



The Political Sea:

Conservation Policies, State Power, and Symbolic Violence The Case of the Bajau in the Wakatobi Marine National Park

ANH LIÊN DO KHAC

MA Student in Political Science and Southeast Asian Studies
Institut d'études politiques de Lyon

Abstract

This article explores how the establishment of a marine national park in order to protect the natural resources of South-East Sulawesi Sea has resulted in symbolic violence against the Bajau, also known as sea gypsies, by destructing their ways of life under the cover of conservation and development policies. This article argues that those policies dissimulate the central government's will to extend its control over the people and the natural resources in the peripheral areas and can be root back to the concept of "political forest". Against this backdrop, the sea has become a key political entity on which claims are made, to which meanings are attached, and over which political conflicts erupt.

As every state engaged in a nation-building process, extending and consolidating the central state power over space or territory is crucial, especially over peripheral areas inhabited by various ethnic minority groups who live physically, culturally, and politically at the margins¹. Indonesia, with its estimated 13,466 islands², disposes of vast peripheral areas over which the central government has tenuous influence. The sea, for instance,

have, for a very long time, escaped state control. However, evolution of technologies and international regulations have made it more convenient for the government to make claims over parts of the sea, thus, providing the government control over natural resources and people behavior. The sea, therefore, become a key political entity where its biological and ecological properties matter less than its strategic

¹ Baird, I.G. 2009. "Controlling the margins: Nature conservation and state power in northeastern Cambodia". In: Bourdier, Frédéric (Ed.). *Development and Dominion: Indigenous Peoples of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press.: 215-248

² According to the 2007-2010 Survey undertaken by the Indonesian National Coordinating Agency for Survey and Mapping

resources³. Nonetheless, the expansion of control over the sea is a challenging task for the government. One of the various tools that the Indonesian government uses to extend its control over its territorial waters, is the establishment of marine protected areas or marine national parks. Meanwhile, under the cover of conservation programs, the central state is simply continuing colonial territorialization processes, which have led to the expansion of state power in the peripheries. Back to the nineteenth century, when the European powers were expanding their territorial control in Southeast Asia, expansionist rulers claimed huge areas of “forest” lands as state property so to protect the nature as well as allowing them to control over territory and natural resources at the local people’s expenses⁴. Conflicts over natural resources have emerged and escalated over time as the newly independent nation-states pursued the previous “conservation” policies. At the same time demographic and economic trends have hastened the pace of change in the physical and social environment⁵. Nowadays still, the creation of national parks involves various kinds of coercion and violence against the “indigenous people” living in remote areas⁶. State development programs along with the conservation policies have increasingly

allowed government to interfere in the lives of local people. Forced settlement, re-settlement or official discourses bear symbolic violence against the ethnic minority groups.

To point out the connections, this paper will discuss empirical case study of the Wakatobi Marine National Park in South-East Sulawesi. Drawing from the concept of “political forest” as described by Peluso and Vandergeest (2001), this paper will demonstrate how the establishment of the Wakatobi Marine National Park is the continuation of land-based territorialization process but on sea, highlighting the numerous similarities and differences between the “political forest” and the “political sea”. This paper will also explore why the “political sea” is an arena for confrontation between the Indonesian government and the Bajau, a sea nomadic ethnic group living in the Flores Sea. Last but not least, it will underline the symbolic violence embedded in conservation and development policies implemented by the central state to extend its power in the margins.

The Wakatobi Marine National Park (thereafter WMNP) is one of the nine maritime national parks in Indonesia. Located in South-East Sulawesi, it encompasses the waters surrounding the four

³ Peluso, Nancy. 1992. “Coercing Conservation: The Politics of State Resource Control”. *Global Environmental Change* 4: 199-218

⁴ Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 2001. “Genealogies of the Political Forest and Customary Rights in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand”. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60 (3)

⁵ Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr., Uson, Ma. Angelina M. 2005. *Control and Conflict in the Uplands*. Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University: 9

