Working Group

Socio-Economics of Forest Use in the Tropics and Subtropics

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Contested Heritages: Disputes on People, Forests, and a World Heritage Site in Globalizing Thailand

SEFUT Working Paper No. 9

Freiburg

August 2001

ISSN 1616-8062

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

The **SEFUT Working Papers Series** is published by the Working Group Socio-Economics of Forest Use in the Tropics and Subtropics at the University of Freiburg.
The Series is available electronically on the Freiburger Dokumentenserver (FreiDok):
http://www.freidok.uni-freiburg.de/freidok/

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Introduction: conservationism and modernization

In December 1991, two Wildlife Sanctuaries[1] in Thailand were declared a heritage to mankind by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee due to their outstanding universal value regarding global biodiversity. For conservationists the designation of Thailand's first and only Natural World Heritage Site was a great success in their long lasting efforts to protect the vast forest area in the western part of the country against detrimental effects of national modernization and development: Regrettable and avoidable side effects of development, as some of them would argue, effects revealing the inherent logic of modernization, as others would say.

People of the Karen ethnic minority group, who lives in the area since about 200 years, were also among the threats mentioned in the nomination[2] submitted to UNESCO. Stereotyped as 'hill tribes' they somehow are at the edge, if not outside, of Thai society, conceived as resistant to modernization, if suitable for it at all. In the dominating conservationist perspective their existence in the sanctuary is an unfortunate flaw, preferentially removed by resettlement, but, at least, requiring careful monitoring and management.

Since the 1970s, after the demarcation of the Wildlife Sanctuaries, state authorities had started to evict them in successive waves. In the beginning 1990s, the removal of the remaining villages was announced in the nomination for the near future. Ten years after the declaration as a World Heritage Site there are still people living in this 'global heritage'. But now, Thailand's Royal Forest Department (RFD) and Military finally seem determined to resettle them. As the legal grounds for their eviction are still rather shaky, the state authorities are trying to convince the Karen to resettle 'voluntarily', using strategies of exclusion and ethnicism together with restrictions and terror towards the Karen in the sanctuary.

The paper supports a view in which conservationism emerged in the context of modernization to regulate and compensate for human 'encroachment' on nature. This cultural framing of conservationism, so it is argued, on the one hand, is misleading in perceiving and determining the local situation in the World Heritage Site in Thailand, specifically regarding the 'local people' living in the 'global heritage', on the other hand, it is exploited to pursue particular political interests.

The concept and project of 'modernization' went somewhat out of fashion since generally the emergence of a new 'era' (within or beyond 'modernity') was announced and 'globalization' has become the new 'sexy' word. In this paper 'globalization' is conceived as part of a broader historical development towards increasing social complexity, referring specifically to the emergence of transnational and international relations, institutions, and networks, leading to growing global integration and interdependence, including economic, social, political, and cultural processes. 'Modernization' is perceived as a specific aspect of this globalization process, defining direction, means, and objectives of this process in rather culture specific terms. 'Conservationism', in this paper, refers to efforts to protect 'nature', primarily defined as 'the other' to the space of 'human creation', against deterioration and destruction, be it for reasons of resource management or for ascribed inherent rights of 'nature'.

The paper will sketch the emergence of a 'protected area' and its promotion to a 'global heritage' in the context of international conservationism and national controversies about nature conservation and modernization.

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[1] The two Wildlife Sanctuaries, Thung Yai Naresuan and Huai Kha Khaeng, together encompass more than 6200 km². Located in Western Thailand, adjacent to Burma, they are the core area of the so-called Western Forest Complex, constituting Thailand's largest remaining forest area with about 18700 km².

[2] Seub/Stewart-Cox 1990.

The ideology of an incompatibility of humans and forests is dominating conservation policies in Thailand. The paper locates the roots of this ideology in culture specific frames of thought referring to 'modernization' and 'conservationism', as well as in more recent interest conflicts between different social groups and institutions, reflected in changing forest policies and conflicts about forests.

Since the beginning 1990s, and with growing intensity towards the end of the decade, these conflicts about forests increasingly focus on the territorial, social, and political exclusion of so-called 'hill tribe' ethnic minority groups, based on conservationism and ethnicism in the context of a culturally defined nationalism. State agencies like the Royal Forest Department and the Military, thereby, try to secure and regain positions and power challenged in the course of the democratization process and the controversies about people and forests in Thailand.

The excluded and marginalized ethnic groups living in conservation areas are forced to refer to dominant discourses of modernity and conservation if they try to speak out in their interest, with only few chances to find and shape a position of their own in these discourses. For the Karen in Thung Yai advocacy by national and international actors is, at the moment, the only possibility to point to their rights and interests. But, this remains rather ambivalent as long as they cannot speak out in their own voice according to their own cultural frames and interests.

On a more abstract level the paper points to the quite general problem of applying generalizing frames of thought and perception, designed in rather encompassing social contexts like states or the 'international community', to define highly specific local situations, which, to some degree, necessarily distorts perceptions of these situations. This problem of scales and difference of context, so it is argued, requires in the present process of globalization the empowerment of 'local communities' to improve their chances for self-determination as well as to strengthen their representation in those institutions that decide about their living places.

Furthermore, the paper indicates that the current process of economic, political, and cultural globalization, to a high degree, is a process in which a dominating 'culture' shaped by an ideology of competition, unlimited growth, and consumerism, with a strong tendency to economize all spheres of life, in the name of 'modernization' and 'development' is defining its culture specific frames of thought as 'global' or 'universal', while trying to impose them on the varied, heterogenous groups and institutions which constitute and are 'incorporated' into the emerging 'global community'[3].

From 'wilderness' to 'global heritage'

With the adoption of the 'Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage' in 1972, the member states of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had created an international instrument to protect endangered outstanding cultural and natural values of mankind.

> "The cultural heritage and the natural heritage are among the priceless and irreplaceable possessions, not only of each nation, but of mankind as a whole. The loss, through deterioration or disappearance, of any of these most prized possessions constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the peoples in the world. Parts of that heritage, because of their exceptional qualities, can be considered to be of outstanding universal value and as such worthy of special protection against the dangers which increasingly threaten them." (UNESCO 1997).

[3] The existence of a 'global community' may be disputed with good reasons, in the end, it is a question of definition. For me this 'community' is constituted in as much as people conceive themselves as part of it and create relations and institutions referring to a 'global community'.

The convention emphasizes the idea of a 'heritage of mankind' and refers to 'endangered universal values'. As an instrument it is aiming at the conservation and protection of these values. In this conception the convention is an expression of the upswing of globalization after World War II as well as of the growing awareness for the emerging 'global environmental crisis'.

Regarding the category of the 'Natural World Heritage', the convention is drawing on existing conceptions of nature conservation and protected areas. Ideas and efforts to protect 'nature' from human impacts do have a long history.[4] There seem to be two main sources of motivation for these efforts. On the one hand, the identification of 'nature' or natural phenomena with aspects of reality transcending and determining the sphere of human dominance, quite generally invoking religious frames of thought. On the other hand, the wish to control and 'manage' resources or values within this sphere of human dominance. The World Heritage Convention obviously belongs to the latter one.

The models of nature conservation the architects of the World Heritage Convention had in mind are to be found in the national parks established in the United States in the second half of the 19th century. The objectives of these areas protected by national law and state authorities, at first, were the conservation of extraordinary natural phenomena for the enjoyment and education of rather urban people.[5] With the growing awareness for environmental problems in the wake of global modernization this concept of protected areas increasingly was used to protect wildlife, forests, biodiversity, and complex regional and global ecosystems as endangered resources.[6]

In the so-called developing countries this concept met growing interest since the 1950s and has spread rapidly in the context of modernization and globalization. Increasing 'international interest', be it in game hunting, tourism, or environmental problems, not least furthered the spread of protected areas in third world countries as their establishment promised foreign fundings and foreign exchange from tourism. Apart from these external incentives, conservationism and environmental awareness also grew in popularity within the urban elites of the developing countries.

Furthermore, for governments and elites in many of the emerging nation states the concept of protected areas was appealing because it easily could be used to justify and push through territorial claims and control over resources and local people. It is in this context that conflicts between 'national interest' and local needs and rights increasingly broke out, quite often sparked off by disputes about forests as resources or environment.[7]

Meanwhile, within the international conservation discourse the problem of local people in and at the edge of protected areas has received broad attention, resulting in a shift from exclusion and resettlement strategies to 'participation' approaches that account for needs and rights of local people. It is widely recognized that effective management of protected areas requires participation and specifically cooperation of the concerned local population. Unfortunately, these participation approaches, quite generally, find their way into national policies and practices only in their rather technocratic top-down versions. 'Participation' in these versions gene-

[4] First records of such efforts may be dated back to the year 252 B.C. when the Emperor Asoka of India passed an edict for the protection of animals, fish, and forests (MacKinnon et al. 1986:1).

[5] These early concepts of nature conservation, emerging in a specific historic situation and based on culture specific perceptions and values, have framed conservationism and environmental movement for a long time. See for example Hales 1989; Hargrove 1989; Ehrenfeld 1989; Cronon 1996; Stevens 1997a; Katz 1998.

[6] While the aspect of 'resource management' is by far dominating the modern conservation discourse, the idea of protecting biodiversity as the base for the evolutionary process, as well as ideas conceding 'nature' values and rights in its own, apart from its utility for humans, for example, are pointing to the first source of motivation for conservation.

