

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLEXITY AROUND LOCALLY MANAGED MARINE AREA: A SITUATION ANALYSIS OF 'THE BAJAU' SEA ORIENTED COMMUNITIES IN WAKATOBI

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Abstract

The complexity of institutional issues that cross sectors and borders in natural resource management determines how a community entity might persist and endure. In Bajau communities, institutional supports are portrayed as impediments to carrying out their sea-oriented cultural activities. This research explores how institutional support intersects with Bajau community activities in a locally managed marine area. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted in the Wakatobi Regency of Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, to generate descriptive data into portrayals of institutional supports and impediments. However, the Bajau cultural governance system shows signs of degradation due to several factors. The complex customary system and multi-scale governance that overlap in the marine and coastal areas of Wakatobi dissuade the Bajau from consenting to the implementation of locally managed marine areas. Instead of migrating or preserving their customary system, the Bajau encounter contemporary challenges within intercultural conflicts, rapid population growth, stigmatisation, and acculturation. Consequently, new ways of theorising about Bajau indigeneity, communal property rights, local knowledge recognition, and new policies for settling the intricacy of institutional and cultural interrelations are urgently needed.

Keywords: Institutional complexity; Bajau; Locally Managed Marine Area; Customary Governance; Coastal Management; Local knowledge; Wakatobi

Introduction

The existence of institutional systems in a community is fundamental. Institutions persist in strengthening community identity, ranging from indigenous communities to formal organisations. As complex management systems, institutions strengthen sustainable livelihood practises such as coastal management and socio-ecological efforts [1]. They empower customary regulations, government policies, community participation, or policy hubs to integrate coastal development activities. Institutions align stakeholders to pursue goals such as strengthening conservation [2], biodiversity protection [3], fisheries [4, 5], social networks [6],

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co-management [7], climate change adaptation [8], community capacity-building [9, 10], and other socio-ecological systems [11]. In the context of indigenous peoples, customary institutions are embedded in social relations and cultural norms and are evidence of the enormity of human-nature relations [12]. For example, in Indonesia, the practise of *Sasi* in Maluku and Papua features the *Petuanan* customary institution system [13, 14]. *Sasi* and its *Petuanan* protect biodiversity, sacred areas, or marine closure areas as a source of communal economy. This practise is associated with community-based conservation practises and sustainable marine resource management.

Indonesia is an archipelagic country that has implemented community-based fisheries management and has been strengthening its institutions since the end of the New Order era around the 1990s [15, 16]. Currently, there are two management systems in Indonesia based on institutional strengthening that are considered appropriate and sustainable coastal customary systems: the Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) and *Masyarakat Hukum Adat* (MHA), or 'customary law communities'. LMMA¹ focuses on strengthening customary-based institutions in Maluku and Papua. In LMMAs, social, ecological, and cultural applications are integrated into customarily-based programmes at the village level [17, 18]. MHA² is the scheme under the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Republic of Indonesia to grant management rights and marine access in order to strengthen customary institutions and grant legal acknowledgment from the regency.

The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 18B, Paragraph 2, concerning the construction of customary law communities, states the important role of the customary institution in the social-cultural system. Nowadays, institutional strengthening has been implemented in customary communities in coastal areas and small islands, not only with customary institutions but also as co-management systems among organisations and customary communities. In accordance with the definition of coastal communities as stated by Law No. 1/2014 about the management of coastal and small island areas, coastal communities in Indonesia fall into three categories: MHA, *Masyarakat Tradisional* (traditional communities), and *Masyarakat Lokal* (local communities). MHA is the highest communal right granted, which is acknowledged by the regent's regulation. Traditional communities are defined as Indonesian coastal communities that sail marine borders under specific international law among neighbouring countries. Lastly, local communities are all coastal communities in Indonesia that are not entirely dependent on coastal and marine resources. However, this categorization scheme neglects the communities of maritime-oriented people, such as the Bajau.

The Bajau are a culturally sea-oriented people who were formerly marine nomads and are now scattered throughout the archipelago, with communities established on lands now claimed by the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia [19]. The complexity of the Bajau genomic profile furnishes a remarkable reflection of their history, intervened by both migratory and local admixture events, and emphasizes their unique lifestyle in its adaptations across multiple geographical scales [20]. One similarity across communities is that the spleen size of Bajau people is larger than that of non-Bajau people, an adaptation to the genomic process resulting from their diving habits as marine people [21]. Recent sedentarization efforts by nation-states have given rise to complex and sometimes discordant social relations due to the stigmatisation of the Bajau people as a migrant community. This stigma constructed by land-based community groups often leads to the denial of rights and mitigates access to cultural strengthening efforts by the government. The Bajau culture and traditional ecological

¹Despite coastal and marine management practises, LMMA also refers to a network of practises in Asia-Pacific islands. Indonesia-LMMA (ILMMA) works in the coastal communities in the eastern part (Maluku Islands and Papua).

²The term MHA was introduced in basic agrarian law in Indonesia (Article 3 Law No. 3/1960), which refers to indigenous community term, then adopted and executed as a development programme and customary recognition by several ministries, including the use of MHA for coastal and small island communities under the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Republic of Indonesia.

knowledge have also been neglected in planning and implementing governmental development plans. For such efforts to be successful, the adaptive capacity and keen maritime knowledge of the Bajau must be included in all decision-making processes. Also, the Bajau socio-ecological system and LMMA require extensive analysis and documentation.

The rapidly growing international conservation movement imparts its agenda upon socially, culturally, economically, and politically marginalised maritime ethnic groups in Southeast Asia, such as Bajau [22]. This mainstreamed conservation phenomenon is shown in the situation of the Bajau people in Wakatobi National Park (WNP), a national marine protected area located in the Wakatobi Regency of Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. Settled Bajau communities are not deeply engaged in coastal management activities in the WNP. As maritime foraging people, Bajau communities have no ancestral domains on land. The stereotype of the Bajau as a migrant community of landless people who do not possess communal assets has impacted their attitude and perspective on coastal and marine area management. The Bajau still believe acknowledging specific marine areas as sacred is an appropriate and sufficient coastal management system. Identification of sacred ecology, co-management of communal assets, and the strengthening of socio-ecological systems and institutions are noteworthy steps that have been taken to fortify sustainable coastal management practises [23-25]. However, this understanding has not yet been integrated into WNP as a customary-based conservation area in accordance with the Bajau traditional ecological knowledge system.

Bajau communities in Wakatobi Regency

Wakatobi is an acronym for the four main islands—Wangi-wangi, Kaledupa, Tomia, and Binongko—and in terms of sustainable coastal management for customary communities, Wakatobi has unique cultural assets. Wakatobi represents a beautiful archipelago in Indonesia with rich maritime culture and underwater tourism potential. The ethnically diverse human population has made the area a learning laboratory in domains such as fisheries, conservation, and maritime cultures. Wakatobi is in the coral triangle and was recognised as having high biodiversity values in Indonesia and regional countries. In 2002, Wakatobi was established as a marine national park by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry Republic of Indonesia through Minister of Forestry Decision No. SK.7651/Kpts-II/2002. In 2012, Wakatobi was nominated as a UNESCO biosphere reserve. Since then, the proliferation of local, national, and international NGOs in Wakatobi has been extensive, with numerous marine-based development programmes setting up each year. The Wakatobi government has declared their development priority to be community-based tourism, which is evident from the increasing number of tourism actors such as culinary and hospitality businesses, tour operators, and other such actors. However, the fisheries sector is also a significant source of income for Wakatobi residents, 94% of whom work in small-scale fisheries, especially deep-sea and coastal capture fisheries [26]. These abundant resources are not aligned with coastal community initiatives' inclusivity, acknowledgment, and cultural protection efforts, especially for groups like the Bajau.

