

**SOCIALIZATION AGENT'S KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION AMONG  
BAJAU-LAUT COMMUNITY: TUN SAKARAN MARINE PARK  
CONSERVATION ZONE, SABAH**

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**ABSTRACT**

The issues of water conservation are part of the agenda of the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) between Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines due to the population of Bajau-Laut community in the surrounding waters. It is feared that the freedom of the communities living in the confines of our waters as well as cultivating their traditional fishing using explosives may threaten the sustainability of marine conservation zones. The knowledge and the preparation of the community to obey the rules and regulations enforced in the protected area of marine activity to ensure a sustainable supply for the future. Thus, this study aims to discuss the agents who socialize the knowledge of Bajau-Laut community about the conservation zone involving the Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP). Research has been ongoing in Pulau Bum-Bum, Semporna, Sabah through applying phenomenological approaches on selected ten informants through purposive sampling techniques. Semi-structured interview was chosen to deepen the knowledge of Bajau-Laut community as the actor of the study. Assumptions made by ontology and epistemology idealist of the social constructivist envisioned paradigm study as a research to understand the significance of conservation zones that are formed from social reality of Bajau-Laut community. The results revealed that the Village Development Committee (JKKK), Welfare Association Bajau-Laut (PEKEBAL), the agency of Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP) serves as a formal agent of socialization while families, friends and the media are informal socialization agents that make up the knowledge of informant. As a community living in an island, the knowledge of zoning and conservation efforts by the significant agencies is crucial to understand the importance of preserving habitat of marine resources. Hence, the habitat of marine resources could be protected and conserved for future supplies.

**Keywords:** Bajau-Laut; Community; Conservation Zone; Knowledge; Socialization Agents

**INTRODUCTION**

The awareness and concern about environmental issues among the people had been widespread through conservational programs mainly observed in industrialized countries as well as developing countries (Clifton, 2011; Majors 2008; Dunlap & Gallup, 1993). Conservation programmes through the initiative of developing countries (NSM) especially in Southeast Asia, namely Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines are the examples of countries that have a special approach towards management of maritime resources and established delimitation. The country's efforts in implementing the zoning regulations as social control can be traced through the 1982 UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea) based on space limitations of the Exclusive Economic Zone (ZEE) in the Plan Initiative Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI). In accordance with the plan, there are three issues to be addressed, namely coral reefs, fisheries and food security

(Secretariat of the Coral Triangle Initiative, 2008). The rationale for these three maritime nations is warranted because of the similarity of socio-demographic ethnics Bajau-Laut population inhabiting the border areas of the country (Stacey et al. 2012; Saat, 2003; Nagatsu, 2001 & Warren, 1983).

Aquatic life and natural resources are already providing basic needs to the Bajau-Laut community whether they have built settlements through the process of sedentarisation of nomadic lifestyle or around water. However, concerns exist because communities are often involved in the low-tech fishing activities and aiming towards the bow of the boat offshore's pelagic zone around the area of conservation by the Coral Triangle initiatives (Akimichi &, 1996). (Clifton, 2010) and (Elliott et al., 2001) explains that 'Bajau communities are commonly associated with illegal and destructive practices such as blast fishing, cyanide fishing, coral mining, and the harvesting of protected species. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the diversity of different terminological Bajau-Laut in Southeast Asia such as Bajau, Sama Bajau, Badjau, Sama-Dilaut and Orang Laut or Sea Gypsies (Tagliacozzo 2009 & Sather 1997; 1995). Consequently, it is to subject Bajau-Laut community to legal action in connection with the Explosives Act and the Fisheries Act 1985 (Nolde, 2009 & Lowe, 2003), especially in Malaysia.

Through this paper work, the research focus is concentrated in the Tun Sakaran Marine Park, Semporna, Sabah, which is a national park with a significant conservation programs as an alternative life. In July 2004, this marine park with an area of 350km<sup>2</sup> was gazetted eight islands around Pulau Bum-Bum because of the importance of aquatic features like homogeneous in Australia Islands (Brunt, 2007). The gazette introduce a system of conservation zones covering fishing zone, community use zones and preservational zones. Based on the explanation (Wood et al., 2011), the conservation zone is divided into artificial reefs and fisheries areas, community customary land, farm trial lobster and fish cages, seaweed and pearl farms, preserved forest and protected areas of mangrove. The introduction of the zone system is expected to protect the characteristics of aquatic as well as boosting the community's economic growth. However, the conservation and preservation of island's ecosystems until now is found to cause various reactions, especially among communities that refused to participate in an alternative program of life.