[7] See for example Peluso 1992, 1993; Bryant 1993, 1994; Lipschutz/Mayer 1993; Colchester 1994; Taylor 1995; Vandergeest 1996a; Howitt/Connell/Hirsch 1996; Brenner et al. 1999.

rally means communication about objectives and rules determined from 'outside' and 'above', and 'cooperation' predominantly is a question of appropriate incentives and sanctions.[8]

The modern idea of nature conservation gained a foothold in Thailand around the middle of the 20th century in the context of the nationalization of the country. Dr. Boonsong Lekagul, the 'father' of nature conservation in Thailand, had been a passionate hunter before he became the most prominent advocat for wildlife conservation in Thailand after World War II. In 1950/51, he founded the Association for Conservation of Wildlife to pressure the government to establish Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks.[9]

His concerns met the interests of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat who had taken over power after a military coup in October 1958. Sarit perceived Thailand's 'nature', its forests, wildlife, and natural monuments, as another important element of national identity besides the institution of monarchy, buddhism, and the Thai language. Thus, for him the conservation of 'nature' became a matter of national interest, and the 'destruction' of this nature due to the swiddening practices of 'non-thai' ethnic minority groups, for example, were an assault on the nation.[10] Under his military rule the legal basis for the establishment of protected areas was laid with the Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act of 1960 and the National Park Act of 1961.[11]

The idea to protect forests and wildlife in the western parts of the country by establishing two Wildlife Sanctuaries, to be named Thung Yai Naresuan and Huai Kha Khaeng, grew in the mid-1960s among some conservation oriented officials at the Royal Forest Department (RFD). At the same time, Western biologists had drawn attention to the zoological importance of the region. By then, deforestation was already considerably proceeding in other parts of the country, even though, this was generally not perceived as a problem, but rather as instrumental for national development and security. Due to strong logging and mining interests in the area, it was not before 1972 that the first of the two sanctuaries, Huai Kha Khaeng (HKK), could be established. Commercial interests in Thung Yai Naresuan (TYN) were even stronger. But, after in April 1973 a military helicopter crashed in Thung Yai and revealed an illegal hunting party of senior military officers, businessmen, family members, and a filmstar, arousing nationwide public outrage[12], the area finally was declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1974 under a new democratic government. After the Military had taken over power once again in October 1976, many of the leaders and activists of the democracy movement fled into the peripheral regions of the country that were under control of the Communist Party of Thailand. Many of them were seeking refuge in the western forests and among the Karen people living in the sanctuaries. For commercial hunters, logging companies, and state authorities the western forests in vast areas became inaccessible until the beginning 1980s, one of the reasons why they remained widely undisturbed until today.

During the 1960s, not only timber and ore but also the water of the western forests as hydroelectric power resources became of interest for commercial profit and national development.

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[8] Regarding history and shifts of the international conservation debate see McNeely/Miller 1984; MacKinnon et al. 1986; Western/Pearl 1989; Wells/Brandon 1992; Western/Wright 1994; McNeely/Harrison/Dingwall 1994; Ghimire/Pimbert 1997. For rather positive examples of protected areas see specifically Stevens 1997.

[9] Vandergeest 1996b:260.

[10] Vandergeest 1996a:165, 1996b:260.

[11] While in Thailand National Parks are generally open for the public and tourism, admittance to Wildlife Sanctuaries has to be obtained from the Royal Forest Department and is restricted to research and education purposes.

[12] In a time of great political unrest the incident became a focus for the prevailing discontent with the military rule and "a rallying cry for the pro-democracy movement" (Seub/Stewart-Cox 1990:34), triggering public protest and demonstrations that finally led to the fall of the Thanom-Prapas Regime after the uprising of October 14, 1973. Regarding the circumstances of the incident and its political relevance see for example Veeravat 1987:28; Seub/Stewart-Cox 1990:34; Hirsch 1993:139.

A system of several big dams was planned to use these resources most efficiently to produce electricity for the growing urban centres. Until the middle of the 1980s, three dams had been finished, supported by the World Bank and Japanese funds. The Nam Choan Dam, the last of the projected dams, to be finished in 1997, was supposed to flood a forest area of about 223 km² within the Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary.

The public dispute about the Nam Choan Dam Project lasted for more than six years, dominating national politics and public debate in early 1988 before it was shelved in April that year, with few prospects of being revived ever again. The success of the movement against the Nam Choan Dam was not only a remarkable victory for conservationism in Thailand, but also a milestone for the development of Thailand's civil society and the process of democratization.[13]

The arguments in the public debate about the dam focused on the question whether the expected economic benefits and chances ascribed to the dam warrant the ecological and social costs and risks of the project.[14] In this context of the dominating discourse the debate reflected a rather simple environmental problem, a conflict between 'development' and 'conservation' objectives to be decided within the frame of a cost-benefit analysis.

In the context of the actors and groups of interest involved the controversy revealed a very heterogenous variety of interests. Here, conflicts over resources and power dominated, conflicts between various state agencies, social groups, and civil society organizations. Apart from different interests, the various actors also referred to quite different ideas of 'development' and 'conservation'.

In the end, the success of the movement against the dam depended on a broad temporary alliance of actors with quite different interests in the name of nature conservation, putting aside internal conflicts and inconsistencies. Furthermore, the opponents were supported by strong and prominent international conservation groups[15]. Of crucial importance was the broad and predominantly positive response of the media towards the resistance movement which furthered the general perception of an overwhelming opposition towards the dam. Fears for a student revolt, like the one that toppled the military regime in 1973, quite probably also influenced the decisions of the politicians who finally shelved the project in 1988. [16]

The people of the Karen ethnic minority group living in the area to be flooded, in the debate never had a voice of their own. Within the committee established to decide about the project their existence was of no relevance. Their interests partly were brought into the debate by NGOs and Journalists, but hardly appeared as an important argument. Very much in contrast to the forests and wildlife that finally emerged as the crucial factor.

Pointing to the high value for nature conservation and biodiversity, the opponents on the national and international level had raised the possibility of declaring the area a World Heritage

[13] Regarding the role of the Nam Choan Controversy for civil society and democratization in Thailand see Buergin/Kessler 1999, 2001.

[14] See specifically Nart/Poonsab 1984:296-302; Prayudh et al. 1987; Ungphakorn/Usher/Termsak 1988.

[15] The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) publicly criticized the project (BP 02.23.88). Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands (founder and former president of the WWF) raised his concerns and spoke against the dam during a state visit (Nation 2.4.88) as did Prince Charles and his father Prince Philipp, acting president of the WWF (Nation 4.18.88). The British conservation journal 'The Ecologist' dedicated its issue of March 1988 to the Nam Choan Controversy and the organization of the movement in Thailand was supported by international scientists and activists like, for example, Larry Lohmann, Philip Hirsch, and Belinda Stewart-Cox.

[16] For the history of the dam project and the controversy about it see for example Nart/Poonsab 1984; Prayudh et al. 1987; Stewart-Cox 1987; Hirsch 1987b, 1988, 1993; Nation 1988; Rigg 1991; Buergin/Kessler 1999.

Site.[17] This prestigious option would have been lost with a huge dam and reservoir in the middle of the two wildlife sanctuaries most promising to fulfill the requirements for a global heritage.

Just before the Nam Choan Controversy reached its peak, Thailand had ratified the World Heritage Convention in December 1987, after three years of discussion. During a visit to Thailand in February 1988, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, as former president of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), had raised his concerns about the dam project in the Wildlife Sanctuary, emphasizing particularly the interest of the WWF to have the area declared a World Heritage Site which would require to give up the dam project. After the project was already shelved, student groups, NGOs, and academics again pushed forward the idea, fearing the dam project could be revived, something which seemed to be less probable in a World Heritage Site.

On behalf of the Royal Forest Department, the proposal to UNESCO was written by two persons[18] who had been outspoken opponents in the Nam Choan Controversy. It finally led to the declaration of Thailand's first and, until now, only Natural World Heritage Site in December 1991. In the nomination the 'outstanding universal value' of the two Wildlife Sanctuaries is, in first place, justified with their extraordinary high biodiversity due to their unique position at the junction of four biogeographic zones, as well as with its size and "the undisturbed nature of its habitats."[19] Despite this 'undisturbed nature', the Karen in Thung Yai were defined as a threat to the sanctuary and their resettlement was announced for the near future.

Guarding a global heritage not only brought prestige to the nation and the Royal Forest Department, but also economic assets as well as increasing political importance to the sanctuaries. Immediately after the declaration, international organizations in cooperation with national partners began to plan and project in and around the sanctuaries. The most prominent and most important in terms of 'economic weight' was a joint project of the World Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture, designed to improve biodiversity conservation and protected areas management in Thailand. The proposed project was concentrating on the World Heritage Site with a time frame of five years, beginning in 1994, approving extension. The total project cost was estimated at US$ 96 million to be covered with a grant fund of US$ 20 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a US$ 40 million loan from the World Bank, as well as funds from bilateral aid donors and the Royal Thai Government.

The pre-investment study for the project[20] was disapproved by NGOs in Thailand who criticized its narrow conservation perspective, its top-down approach, as well as the high costs of the project. The following negotiations between World Bank, state agencies, and NGOs focused on the controversial issue of resettlement of local people in bufferzones and out off pro-

[17] Most outspoken in this regard were Veeravat Thiraprasat, then chief of the Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary, and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, former president of the WWF.

[18] Belinda Stewart-Cox graduated from Oxford University and did research as a biologist in Huai Kha Khaeng. Seub Nakhasathien was chief of the Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary. On September 1, 1991, Seub committed suicide in his office out of despair about missing support within the RFD. Belinda Stewart-Cox, his ally in the struggle to protect the sanctuary, commented his death with grave reproaches towards his superiors at the RFD: "Seub's death was suicide - an act of despair - but it might as well have been murder. When he needed the support of his superiors to do the job they had asked him to do - stop the hunting and logging that was rampant in Huai Kha Khaeng at that time, master-minded by police and military officials - it was withheld. A terrible betrayal." (Stewart-Cox 1998).

[19] Seub/Stewart-Cox 1990:49.

[20] The study (MIDAS 1993) had been ordered by the UNDP, was financed by a Japanese fund and executed by a Bangkok based consultancy company in cooperation with numerous scientists, published in 8 volumes in October 1993.

tected areas. The study, as a state of the art conservation management manual, had cautiously, in a rather ambivalent way, voted against resettlement in the specific case of the Karen villages in Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary, though, under strict conservation reservations and with 'technical'[21] arguments. But, it explicitly had left open the option for resettlement, dedicating a whole chapter for the implementation of such resettlements. The negotiations only gradually led to convergence and the NGOs denied their cooperation for a project based on the pre-investment study.[22]

The stop to the project was due to another issue that was raising controversies in Thailand. In July 1994, grant funds from the Global Environment Facility had been made conditional on the ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Although Thailand had joined the Convention, established in 1992 in Rio, it didn't ratify until today, mainly due to reservations and resistance of NGOs and certain state agencies[23]. In the context of the discussion of the World Bank/GEF project with the Thai NGOs, the representative of the World Bank had tried to exert moderate pressure, pointing to the limited funds of the GEF that may go to other countries if not welcome in Thailand, urging the NGOs to give up their resistance against the ratification of the CBD. That time, the NGOs had not been very impressed. But, by now, it only seems to be a matter of time until the CBD will be ratified. The World Bank/GEF project for the global heritage then, most probably, will be on the agenda again.