The Bajau arrived in Wakatobi waters around the late 18th century. Their first village was Mantigola, on Kaledupa Island, then known as the Bajau Mantigola group. They initially sailed from South Sulawesi and stopped at Kaledupa's atoll for fish and other marine resources. Over time, due to good catches, they established a floating village on the west coast of Kaledupa Island. This location is close to the atoll and proximal to the mainland, which facilitates easy bartering of their catch for other goods. In 1957, a conflict occurred between the Kaledupa people and the Bajau communities. The Bajau did not fight back because they realised their position as migrant sea people. The conflict resulted from the Kaledupa people assuming the Bajau people were helping a separatist movement named *Darul Islam / Tentara Islam Indonesia* (DI/TII), or the Islamic Armed Force of Indonesia. The Bajau village in Mantigola was burned, and the mainland Kaledupa people demolished their stilt houses. After this conflict, the Bajau people migrated to other locations to survive and protect themselves

from islander intimidation. They sailed the nearby seas to find a new place to live, and some people migrated to other Bajau villages across the sea. After 1963, when the situation was safer, some Bajau people returned to Mantigola, but others settled in new villages such as Sampela, Lohoa, Lamanggau, and Mola. This incident imparts a dark story about the relationship between Bajau and mainland communities, especially on Kaledupa Island.

As a group whose life and culture are oriented to the sea, 90% of the Bajau people in Wakatobi are dependent on marine livelihoods. The other 10% work in the informal, government, or private sectors. Bajau groups in Wakatobi are spread over five villages: Mola, Sampela, Lohoa, Mantigola, and Lamanggau (Fig. 1). As of October 2021, the total population of the Bajau community in Wakatobi Regency is 11,939 people, or 23% of the Wakatobi Regency population. Surprisingly, the number is almost five times higher than identified in previous research works, up from 5% in 2004 [27] and 10% in 2007 [28]. The most densely populated community is Mola on Wangi-wangi Island. The least populated is Lohoa on Kaledupa Island. Currently, the Wakatobi Bajau group does not have a special Bajau customary organisation system. Bajau communities fully adhere to the state village administrative system. There is a customary organisation called *Kekar Bajo (Kerukunan Keluarga Bajo)* or the Bajau Kinship Association, but this organisation does not serve as a customary institution.

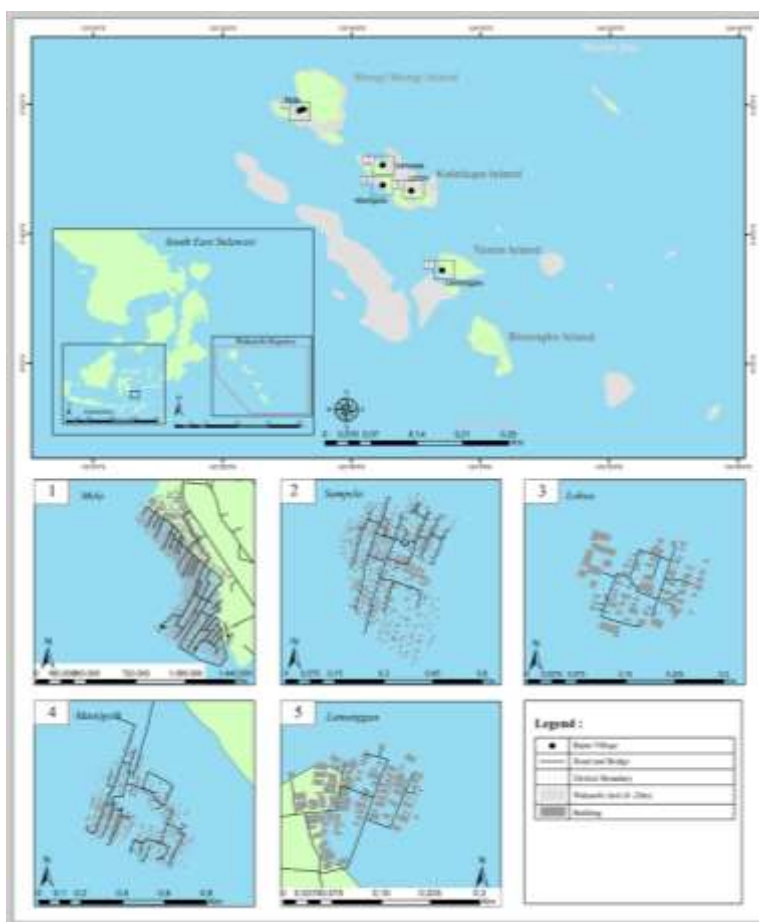


Fig. 1. Bajau Villages in Wakatobi Regency: 1. Bajau Mola village in South Wangi-wangi Sub-district, 2. Bajau Sampela village in Kaledupa Sub-district, 3. Bajau Lohoa village in South Kaledupa Sub-district, 3. Bajau Mantigola in Kaledupa Sub-district; 5. Bajau Lamanggau village in Tomia Sub-district

In the past, the Bajau had a robust customary system and maintained it wisely. The *Punggawa* Bajau, as the leader of the group, served as the customary leader who regulated the internal affairs of Bajau cultural systems. This system has been gradually degraded since the 1980s by efforts to homogenise the state administration system during the New Order era in Indonesia. The overtaking of villages and sub-district systems by military task forces caused customary practises and systems to evaporate. Religiosity also contributed to the weakening of the Bajau customary system in Wakatobi. The terms *Islam Bagai* (Islam including non-Bajau beliefs) and *Islam Sama* (Islam including only Bajau beliefs) were hotly debated in that regime [29]. By the 1980s, customary practises and beliefs contrary to religious law had to be carried out clandestinely. The Indonesian military task force's community assistance programme also intervened in customary practises in the Bajau communities in Southeast Sulawesi Province.

Memories of conflicts leave different cultural and social relations in every Bajau village in Wakatobi. For example, in Bajau Mola, the customary neighbourhood community, Sara Mandati, pushes for their existence and social dynamics to be more complex. The Bajau people are facing cultural degradation because they are seen as a second-class group under the rule of the Sara Mandati customary institution. Problems they face due to this status include assignment to housing locations in coastal border areas and graveyards, as well as marginalisation during elections of regional heads. Threats and discrimination are still observable in the social relations between these two customary groups.

On the one hand, transactional relations and mutualism symbioses are more substantial due to consumption and production growth and the change in socio-economic patterns in the Bajau community. Mola plays a vital role in fisheries trading in the Wakatobi regency because it is the main fishing centre. Also, on the islands of Kaledupa and Tomia, Bajau villages play similarly essential roles. Another example of intercultural relations emerges from the Bajau community in Lamangau, on the island of Tolandono, Tomia. This group has adopted several local customary systems, ranging from daily language use to cultural ceremonies and even intermarriage between the Bajau and the Tomia people. The asset-oriented land mindset has also observably influenced the Bajau Lamangau people.