⁶ Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 2015. “Political forests”. In Bryant, Raymond L. (Ed.). *The International Handbook of Political Ecology*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing: 166-175

major islands of the Tukang Besi archipelago (Wanci-Wanci, Kaledupa, Tomia and Binongko). The WMNP covers a total area of 1.4 million hectares at the center of the Coral Triangle. Therefore, it includes approximately 50,000 ha of coral reefs, over 390 species of coral and 590 fish species, to the extent that “these levels of diversity are among the highest recorded in any coral reef”⁷. The WMNP park is established to protect the highly bio-diverse coral reefs and to halt the use of destructive fishing techniques in the zone that the Wakatobi Marine Conservation Area was established in 1996 by the Ministry of Forestry and later became a National Park in 2002. The WMNP park is managed by the Wakatobi District government and the Wakatobi National Park Authority. Despite a decentralization movement engaged in Indonesia since 1998, the park management rely heavily on centrally governed rules and regulations⁸. The creation of WMNP and establishment of conservation regulations have directly affected 100,000 people who

live in the area. The WMNP is thus the arena of a conflict between the local populations and the government.

Among these local populations, the Bajau represent an estimated number of 40,000 people⁹. The accurate number of this group is hard to estimate as they are one of the three distinct groups usually called “sea nomads”, along with the Moken and the Orang Laut¹⁰. The various groups collectively referred to the Bajau as they share linguistic characteristics, along with historical and cultural attributes. The Bajau speak Sama-Bajau, a linguistic family of around ten languages¹¹. Their place of origins is very hard to identify, as they have continuously travelled over time, but they are thought to originate from the Sulu archipelago, even though in their origin myth, they claim coming from Johore¹². They migrated south from the Sulu archipelago around the ninth century to establish a network of trading routes. They would have moved to Sulawesi around the fifteenth century, about the same time as the

⁷ Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 12

⁸ De Alessi, Michael. 2014. “Archipelago of Gear: The Political Economy of Fisheries Management and Private Sustainable Fisheries Initiatives in Indonesia”. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 1 (3): 576

⁹ Clifton, Julian. 2010. “Achieving congruence between conservation and community: the Bajau ethnic group and marine management within the Wakatobi and south-east Asia”. In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 199

¹⁰ Sopher, David E. 1965. *The sea nomads: A study based on the literature of the maritime boat people of Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Printed by Lim Bian Han, Govt. printer. 422 p.

¹¹ Sather, Clifford. 1997. *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, history and fate in a maritime fishing society of south-eastern Sabah*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 8

¹² *Ibid* : 17

founding of the Sulu Sultanate, following the development of the *trepang* trade with China¹³. Prior to the last century, Bajau family groups lived almost exclusively at sea in family houseboats, trading with coastal settlements and, through their nomadic traditions, escaping European colonial rule¹⁴. But more recently, with technological innovation (especially the outboard engine), the assertion of nationhood and its implications for individual movement throughout Southeast Asia and the rise of Islam as a unifying force, all combined to radically alter the Bajau way of life¹⁵. A contemporary trend pushes the Bajau people to settle down in villages of stilt houses. In the Tukang Besi islands, the Bajau occupied five different settlements. Despite their sedentarization, they have an

inferior status in relation to other ethnic groups, being marginalized politically and poorly provided with health care, education and other government services¹⁶. They have been particularly criticized by the government and other international organizations for their destructive patterns of maritime resources utilization including cyanide poisoning and blast fishing¹⁷. The fact is that the Bajau heavily depend on fisheries for subsistence¹⁸ and sedentarization of Bajau communities has resulted in the intensification of fishing effort¹⁹. However, these negative views of the Bajau as un-eco-friendly exploiters do not take into account the Bajau traditional knowledge of marine resources. This knowledge is deeply intertwined with the Bajau worldview, a syncretic form of Islam with their own

¹³ Boomgaard, Peter, Henley, David, Osseweijer, Manon (Ed.). 2005. *Muddied Waters: historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Management of Forests and Fisheries in Island Southeast Asia*. Leiden: KITLV Press: 48; Warren, James. 2011. "The Global Economy and the Sulu Zone: Connections, Commodities and Culture". *Crossroads - Studies on the History of Exchange Relations in the East Asian World* 3

¹⁴ Scott, James. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press: ix

¹⁵ Clifton, Julian. 2010. "Achieving congruence between conservation and community: the Bajau ethnic group and marine management within the Wakatobi and south-east Asia". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 200

¹⁶ Cullen, Leanne C. 2010. "Marine resource dependence and natural resource use patterns in the Wakatobi". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 166

¹⁷ Clifton, Julian, Majors, Chris. 2012. "Culture, Conservation, and Conflict: Perspectives on Marine Protection among the Bajau of Southeast Asia". *Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal* 5 (7): 717