Prior research studies prove that there exists an overlap between the views of imagination regarding the benefits of conservation of maritime resources and the reality of complying the zoning rules among administrators and Bajau-Laut communities (Brosius et al., 1998 & Zerner, 1994). The lack findings of local researchers particularly, led to the need for a discussion on Bajau-Laut community and the water conservational issues are focused sociologically. This is similar to the recommendations of (Clifton & Chris, 2012), which is to further the study on examining the perceptions of island communities about conservation zone covering areas such as biology, marine ecology and social anthropology. 'The evidence is that till now, there have been only a very few studies that highlights scholarly research of international undergraduate study such as Culture, Conservation and Conflict: Perspectives on Marine Protection among the Bajau of Southeast Asia' (Clifton & Chris, 2012), 'Stateless Stakeholders: Seen But Not Heard' (Brunt, 2013) and 'Should state and international organizations adopt a human rights approach to fishery policy? (Allison, 2011). Therefore, it is axiom that the question of who are the agents who socialized the knowledge among Bajau-Laut community about the conservation zone initiative in Semporna, Sabah is still relevant to be explored and discussed further.

## PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES AND AWARENESS OF BAJAU-LAUT COMMUNITY ON WATER CONSERVATION ZONE

Literally, most previous studies highlight that the island's Bajau-Laut community globally focuses on perceptions, attitudes and awareness of conservation rules enforced by a National Park. Research on these themes is focused on the role undertaken by the administrator agency and its impact on the communities' understanding. Community's perceptions about the implementation of conservational zones in Semporna observed to be associated with the geographical life cycle. The rationale for marine ecological conservation is influenced by the spirit of the ancestors as *Mbo Madilau* (Fox et al. 2009; Drew 2005). Believe and worldview of Bajau community less explored and led to findings related to spiritual practice and its relation to the impact of maritime conservation is difficult to be discussed (Bottingnolo, 1995; Nimmo, 1990). Perception luck catches and the efficiency of fishermen dependent on the of delivery of the good fortune 'padalleang' (Clifton, 2011: 721). In contrast, the findings of a study by Brunt (2007) and Santoso (2012) scholars, revealed that involvement in conservation initiatives can be enhanced if the monitoring system is provided to the community of maritime zones.

Attitudes and awareness about water conservation zone implementation also affected by the ability of communities to adapt to any changes in the environment. This is proven through field observations by Clifton and Majors (2011: 719) with reference to the study of (Sather, 1997), explains that the Bajau community 'alter their practices on complex diel or lunar cycles reflecting known patterns of fish movement, spawning and aggregation, while changes in preferred species and habitats also occur in tandem with longer term seasonal variations'. Compared to Saidatul's study (2013) revealed that the language barriers between foreign researchers and locals made it awkward for the Bajau community to obtain the information and interpret it from their perspectives good enough. Attitude is finally giving different responses regarding the feasibility of the fishery zone regulation (Christie, 2005).

Community awareness to preserve the system of conservation zones are related to its restriction is enforced by the administrator. (Lester et al., 2009) explains that the administrators consider restrictions on fishing activities, the fishing gear and maritime protection zone enforcement misconduct able to reduce fishing activity. However, social control and legal action is difficult to implement (The Nature Conservancy / WWF, 2004) as the population of Bajau community in fishing activity registered a total imbalance and the migrants' location around waters variable (Cullen, 2007). A survey on the perception, attitude and awareness of the community, found to exist some gaps that could be purified. (Roberts et al., 2001) explained that compliance with maritime protection area could be achieved if we could explore the system of world community's perception. This is because the sailors community certainly has its own interpretation of the changing processes of the environment and its relationship to the total number of fish populations (Berkes, 1999).

The study of social anthropology side by Nimmo (1969) argues that earlier researchers tend to discuss the transition after the change of the Bajau community of collectors of forest products and shift to maritime civilization with writing refers historians such as Sopher (1965). Finally, the question of international scholars on the community's understanding about the conservation of coral reefs (Afiff et al., 2007) is limited because they do not understand the purpose and benefits of conservation programs (The Nature Conservancy, 2006).

## FISHERIES AND ABUSE EXPLOSIVES

Debate on the issues of fishing activity and the misuse of explosives was given attention by scholars before the era of the 90s (Akimichi & Supriadi, 1996) that are commonly associated with the distribution of the settlement community issues. According to the issue, the exploitation case of fisheries resources in the form of local residents observed among nomadic communities (Pet-Soede & Erdmann, 1998). In this case, scholar Gaynor (2005) and Chou (2003) described the impact of modernization through sedentarisation process of Bajau-Laut community (Crabbe & Smith, 2005) argued as a contributing factor. The fact is reinforced by Bracamonte (1995) who found that the young men easily migrate to urban sites due to causes of migration.