On Kaledupa Island, there are three Bajau communities. Every location has different relationships with islanders. The Sampela Bajau is oriented towards economic and transactional relationships and is involved in tourism and research activities. In Mantigola, the relationship between assets and customs has been harmonised with islanders. As the oldest Bajau village, this group has greater access to the mainland and is less influenced by the politics of islanders. They are now much more highly regarded, as they are gradually starting to fill important positions in land-based village administrations. Mantigola thoroughly nourishes the customary system and practise of Bajau life, which still depends on marine resources and migratory patterns or transhumance activities. Most of the Mantigola Bajau's livelihoods are tied to the Wakatobi atoll, which they extensively fish during the calm season (June to November). Finally, the Lohoa Bajau, as the most conventional Bajau group, has complete dependence on self-determination from the village head from mainland Kaledupa. The intercultural relationship in Bajau Lohoa has led to the adoption of a mixed customary system.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was used in this study to explore the institutional complexities of the Bajau in coastal area management. The multi-sited ethnographic method was conducted through participant observation in the five Bajau villages of Wakatobi between October 2020 and October 2021, providing new spheres of interdisciplinary method and giving a deeper understanding of the growing issues [30, 31]. Daily activities were observed and written down in ethnographic notes. Those recordings and field notes were periodically evaluated and analysed, with attention paid to extended issues and complexities that emerged during the observation. This method also supports other data by offering perspective on the Bajau community's activities by

generating corpus data from which themes can be drawn for further discussion in this research. This method is advantageous for observing daily activities in Bajau communities as well as their attitudes and perspectives with regard to other institutional systems and supports. Also, this method emphasises customary governance in the WNP and deliberations between local knowledge and the dual goals of biodiversity and conservation [32].

The second qualitative method utilised was semi-structured interviews conducted from January to December 2021. This method was intended to identify the interactions and perspectives of the non-Bajau communities and LMMAs in the Wakatobi regency. The semi-structured interviews followed a predetermined list of interview questions (Table 1), which were posed to representatives of multi-level government organisations, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), customary institutions, Civil Society Organizations (CSO), academia, and the private sector. Interviews (n = 47) generated corpus data about issues, activities, and capacities (interest and influence) that were not documented via participant observations. A purposive sampling method was used to select informants.

Table 1. Thematic questions for semi-structured interviews

Group	Indicator Questions	Outcomes
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development programmes/projects related to the Bajau • Perspectives on the Bajau coastal management and local knowledge • Challenges and Opportunities working with the Bajau • Future directions of the Bajau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Interest and Influence • Interrelation with the Bajau governance system • Local to formal management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Government Organization • Civil Society Organization • Private Sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development programmes/projects related to the Bajau • Perspectives on the Bajau coastal management and local knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Interest and Influence • Interrelation with the Bajau governance system
Customary communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social relations with the Bajau • Perspectives on the Bajau coastal management and local knowledge • Future of Bajau communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bajau cultural system • Interrelation with the Bajau governance system • Local to formal management
Academia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspectives on the Bajau coastal management and local knowledge • Challenges and Opportunities working with the Bajau • Sustainable future for the Bajau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interrelation with the Bajau governance system • Local to formal management

Interview data were theme-coded and scored by stakeholder groups, and then mapped with regard to LMMA interest and influence. Stakeholder mapping is a participatory social research tool that documents and feeds back into a defined stakeholder's values, interests, attitudes, and aspirations [33]. It encourages mutual understanding and enhances negotiation and deliberation over conflicts of interest in institutions. For example, in the form of an environmental conflict management model, the stakeholder mapping method assists in negotiating solutions, building mutual trust around areas of common interest, and forging a mutually beneficial partnership [34]. The influence and interest scales are placed on the x and y axes from zero (score 1) to high (score 5) participation (Table 2). The data obtained from participant observation and interviews were combined by overlaying issues from the grassroots level with issues of institutions working with Bajau LMMAs, and then scored by dividing qualitative data into several thematic categories, following the nature of grounded theory [35]. The combined data was validated using data triangulation techniques to reduce the information

bias gap, especially in transcribing data from interviews. Finally, the data output was depicted in a quadrant matrix.

Table 2. Measurement of scores on the role of interests and stakeholder influences

Score	Interest	Influence
5	Has high interest in Bajau LMMA	Has high influence on Bajau LMMA
4	Has moderate interest in Bajau LMMA	Has moderate influence on Bajau LMMA
3	Has low interest in Bajau LMMA	Has low influence on Bajau LMMA
2	Lack of interest in Bajau LMMA	Has very low influence on Bajau LMMA
1	Has no interest in Bajau LMMA	Has no influence on Bajau LMMA

Adapted from [36]

Results and discussions

The Indonesian government is committed to recognising customary practises and effecting sustainable development through the implementation of progressive fisheries management. Therefore, capacity building in coastal communities through institutional approaches aligns with Indonesia’s ambitions. Hereditary practises in coastal and small island areas are promoted as the most vital bargaining point in most sustainability forums. On the implementation side, however, the need to strengthen customary institutions and other institutional supports has not yet coincided with customary marine practises. The localities and cultural contexts of custom-based coastal resource management cannot be generalised into one practise. There is a role for customary governance, socio-ecological activities, and institutional complexities [37]. Social construction, stereotyping, and unclear nomenclature in the laws are tremendous problems for such sea-oriented people.

The Bajau community, with its uniqueness and socio-cultural problems, faces uncertainty when engaging with the customary institutions and influences of institutional support in implementing LMMA. At least three driving factors impact this complexity in the Wakatobi Regency. For one, the Bajau do not have tenuous access to LMMAs either on the coast or in the marine area in Wakatobi. Practically speaking, the Bajau communities need access to land even though their livelihood largely depends on the sea as an ancestral domain. However, the concept of understanding agrarian-based customary areas has consequences for their conceptions of managing coastal and marine areas. The sea as a common resource cannot be granted individually or communally to a certain community. Governments have claimed the right to own the marine areas, and in exceptional cases, governments grant customary communities’ access and management rights over areas based on their customary governance (refers to MHA). The Bajau, as maritime people, have not yet been provided by governments with any specific recognition to govern their rights in LMMAs. Both the national and sub-national governments have overlooked the substance and urgency of this condition. In this instance, the most suitable approach is for Bajau groups to redefine themselves, strengthen their self-determination efforts, and formally seek communal and intellectual property rights. Countries with coastal indigenous peoples have widely adopted this concept [38, 39].

Next is the issue of the Bajau governance system, which is no longer functioning. The Bajau have now fully adopted Indonesia’s governance system without incorporating their customary system, even though Indonesia technically grants customary communities the right to practise their governance systems as long as they do not contradict the 1945 constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and other relevant laws. As a result of adopting Indonesian governance schemes, the Bajau customary system was replaced by dominant social norms in their settlements. In Wakatobi, the Bajau communities, who are considered migrants, are living together with customary communities. The dominant customary communities near Bajau settlements have successfully enforced their customary institutions. Since 2017, the Wakatobi government has acknowledged four MHAs and their institutions. This socially iniquitous

relationship has indirectly influenced the identity of Bajau communities. The cultural influence of customary communities on the Wakatobi islands impacts the rapid acculturation and assimilation of the Bajau communities. As the dominant group has always controlled governance systems and the Bajau have not been represented at the executive and legislative levels, the concept of development in Wakatobi has been decided through a land-oriented worldview.