Forest policies in globalizing Thailand

In the public debate about the World Bank/GEF project for the World Heritage Site, the Karen people living in and at the edge of the protected area, and the question of their resettlement, had been a crucial issue. This points to a broader societal controversy generally condensed in the contrary positions of whether or not people and forests can co-exist. The ideology that 'people and forests cannot co-exist' is rather popular in Thailand and, until today, is the basis for the conservation policies of the Royal Forest Department (RFD).

The present Director General of the RFD, Plodprasop Suraswadi, rather succinct expressed his position on the occasion of an international seminary on community forestry, in September 1998, when he declared: "Man cannot co-exist with the forest". To justify the position of the RFD not to tolerate community forests in protected areas he further explained: "Humans can't live in the forest because human beings aren't animals. Unlike us, animals can adapt themselves to the wild or any environment naturally".[24]

The origins of this ideology are diverse. On the one hand, they are to be found in international and national forest and conservation policies as well as in rather obvious conflicts about resources between different social groups of interest and power. On the other hand, this ideology is grounded in culture specific conceptions of 'forest' and 'civility' and their determination and changes in the process of the country's globalization and modernization (see below). The shift of meaning of 'forests' that occured in the process of modernization can broadly be characterized as a shift from 'forests as environment' for people to 'forests as resources' requiring protection from people.

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[21] The detrimental effects of the villages and risks for the sanctuary were assessed relative low, while their resettlement was supposed to cause high costs and considerable difficulties.

[22] Regarding the debate on the study see for example BP 01.09.1994; Nation 01.26.1994; BP 09.12.1994; Malee 1994:15-17; Ewers 1994; PER 1995; World Bank 1995.

[23] Predominantly the Public Health Ministry and the Council of State. Regarding the debate on the CBD in Thailand see for example Ewers 1994; PER 1995; Amara 1999; Nation 6.11.97, 7.13.97; BP 7.16.97; 8.23.97, 6.20.98, 12.31.99, 10.6.2000, 1.1.2001, 1.25.2001.

[24] Bangkok Post, 09.24.1998.

An important turning point in Thailand's economic globalization may be located in the middle of the 19th century, when the British colonial power, not entirely selfless and with considerable pressure, gained access to the markets of the country and opened it up for the 'world market'.[25] Origins of Thailand's political and cultural globalization process also are to be found in the second half of the 19th century, and generally are related to personality and rule of King Rama V[26]. While political globalization, at first, took place in form of the territorialization and nationalization of the state according to Western models, cultural globalization focused on the adoption of Western concepts of rationality, modernity, and development.[27]

The forests of Thailand as valuable 'natural resources' did play an important role in these early processes of globalization. Timber, and specifically Teak, was among the first resources that became of interest to the colonial powers and the regional elites, which was one of the main reasons behind the interests to open up the country for the 'world market'.[28] Furthermore, as potential agricultural areas, the forests were the precondition for the extension of export oriented cash crop cultivation sustaining the rapid economic growth of the country far into the 1970s.[29]

With the establishment of the Royal Forest Department (RFD) the emerging nation state announced very early his claims to control these resources.[30] Established under supervision of the British forester H.A. Slade in 1896, the RFD was modelled after British forest management in India and Burma where most of the Thai foresters were educated. During the first half of the 20th century, the main concern of the RFD was to allocate and control concessions for Teak extraction, predominantly executed by British companies. Besides, taxes on commercially used forest products were levied. Territorial control of the vast areas under the administration of the RFD was neither interesting nor feasible. Contrary to British forest mangement in India and Burma, constantly struggling to protect 'their' forests against 'encroachment' and 'unreasonable' forest use through local people, forest use of local people was widely unrestricted by forest legislation in Thailand until the middle of the 20th century. Forest clearance for agricultural purposes even was encouraged by the state until the enactment of the Land Code in 1954.[31]

It was not before the 1950s and 60s that a remarkable shift in forest policies took place, now increasingly trying to restrict local forest use and improve territorial control through the demarcation of forest reserves, which encompassed almost half of the countries land area by the middle of the 1980s. The reasons for this shift of policies are to be found in the growing importance of the forests for 'national development' as well as the emergence of conservationism. Both factors, to a high degree, were determined by international developments.

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[25] For accounts of this early phase of economic globalization in Thailand until the middle of the 20th century see e.g. Sompop 1989 and Feeny 1982.

[26] King Chulalongkorn, reign 1868-1910.

[27] Regarding the prominent role Western concepts of territoriality, nation state, rationality, and modernity played in the process of the emergence of the Siamese nation state, toward the end of the 19th century, see specifically Thongchai 1994, 1996, 2000.

[28] See for example Renard 1987; De'Ath 1992.

[29] For a 'tight' and complex account of this economic development on behalf of the forests of the country see Pasuk/Baker 1997:1-88, with a more specific focus on deforestation see for example Feeny 1988; Hirsch 1987a; Rigg 1993; Lohmann 1993.

[30] The RFD was made responsible for all areas neither cultivated nor claimed by any other person or state authority. At the beginning of the 20th century, about 75 % of the total land area fell into this category, by the middle of the century it was still about 60 % (Vandergeest 1996a:161f).

[31] For the history of the RFD and forest policies see Kamon/Thomas 1990; Sathi 1993; Vandergeest 1996a. Regarding the roots of Thai forestry in western scientific forestry see Lang/Pye 2001, for differences of interest and forest legislation in British India/Burma and Siam related to local forest use see Vandergeest 1996a; Bryant 1993, 1994.

In the wake of World War II, most of the colonial powers had lost their colonies and Europe had become highly dependent on the import of wood. Among the scientific and political international 'forestry community' it generally was believed that Europe as well as the United States will be increasingly dependent on the timber resources of the tropical forests in future. At the World Forestry Congress in Helsinki in 1949, tropical forests for the first time received broad attention, and at the World Forestry Congress in Dehra Dun in 1954 the controversies regarding management and threats to tropical forests were of central interest. It was here that the FAO, in a paper setting out basic principles, emphasized the importance of the tropical forests for the development of the developing countries as well as the detrimental effects of shifting cultivation for tropical forest resources. Conceptions of tropical forests as important resources in the process of modernization were to guide the forest policies of the FAO and many developing countries during the 1960s and beyond.[32]

This ideology of commercialization of tropical forests for the sake of national and 'global' development, going along with the condemnation of shifting cultivation, is concisely expressed by an official of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the UN in 1957, in an appeal to governments, research centres, and other concerned institutions to combat shifting cultivation globally:

> "- - shifting cultivation, in the humid tropical countries, is the greatest obstacle not only to the immediate increase of agricultural production, but also to the conservation of the production potential for the future, in the form of soils and forests. ...
>
> The average density of only 14 men pr sqare mile (6 pr sq km) is so low that a world in expansion cannot tolerate this relative vacuum. This does not mean that the vacuum should be filled in by migrations, but every country must be made capable of contributing its share of agricultural produce for the benefit of all." (Cited in Jørgensen 1977:77).

The shifts of forest policies in Thailand were, to a considerable degree, in reaction to these international forest policies. In 1947 the RFD established the Forest Industry Organization (FIO) to improve wood production and in 1951 the state-owned Thai Plywood Company was founded for wood extraction and processing. Until the mid-1960s, almost 40 % of the total land area were assigned as concession areas. The new objectives and conception of forestry also influenced perception and politics of the state authorities towards the ethnic minority groups living in the forested mountain areas, most of them practicing various forms of swidden cultivation.[33] The image of the forest destroying swiddener was integrated into the 'hill tribe' stereotype (see below) long before deforestation was perceived as a real 'national' or 'local' problem. In 1961 swidden cultivation was prohibited. Even though the law was never seriously enforced, it put the so-called 'hill tribes' into a state of permanent illegality and insecurity.

Economic development, deforestation and Protected Area System

The global spread of modernization ideology and the expanding world market after World War II not only influenced national forest policies, but national development policy altogether, leading to rapid economic growth in Thailand during the second half of the 20th century. During the 1960s and 70s, the driving force of this growth was the state propagated diversification of cash cropping for the world market in combination with the extension of agricultural areas on behalf of forest areas. In the beginning 1950s, almost two thirds of the country still had been forested. In the beginning 1980s, when deforestation in Thailand was,

[32] For a history of international forestry policy specifically regarding tropical forests see Steinlin/Pretzsch 1984.
[33] On the politics towards shifting cultivation in Thailand see also Pinkaew 1999 and Achara 2001.

for the first time, perceived as a problem by a broader public[34], the forest cover was officially estimated at less than one third of the total land area, 'real' forests may have accounted for a quarter or less.

The new public interest in forests and deforestation was, on the one hand, related to the growing international awareness for a 'global environmental crisis' and the accompaning upswing of international conservationism. On the other hand, it was due to increasing societal conflicts in the context of the 'closure of the frontier'[35] and contested resources in rural areas.

In the beginning 1980s, the RFD had to face the rather uncomfortable task to explain towards a conservation sensitive urban public, who was achieving increasing political power, the rapid and ongoing deforestation of the country, pointing to the RFD's own failure as guardian of the forests. At the same time, the RFD had to deal with some 10 million rural people, or about one fifth of the total population, living 'illegally' in areas that had been declared forest reserves or even protected areas. Of these 'forest areas' more than a third were used for agricultural purposes, constituting at least a third of Thailand's whole agricultural area. [36]

The Forest Department reacted with a new forest policy that, according to Vandergeest, may be termed as "functional territorialization".[37] While the failed 'demarcation policy' primarily had been based on the model of forestry in the British colonies, the new strategy of functional territorialization was based on a zoning approach that had its origins in the United States and that had come to be a prominent concept in international conservationism. It was adopted in Thai forestry mainly via education of Thai foresters in the States.[38]

The idea of zoning the country's land area according to suitability and function based on scientific criteria already had formed the basis for Thailand's National Forest Policy of 1985. It became central to the concept of the 'Protected Area System' (PAS) that was set out in the Thai Forestry Sector Master Plan (TFSMP)[39] of 1993 and today is conceived as the main instrument of forest conservation in Thailand.