¹⁸ Clifton, Julian. 2010. "Achieving congruence between conservation and community: the Bajau ethnic group and marine management within the Wakatobi and south-east Asia". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 166

¹⁹ Clifton, Julian, Majors, Chris. 2012. "Culture, Conservation, and Conflict: Perspectives on Marine Protection among the Bajau of Southeast Asia". *Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal* 5 (7): 717

cosmology²⁰. For instance, they believe that the *Mbo madilao* (ancestors of the sea) and diverse groups of spirits populate the sea²¹. Observances and gifts to these spirits by fishermen are believed to bring good luck in the form of increased catches²². Therefore, the Bajau have more traditional, cultural, and spiritual connections to the sea rather than simply economic²³.

The Indonesian state, however, tends to see these beliefs as primitive and is more concerned with conservation issues. Conservation policies in Indonesia are largely inherited from the Dutch²⁴. Following Indonesia's independence in 1945, state power was highly centralized, especially control over natural resources, and heavily exploited natural resources. Under international pressures, a turn in conservation policies happened at the early 1980s with the establishment of the state ministry of population and environment in 1978 and the first five national parks in 1980. More recently, a new trend in the

international conservation agenda, prominently in Indonesia through NGOs and international aids, regards integrated conservation and development projects as the standard approach to conservation²⁵. The first efforts to develop indigenous communities took place under the Dutch. The colonial power was then interested in controlling population, extracting labor, and tax revenues²⁶. The modern Indonesian state has pursued these development programs and has forced nomad peoples into "social settlement". In the 1970s, special attention was given to "geographically isolated customary law communities" in particular²⁷. Despite being often considered as responsible for the destruction of the environment, these local communities also represented a separatist threat as long as they would not be integrated into the Nation²⁸. As wanderers living on the boat, the Bajau fell into this category of "geographically isolated customary law communities". This category, however, contradict the reality as

²⁰ Sather, Clifford. 1997. *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, history and fate in a maritime fishing society of south-eastern Sabah*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 269-319

²¹ Stacey, Natasha. 2007. *Boats to Burn: Bajo Fishing Activity in the Australian Fishing Zone*. Canberra: ANU E Press: 33

²² Clifton, Julian. 2010. "Achieving congruence between conservation and community: the Bajau ethnic group and marine management within the Wakatobi and south-east Asia". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 204

²³ Stacey, Natasha. 2007. *Boats to Burn: Bajo Fishing Activity in the Australian Fishing Zone*. Canberra: ANU E Press: 31; Cullen 2010: 168

²⁴ Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr., Uson, Ma. Angelina M. 2005. *Control and Conflict in the Uplands*. Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University: 27

²⁵ Chatty, Dawn, Colchester, Marcus. 2002. *Conservation and Mobile Indigenous Peoples: Displacement, Forced Settlement and Sustainable Development*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books: 313

²⁶ Duncun, Christopher R. 2004. "From Development to Empowerment: Changing Indonesian Government Policies toward Indigenous Minorities". In Duncun, Christopher R. (Ed.). 2004. *Civilizing the Margins: Southeast Asian Government Policies for the Development of Minorities*. New York: Cornell University Press: 87

²⁷ *ibid*: 86

²⁸ *ibid*: 88

most conservation and development programs in Indonesia have met opposition from the local people. In some cases, projects claiming to integrate development and conservation have actually resulted in forced settlement, abuse of power by park's rangers and increased government interference in the lives of the local people²⁹. The WMNP is one example of conflicts that may arise when the government decides to create a national park to protect the environment but with economic and social impacts on the local population.

As mentioned above, the WMNP was established to protect the marine environment in the Flores Sea. Nevertheless, the creation of the marine national park also serves larger political purposes such as securing politico-economic power for the state. Using national parks as instrument of power to extent state's territory and claims over natural resources is not a new strategy, but it takes its roots back to the concepts of territorialization and "political forest." Territorialization can be defined as the attempt by the state to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area³⁰.