Multiple authorities are active in coastal area management in the Wakatobi, including the WNP authority, the Wakatobi Regency government, and customary communities. This activity is the third focus of this research. The interests of these three institutions have further cornered Bajau communities. It is not only relevant to Bajau people accessing LMMAs but also to the existence and continuation of their communal customary systems and institutions. The WNP authority, as a vertical government institution, has the intention and motivation to preserve the coastal and marine areas by way of conservation and other socio-ecological schemes. The Wakatobi Regency government has the responsibility and role as the local government to regulate regional policies for marine areas and coastal communities. Also, they coordinate with the marine zone managed by the Provincial Government of Southeast Sulawesi. MHAs and other customary communities have access to customary-based coastal areas and are acknowledged by the Regent's decree. In the case of Wakatobi, the five Bajau settlement areas are managed by MHA and other customary communities. Iniquitous power distribution is clearly visible in this context, as the Bajau are always considered outsiders, and their customary communities are denied even the opportunity to consent to conservation efforts that affect them.

Stakeholders' interests and influences

An analysis of interviews with various stakeholders provides a broader picture of the situation described above. Informants represented governments (28%), NGOs (10%), customary institutions (17%), CSOs (19%), academia (13%), and the private sector (13%). Stakeholders provided a homogeneous view of the existence of the Bajau and LMMAs in Wakatobi. Table 3 lists stakeholders related to LMMA issues in the Wakatobi Regency and their relationship to Bajau communities. This stakeholder mapping made it clear that the views of the Bajau people were consistent with the institutional support being provided. Institutions that have an important role include the WNP authority, the Regency Government, and customary communities. Other institutions showing interest based on their organisation's mission and programmes have also been included in Table 3 and Figure 2.

Table 3. Stakeholders related to coastal and marine areas management in Wakatobi and with Bajau communities

Institution	Actor	Abbreviation	Motivation	Working Scopes
Government	Wakatobi National Park Authority	WNP	Zonation Biodiversity and marine conservation Marine sustainable recourse Other Social-ecological Issues	Wakatobi
	Wakatobi Local Government	KAB	Sustainable Development	Wakatobi
	Provincial Government	PRV	Zoning plan of coastal areas and small Islands (RZWP3K) Fisheries facilitator	Wakatobi
	Department of Marine and Fisheries of Wakatobi	DKP	Community welfare Capture and aquaculture fisheries MHA and coastal customary communities	Wakatobi
	Regional Development Planning, Investment,	BPD	Coastal planning and development	Wakatobi

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	Research, and Development Agency of Wakatobi			
	Department of Tourism and Creative Economy of Wakatobi	DPR	Coastal and marine tourism	Wakatobi
	Environmental Agency of Wakatobi	DLH	Solid waste management Environmental health	Wakatobi
	Public Works and Settlement Office of Wakatobi	DPU	Coastal facilities and construction	Wakatobi
	Water and Air Police Corps	ART	Security	Wakatobi
	Indonesian Navy	TNI	Security	Wakatobi
	Agrarian and Land Planning Office of Wakatobi	ATR	Agrarian Reforms Task Force for coastal and small island areas (vertical instruction from Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning of the Republic Indonesia)	Wakatobi
Non-Government Organization	Worldwide Fund for Nature	WWF	Community-based management	Binongko Kaledupa Wangi-wangi
	<i>Yayasan Konservasi Alam Nusantara</i> or The Nature Conservancy	YKN	Community-based management	Kaledupa Tomia
	Rare Indonesia	RAR	Community-based management	Wangi-wangi Kaledupa Binongko
	Sustour	STR	Community-based tourism	Kaledupa
	Operation Wallacea	OPW	Research experience and collaboration	Kaledupa
Customary Institutions	MHA Kadiye Liya	MKL	Managed and accessed customary areas	Wangi-wangi
	MHA Barata Kahedupa	MBK	Managed and accessed customary areas	Kaledupa
	MHA Kawati Tomia	MKT	Managed and accessed customary areas	Tomia
	MHA Sara Sarano Wali	MSW	Managed and accessed customary areas	Binongko
	Sara Mandati	MSM	Managed and accessed customary areas	Wangi-wangi
	Sara Kapota	MSK	Managed and accessed customary areas	Wangi-wangi
	Sara Vance	MSV	Managed and accessed customary areas	Wangi-wangi
	Bonto Popalia	MBP	Managed and accessed customary areas	Binongko
	Joe Palihidu	MJP	Managed and accessed customary areas	Binongko
Community Social Organization	Kekar Bajau	MKB	Bajau customary organization	Wakatobi
	Komenangi	KMN	Island forum: Coastal issues in Wangi-wangi	Wangi-wangi
	Forkani	FKN	Island forum: Coastal issues in Kaledupa	Kaledupa
	Komunto	KMT	Island forum: Coastal issues in Tomia	Tomia

	Foneb	FNB	Island forum: Coastal issues in Binongko	Binongko
	Posaasa Liya	PSA	Small-scale fisheries in Liya	Wangi-wangi
	Lepa Mola	LPM	Bajau community-based tourism	Wangi-wangi
	Kamelia	KML	Environmental education	Wakatobi
	Padakawang Sama	PWS	Bajau conservation group	Kaledupa
	Conservation Group Horuo Mantigola	CHM	Bajau conservation group	Kaledupa
	Padakauang Sama Mola	PDS	Bajau conservation group	Wangi-wangi
Academia	Halu Oleo University Wakatobi	HOU	Research, development, and policy	Wakatobi
	Community College for Marine and Fisheries	AKP	Research, development, and policy	Wakatobi
	Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology and Business of Wakatobi	IMB	Research, development, and policy	Wakatobi
	Visiting Researchers	VTR	Conducting research to institutions need	Wakatobi
	Wakatobi Dive Resort	WDR	Tourism and cultural visit to Bajau Lamanggau	Tomia
Private	Tour operators	TOP	Tourism to all Bajau villages	Wakatobi
	Pulau Mas	PMS	Marine Product Distributors	Wangi-wangi Tomia
	Where There Be Dragons	WTD	Cultural Tourism in Bajau Sampela	Kaledupa
	Aruna Jaya Nuswantara	ARN	Marine Product Distributors	Wangi-wangi

Institutional support should notably play a role in community capacity-building, and outreach in Wakatobi includes addressing customary coastal communities' protection, meeting essential community needs, strengthening the cultural identity, and assisting with other socio-cultural issues. One of the unsolved issues is institutional support for sea-oriented community groups such as the Bajau people regarding human security issues and intellectual property rights such as LMMAs. Figure 2 shows the relationship between institutions that exist in Wakatobi and their intersections with LMMAs in the Bajau communities.