However, the Bajau-Laut community's settlements are typically characterised as lagging behind in terms of formal education, poverty and high child mortality rates (Chou, 1997). Apart from the fishing activity of the Bajau-Laut community, it is also associated with water transportation systems (Wan Shawaluddin Wan Hasan et al., 2012) and issue from arranging the permit in terms of providing financial problems (Jamie et al., 2011). In 2004, the use of 'Pump Boat' was banned due to the reasons of safety purposes and smuggling, but it remains widespread (Ramli Dollah et al., 2012). Through the research of Chiam (2012), the boat is significant in the culture of living heritage Bajau-Laut. Misuse of explosives in fishing activities considered widespread in the Bajau community in the reef (Tun et al., 2008) as a collateral arrests maritime source with a high number (Pet-Soede et al. 1999).

Assertive enforcement of community's compliance also sparked concerns of environmentalist (Cesar et al., 1997). Contrary to the views of Clifton et al (2011: 722) which is the use of explosives are essential to the cultural and social status of fishing communities, especially through the egalitarian spirit of the rarest marine species. Social status sailors rise as their efficiency is recognized as a 'folk hero' on a par with the head of an informal group. Recognition is an essential element to build a socially good fishing communities (Woolcock, 2001).

Based on this theme, the process of socialization acceptance by the Bajau-Laut community is significant to explore for a deeper understanding on how communities internalize any knowledge regarding the enforcement of conservation zones around Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP). Thus, this paper is here to prove that the process of socialization through social interaction with capable agents who could change the world's view of the Bajau-Laut community about reforms in the vicinity of the island, especially on the restructuring of conservation zone.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In brief, the study area is located in Semporna, Sabah. It focused closely on Tundun Village in Pulau Bum-Bum as *mukim* dealing with the conservation zones gazetted (Figure 1.0). In terms of demographics, the area is inhabited by the Bajau-Laut community is to build settlements in the surrounding waters, whether it stays permanent through sedentarisation process or still lead a nomadic life. The purposive sampling technique is applied with the cooperation of JKKK Kampung Tundun as a gate keeper was held with 10 people Bajau-Laut community. The amount is determined by the appropriateness of this approach depends on the phenomenology saturation of the data (Creswell, 1998). Informants in this study, consisted of three (3) males and seven (7) females with a diversity of educational level,

occupation, religion and type of settlement. Minimum age in this study was not structured to show patterns of similarities, differences and comparisons when descriptive analysis implemented. As a result, there is a diversity of ages ranging from the 20s, 30s, 40s and 60s to provide feedback from a broad perspective. Furthermore, the primary data feedback from informant also being supported with secondary data by analyzing several reports as *Socio-Economic Monitoring in Taman Marin Tun Sakaran Results of the 2006 Community Census* (Wood, Suliansa & Brunt, 2007), (ii) *Progress Towards Development of Alternative Livelihoods in Tun Sakaran Marine Park* (Wood, Bavoh & Ng, 2011) and (iii) *Semporna Island Darwin Projects* (SIDP Reports 2011).

Figure 1.0: Location of Study



(Source: [http://www.tamannegara.org/pg\\_tmnn/pg\\_tunsakaran.php](http://www.tamannegara.org/pg_tmnn/pg_tunsakaran.php))

## FINDINGS

A total of ten (10) informants were interviewed by conducting a semi-structured interview technique to obtain information about agents who were disseminating knowledge of informants in conservation zones of Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP). Five (5) people from the informants are Bajau-Laut community who had built permanent settlements while the rest are those remained nomadic status near the water area of Semporna. The study has identified a total of two (2) groups of agents, an agent for formal socialization and another for informal socialization involved in distributing information. Moreover, the findings will be discussed by applying the theory of Symbolic Interaction such as Mental Process and the Mind paradigm (Mead, 1934). The goal is to understand the social interaction of actor study by applying the description from the aspects of idealist ontology and epistemology of social constructivist and not to ignore the sociological analysis of the contribution of this study.

### i) Formal Socialization Agents

Investigated through descriptive analysis feedback from informants highlighted the three (3) forms formal knowledge socializing agents in Bajau-Laut community regarding the

conservation zone. Through this categories a total of four (4) people interacting with information agencies such as i) JKKK, ii) PEKEBAL) and iii) agency of Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP). Under this category, the majority of three (3) informants settled around Kampung Tundun and acquire formal education up to the Diploma and worked in various fields of work. For the male informants, their analysis are labeled as 'M', while for female informants it is labeled as 'F' by order of the interview.