Territorialization first served to protect state's access to people and income from taxes and natural resources, and later, to organize surveillance, gather information about the population, force them to settle down, and organize close control over people's everyday activities³¹. The concept of "political forest" was a critical part of the colonial state-building process both in terms of territorialization of the forest and institutionalization of forest management as an instrument of state power³². Territorial control was implemented through demarcation of specific territories as forestlands, claims on all the resources in these territories as state property under the jurisdiction of a forest department and through patrols of forest guards and regular police or military personnel³³. Territorial control was followed by resource control, a process by which government monopolized, taxed, or otherwise limited the legal trade and the transport of certain species³⁴. To enforce the political forest, the state employed different instruments of power such as zoning and mapping, the establishment of laws establishing the legal and illegal practices, and the creation of authorities responsible for ensuring com-

²⁹ Baird, I.G. 2009. "Controlling the margins: Nature conservation and state power in northeastern Cambodia". In: Bourdier, Frédéric (Ed.). *Development and Dominion: Indigenous Peoples of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press: 216

³⁰ Sack, Robert D. 1986. *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 19

³¹ Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 1995. "Territorialization and State Power in Thailand". *Theory and Society* 24 (3): 390

³² Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 2001. "Genealogies of the Political Forest and Customary Rights in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand". *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60 (3): 762

³³ *ibid*: 765

³⁴ *ibid*: 765

pliance with these laws. Maps were particularly important instruments by which state agencies drew boundaries, created territories, and made claim enforced by their courts of law³⁵. The creation of the political forest followed a four-stage process: first, the state started by asserting its sovereignty over the entire territory; then it normalized the idea of “forest” as an biological entity that requested or deserved to be managed under a different form of management than the agricultural lands; once the forestland defined, the state differentiated between “protected species” and agricultural species; finally, just when the forest had become scientifically defined and categorized, the fauna and flora were politically defined and managed through laws, policies, and controls.

The establishment of the WMNP is the continuation of this policy. The United Nations Law of the Sea Convention of 1982 allowed the Indonesian State to claim all the surrounding waters up to 200 nautical miles from its coast line, asserting at the same time property over the waters of the today Wakatobi Park. Then, the State declared the WMNP as a “natural monument” which has to be preserved for research and tourism.³⁶ The coral reef, scientifically defined, required to be protected under a specific

form of authority and a special regime of law because of its uniqueness and because it was jeopardized by external threat. Teams of scientists identified particularly endangered species. After a long process, a zoning plan for the park was put into place in July 2007. Under this plan, the majority of the park is a “local use zone”, with only fishing by small-scale, local fisherman using traditional methods (such as hook and line and small gill nets) allowed. The zoning also includes no-take zones, “protected areas” and “tourist areas”³⁷. Some fishing practices are prohibited and fishermen have also to register their boat and their catches. Coast guards patrol regularly³⁸. The park authorities, as legal basis for declaring any activities as illegal, monitor and regulate day-to-day village behavior³⁹. Conflicts have then aroused over resource use and management, as the Bajau are denied certain traditional fishing zones and practices. The sea is therefore seen as a contested resource, a social arena where meanings and values on natural resources are constructed and fought over through processes of interactions. It has acquired a political status hence the “political sea”.

Although many parallels can be drawn between the “political forest” and the “political sea”, there are some differences.

³⁵Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 1995. “Territorialization and State Power in Thailand”. *Theory and Society* 24 (3): 389

³⁶ Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 2001. “Genealogies of the Political Forest and Customary Rights in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand”. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60 (3): 783

³⁷ De Alessi, Michael. 2014. “Archipelago of Gear: The Political Economy of Fisheries Management and Private Sustainable Fisheries Initiatives in Indonesia”. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 1 (3): 581

³⁸ Shepherd, Samantha, Terry, Alan. 2004. “The Role of Indigenous Communities in Natural Resource Management: The Bajau of the Tukangbesi Archipelago, Indonesia”. *Geography* 89 (3): 207

³⁹ Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr., Uson, Ma. Angelina M. 2005. *Control and Conflict in the Uplands*. Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University: 56

First, the ways the state claimed property on the land and on the sea differ. On land, the state declared that all wasteland or abandoned land should be state property and the villagers had to register their land⁴⁰. Yet when it comes to the sea, claim to ownership of a plot of sea is hardly possible, especially because the sea is seen as the common property of all⁴¹. This leads to a difficult question of the maritime borders. Although a forest territory is relatively easy to define, by building barriers around, for instance, the maritime borders, however, are more difficult to discern. They require the possession of suitable technological tools such as GPS, tools that simple Bajau boats do not necessarily possess⁴². The size of the forest itself limits the freedom of movement of forest inhabitants but the seas have countless entry points⁴³. Conflicts also emerge in relation with the zoning system, which imposes boundaries based purely on ecological “scientific” considerations. However, the mobile character of the fish complicates the problem of apportioning

exploitation rights and enforcing exclusion rules⁴⁴. Last but not least, Vandergeest and Peluso (2001) emphasizes the existence of various legal exemptions called Customary Rights. However, the difficulty in the WMNP case is to determine whether the Bajau are an indigenous people. Internationally recognized definitions of indigenous people associate indigenous communities with a specific territory on which they depend, but no mention of the sea as specific territory is made. Nevertheless, the Bajau are deeply affected by the presence of the WMNP.