Government. The government of Wakatobi Regency has an influential role in many, if not all, of these relationships. There is no observable volition or capability to strengthen the Bajau LMMA concept. The research found that the Wakatobi development plan concentrates on customary law communities, or MHAs, that received lawful recognition. The Wakatobi government has limited power in zoning and managing marine areas, as Law No. 23/2014 on regional governments stipulates that the maximum limit of the provincial sea area is 12 nautical miles, while the limit for district or city marine areas has a maximum of four nautical miles. This division of tasks in marine area management seems to be an obstacle for the local government to act on issues occurring in marine areas, including those of coastal communities, especially sea-oriented people. The government offices of the Wakatobi Regency do not have enough power to play a role in coastal management because they must follow instructions specified in regional development plans and according to the Regent's political agenda. The Wakatobi government did issue Regent's Regulation No. 62/2020 on sustainable small-scale fisheries, but it only focuses on involving MHAs, not the Bajau communities. This regulation

normalises the term ‘small-scale fisheries’ to refer to the Bajau rather than recognising them as Bajau customary communities. Approximately 80% of Bajau people work as small-scale fishermen in Wakatobi. Then, marine police and the navy lack interest in strengthening Bajau LMMAs because their focus is on maritime security and other protection issues.

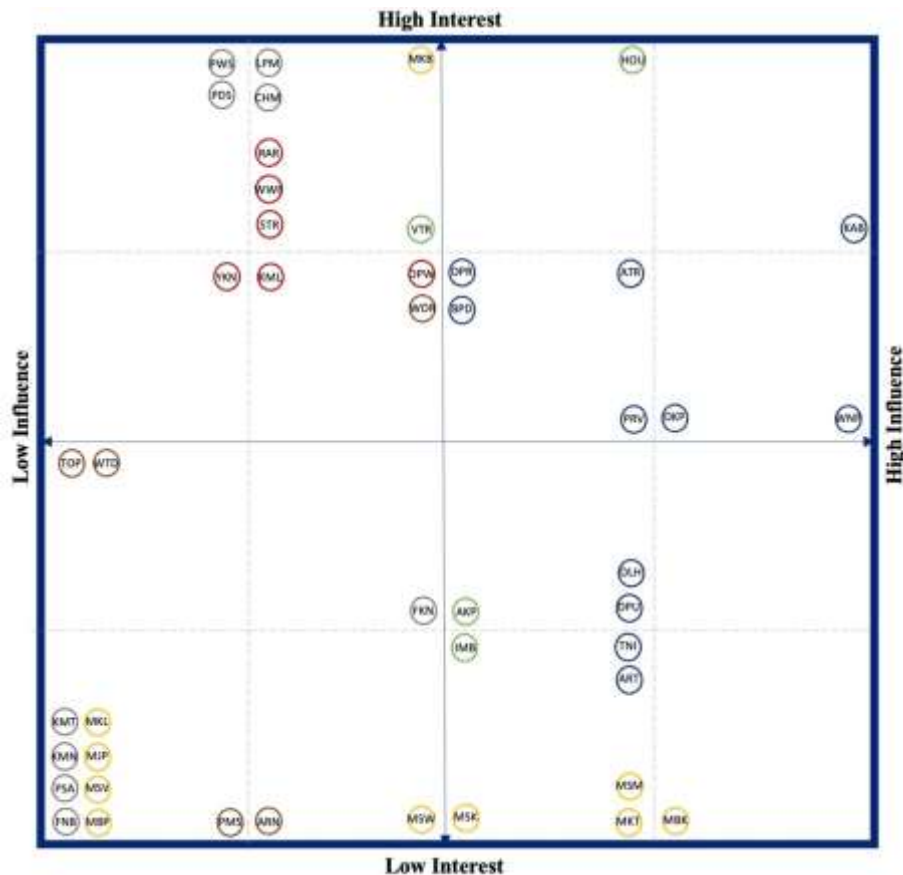


Fig. 2. Stakeholder mapping of Institutional support for Bajau LMMAs Colour grouping: government (blue), NGOs (red), CSOs (grey), customary institutions (yellow), academia (green), and private (brown)

The next issue has to do with the WNP authority that regulates marine protected areas and the biodiversity preservation agenda under the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia. The Wakatobi Regency, which consists of small islands and marine areas, is nationally regulated by the Ministry, focusing on forests and the environment but not specifically on marine habitats. However, the WNP authority has, as part of its agenda, a responsibility to protect marine ecology, which gives it oversight of the marine-oriented Bajau communities. The mutual distrust between the WNP authorities and the Bajau communities is readily apparent [27]. The Bajau are presumed to be the main perpetrators of destructive fishing in Wakatobi, and indeed, this research discovered that illegal fishing methods such as bomb fishing and chemical poisoning are still practised in all five Bajau communities in Wakatobi. However, it is practised not only by the Bajau people but also by fishers from the mainland and illegal fishers from outside of Wakatobi. Multi-cultural communities in Wakatobi well manage the ‘underground’ and illegal market chains. Unfortunately, there is no practical solution to this destructive fishing problem in Wakatobi. The intimidating approach by the WNP authority towards the Bajau does not educate them about the detriments of such destructive fishing

methods; it only exacerbates their fear when going out to sea. Fortunately, this relationship is getting better since the WNP authority carried out a collaborative programme for mangrove plantations on Kaledupa Island in October 2020, which continues today [40]. The WNP authority appointed the Bajau villages of Sampela, Mantigola, and Lohoa as programme implementors. Although it is still regarded as insufficient compensation, this mangrove plantation programme has reconstructed the mindset, perspective, and attitude of the Bajau communities towards the WNP authority.

Non-Government Organisation. The prominent role of NGOs is to establish community-based development programmes. As a result of NGO initiatives, the Bajau have greater access to the economic system, capacity building, knowledge co-creation processes, and networking opportunities. Nevertheless, as institutions that work under a strict mandate, the programmes are led by institutional missions that leave the root causes of Bajau community problems unresolved. Initially, NGO missions were more about marine conservation and protection, but their efforts increasingly extend into issues of micro-economics, tourism, and the protection of customary coastal communities. All NGO groups have displayed a commendable interest in the issue of Bajau LMMAs, building up their community-based development and overtly supporting alternatives to mainstream development schemes. This interest includes strengthening customary institutions that understand the necessity for sustainable coastal resource development. According to NGOs, the current development plan of the Wakatobi Regency does not target issues of substance but only those of importance to the Regent. Hence, they argue that the Wakatobi Government should prioritise the concept of Bajau LMMAs in the form of formal recognition or localised agenda setting. NGOs would then align their institutional interests with such agendas. The challenge faced by NGOs is that the issues deemed important sometimes overlap with other organizations' interests, politics, and social relations. The Wakatobi Government is not very accommodating as the coordinating centre for NGOs and does not actively assist in aligning other institutions' agendas for the coastal and marine development plans.

Customary Institution. Wakatobi is one of Indonesia's regencies with multifarious coastal community categories, such as MHA, customary communities, and local communities, and yet sea-oriented groups such as the Bajau still fall outside of this categorization scheme. Land-based customary communities play prominent roles in Wakatobi because these customary communities have been inhabiting the land and waters of Wakatobi since before the existence of the state system. Four customary communities have obtained legal rights to manage coastal areas and practise customary institutions from the Wakatobi government: MKL, MBK, MKT, and MSW. Five more customary communities are preparing to be granted formal recognition as MHAs: MSM, MSV, MSK, MBP, and MJP. All of these customary communities have no interest in Bajau LMMAs. They are still not considering the Bajau as one of the Wakatobi customary communities. In this context, intercultural issues generate competition, conflict, marginalisation, and dominance. The customary institutions of MHA Barata Kahedupa (MBK), MHA Kawati Tomia (MKT), and Sara Mandati (MSM) are very vocally opposed to accommodating the Bajau communities in their LMMA. These three customary communities have a more assertive role than the Bajau communities in terms of power relations. One predictable cause of future conflict is the housing expansion area and the rapid population growth in the Bajau communities, especially in Mola and in relation to its MSM institution on Wangi-wangi Island. The need for settlement areas and the competition for common resources in the marine ecosystem and customary sacred areas will be multiplied.