The TFSMP, with its origins in the context of the international Tropical Forestry Action Programme (TFAP)[40], was supposed to be the basis for the implementation of the National Forest Policy. It was designed by the Finish consultancy company Jaakko Pöyry on behalf of the

[34] It may well be, as Pasuk and Baker in the case of Thailand argue, that decreasing interests of the dominating political and economic elites of the country in the peripheral forest resources, as well as their diminishing importance for 'national development', were a precondition for the emerging public awareness of the deforestation problem in the beginning 1980s (Pasuk/Baker 1997:80f). But, in the 1980s, public awareness for deforestation processes and specifically global tropical deforestation grew internationally, suggesting broader frames of explanation.

[35] The expression is taken from Pasuk and Baker (1997:80). It does not primarily point to a geographically definable phase of physical colonization of the peripheral areas of the country, but rather to the growing societal perception that there is no more 'wilderness' left suitable for 'colonization' or 'civilization'.

[36] Feeny 1988:18f; Hirsch 1990; Pasuk/Baker 1997:62f; Vandergeest 1996a:166f.

[37] Vandergeest 1996a.

[38] Vandergeest 1996a:168; Kamon/Thomas 1990:171.

[39] RFD 1993.

[40] Background for the establishment of the Tropical Forestry Action Programme (TFAP) in cooperation of FAO, WRI (World Resources Institute), UNDP, and World Bank, in the beginning 1980s, was the growing international concern about tropical deforestation. Larry Lohman points to the 'cultural context' of the program as well as to 'particular' interests that may be behind 'global politics' when he suggests to look for its origins in a Washington bar: ".... the Tropical Forests Action Programme (TFAP), a gigantic scheme which had originated in an early 1980s conversation in a Washington bar between the World Bank forester John Spears and a colleague, who were brainstorming ways of getting more international development funding for professional forestry consultants in the new atmosphere of concern in world capitals for tropical forests." (Carrere/Lohmann 1996:242). Regarding history and controversy of the TFAP see eg. Humphreys 1996:31-54.

Thai Government and with financial support of the Finish Government. Efforts to integrate Thai NGOs into the drafting of the plan largely failed.[41]

In the middle of the 1980s, the RFD was still predominantly concentrating on commercial forestry, aiming at a quarter of the total land area to be designated as commercial forest areas, besides 15 % for conservation areas. Due to rising critique regarding deforestation and the RFD's commercial orientation as well as due to resistance against its resettlement policy in the forest reserves, the agency was forced to considerably shift its focus to conservation forestry, not least reflected in the Thai Forestry Sector Master Plan.

According to the plan, 28 % of the total land area is to be reserved for the Protected Area System while, outside of this area, another 15 % of the land area is to be dedicated to commercial forests[42], aiming at a total forest cover of almost 44 % of the land area. The PAS is to include all the still existing 'natural' forests as well as all protected areas and watershed areas.[43] Generally, the TFSMP leaves no doubt about the absolute priority of conservation objectives in the PAS and the desirability to remove people living in these areas. But, with its background in international conservation discourse, and pointing to the foreseeable problems, the plan is rather moderate regarding its position towards resettlement, making it conditional on the consent of the concerned population. Quite in contrast to objectives and practice of the RFD. [44]

Arguments about people and forests

The very fact alone that, already in the middle of the 1980s, at least a third of the forest reserve area was used as 'agricultural area', while apart from the forest reserves there was hardly any unclaimed land left over suitable for agricultural purposes, points to the somehow 'naivety' or 'calculation' of propagating the Thai Forestry Sector Master Plan as a solution to deforestation and 'encroachment' on forest reserves.[45] Therefore, it is not surprising that on the local level conflicts between local people and the RFD in coalition with the Military mounted throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, predominantly focusing on forests and reafforestation projects. As capacities of the RFD were absolutely insufficient to achieve its reafforestation objectives[46] layed down in the National Forest Policy, the agency put its hope in commercial agribusiness and specifically the extension of eucalyptus plantations, therefore leasing

[41] For the controversy on the TFSMP in Thailand see specifically Orawan 1992:61-66, Rajesh 1995 and Carrere/Lohmann 1996:242-245.

[42] About 9 % supposed for 'community forests' and another 7 % for agro-industrial forestry, both areas with the status of forest reserve under the administration of the RFD. Only 4 % of the total land area, presently under the status of forest reserve, is supposed to be handed over to the Agricultural Land Reform Office (ALRO) for conversion into legal agricultural areas.

[43] RFD 1993.

[44] This may be one of the reasons that the TFSMP, altogether, never was passed by the Cabinet. Although, its fundamental objectives of designating 27,5 % of the land area to the PAS and another 16 % as commercial forest area already was passed in 1992. In this resolution the area to be signed over to ALRO was only 0,8 % of the land area (Bhadharajaya 1996:11).

[45] Lohmann, going into the details of this calculation, quite reasonably asks: "It may be wondered why nobody in the think-tanks, boards and ministries involved in formulating plantation policy have performed these simple calculations, or why such projections fail to appear in any of the thousands of pages of official documents produced on forestry and land use each year. The obvious answer is that both bureaucracy and industry are aware of the problems, but want urgently to get large plantation schemes started now." (Lohmann 1990:10).

[46] For a calculation of this insufficiency see Kamon/Thomas 1990:177.

forest reserve areas to private companies at very low costs and for long periods.[47] Therefore, since the beginning 1980s, the RFD, supported by the companies, Police, and Military, had increased its efforts to resettle people living in forest reserves, meeting growing resistance from the local peasants. Even if not facing direct eviction, many of them were threatened in their subsistence as eucalyptus plantations interfered with their forest and land use.

In the context of these conflicts, during the 1980s, a strong civil society movement had emerged which, specifically in its more 'people oriented' parts, increasingly conceived the RFD as one of its main opponents. In the 1990s, the community forest debate and the issue of people living in forest reserves became an important field of politics and societal controversy on social justice, resource control, land rights, democratization and decentralization. The outcome of this controversy, that to a large extent developed in the context of the drafting of a Community Forest Bill, is still open.[48] It mainly finds its expression in two opposing positions related to groups with different interests and ideologies.

On the one hand, there are the Forest Department, conservation oriented academics, and so-called 'dark green' NGOs who concentrate on conservation issues. They believe 'people and forests cannot co-exist' and argue that the protection of forests is only possible if human settlements in forests are removed, and human forest use is restricted to the greatest possible extent. In this perspective, community forests are only to be established outside protected areas and are perceived as a means to satisfy local needs for wood and forest products to reduce pressure on the 'natural' forests which are to be 'protected', as well as to achieve the reafforestation objectives of the RFD.

On the other side, there are various groups of the peasant movement, socially concerned academics, and so-called 'light green' or 'peoples' NGOs who concentrate on the interests and problems of the local rural communities. They presuppose a vital interest of local communities in the protection of their local forests as a source of livelihood as well as for its ecological and cultural functions. Furthermore, they point to traditional cultural patterns of community forests and sustainable co-existence of people and forests. They also conceive the legal institutionalization of community forests as a means to protect the forests against commercial interest as well as to withdraw them from the control through state agencies unable to ensure their protection while denying local communities their rights to their local resources.

The controversy focuses primarily on the question of control over local resources and self-determination as well as the possibility to establish community forests in protected areas. But, in the context of conflicts over resource control broader societal controversies are dealt with too, regarding different conceptions of development and contested societal power relations.

Already in 1989, due to broad public protest, the RFD had been forced to consent to a nation wide 'logging ban'[49], rendering its own commercial orientation, only recently emphasized in the National Forestry Policy (NFP) of 1985, quite problematic. Now, wood predominantly

[47] The contracts generally provided for leasing rates of 1 Baht per rai and year (~ 0,23 US$ per ha and year) for a period of 30 years. Due to public protest they later had to be raised to 10 Baht (Apichai et al. 1992:193f; Pasuk/ Baker 1997:82).

[48] For the controversy on the Community Forest Bill see Brenner et al. 1999. Regarding its role in the democratization process as well as regarding the social and political background of the different positions in this controversy see Buergin/Kessler 1999, 2001.

[49] Due to heavy floods and land slides, in November 1988, in the south of the country, attributed primarily to deforestation and the establishment of rubber plantations, more than 250 people had been killed, forcing the Government to declare the still existing logging ban. Regarding the events leading to the ban see PER 1992:14f. For a critical analysis of the arguments on the causes of the flooding see McKinnon 1997.

had to be imported from neighbouring countries, specifically Burma, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia and Indonesia.[50] Besides this blow to the commercial 'justification' of the RFD, in the beginning of the 1990s it had become obvious that resettlement of now about 12 million people living in the forest reserves, in a big way, wasn't feasable any more. Despite the unrealistic objectives of the TFSMP providing for about 44 % forest area in Thailand. This, most clearly, had been indicated by the failure of two big resettlement projects of the Military.

Similar to the RFD, the Military also had to face increasing legitimization problems in the middle of the 1980s. With the defeat of the communist insurgency in Thailand, in the beginning 1980s, and decreasing influence of communism in neighbouring countries, as reflected in the new quest "battlefields to marketplaces", the main justification for political dominance of the Military became shaky. At the same time, the new economic elites who emerged in the process of modernization and economic development increasingly were demanding political influence and challenging power positions of the Military. In this situation, the Military had turned to rural development and 'forest conservation' as new tasks to justify power and political influence.[51]

Engagement in 'rural development' had already been part of anti-communist strategies of the Military since the 1960s. Reafforestation with commercial eucalyptus plantations and 'forest conservation' were a rather new field of interest, even though, high militaries frequently had strong interests in the logging business and deforestation had been deployed in counterinsurgency. Two projects of 'national importance' mark the engagement of the military in forest policies: the '*Isan Kiew*' or 'Green Northeast' project in the middle of the 1980s, and the '*Khor Jor Kor*' project of the beginning 1990s. In accordance with the forest policies of the RFD, both projects relied on the forced resettlement of people living in forest reserves (projected 1,2 and 6 million people respectively) and reafforestation with commercial eucalyptus plantations. Both projects failed mainly due to heavy local resistance supported by a growing peasant movement, student groups, and NGOs.[52]

In this situation of contested competence and growing resistance, the Protected Area System became of main concern for the RFD as a way to secure sovereignty over large areas as well as positions of power within the state bureaucracy and society. While forest reserves altogether (including protected areas) have only slightly been expanded, from about 43 to 45 % of the total land area since the mid-1980s until the end of the 1990s, protected areas were extended considerably from about 10 % in 1985 to more than 17 % of the land area in 1999, with the objective to enlarge up to 28 %.