#### ***Village Development Committee Tundun Village Branch (JKKK)***

The pattern of responses that show JKKK as a formal socialization agent is shown through testimony of two (2) members, namely M1 and F1 informants who lives in Kampung Tundun. According M1 aged 65, he obtained information about the implementation of conservation zones through monthly meetings with the JKKK. As a senior citizen who learned the intricacies of the lives of fishermen, M1 described the rules and restrictions of fishing activity to be an obstacle to an active community with a system of self-sufficiency. L1 can be displayed through the view of his response which is;

*'I knows a lot from the village chief. Pity all of my neighbours as well who lives in the sea. Want to go to marine areas in need of permits to be paid, while live to eat itself is too difficult' (M1).*

In contrast to the respond of F1 informant, the informant was a housewife and a part-time dealer of exotic coral to be supplied to the fans accessories and hoteliers in district. P1 informant acknowledged that information of water conservation zones and receiving free nets is known in a meeting with village leaders (JKKK) a few years earlier. Through F1 statement, she stated that;

*'we get to know the rules of the sea by our village's chief person. Moreover, I am not good at writing and reading. Only now is a little difficult as the area where there are many pearls can't bring things along inside' (F1).*

#### ***Community Welfare Association Bajau-Laut (PEKEBAL)***

Interview with informant a teacher M2 explained that his knowledge is more socialized through PEKEBAL agents. These agents act as 'middlemen' to channel expansion and Semporna's projects on the island. At the same time the teaching profession in the area of the island is also involved with conservation programs. The explanation can be understood through M2 explanation;

*'school teacher at times we have some environmental programs with students here. But it is only for those in school and if for those who are schooling, we have those programs outside the school. PEKEBAL numerous articles provide information and encourage marine parks program' (M2).*

#### ***Tun Sakaran Marine Park Agency (TSMP)***

Responsibility of the Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP) agency as a formal agent of socialization can be analyzed from the evidence of informant m3 who works as a tour guide. m3 is within the range of 45-year-old clarified that the daily routine work to expose him to any information related tourism activities on the island. He said;

*'if before this snorkelling is free to snorkel everywhere, but now there is a little difficult because tourists also must be registered with our new agent who can bring them to snorkel. There is freedom but it's controlled by marine park agents' (M3).*

## ii) **Informal Socialization Agents**

Findings regarding informal socialization agent highlights three agencies whose role is to channel knowledge in relation to the conservation zone in Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP). The agents comprising i) family, ii) peer and iii) the print media. Although the family is the primary agent of socialization in the process of socializing, the results of the study shows the role of a peer or peer group as the agent is more dominant among the four (4) informants than the ten (10) other informants. Then, only one (1) of the informants only knows information of zone through print media displayed around the jetty and the place he stays.

### **Family**

The role of the family as friendly informal socialization agent can be appreciated through a statement that he is working as an informant M4 Laborer in Semporna. Nomadic life traveled by M4 for 25 years gives a different perspective on the changes of conservation zone in the area. M4 explained that the information from family members is crucial due to work constraints have limited interaction with other Bajau-Laut. Explanation M4 can be appreciated through the response;

*'we used to freely hook fish ... island where all can be entered ... but sadly now it's hard because about the house (family), tell do not arbitrarily enter island then will be arrested by the marine police' (M4).*

### **Peers**

The question is the role of peers as the agent of socialization responded by the next four (4) persons namely informants M5, F2, and F3 M6 who came from different backgrounds and different status. Analysis of the role of these agents, highlighting three (3) different response patterns in terms of how knowledge is disseminated about the conservation zone. The pattern of responses that expressed uncertainty about the zones can be analyzed within Informants M5 and F2. However, the informants admitted that a little knowledge is formed through the daily experience of their peers. Recognition M5 working as a boat driver can be observed through the conversation; *'... like a friend of mine made me remember, what you can bring on boats based on the rules in Semporna which is different at 6 morning out, 6 pm in jetty' (M5).*

Informant M5 can be believed as fact until now, there are curfew around Pulau Bum-Bum to safeguard its population. Informant feedback pattern F2 as Putu Seller (a kind of traditional food based on a mixture of tapioca and coconut) can also be appreciated by the excerpts such as;