Civil Society Organization. This institutional group is a strong contender for articulating customary issues of small-scale fisheries in the Wakatobi regency. They utilise a grounded theory and take note of community-based initiatives that the government rarely notices. They are capable of working with cooperation partners on projects and strengthening customary-based fisheries management and conservation practises with support from donors. The high-

influence groups are the fishing forums on each island (KMN, FKN, KMT, and FNB). When it comes to small-scale fisheries and community-based practises, the programmes initiated by CSOs are always the pledge programmes in the Wakatobi Regency. One of the CSOs with many activities, donors, tidy management systems, and strong human resources is *Kahedupa Toudani Forum* (FKN). The FKN has the vision to strengthen community sovereignty in sustainable natural resource management based on local knowledge in Wakatobi. FKN used to coordinate some activities with Bajau Sampela on fishery data and management, but these are no longer being facilitated. Since 2022, FKN has been working with Bajau Lohoa for octopus's project. The other CSOs have low intentions and interest in the Bajau LMMAs.

This study identified two main reasons for this complexity. The first is the limited human resources and the priority of working in customary communities on mainland Wakatobi. The inclusion of Bajau people as representatives in these CSOs was not observed. Secondly, in the Wakatobi government's lens, more effort and time are needed to work with Bajau communities due to the lack of existing data about their maritime culture and customary practises. The social dynamics of land-based customary communities are complicated but easier to manage than those of the Bajau community, which is even more complex. In the community-based management scheme, the communities targeted by donors have communal rights and a clear institutional governance system in coastal and marine management. The institutional governance of Bajau communities has been degraded over time and does not have ancestral domains in the agrarian or land-based sense. As a high-interest group, there are several CSOs whose members are all Bajau people. Outsider institutions created four CSOs (LPM, PWS, CHM, and PDS) in the form of programme partners with full legal status: for example, the mangrove conservation programme with PWS and CHM was formed by the WNP authority; the joint fisheries access management programme with PDS was introduced by WWF and activated by RAR; and the Bajau cultural tourism development programme with LPM as an accelerator was created by the Wakatobi Government and supported by various community social responsibility programmes.

Academia. Wakatobi has been the object of research for decades. Wakatobi exoticism has attracted many national and international institutions and researchers to learn from its abundant natural and cultural resources. One of the most popular research topics is the Bajau community. Research related to the Bajau way of life from a socio-cultural, economic, and environmental perspective has been widely published in internet databases. Nevertheless, Wakatobi had not referenced those research results to inform local development. In supporting the concept and practises of Bajau LMMAs, academic institutions are essential in researching and offering policy recommendations to decision-makers in the Wakatobi Regency. This function has not worked well for the Bajau LMMAs issue because of institutions' interests and priorities, government support, research experiences and funds, and other internal institutional matters. One of the foremost universities in Southeast Sulawesi Province is Halu Oleo University (HOU). HOU actively encourages their lecturers and students to research Bajau issues across the province and serves as the entrance for visiting researchers (VTR). This academic institution holds a position of high interest and influence. Through this institution, the strengthening of Bajau LMMAs is closely managed. HOU is the leading promoter in this stakeholder mapping. Meanwhile, local Wakatobi universities such as Wakatobi Community College for Marine and Fisheries (AKP) and Muhammadiyah Institute of Technology and Business of Wakatobi (IMB) have no direct research or programmes related to Bajau communities or coastal management issues at this time.

Private sector. This institution has two categories, fishing businesses and tourism enterprises. The first group is buyers such as Aruna Jaya Nuswantara (ARN) and Pulau Mas (PMS), and their core business is buying fishery products from Bajau communities. This group has no direct interest in Bajau LMMAs but influences the marketing chain and the economic system of the Bajau communities in Wakatobi. Moreover, another economic control group for

the Bajau communities, namely fishing coordinators or buyers, is not included in this analysis. This informal actor engages in patron-client relations with the Bajau and sometimes creates illegal and overfishing activities in the market chain. Tour operators (TOP) and Where There Be Dragons (WTD) are interested in the tourism sector but do not have power over Bajau LMMAs. This interest describes the need for socio-cultural and underwater tourism such as scuba diving, free diving, and snorkelling. WTD is run by an organiser from Bajau Sampela, partnering with an international agency. Their core business provides alternative and mainstream travel and tourism opportunities for summer and gap year programmes in developing countries. Their guests are foreigners from developed countries who are offered a living experience with a foster family in Bajau Sampela for a couple of weeks. The TOP core business offers cultural tourism opportunities such as sightseeing in Bajau villages. The largest enterprise in this group is Wakatobi Dive Resort (WDR), a provider of hospitality services and a pioneer of the luxury eco-tourism concept that has been active in Wakatobi since 1993. This luxury resort company has sought the permanent closure of marine areas to form a marine protected area along the seashore over one kilometre around the resort area for tourism purposes. Lamanggau Bajau neighbours WDR on the small island named Tolandono Island, next to the main island of Tomia. WDR provided compensation in the form of employment, electricity payments, and access to clean water to the surrounding communities on that island. The community is responsible for protecting that area from all activities because it is exclusively for WDR guests. The interest of WDR in the Bajau LMMAs is to benefit from tourism.

Bajau cultural system

From the era of kingdoms through colonialism to independence, Indonesia's long historical record has given rise to several anti-state separatist movements. Since the era of globalisation, however, the customary system of Indonesia has been utilised to incorporate such groups. Some have survived and acculturated, and in so doing, some have lost their traditional systems. Maritime culture is a traditional system that is no longer perceptible. Bajau communities have nearly entirely lost this customary maritime system [41]. Their customary system was formerly known as *Kepunggawaan* and was a lordship scheme. This system and its institutions were lost after the last *Punggawa*, or leader of Mantigola, named *Mbok Buyung Rabbana* in the 1980s. This customary institution had social, government, and legal duties, including managing ideologies, social norms, conflict resolution, marine guards, and other customary rules oriented to the sea. The Bajau customary system in Wakatobi is not currently practised. Mantigola Bajau, as the oldest Bajau group in Wakatobi, still partially adheres to this customary system. If sorting Bajau cultural identity based on customary practises from the strongest to the weakest, the order would be Mantigola, Mola, Sampela, Lohoa, and Lamanggau. Undoubtedly, the socio-economic changes indicate the complexity and closeness of the Bajau, their forced adaptation to a formal system, and the resultant loss of Bajau cultural power due to being subordinated to the superstructure of land-based society.