The appeal of the PAS to the RFD, to a high degree, is due to its deep rootedness in prominent international and national conservationism. But, there is yet another aspect to the PAS improving the chances of the RFD to succeed in their objectives to establish a conservation area free of human interference of more than a quarter of the countries land area,. The people living in areas designated for the PAS, contrary to the areas in forest reserves apart from it, predominantly are people of ethnic minority groups with a most precarious status in Thai society.

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[50] Regarding the problem of shifting foci of resource exploitation in the region see PER 1992:41-43; Hirsch 1993, 1995; Geary 1994; RFD 1995:30f; Brunner/Talbott/Elkin 1998. General Chavalit Yongchaiyud, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, had visited neighbouring countries to secure provision of wood already before the declaration of the logging ban.

[51] See specifically Perapong 1992. The military's need for reputation grew even more when, in May 1992, the so far last military coup in Thailand was terminated by broad public resistance.

[52] Regarding the Isan Kiew project see eg. Hirsch 1990:172; Perapong 1992:82-185,208-217; PER 1992:68-77; Hirsch 1993:139; Pasuk/Baker 1997:330,347f,354. For the Khor Jor Kor project see for example Pasuk/Baker 1997:83f,417; Brenner et al. 1999:17f, regarding the peasant movement in the context and wake of the project see eg. Preecha n.d.; Pasuk/Baker 1997:355-364; Reuber 1999.

'Forest people' and 'hill tribes' in modernizing Thailand

The RFD's estimates in 1998 accounted for about 600.000 people living in areas designated for the PAS. Contrary to the majority of the estimated 12 million people living altogether in forest reserves, predominantly ethnic Thai, most of the people within the PAS are members of one of the various ethnic minority groups generally categorized as *chao khao* or 'hill tribes'.

The term *chao khao* came into use in the 1950s, as a generic name for various non-Thai groups living predominantly in the uplands of northern and western Thailand. Very soon, the term was identified with the negative stereotype of forest destroying, opium cultivating, dangerous alien troublemakers. Originally this image was mainly derived from the Hmong ethnic minority group, as their shifting cultivation systems frequently included opium cultivation and some of them were involved in the communist insurgencies of the 1960s. It soon was branded on all the different groups categorized as 'hill tribes'. Until today it is a widespread and influential image in Thailand, revived and instrumentalized in the community forest debate and resource conflicts of the 1990s.[53]

Historically and ideologically the term *chao khao* is related to the term *chao pha* ('forest people') which was used to denote these non-Thai minority groups before the term *chao khao* came into use. Within the linguistic and cultural context of the various ethnic Tai groups of Southeast Asia, '*pha*', referring to 'forest', 'wild', 'savage', quite generally is conceived as opposite to '*muang*', referring to 'civility' or the 'human domain'. Frequently, the pole of 'civility' was identified with dominating ethnic Tai groups, while the 'forest/wilderness' pole was related to marginal ethnic minority groups at the edge of the Tai polities.[54]

In the context of the emerging Siamese nation state, towards the end of the 19th century, the elites of the country increasingly merged their conceptions of *muang* or 'civility' with the Western concepts of 'modernity' and 'development'. Urban Thai culture, identified with the *chao krung* or 'city people' and shaped according to Western concepts of state, science, and economics, became the model for 'modernization' and 'national development'. Rural Thai culture, personified in the *chao bannok* or 'villagers' (generally paddy growing buddhist peasants living in the valleys, not necessarily ethnic Thai), was perceived as backward in time and development, but within the space of 'civility'. Therefore, they had the potential for modernization, even more, were perceived as a resource for development. Outside of this space of 'civility', even refusing 'civilization', were the 'wild' non-Thai people of the forests, the *chao pha* ('forest people'), unsuitable for modernization. These 'forest people' had lost their former importance for the ruling elites of the center at the beginning of the 20th century and were to be left on their own. It was not before the middle of the century, when the state in the name of modernization, national security, and 'international' anti-communism began to expand into the peripheral forest and mountain areas, that the *chao pha* re-emerged in national politics as the troublesome *chao khao* or 'hill tribes'.[55] By now, the forests, being the appropriate even though discrediting 'environment' of the 'hill tribes' at the turn of the last century, had been redefined as a resource for national development in the process of modernization.[56]

[53] See for example Krisadawan 1999; Buergin/Kessler 1999, 2001.

[54] Regarding the dynamics and history of this binary classification see Stott 1991; Turton 2000; Thongchai 2000; Renard 2000.

[55] Thongchai 2000:56f. For more comprehensive accounts of these shifts of social categorizing and stereotyping see Thongchai 2000; Renard 2000.

[56] These shifts of meanings of forests and 'forest people' partly reflect similar shifts in the history of European modernization, see for example Merchant 1983; Klose 1985.

The framing of the social category *chao khao* was part of a process of nationalization in which, during the first half of the 20th century, national identity and definition of 'Thai-ness' was linked to certain cultural traits, in particular Thai-buddhism, language, and monarchy. Furthermore, at the latest since the 1950s, Thai-ness is frequently related to a specific, culturally defined pattern of livelihood and residence. Recalling the frames established at the turn of the century, in this perspective, Thai-ness and suitability for inclusion into the nation is made dependent on a 'civilized' way of living, specifically: living in the valleys (not in the mountains or forests!) and growing paddy (no hill rice and swiddening!). Referring to modern environmentalism and conservationism, in this frame, the Thai valley population and the nation are dependent on the undisturbed (unpopulated!) mountain forests that secure the national water supply as well as the ecological stability of the country.[57] In this perspective, the 'hill tribes' already due to their place of residence and their way of livelihood exclude themselves from the Thai nation, even worse, they are threatening the welfare of the whole nation by destroying its forests.[58]

Quite in contrast to the stereotype, the category 'hill tribes' includes a very heterogenous group of culturally diverse ethnic minorities. Most of the people categorized as 'hill tribes' never were involved in the opium business or communist insurgency and traditionally rather practiced sustainable forms of swidden agriculture. At the end of the 1990s, they comprised about 840.000 people or 1,3 % of the total population. Some of them, like the Lawa, H'tin, and most probably the Karen, already have been living in areas now part of the Thai nation state before the Thai speaking ethnic groups immigrated at the beginning of the second millenium. Others, like the Hmong, Yao, and Lahu immigrated since the middle of the 19th century into present day Thailand, or in the beginning of the 20th century like the Lisu and Akha.[59]

Since the 1950s, these groups have been differentiated by Anthropologists and Geographers, on the one hand, into those predominantly living in the uplands at altitudes from about 400 up to 1000 m above sea-level, like the Karen (comprising about 51 % of the total 'hill tribe' population in Thailand), the Lawa (~2 %), H'tin (~4 %), and Khamu (~1,3 %), on the other hand, those living in the 'highlands' at altitudes above 1000 m like the Hmong (about 16 % of the 'hill tribe' population), the Yao (~6 %), Lahu (~10 %), Lisu (~4 %), and Akha (~6 %).

Regarding their dominant economic organization, the groups living at the lower altitudes traditionally mostly cultivated rice in sedentary forms of rotational swidden systems, in combination with paddy fields where possible, while the groups living at the higher altitudes in Thailand 'traditionally' rather practiced forms of shifting cultivation with long cultivation and

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[57] Regarding scientific critique of the ecological assumptions of this frame of thought see Kunstadter et al. 1978; Chupinit 1989; McKinnon 1989; Chantaboon 1989; Lohmann 1995; Enters 1995; Forsyth 1996, 1999.

[58] This frame of thought was most influential since the beginning of hill tribe policies in the 1950s. In the conflicts about local resources and national forest policies, this ideology found broad public resonance in the second half of the 1990s (see e.g. Watershed 1998; Buergin/Kessler 1999, 2001; Pinkaew 2000). In August 2000, one of the leaders of the 'conservation' NGOs in the Chom Thong Conflict appeared on a forum at Thammasat University and on TV talk shows on the 'government side' along with the Director General of the RFD Plodprasop and Deputy Agricultural Minister Newin. "At the Thammasat forum, Plodprasop lamented that the territory of Thailand, which once belonged to the king, 'is gradually being given away'. Newin said the problem was that '90 per cent of the hill peoples are not Thai'." ... "One of the Chomthong leaders said last week: 'This land is ours. We were here before. Hill people are not our people (chao khao mai chai chao rao). If they were Thai, they would live down here in the lowlands." (Nation, 09.18.2000).

[59] For overviews on the various ethnic minority groups of the uplands see for example McKinnon/Vienne 1989; McKinnon/Wanat 1983.

very long fallow periods, requiring periodic shifts of settlement areas, often including opium cultivation.[60]

This 'traditional' model based on ethnic layers related to specific forms of economic organization, since the 1970s, for various reasons became increasingly obsolete. On the one hand, the economic system and settlement patterns of the groups living in the 'highlands' have undergone changes and differentiations due to state control as well as national and international development policies. Swidden systems with long cultivation and very long fallow periods are not practicable any more, opium cultivation in Thailand has become fairly insignificant, and highland groups increasingly have moved down to lower altitudes too. On the other hand, groups of the lower uplands, like the Karen, Lawa, and H'tin, since long, have been living in the valleys too, and ethnic Thai, 'traditionally' plains and valley populations, are moving into the uplands. By now, ethnic Thai constitute the majority of the population of the uplands, formerly almost exclusively inhabited by ethnic minority groups.[61]

Policies towards these ethnic minorities have been concerned, with shifting emphasis from the 1950s until today, with the three problem areas attributed to 'the hill tribes': opium cultivation, national security (read 'anti-communism'), and deforestation (read 'shifting cultivation'). During the 1960s and 70s, the fight against opium cultivation and communist insurgency had dominated hill tribe policies. By the mid-1980s, both issues had lost most of their urgency. Now, most of the remaining forest areas in Thailand were to be found in the uplands of the north and west, in the settlement areas of the 'hill tribes'. Furthermore, deforestation had become a matter of public interest, and 'forest conservation' became the dominant concern of hill tribe policies. At the same time, the military assumed a central role for hill tribe policies. In 1986 the 'Center for the Coordination of Hill Tribe Affairs and Eradiction of Narcotic Crops' (COHAN) was established. It was presided by the Commander of the Third Army and responsible for the implementation of hill tribe policies, now predominantly a resettlement policy.[62]

International and national scientists related to the Tribal Research Institute at Chiang Mai University, including its Director Wanat Bhruksasri, had urgently expressed their concerns about the aggravating resettlement policy towards the end of the 1980s.[63]

> "Throughout the period 1986-1988 in the last years of the Prem administration, the growing impatience with highlanders became clearer everyday. The idea took hold that since highlanders were cutting the forest, destroying the national watershed, endangering lowland property, were not citizens, constituted a security problem, grew narcotics and engaged in illegal trading activities then the quickest way to solve the problem was to simply move them out of the hills. This barrage of charges, advanced by leading national authorities provided a raison d'être for strong intervention, which was underscored by an increasing willingness to use the military and other paramilitary forces to move people from places like national parks, other forested areas and border zones where the government did not want highlanders to be, to places which the authorities considered more suitable." (McKinnon/Vienne 1989:xxiii-xxiv).