The creation of a national park has both social and economic impacts⁴⁵. Ban on fishing has discriminatory effects on the poorer inhabitants of the Park, especially on the Bajau who rely on fisheries for subsistence⁴⁶. Tourism related activities are not sufficient to replace the revenue loss. Moreover, the Tukang Besi islands are relatively infertile islands and they can only support a limited amount of small-scale agriculture⁴⁷. The establishment and protection of national parks and nature reserves

⁴⁰ Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 2001. “Genealogies of the Political Forest and Customary Rights in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand”. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60 (3): 774

⁴¹ Russell, Denise. 2010. *Who Rules the Waves?: Piracy, Overfishing and Mining the Oceans*. London ; New York: Pluto Press: 137

⁴² *ibid*: 135

⁴³ Boomgaard, Peter, Henley, David, Osseweijer, Manon (Ed.). 2005. *Muddied Waters: historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Management of Forests and Fisheries in Island Southeast Asia*. Leiden: KITLV Press: 188

⁴⁴ *ibid*: 9

⁴⁵ Pomeroy, Robert S., Mascia, Michael B., Pollnac, Richard B. 2006. “Marine Protected Areas: the Social Dimension”. *Background Paper 3*. FAO Expert Workshop on Marine Protected Areas and Fisheries Management; Christie, Patrick. 2004. “Marine Protected Areas as Biological Successes and Social Failures in Southeast Asia”. *American Fisheries Society Symposium*

⁴⁶ Cullen, Leanne C. 2010. “Marine resource dependence and natural resource use patterns in the Wakatobi”. In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 162

⁴⁷ Stacey, Natasha. 2007. *Boats to Burn: Bajo Fishing Activity in the Australian Fishing Zone*. Canberra: ANU E Press: 12

on land have often been done at the expense of forest-dwelling communities who are forced to vacate their lands in the name of conservation⁴⁸. It is the same for the Bajau who have been pressured to settle down on land. Forced settlement and state's discourses and practices represent a form of violence that can be defined as symbolic violence⁴⁹ as they discriminately threaten the traditional Bajau way of life. The loss of traditional fishing knowledge and cultural identity has already occurred since settlement⁵⁰ and several medias have written about the "last sea nomads"⁵¹. The ideas of backwardness and primitiveness found in the Program for Development of Social Prosperity of Geographically Isolated Customary Law Communities literature have become an almost standardized way of thinking about indigenous minorities among Indonesian bureaucrats⁵². These ideas are

part of a process of "simplification"⁵³, meaning the rationalization and standardization of knowledge through maps, census, cadastral lists or standard units of measurement. Cultural precepts and practices of the Bajau are denigrated by imposing on them authoritative scientific knowledge and practices structured by the state or international bodies⁵⁴. The state does not see the cultural significance of the sea and perceives it only as a revenue-generating resource⁵⁵. Furthermore, little recognition is given to the Bajau historical presence in the Park's waters. Ignoring histories of the Bajau leads to a feeling of deterritorialization among the Bajau, as if the area did no longer belong to their communities⁵⁶. As Gérard Clarke argues, mainstream development strategies tend to generate conflicts between states and ethnic minorities and such strategies are, at times,

⁴⁸ Duncun, Christopher R. 2004. "From Development to Empowerment: Changing Indonesian Government Policies toward Indigenous Minorities". In Duncun, Christopher R. (Ed.). 2004. *Civilizing the Margins: Southeast Asian Government Policies for the Development of Minorities*. New York: Cornell University Press: 102

⁴⁹ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1979. *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris : Les Editions de minuit. 672p.