The Bajau customary system did, in some respects, survive by undergoing a cultural transformation. Currently, the term *Punggawa* is only used in group fishing systems such as *Lamba* or *Ambai* gear (net fishing). The differentiation of roles in these groups is now performed as a *Punggawa* system in a minimal context. There are three levels of work involved in this net fishing method. The first is *Punggawa*, which means something similar to captain, and refers to the person who has skills, knowledge, and assets in the form of nets, boats, and other equipment. *Punggawa* has not only expertise and reliable fishing experience but also a high social class in society. The figure of *Punggawa* is associated with a religious and wise person. The second class is *Parika*, who is the trusted assistant of *Punggawa*. *Parika* can represent *Punggawa* in coordinating with the team but not in decision-making, such as choosing a location for lowering the net. All decisions remain under the control and direction of the *Punggawa*. Finally, there are *Sabi* or *Sawi*, or crew members, of which there are two types: *Sabi*

Tita' (fixed worker) and *Sabi Bau* (temporary worker). *Sabi Tita'* is typically invited by *Punggawa* and is officially a part of the team. *Sabi Bau* is a substitute, and their presence is sometimes unwanted by other group members. These people are considered opportunists and do not benefit the fishing group. The Bajau customary system illustrates a structured control system for the division of labour. This relationship of *Punggawa-Sabi* indicates the shifting from a customary system into a controlled system with the ideology of power, capitalism, and religiosity over the members [42].

The current sedentary Bajau communities in Wakatobi are the fourth generation. They do not know much about this cultural system of their ancestors. The last *Punggawa* did not fully execute the Bajau customary system. The reign of *Mbok Buyung Rabbana* combined the cultural system with the administrative village system. This *Punggawa* was also the community leader in dealing with land-based communities. The fragility of the Bajau community institutions was also caused by perceiving land-based communities as more advanced. The current phenomenon emerges from Bajau's mindset that they desire to live like land-based communities. In contrast, they do not want to completely move to the mainland due to various reasons.

In the 1970s, there was a massive change in the construction of stilt houses with piles of rocks, which aimed to create a reclamation of coastal lands for Bajau villages. Initially, piling reef rocks under their stilt houses was to store fishing equipment and support boat making and repair. Nevertheless, the piles of reef rocks eventually became a contemporary island once connected. Subsequently, the development concept in the village changed to the construction of permanent buildings and roads made from concrete. Interestingly, in 2014, those house areas were granted a land certificate from the Agrarian and Land Planning Office of Wakatobi.

The perspective and attitude towards house construction are easy examples of the aforementioned complexity. The sea as communal property shifted to being an asset and became commercialised. The metamorphosis of settlement patterns became evident throughout this study. Bajau communities once lived in houseboats, then began to erect stilt houses, then these were made permanent, and these days most of those have become land-based houses. Tracing back through history, the Bajau in Wakatobi have arguably been a sedentary community since the early 19th century, when the construction of temporary stilt houses began. What followed was a period of seasonal migration, and the Bajau took refuge in stilt houses during hydrometeorological threats. Eventually, they felt safer staying in a house than on a houseboat. The period of the new order in Indonesia from 1980 to 1998 also contributed to the shift, as nomadic people were forced to settle in particular areas.

However, the Bajau have not been separated from the sea by their move to land. For the Bajau, land and sea are not only resources and relational partners but also the basis for beliefs about the spirits of the sea. The Bajau believe in an ancestor's quote, "*Lamong para daong ma dara, para dayah ma dilao,*" or "the more the leaves on the land, the more the fish in the sea." This quote illustrates the relationship between the Bajau, the sea, and the land and offers insight into their concept of conservation, despite land and islands being sites for graves and wells. The traditional ecological knowledge of the Bajau is not limited to the sea. The difference is that the mainland is not their cultural orientation.

Interrelation of the Bajau governance system

Systematic factors have accumulated in Bajau communities in Wakatobi over the past decades. The religion and existing culture of the Bajau expose them to instruments of hegemony and dominance in their intercultural relations. The social constructions of outsiders are sometimes used to control Bajau's customary practises. Internally, the Bajau governance system gradually becomes weak because the customary boundaries of symbolic legitimacy are blurred and reduced by various influences. Some institutions stigmatise the Bajau by referring to them as coastal and marine resource destroyers. They blame Bajau communities for gouging reef stones as piles for their houses, felling mangrove forests for firewood, engaging in bomb

fishing, and using chemicals that damage coral reefs to capture fish. The government, through the WNP, has carried out many operations to reduce such activities by the Bajau people. Many cases of destructive fishing have been reported to the police, and some Bajau people have even been imprisoned. However, these practises persist and proliferate secretly. Unfortunately, some poorer Bajau cannot afford to care about deterrent effects and fines and often express pride when leaving jails. Regulations and enforcement are seen as oppressive forces for them.

The interrelationship of governance systems between the Bajau and other customary institutions in Wakatobi prevails in managing the LMMA. In the situation of LMMA, the Bajau and MHA have ideologies and values embodied as cultural identities in marine resource management but practical differences. This circumstance is nothing new in the case of ethnicity in Indonesia, a maritime country featuring a high degree of multiculturalism and pluralism. Nevertheless, Bajau communities are vulnerable to the influence of the dominant cultures around them, from dialects and languages to cultural ceremonies, dresses and costumes, and daily activities. This situation can be seen clearly in the Bajau community of Lamanggau, on Tomia Island. The Lamanggau Bajau have lost their cultural practises and fully follow Tomia's customary culture. It demonstrated the ease with which the Bajau can adopt other cultural lifeways as their new cultural expression by leaving their Bajau values behind. Another example is Lohoa on Kaledupa Island. The absence of elders, *Panguleh* (shamans), and *Panambar* (customary healers) forced them to invite others to fulfil the customary activities and ceremonies, either from neighbouring Bajau communities or even outsiders from mainland Kaledupa. It suggests that Bajau communities can also partially absorb the cultures of other customary communities based on their needs. In Sampela, on Kaledupa Island, another pattern of acculturation was observed. One of the elder figures is a community developer and an Islamic religious leader but is not originally Bajau. This situation impacts Bajau's customary practises, which now barely exist. In Mantigola on the same island and Mola on Wangi-wangi Island, the people have shown less interest in adopting the culture of land-based communities because many Bajau elders remain in these villages.

The Bajau in Wakatobi acknowledge themselves as Muslims [29]. All Islamic teachings are based on Sharia and Sunnah guidelines in the Koran. However, Bajau communities still carry out their customary belief system as well. The Bajau people respect and pay homage and merit to the sea spirits, and a sequence of offerings must be served. They also believe that every newborn baby has a twin brother octopus in the sea that always follows them. These two logics are contradictory, and young Bajau, who have studied the Islamic religion in university or boarding schools, sometimes accuse Bajau elders of being apostates. These Bajau elders are assumed to worship jinn or a God other than Allah, which is disallowed by Islamic teachings. These young people often invite Islamic clerics and preachers to Bajau villages to teach Islam, and many members of the community often reject these Islamic forums. Nonetheless, the absence of Bajau customary institutions to defend Bajau epistemology in such instances has degraded the social cohesion of their internal governance system.

Furthermore, the Indonesian educational system has not incorporated Bajau local wisdom or traditional beliefs, and Bajau adults are prevented from serving as teachers in their children's schools because they cannot acquire the needed certifications. This situation indirectly affects the understanding and scepticism of young Bajau people who are being exposed to formal learning and religious knowledge, often in the absence of adults from their culture. Such youth often disavow their customary systems and cultural heritage. If this situation persists, the Bajau cultural identity seems to be diminished, and their collective knowledge will disappear entirely. The Bajau and their culture may eventually be known only as exonyms and languages.