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[60] For descriptions of the different land use systems see for example Schmidt-Vogt 1995, 1997; Grandstaff 1980; Uhlig 1980; Kunstadter/Chapman/Sanga 1978; Geddes 1976.

[61] Regarding accounts of these changes in the uplands see for example Elawat 1997; Chupinit 1994; Somnuk/Sombat 1993; Kunstadter/Kunstadter 1992; Vienne 1989; Chantaboon 1989; Kunstadter 1980, 1990; Uhlig 1979, 1980.

[62] For an account of changing hill tribe policies see Buergin 2000.

[63] These concerns were among the main motivations leading to the publication of the reader 'Hill tribes Today' in 1989 (McKinnon/Vienne 1989). They were also quite clearly expressed in personal communication by the director and staff of the Tribal Research Institute on the occasion of a visit of the Institute in 1990. Regarding the resettlement policy of the RFD and Army towards the end of the 1980s see also Chupinit 1987, 1988, 1989; McKinnon 1987, 1989; Eudey 1989; Vithoon 1989.

In the view of the RFD, meanwhile, the 'hill tribes' had become the main 'problem group' regarding deforestation. Already in the National Forest Policy of 1985 'hill tribes' are, in prominent position, mentioned as 'forest degradation problem'[64]:

> "Explicit guidelines shall be established to deal with various forest degradation problems e.g. shifting agriculture, forest fires, forest clearing by the hill tribe minorities, etc. Measures on enforcement of law and penalty codes shall be specified and respective due processes shall be established ...." (RFD 2001).

Even more outspoken was a former Director General of the RFD, Phairot Suvanakorn, in a talk given in the mid-1990s[65], referring to the successfull resettlement policy and the protection of the watersheds against 'encroachment' by "hill tribers" as most important task for the RFD.

> "Up till now, hill-tribers are still the main groups who destroy forests of watershed areas. Although the Thai government has allotted pieces of land for the hill-tribers for their living, but encroachments by those from inside and outside the country are still common.
>
> The RFD has had collaborative efforts with concerned institutions, i.e. Working Group on Forest Protection of the 3th Army Region, to remedy the problem. Approx. 5,000 hill-tribers had been relocated from protected forests to Km 57 on the route of Klong Lan – Umphang of Kampaeng Phet province. Relocation of hill-tribers from Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary to Popphra district, Tak province. Hill-tribers of Nan province of approx. 50,000 shall be relocated to group on the same area for ease of control and social and economic development as well." (Phairot 1996:4).

On the local level, with the spreading of ethnic Thai farmers into the uplands as well as the extension of cash cropping by some of the 'hill tribe' groups, induced and supported by the international and national opium substitution programs, conflicts between ethnic Thai and 'hill tribe' groups increased during the 1980s, specifically over land, forest, and water resources.[66]

At the beginning of the 1990s, these resource conflicts, often termed environmental conflicts, emerged as a national issue in the context of the debate over the Community Forest Bill. NGOs established in local conflicts to support the interests of 'modern' Thai farmers against 'hill tribe' groups together with 'dark green' conservation NGOs, now tried to push through their objective to remove the 'hill tribes' from the watershed areas on a national level and found their 'natural' ally in the RFD with its conservation strategy.[67] In their arguments they generally refer to the image of the 'hill tribes' as destroyers of the nation's watershed forests as well as the cultural frame defining 'Thai-ness' as incompatible with residence in 'watershed forests' and swiddening (see above).

Since 1997, these groups tried to pressure the Government to support their claims with diverse public actions, including petitions to politicians and Government, the fencing of cultivation areas of 'hill tribes' with barbed wire, demonstrations, road blockades, and the burning of effigies of Professors of Chiang Mai University who publicly spoke out for the rights of ethnic minority groups. They demanded the resettlement of all 'hill tribe' groups out of the so-called 'watershed forests' as well as the revocation of three Cabinet Resolutions of April 1997, in which settlements in forests and protected areas under certain conditions had been legalized.

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[64] In this policy, until today the only policy paper on the website of the RFD, 'hill tribes' are the only social group mentioned besides "integrated wood using and pulp and paper industries" who are to be supported, and "corrupted government official and influential person" to be punished.

[65] Phairot Suvanakorn had been Director General of the RFD from 1989 until 1991. In the talk he gave, in March 1996, to a group of german PhD students starting their studies on forestry issues in Thailand, he emphasized his great concern about the 'hill tribe' problem as well as his personal engagement in the resettlement schemes of the 1980s.

[66] Regarding highland-lowland resource conflicts between ethnic groups see for example Pinkaew 2000; Watershed 1997; Waranoot/Bengtsson 1996; Waranoot 1995.

[67] For an account of the increasing tensions between ethnic Thai and 'hill tribe' groups in the context of environmental and resource conflicts see Buergin/Kessler 1999, 2001.

In June 1998, the April 97 resolutions, due to the public pressure, were revoked and most of the settlements in protected areas illegalized again and threatened by forced resettlement. Moreover, with the introduction of the diffuse category of 'ecological sensitive areas', the RFD had created an instrument to facilitate the resettlement of 'legal' settlements established before the declaration of forest reserves or protected areas. The situation of the ethnic minority groups of the uplands, thereby, was getting more precarious once again, as many of them are living in areas declared 'watersheds' and 'protected areas' deemed to be 'ecological sensitive'.

Ethnicism and politics of exclusion

At the same time, the conflicts assumed more and more ethnicist traits, aiming at the territorial, social, and political exclusion of the 'hill tribes' in the context of a more or less outspoken, culturally defined Thai nationalism, even among high government officials. Contrary to the integration policy announced by the Government, the bureaucracy responsible for the naturalization of ethnic minority people is rather reserved and restrictive regarding these groups. Moreover, discretionary powers of the officials in the process of granting citizenship, quite often seem to be used for personal profit and corruption. At the moment, only about 240.000 of the more than 840.000 'hill tribe' people actually do have the status of Thai nationals.[68] Therefore, most of them even cannot refer to the existing legal provisions regarding their settlement and land use rights. Most of them, at best, do have a so-called 'blue ID card' and '*thor ror 13*' residence permits, entitling them to stay in Thailand legally for 5 years and restricting freedom of movement to the district of registration.[69]

The new hill tribe policy in the context of the resource and environmental conflicts since the late 1980s and beginning 90s, increasingly led to resettlement of 'hill tribe' villages as well as restrictions on their traditional land use systems. Since 1998, pressure on the ethnic minority groups in the uplands even seems to be growing once more, resulting in arbitrary arrests, forced resettlement, terror, and violence.[70]

In May 1998, the new Director General of the RFD, Plodprasop Suraswadi, signed an agreement with Gen. Chettha Thannajaro, Supreme Commander of the Army, specifying the cooperation of RFD and Army to protect Thailand's remaining forests. In this agreement the Army is given far reaching authorities as well as financial support for operations in forest areas where 'illegal immigration' and illegal large scale logging prevail, while the RFD is responsible for forest areas encroached by small scale farmers. According to this division of responsibilities, the RFD mainly will have to deal with the Thai farmers predominantly living in the highly degraded forest reserves, while the Military is supposed to deal with the 'non-Thai' ethnic minority groups, often living in protected and watershed areas.[71]

The fruits of this agreement and the new policy were to be observed in a 'pilot project' of this alliance in the Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary, core area of the so-called 'Western Forest Complex' conceived as the most important forest area within the Protected Area System, and a global heritage since 1991.

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[68] BP 7.25.2001.

[69] Regarding the status of 'hill tribe' people and public debate on it see for example Deuleu/Naess 1997; McKinnon 1989; BP 7.19.2001; BP 5.26.2000; BP 5.4.2000; Nation 7.23.1999; Nation 7.12.1999; Nation 7.14.1999; BP 5.20.1999.

[70] See for example Watershed 1998; Pinkaew 2000; Watershed 2001.

[71] Nation 5.9.98; BP 7.2.98.

On April 13 in 1999, the Director General of the RFD himself flew into the Wildlife Sanctuary, landing with his helicopter at the place where the Karen just had started to celebrate an important annual religious festival supposed to last for three days. The Director General requested to stop the ceremonies and, soon after, the military was burning down religious shrines of the Karen. Afterwards, from April 18 to May 12, a group of soldiers and forest rangers marched through the different villages of the sanctuary, threatening the villagers. They demanded to stop growing rice, demolished huts and personal belongings, and burnt down a rice barn.

When these events became public, the Director General of the RFD downplayed his role in the incidents, at first denying any military actions at all. Not so Lt.-Gen. Taweep, the commander of the military troops involved. He seemed rather proud of their achievements, declaring the operation a 'pilot project' in their efforts to control local communities to prevent forest destruction in and around protected areas.[72]

Throughout the following months, efforts to 'convince' the Karen people to resettle voluntarily continued with military raising signs at village entrances prohibiting agricultural activities and preventing villagers from using their fields. Allegedly, they even confiscated identity cards and house registration papers while raiding villages and arresting people unwarranted for days as well as removing families without Thai identification cards, supposed to be illegal Burmese immigrants. Even though the Senate Human Rights Panel had criticized the incidents, RFD and Military continued with the implementation of their joint resettlement program in November 2000, announcing further relocations of families as well as the preparation of the resettlement area for all the villages in the sanctuary.[73]

Almost at the same time when the 'pilot project' in the World Heritage Site was executed, 3000 representatives of the different 'hill tribe' groups demonstrated, from April 26 to May 20 in 1999, in front of the seat of the provincial government in Chiang Mai. They were supported by various Thai NGOs as well as by a group of academics whose effigies already had been burnt by conservationists in the conflicts around the Community Forest Bill. They demanded their right to be granted Thai citizenship, the simplification of the procedures for naturalization, and the recognition of their settlement and land use rights in protected areas, in which some of them had been living for generations.