⁵⁰ Majors, Chris, Swiecicka, Joanna. 2005. "Missing the boat?". *Inside Indonesia* 82 ; Pilgrim, Sarah. 2010. "Marine and coastal resource knowledge in the Wakatobi". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 218

⁵¹ Langenheim, Johnny. "The last of the sea nomads". *The Guardian*. September 18, 2010 ; Kaye, Melati, Orland, Brian. "Indonesia's last nomadic sea gypsies". *Aljazeera*, October 6, 2012

⁵² Duncun, Christopher R. 2004. "From Development to Empowerment: Changing Indonesian Government Policies toward Indigenous Minorities". In Duncun, Christopher R. (Ed.). 2004. *Civilizing the Margins: Southeast Asian Government Policies for the Development of Minorities*. New York: Cornell University Press: 87

⁵³ Scott, James. 1995. "State simplifications: Nature, space and people". *Journal of Political Philosophy* 3 (3): 191-233

⁵⁴ Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr., Uson, Ma. Angelina M. 2005. *Control and Conflict in the Uplands*. Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University: 56

⁵⁵ *ibid*: 13

⁵⁶ Baird, I.G. 2009. "Controlling the margins: Nature conservation and state power in northeastern Cambodia". In: Bourdier, Frédéric (Ed.). *Development and Dominion: Indigenous Peoples of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press: 234

ethnocidal in their destructive effects on the latter⁵⁷. To ensure conformity to a certain ideology of conservation and development expressed by the bureaucracy, the state create and maintains structures and mechanisms that entail the surveillance of communities through system of power relations that interacts and conflicts with the beliefs and practices of the Bajau⁵⁸. This power relationship leads to cultural domination and meets resistance from the local people. After all, the sea is the center of their world, not at the margins.

The Bajau have a long history of escaping any state authority. But nation-building processes have led the Indonesian state to increase its control over the peripheral areas and communities. One way of extending state power has been the use of national parks, inherited from colonial forest politics. Inevitably concerned with sea areas, the Indonesian insular state has extended the territorialization process on the sea by establishing marine protected areas such as the Wakatobi Marine National Park. The creation of the Park has not been neutral and economic and social impacts have altered permanently the Bajau's way of life. Conflicts have arisen on meanings attached to the sea and on the use and management of marine natural resources. Therefore, the sea has become a contested resource between the central government and the Bajau community and has acquired a political status. As in every conflict,

violence occupies an important part. In this case study, it takes the form of symbolic violence. Integrated conservation and development policies have eventually resulted in ethnocidal effects. Moreover, projects attempting to integrate conservation with development have extended state power into South-East Sulawesi. Discursive tools also have a very important role. By depicting the people living in the park as either destroyer of the environment or backward, official discourses justify the takeover of areas for the establishment of marine national parks, the sometimes heavy-handed treatment of local people and their exclusion from important decision-making processes. The nomadic nature of the Bajau livelihood has made the recognition of their fundamental rights to live on the sea very difficult. Nevertheless, their lives remain intricately linked to the sea by livelihood, culture, and history. The Wakatobi Marine National Park is therefore a symbol of state power over what was once their place.

One important factor, globalization, has given little development in this essay, although mentioned several times. International scrutiny on conservation programs and development policies, as well as international networks for conservation play an important role on defining Indonesia policies and shaping the conflict in the WMNP. International environmental aid has not only fueled the direction and the extent

⁵⁷ Clarke, Gerard. 2001. "From Ethnocide to Ethnodevelopment? Ethnic Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia. *Third World Quarterly* 22 (3): 413

⁵⁸ Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr., Uson, Ma. Angelina M. 2005. *Control and Conflict in the Uplands*. Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University: 26

of the establishment of numerous national parks, but inadvertently legitimizes state territorial strategy⁵⁹. All the international organizations have failed to consider the implications of increased state control over the parks. Conservation and development policies are considered as “noble causes”

and only a few people dare questioning the prevailing discourse⁶⁰. We cannot deny that national parks are needed but perhaps a more community-based management should be advocated to address marine national parks issues.

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⁵⁹ Sowerwine, Jennifer C. 2004. “Territorialisation and the Politics of Highland Landscapes in Vietnam: Negotiating Property Relations in Policy, Meaning and Practice”. *Conservation and Society* 2 (1): 98

⁶⁰ McKinnon, John. 1997. “The forests of Thailand: strike up the ban?” In McCaskill, D., Kampe, K. (Ed.). *Development or Domestication? Indigenous Peoples of Southeast Asia*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books: 117-131

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