For now, though, one of the most problematic aspects of Bajau culture is the demographic dividend, which has become a potent source of conflict for coastal resource management and other intercultural institutions. The dense and rapidly increasing population

demands more comprehensive access to housing and marine areas. It is a threat from non-Bajau customary institutions because the Bajau settlement has been extending into overseas areas for a long time now. From the government's perspective, this population size is becoming a hazard to the marine environment. Solid waste management in Bajau villages is already causing environmental problems. Bajau communities have failed to implement their local knowledge in this context due to the complexity of the Wakatobi waste management system [43]. Unfortunately, these emerging issues have not evolved into a local priority for development. The Wakatobi government's agenda remains focused on developing the tourism sector, which directly contributes to local government incomes. Economically speaking, the rapid population growth of the Bajau can be very lucrative and beneficial to people from the mainland who are positioned to serve the needs—or hold ransom—of the Bajau people, whose consumption and purchasing of goods and services will increase exponentially. Another institution that will benefit from the increasing Bajau population are political actors. Kinship with Bajau communities can be an effective strategy for getting endorsements and securing a position at the legislative or executive level.

Local to formal management

The government of Indonesia has created policies and programmes to strengthen customary institutions for coastal communities, acknowledge communal access rights to coastal and marine areas, and encourage community-based management knowledge of fisheries and marine conservation. In terms of strengthening the tenure rights of coastal communities, Indonesia is one of the leading countries in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of MHAs and LMMAs. This management shift helps with monitoring and evaluating coastal resources because of the existence of customary institutions with traditional knowledge [44–46]. This concept is the main part of a model of integrated coastal management [47], as are future holistic approaches that interact with the science-policy interface, including the co-creation of knowledge, the strengthening of community participation, the reconstruction of decentralisation, and the clarification of institutional interactions across the diversity of coastal stakeholders [48, 49]. However, these benefits have not yet been extended to sea-oriented communities such as the Bajau communities. This research documented three practical reasons why the concept of integrated coastal management has not been implemented in Bajau communities. Firstly, the lack of appropriate information and participatory action research on Bajau livelihoods and cultural conditions in coastal and marine management complicates engagement. Secondly, there is no legal protection in Indonesia at the national or local level that accommodates the Bajau people's and communities' defence and acquisition of resources. And lastly, local politics and intercultural relations on the mainland prioritise dominant customary communities in every development plan. The lack of Bajau politicians at any level of government underscores their minority status.

In June 2022, the government of Indonesia, under the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Indonesia, commenced awarding marine settlement permits to Bajau communities in coastal areas and small islands through a programme named the Agrarian Reform Task Force (GTRA). As an item near the pinnacle of the G-20 presidential agenda, the GTRA endorses a theme titled "Actualizing inclusive and environmentally friendly economic recovery through agrarian reforms, synchronised spatial planning, and empowerment of people in small islands and coastal areas." The GTRA aims to give legal certainty to people's land rights and business licences, asset reforms in the coastal, small island, and outer-most small island areas, and access to avenues for reform of customary laws, traditions, and local communities in coastal and small island areas. The GTRA programme categorises Bajau communities as local communities according to Law No. 1/2014 concerning the management of coastal areas and small islands. This manner of granting individual marine settlement permits to the Bajau raises many debates and impacts myriad political interests. Formal institutions in Wakatobi acknowledge that this initiative will protect Bajau communities from marine area

conflicts such as settlement eviction and likely help with overpopulation problems and potential LMMA conflicts with other customary communities. This research argues that formal recognition from the local government is an important step towards including the Bajau and addressing their problems before granting individual marine settlements. In terms of Bajau conflict resolution with other customary communities regarding LMMAs, this initiative does not consider the substance, cultural values, or ideology of Bajau culture. Institutional customs are very strong in terms of the appropriation of cultural wisdom and ancestral domains. The GTRA initiative has the potential to create social, ecological, and cultural problems for the Bajau communities. On the other hand, the GTRA initiative will also initiate deliberations with the Wakatobi Government to take more action and acknowledge their settlement areas contribution to communal social protection.

The complexities in the internal body of Bajau and external institutional support show a need for the proper management of coastal resources. To strengthen Bajau customary systems into formal management systems, the concept of co-management can be taken up as a development alternative to aligning the needs of Bajau communities with institutional support. Prior to developing programmes, assessment and identification of traditional ecological knowledge should be conducted to inform baseline data. In the case of the Bajau, who do not have formal customary institutions, programme intervention through the village administrative system is possible. Indonesian LMMAs use this concept in the eastern part of the country. Indonesia's LMMAs target the smallest unit of society through village laws to strengthen institutions [50]. As one administrative village, the community tends to be homogeneous, and the village government and traditional stakeholders can still handle issues of political interest. Indeed, the key to the success of such co-management programmes is community participation and a high sense of communal ownership.

Conclusions

The Bajau are a customary community that has distinct complexities compared to land-oriented communities. Rapid population growth, cultural acculturation, socio-economic transformation, and forced adaptation have made Bajau communities abandon their cultural identity as maritime-oriented people. Bajau communities now seem to shift their mindsets, attitudes, and communal perspectives towards an asset-based and land-based orientation, and their customary institutions have been degraded by this shift and ethnocentric government approaches to development. This customary institution has been displaced by administrative systems presupposing formal villages. This situation has weakened Bajau's customary systems and governance, including the acquittal of social norms, fines and social sanctions, and cultural activities. Related to the concept of development and coastal management, Bajau communities face uncertainties in community participation and communal property rights resulting from their lack of access to legal protections, land-related ancestral domains, and unperformed customary institutions.

The main obstacle the Bajau face continues to be labelling issues by non-Bajau communities. Bajau communities are stereotyped as migrant communities with fast-growing populations and disruptive fishing tactics. It has led governments and other organisations to institute inappropriate and unhelpful management schemes that have been more effective in unravelling and degrading the identity and community systems of the Bajau than in integrating them into coastal management efforts, leading to a crisis in Bajau communities. This is further complicated by customary institutions on the mainland refusing to accept the Bajau as part of their historical culture. There is no open collaboration space for Bajau communities to be recognised or become customary partners in maintaining sustainable coastal resources, which potentiates conflict and needs to be addressed in intercultural relations to safeguard communal rights among all customary communities in Wakatobi.

Wakatobi Bajau communities can be categorised into two groups (Fig. 1): the first group lives on the water and has not been connected to the land, and the second group lives on the water but is already connected to the land. These policies towards each group should be different and specific according to their needs, surrounding local issues, and exposure to development programmes. This consideration also alludes to the reconstruction of Bajau customary institutions and co-management programmes for managing coastal and marine resources, such as the LMMA.

In other institutional relations, interest and influence are distributed according to organisational and political interests in the LMMA. This complexity has not been adequately integrated as a practised model in Wakatobi's development priority programmes. There is no culturally inclusive project that engages Bajau customary communities, though this is necessary to nurture marine ecology in alignment with specific traditional ecological knowledge of the Bajau communities that have traversed these seas for millennia. Holistic, integrated, thematic, and spatial approaches might resolve institutional complexities that occur both in program preparation and initiation, but the complexity of these institutional issues cannot be resolved by institutions alone. An integrated model and mutual commitment that consider historical and cultural context, supporting policies, and socio-ecological shifts are needed. In the broader context, the government of Indonesia has been mainstreaming the Bajau into the local community category in coastal and small island areas instead of recognising them as part of the coastal community category or, better yet, creating a category that acknowledges sea-oriented people.

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