On the 2nd of May, negotiations with Deputy Interior Minister Vatana Asvahame and Deputy Agricultural Minister Newin Chidchob began. In the context of the debate on the Community Forest Bill Newin already had made clear his position that use rights in community forests shall be granted only to Thai nationals. It was agreed to establish various committees to further negotiate. After discussing this agreement in Cabinet, on May 11, the demonstrators had to learn that the composition of the committees had been changed, with no provisions for representatives of the ethnic minority groups and supporting academics anymore.

Therefore, they decided to continue their demonstration until the assembly was dissolved by force of about 1200 forest rangers and 400 police men in the night of May 18 to 19. The supporting academics in vain tried to negotiate and finally led the scared demonstrators, who had to leave most of their belongings behind, to the university campus.

[72] For details on the events in April/May 1999 see Buergin/Kessler 1999; BP 5.13.99; BP 5.15.99; Nation 5.15.99; BP 5.16.99; Nation 5.27.99; BP 5.30.99; Watershed 1999.

[73] Regarding the events in 2000 see Buergin 2002a (forthcoming); BP 9.19.2000, 9.20.2000, 9.21.2000, 10.12.2000, 11.1.2000, 11.3.2000, 11.7.2000, 12.1.2000, 12.7.2000, 12.11.2000; Nation 9.19.2000, 11.3.2000, 11.7.2000, 12.3.2000.

The following day, NGOs and journalists criticized the authorities, arguing the breaking up of the peaceful demonstration was an offense against the new constitution. Those responsible seem to have had a hard time to defend their actions. The Director General of the RFD claimed having sent his rangers only on behalf of the Governor to clear up the place. The Governor wasn't willing to comment on the issue at all and the Deputy Agricultural Minister declared the incident an 'accident' which would not have happened at all if the 'hill tribes' had not demonstrated, and he recommended the journalists would do best to forget about it.[74]

On May 20, the demonstrators finally left Chiang Mai after the Minister of the Interior agreed to improve the procedures for naturalization and the Minister of Agriculture declared to reconsider the residence of the ethnic minority groups in the forests after they have registered with their local forestry office. Regarding present policies of the RFD as well as still growing resource conflicts between ethnic Thai and ethnic minority groups, one may be sceptical whether political action will follow and whether these actions will improve the situation of the ethnic minority groups.

Local heritages and transcultural resistance

While the forced dispersal of the demonstration in Chiang Mai aroused broad public rejection and civil society protests on the national level to an extent that nobody wanted to take over responsibility, the events in Thung Yai later were promoted as a 'pilot project' and success of the 'new' forest conservation policy of the RFD and Military. The incidents in Thung Yai, at first, happened without public attention, not least due to the remoteness of the area. When they were made public they caused some protest among concerned journalists and NGOs, but constant harassement hardly is suitable to sustain media attention and public interest, even more so in an athmosphere of growing ethnicism towards 'hill tribes'. Having in mind the forest politics of the last two decades, one may even wonder why there are still people living in Thailand's global heritage at the beginning of the new millenium.

The about 3000 people living in Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary, apart from the public servants being ethnic Thai, are almost exclusively ethnic Karen, born to about 90 % in Thailand, predominantly within the sanctuary itself.[75] According to their traditions their ancestors came to the area fleeing political and religious suppression in Burma after the Burmese had conquered the Mon Kingdoms of Lower Burma in the 18th century. The first written historic references to their residence in Thung Yai may be found in Thai chronicles of the late 18th century. They tell us that in 1775 and 1785 Karen living in the area were supporting Thai troops fighting the Burmese army.[76]

In the early 19th century, Karen of this western border area received formal settlement rights from the Governor of Kanchanaburi, and their leader was conferred the rank of Siamese nobility *Khun Suwan*. When the status of the border area was raised to that of a *muang* or principality, between 1827 and 1839, the Karen leader of the *muang* was awarded the title of *Phra Si Suwannakhiri* by King Rama III. At the latest since 1873, *Phra Si Suwannakhiri* resided in Sanepong which became the centre of the *muang* and nowadays is one of the Karen villages lying within the Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary.

During the second half of the 19th century, this *muang* was of considerable importance for the Siamese Kings, guarding part of their western border with British-Burma, and Karen living

[74] See BP 5.16.99; BP 5.20.99; BP 6.6.99; BP 6.28.99.
[75] For the history and present situation of the villages in the sanctuary see Buergin 2002a (forthcoming).
[76] Regarding references in Thai chronicles see Renard 1980.

there were consulted for the delineation of the border between Thailand and Burma under King Rama V. It was only in the beginning of the 20th century, after the establishment of the modern Thai nation state, that the Karen in Thung Yai lost their former status and their importance for the Thai state, re-appearing on the national political agenda as forest encroachers and illegal immigrants towards the end of the 20th century.

Until today, most of the households in Thung Yai are living on subsistence farming, predominantly growing rice in swidden fields and some paddy fields. Besides rice a great variety of other plants is grown and collected in swidden fields, gardens, and forests. Fishing is important regarding protein provision, besides, various smaller animals are hunted and collected. Bigger animals, for fear of punishment as well as for reputation in the public discourse on their settlements, are not hunted anymore by the Karen living in the sanctuary, causing quite some problems as wild boar frequently ravage the fields of the Karen. Furthermore, a considerable part of the Karen are vegetarian, and most of the households dissaprove raising pigs and chicken due to religious reasons. Generally small supplementing cash incomes are obtained in most households by way of selling chillies, tobacco, and various other fruits grown within the traditional land use system. Wage labour is, in most households, of rather little importance[77]. Until today, most of the basic provisions for subsistence are produced locally.

Their rotational swidden system depends on short cultivation and long fallow periods. Within a territory 'controled' by the village community, every year each household selects a swidden field according to its size and capacity for work. The secondary vegetation of the fallow area, predominantly a kind of bamboo forest, is cut, and burnt after a period of drying. After being used to grow hill rice, generally for one year, the field once again is left fallow for several years, while numerous plants growing in the fallow are used continuously. The long fallow periods of 5 – 15 years (and more) together with specific cultivation techniques support the long-term productivity of the soils.

The Karen in Thung Yai conceive themselves as people living in and of the forest, as part of a very complex and lively 'community' of plants, animals, humans, and spiritual beings. Within this community, the Karen do not feel as 'superiors', but rather as highly dependent on the various other beings and forces. Living in this community requires adaptation as well as highly specific knowledge about the interdependencies and 'rules' of this community. Fostering relations to the various spriritual caretaker of the community is an integral and important part of Karen life in the sanctuary. Their permission and support continuously has to be sought in order to live in and make use of the forest and the land.

Out of a 'modern' perspective, many of these rules and 'traditions' may be termed 'ecological knowledge'. In these rules and norms as well as in their daily practice of livelihood, passed on and transformed from generation to generation, a very rich and highly specific knowledge about the 'environment' of the Karen is conserved and kept alive. This 'ecological knowledge' as well as the 'real' and 'imagined' history of the Karen in Thung Yai are at the heart of their identity and of the way they see themselves.

The world 'outside', and specifically the 'Thai world', is perceived as very different, often incomprehensible (for the elder people frequently starting with the Thai language), and rather threatening. Their relations with this outside world have been changing frequently in history, not least in the context of Thailand's modernization and globalization process. But regarding their 'internal affairs', the Karen in Thung Yai had been largely autonomous until, in the beginning 1960s, economic and political interests furthered the extension of state authority into the peripheral areas of the country in the name of 'modernization', 'development', and 'national security'. The intrusion of Thai institutions into the 'living space' of the Karen, at first, trigge-

[77] The mean annual income per person in 1996 was below 50 US $.

red and shaped changes of the social, political, and religious organization of the Karen communities, while the economic organization of most of the housholds remained rather unchanged until the late 1980s and beginning 1990s.[78]

During the first half of the 20th century, the population in Thung Yai, most probably, only increased very moderately. From the early 1970s to the late 1990s, population roughly doubled up to 3000 people approximately. This increase, apart from population growth within the area, predominantly is to be attributed to Karen whose neighbouring settlement areas had been flooded in the course of the building of various hydroelectric dams (see above). To a far lesser degree, it was also due to refugees fleeing suppression and war in Burma, many of them joining relatives in Thung Yai. Until today, inside the sanctuary there has been only very few acquisition of land by ethnic Thai farmers, who comprise less than 1 % of the population, not least due to the remoteness of the area, but quite probably also due to its conservation status.

Subsistence within the traditional 'territories' or land use areas of the Karen communities is no problem in the context of their traditional land use system. Assuming a mean fallow period of 10 years, the total agricultural area in the sanctuary, including fallow areas, presently accounts for about 1 % of its total area.

When, in the beginning of the 1990s, the RFD, in the process of nominating the Wildlife Sanctuary for a World Heritage Site, tried to finally settle its problem of people living in the sanctuary by removing them, it met unexpected strong public criticism, urging the Director General of the RFD to publicly reverse the agency's resettlement scheme. Though, the objective to move the Karen out of the sanctuary remained strong within the agency. During the following years, the RFD concentrated on the land use system of the Karen, allegedly being detrimental to the forests of the sanctuary, prohibiting the use of fallow areas older than three years. In the longer term, these restrictions necessarily will lead to the breakdown of the traditional land use system, as the soils under constant use rapidly loose their productivity. In the villages where control through RFD and Military is most effective, many households already faced increasing subsistence problems in the second half of the 1990s.

The only possibility for the Karen to adapt to these restrictions, apart from trying to avoid them, seems to be 'modernization'. They may either try to increase the productivity of the fields, using fertilizers and pesticides (which most of them cannot afford), or right away turn to cash cropping in, or wage labour outside the sanctuary. Actually, intensification of agriculture and cash cropping is propagated and supported by some of the government institutions and NGOs working in the sanctuary. But, most of the Karen in Thung Yai decline these efforts, trying to carry on with their subsistence farming. Furthermore, intensification of land use, cash cropping, and increasing market orientation - that is 'modernization' - in the end, leads to their own de-legitimization as a 'forest people' with a 'sustainable' land use living in 'harmony with nature'.