*'it's like kind I have also seen some uncles patrolling ESSCOM marine park wearing brown colour shirts. But like younger brother (referring to himself researcher) said that rules I don't really know it because I already went to school and my friends always tell me the same story. I'm indeed Bajau-Laut but I always go down for fishing except brother, cousin and uncles' (F2).*

Nomadic life in the area of uncertainty also contributed to the lack of dissemination of knowledge M5 and F2 on the implementation of the scheme of water conservation zones. Moreover, the pattern on the role of peer feedback can be analyzed through the following statements of F3 and M6 informant. According M6 who works as fishermen and fish dealers, explaining that the daily conversations with small level of entrepreneurs with a group of people at jetty caused him to realize that the existence of regulatory structures in coastal zone around the nomadic life. M6 through his view that; *'... my boss (a close friend) in a market had told me. For I have no letter or permitte. Business was so slow and down that sometimes would beg boat license'* (M6).

The next statement, which can be analyzed through a Informant F3 who works as a dealer in Pier Sea Urchin Balimbang, Semporna and shared the location of the site selling the same with M6. Explanation F3 had be said as; *'friends always say that to my husband, say oh don't you go there looking for tehe tehe (sea urchin)'* (F3).

### **Social Media**

M7 informant who worked as a driver for Van Island as a chater and lived in the same district with F1 and stated that he is very concern about implementation of zoning and fishing activities through the fact that plastered around the bus shelter, Jeti Balimbang. According to M7 in his explanation, his knowledge through print media is like,

*'... There it was plastered on the bus shelters. If you ever could read is okay but if couldn't even a giant letter also wouldn't know'. For example, the nomadic of course they just don't care only. No matter how many times you tell them, they will still jump or dive in the sea near the fenced area....'* (M7).

Through M7's explanation, members of the Police Station Bum-Bum also monitored all forms of fishing activities in the sea which only allows the fishing activity which is not more than three (3) nautical miles of territorial water conservation zone.

The findings of the two groups through socialization agent i) formal and ii) informal show that there exists a dominant influence based on the type of work, level of education and settlement patterns of informants. This is because, the social interaction that takes place is determined by time and space (Giddens, 1984). Issues related to 'what, who, where, how and why' of water conservation zone schemes implemented by the Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP) agency is also influenced by the social experience of actors of the informant studies (Mead, 1962).

### **DISCUSSIONS**

Findings through this paper is guided by the primary objective of the study which is applied to discuss the agents involved in socializing the knowledge among Bajau-Laut community about water conservation zone. Ontologically, this study papers explore the social reality of the community through idealist ontology approach (Blaikie, 2007). This is because knowledge of an actor is a subjective and it depends on the process of social interaction. Through social constructivism approach to epistemology, the researchers found that the social meaning and appreciation of the value of a good or bad values of conservation benefits greatly influenced by the group of agents who disseminate knowledge related to efforts to preserve the Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP).

Besides that, the discussion from the theoretical angle is talked of Symbolic Interaction: Mental Process and the Mind by George Herbert Mead (1934). Through this theory, Ritzer (1996:200) explains that *'... another function of significant symbols, that they*



make the mind, mental processes, and so on, possible. It is only through significant symbols, especially language, that human thinking is possible ... '. The compatibility of this theoretical approach to the study of phenomena is observed balanced by the argument Mead (1934) in Ritzer (1996: 200) as informants' understanding of the conservation zone as a symbol of the rule and its function as a tool of social control is internalized through a process of interaction.

Internalization of values that correspond with the agents of socialization significantly shape the character of informants. Researchers' views observed consistent with the argument Mead (1934/1962: 47), which describes the process of thinking as 'simply an internalized or implicit conversation of the individual with himself by means of such gestures'. Finally, social interactions also affect the process of socialization of the individual in interpreting the noble efforts undertaken by the agency Tun Sakaran Marine Park (TSMP).

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, both the agents of socialization formal as well as informal play a dominant role to instil the value of the preservation of maritime resources in terms of consumerism and generate commodity from the island gazetted. Bajau-Laut community involvement in conservational programs should be more active than administration agents because Bajau-Laut community's dependence on sea-based activities is still a family identity. Thus, for the continuation of sociological discourse analysis of this paper, considering further research knowledge on conservational zone of social reality among Bajau-Laut community should be discussed by applying the Structure-Agency approach (Giddens, 1984). It is important to analyze the role of conservation zoning rules established as whether it is steadfastness in character-forming social control in the community around it. Furthermore, it dismantles the question of whether the role of the marine park agencies disseminating the community's knowledge could be enhanced through the role of local leaders or administrators agent in Semporna area.

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