But, it is precisely this 'image' which is presently their most important asset in the national debate that may decide about whether or not they can remain in their villages in the sanctuary. In contrast to the dominating stereotype of the forest destroying 'hill tribes', harmful to society and nation, the Karen in Thailand, and specifically those living in Thung Yai, are increasingly referred to as 'people living in harmony with nature' and cited as an example for the stand that people and forests can co-exist very well. This position within Thailand's public discourse on 'forests and people' had its origins in the rising conflicts about villages in forest reserves and forest policies towards the end of the 1980s (see above). In resistance to resettlement policies in forest reserves, eucalyptus plantations, illegal logging and corruption, an emerging peasant

[78] See Buergin 2002b forthcoming.

movement as well as concerned academics and NGOs had developed the community forest concept as a counter model to the conservation concept and commercial reafforestation approach of the RFD and big agribusiness companies.[79]

The Karen in Thung Yai find their allies among these groups. But for them it is a rather difficult and ambivalent 'alliance'. In their encounters with state agencies they frequently find themselves in a state of right- and powerlessness. Open resistance to continous repression as well as acts of violence through RFD officials and Military is rather difficult for the Karen, not least due to specific cultural frames of behaviour and historically grounded interethnic relations between Karen and Thai. With good reason, they very much feel that their rights and concerns are not relevant in the national and international discourse about the place that is their home.

Even towards their Thai allies among NGOs and activists a strong feeling generally prevails that they cannot really express their own view, that they have to use words, arguments, and ideas that are not really their own while trying to explain and justify their situation and claims. These 'communication problems' are not predominantly language problems, even though many of the elder Karen have only limited competence in Thai language, but, by the Karen themselves, are attributed to different cultural contexts.

Among themselves they do take different positions towards the external influences and the resettlement threat, even though, there generally is no dissent about the unwarrantedness of the resettlement objective and the wish to remain in their villages, as well as to protect their culture and living place. There is a rather small group, including most of the Phu Yai Ban[80], which is open for 'moderate modernization' to some degree, without having to give up Karen identity. The vast majority is rather more reluctant to changes, preferring to 'live like our grandparents did' as a common saying goes. Among them there are marked differences in their reaction to the external influences. A rather big group, who may be labeled 'extroverted traditionalists', including many influential elders as well as young people, is trying to shape the changes taking place and resist to the threats the Karen are facing by trying to strengthen and revitalize Karen culture and identity, as well as seeking support and advocacy outside of Thung Yai. Another group of more 'introverted traditionalists' as well focuses on revitalizing 'traditional' Karen culture, but they invoke to a higher degree millenarian and more 'exclusive' frames of Karen culture and rather avoid transcultural exchange and support.

Despite these differences of position and strategy, all these groups refer to the same specific cultural frame of values and objectives regarding a 'decent' life appropriate for a Karen living in Thung Yai. Sharpened, but not created in the clashes with external actors and influences, this conception of specific Karen values and objectives focuses on the concepts of 'modesty' in opposite to 'greed', 'harmony' in contrast to conflict, as well as 'spiritual development' versus 'material development'.

The counterpart in contrast to which these conceptions are drawn is quite obvious and, as such, explicitly named by the Karen. It is primarily the 'modern' Thai society, increasingly 'intruding' into their traditional living places and spaces, threatening their very 'cultural' and physical existence. Less pronounced, it is the 'modern world' altogether. There is no need to emphasize that 'greed', conflict, as well as material needs and desires do exist in Karen communities as well, even though to a may be somewhat lesser extent compared to other communities and societies stressing different values and objectives.

[79] On the reasoning of the community forest approach see for example Anan 1992a,b, 1998; Yos 1992, 1993, 1995; Local Development Institute 1992; TDN 1994.

[80] The village head in the context of the state administrative system.

Local representation and cultural hegemony

The point to start from here is the question for the justifications of imposing certain cultural frames on others, even though, I will not try to answer this 'tricky' question, not even in the specific case of the Karen in Thung Yai. I will only point to the cultural underpinnings and 'relativity' of concepts like 'modernization' and 'conservationism' that, although contrasting, are comparable to cultural frames the Karen refer to. The concept of modernization already was identified as being, at least partly, a kind of counter-model for the values and objectives of Karen in Thung Yai. Positively, 'modernization' is based, to a high degree, on the concepts and values of material, economic development, continuous growth, social competition, and consumerism.

Modern conservationism, as the paper indicates, is closely related to modernization. Together with modernization it has its cultural roots within the ideological dissociation of 'man' and 'nature' and the assumption of man's supremacy over 'nature', a framing quite in contrast to the much more 'communal' and 'subordinate' conception of the Karen. Conservationism in the context of modernization may be perceived, on the one hand, as a means to subordinate 'nature' by defining it as a resource for human development, inserting it into the domain of human control and management, on the other hand, as an effort to regulate and compensate detrimental effects occuring in the process of modernization. The modern concept of conservation in its aspects of dissociation and domination is rather strange to the Karen. But, 'regulating' their relations to their 'living space' and compensating for their interferences in this space are important aspects of their cultural frames and everyday life as well, even though with quite different means and objectives.

All three discourses about the 'conservation' of Thung Yai, the 'local', 'national', and 'global' discourse, refer to the area as being an important part of the 'living space' of the respective 'community', worth of and in need for protection. While the national and global discourse are, to a high degree, interrelated and mutually intelligible, the local discourse of the Karen is to them of no relevance and mainly unintelligible (even 'untranslatable' as the Karen would say). Furthermore, they highly differ in interests and objectives. On the one hand, the national and international discourses emphasize the resources of the sanctuary like forests, wildlife, biodiversity as a legacy of 'mankind' and/or the 'nation', conceiving the people in it as a disruptive factor. The Karen, on the other hand, refer to Thung Yai as their 'living place' and 'natural' home, its 'resources' being granted to them by the 'forest community' under the provision to take care of them.

Assuming there is something like a 'national' or 'global community'[81] with a respective 'living space' and respective rights to this space, Thung Yai seems to be a case of conflict of interests that has to be mediated politically. There are good reasons to argue, that there is a rather fundamental difference between local 'places' and national or global 'spaces', implying different rights and scopes of responsibility and control, specifically regarding local resources. But, these rights always are open to dispute and reasoning, highly contested in politics and societal controversies, as the case of Thailand's conservation and forest controversies clearly shows.

The international as well as the national 'community' concerned have commited themselves to principles of democracy and human rights, in the case of Thailand's new constitution even conceding far reaching rights to local communities to their local resources and cultural self-

[81] Which in the case of nations is quite generally conceded, but, with good arguments, also may be contested, even more so in the case of a 'global community'.

determination. The Karen in Thung Yai, until today, never had a chance to participate in the 'external' discourses and decisions regarding their local living space.

Not being a member of the Thai 'national community', I have some reservations to give 'recommendations'[82]. But, being concerned with the Karen in Thung Yai, I would wish that members of this national community, concerned with democratization and human rights, engage in providing possibilities for the representation of the Karen in institutions directly concerned with the sanctuary and in giving them a vote with a voice of their own regarding decisions about it.

As a member of the 'global community' I feel easier to express my opinions and arguments regarding a World Heritage Site in Thailand. Having adopted Thung Yai as a 'global heritage', the 'global community' also should assume responsibility for its heritage. As far as I can see, neither commitments of the 'international community' to principles of democracy and human rights, nor threats posed to 'its' heritage warrant the forced removal of the Karen people from their home in Thung Yai. To almost 100 % they explicitly have expressed their wish to stay in their home places, even if offered improved living standards and development chances outside the sanctuary. According to their own standards, the international institutions concerned with the World Heritage Site should speak out against the pressures and acts of terror towards the Karen, as well as support their existence in Thung Yai.

The differences of easyness and 'legitimacy' I feel to raise concerns and interests in different social contexts, on the one hand, point to the problem of affiliation to social communities, the determination of inclusions and exclusions. On the other hand, they point to the problem of self-determination versus heteronomy of social communities in relation to other social units, a problem that seems to be growing with increasing social complexity. The local situation and future of the Karen is, to a high degree, determined by 'national' and 'international communities' whose cultural frames are very different from those of the Karen and to which the Karen neither have access nor representation, even regarding issues of their own concern.

The problem of representation is even aggravated by problems of scales and cultural frames. Generalizing frames of thought and perception that are designed on 'national' or 'international' levels of social organization to fit these broader contexts, to some extent necessarily have to distort perceptions when applied to specific local situations[83]. They may be highly inadequate if not adapted to the local situations which seems to be only possible through a process of 'participation' and representation of those concerned on the local level.

Apart from the problem of scales, the problem of different cultural frames is almost ubiquitous in the interrelations of social 'communities'. This mainly seems to be problematic insofar as dominating 'communities', quite frequently, seem to have a tendency to impose their cultural frames on other 'communities'. Even if a willingness to be 'careful' with such impositions is presupposed, there still remains the problem to become aware of 'self-evident' cultural frames.

The economic, political, and cultural processes of globalization of the 20th century may be seen, to a considerable degree, as resulting from efforts to define culturally specific frames of thought as 'universal' or 'global' and to impose them on other national and local social contexts. This has been successfull to such a degree that it is difficult to identify basic concepti-

[82] Even though, this is common practice among scientists although generally framed in more 'objective' and 'scientific' speech.

[83] The dialectic tension between generalization and diffentiation is basic to human cognition. Regarding the problem of scales in the context of the perception and determination of social realities, it is aggravating with increasing social complexity in the process of the differentiation of 'local', 'national', 'transnational', 'global', and other levels and forms of social organization.

ons of the dominating 'culture of modernity' like, for example, 'development', 'unlimited growth', 'competition', and 'consumerism' as culture specific concepts.

The process of 'globalization', conceived as part of the historical process of increasing social complexity towards transnational and international institutions and networks as well as growing global integration and interdependence, most likely, will continue in the foreseeable future. But, contrary to the culturally framed conception of 'modernization', this process does not necessarily determine structure, values, and objectives of this emerging global social organization, just as little as it necessarily determines scopes for action and self-determination within 'global', 'transnational', 'national', 'regional', 'local', and whatever other social contexts. Questioning 'higher level' generalizing frames of thought as well as cultural frames claiming 'global' or 'universal' validity, and resisting their claim to hegemony, are the precondition to protect scopes of action and self-determination and the possibility to participate in shaping the process of globalization.

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