

# The Existence of ‘Sasi Ikan Lompa’ in the Millenium Era: Profit or Loss? Evidence from Maluku, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>Sally Paulina Sandanafu, <sup>2</sup>Dady Mairuhu, <sup>3</sup>Vury Lilian Angela Sadubun

**ABSTRACT**--This study aims to revealed whether Sasi Ikan Lompa brings benefits or losses in modern era and how the local government particularly the Maluku Tourism Department contributes to promoting local wisdom Sasi. Data analysis techniques used a qualitative descriptive approach to explain the existence of Sasi. The results show that Sasi custom provides considerable benefits for the people’s prosperity. Thus, the existence of Sasi should be maintained for increasing community income. This research is expected to contribute ideas and policies to the related parties in empowering the potential of natural resources and their sustainability.

**Keywords**-- Sasi, Ikan Lompa, Existence, Profit, Loss

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a pluralistic country because it has a wide variety of ethnicities, cultures, customs, races and religions. This plurality makes Indonesia be a little different from other countries. Maluku is one of the provinces in Indonesia which also has such diversity, especially in terms of cultural customs. The cultural traditions of the Maluku region are unique to each other. The most important thing is Maluku consists of hundreds of villages which is lead by “Raja” (King); that is why Maluku is often called the "Land of Kings". Maluku, also known as Thousand Islands and is categorized as an Archipelagic Province due to the geographical condition of Maluku which consists of 812 islands consisting mostly of small islands surrounded by the sea area (92.4%) and terrestrial (7.5% ) of the rest. In other words, the Maluku sea area is around 12 times if compared to the land area, it turns out that it has its own customary legal system in the marine field which is known as *Sasi Laut* Law (Nendissa, 2010). *Sasi* that is implemented in Maluku cannot be separated from the role of the village community. This is made clear by Article 103 (b) of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages and Article 6 of Law Number 31 of 2004 (Antari, 2015).

In Maluku province, there are several local pearls of wisdom that have been maintained until now in order to balance human life with nature. One of them is "SASI". Almost all villages in Maluku have a "SASI" tradition, including in Haruku village which is famous for “SASI LOMPA. This "SASI" custom is a prohibition intended for villagers who are willing to exploit Lompa fish (*Trissina Baelama*) intentionally or unintentionally. Those who break this rule will bear all the consequences according to applicable customary rules. There is a bond between the

---

<sup>1</sup> Ambon State of Polytechnic, Maluku, Indonesia, [ssandanafu@gmail.com](mailto:ssandanafu@gmail.com).

<sup>2</sup> Ambon State of Polytechnic, Maluku, Indonesia, [dady\\_mairuhu@ymail.com](mailto:dady_mairuhu@ymail.com).

<sup>3</sup> Ambon State of Polytechnic, Maluku, Indonesia, [vurylilian@yahoo.co.id](mailto:vurylilian@yahoo.co.id).

community and very vicious customs. Circumstances take care of the surrounding nature in terms of the necessity of working methods and tools used so as not to damage nature (Renyaaan, et al., 2013). All maintenance of natural resources is overseen by traditional institutions such as the king, head of Soa, Saniri, Kewang and Marinyo. However, the most important role, in this case, is Kewang and the son of Kewang called the police of the forest (Judge and Nurizka, 2008). The duties and responsibilities of the finance are very important because all the borders of the country, forests, gardens are guarded and maintained by the authorities and even finance can judge them according to the specified time (Nendissa, 2010). But in practice, Kewang is faced with various problems both external and internal including limited human resources. Therefore, many youth villagers are affected by modernization so that they are not so interested in becoming a kewang. Kewang should be supported and participated by the local governments, particularly the tourism industry. In this case, the tourism industry has less participation. These things are feared to be the cause of the diminished existence of Sasi tradition in Maluku.

According to Fadlun (2006) sasi only emphasizes a temporal prohibition. Thus, *Sasi* has a temporal dimension and attributes (symbols) that make *Sasi* institutions binding. This has a very positive impact on the implementation of *Sasi* because it will ultimately benefit the rural and regional communities. In addition, the implementation of *Sasi* also teaches the value of not being selfish and considering the value of social inclusion. This can be seen from the fish distribution system when harvesting fish (open *Sasi*). Widows and orphans are given more shares than the general society in Haruku. Supposedly, *Sasi* is a natural resource that brings blessings and benefits to humans instead of harming humans so that it is seen as a curse on these natural resources. The Auty Thesis (1993) showed that natural resources abundant actually has bad economic results and vice versa. This research is supported by research Leibrandt and Lynham (2018) which proves that natural resources that are managed together with related parties will provide great benefits and vice versa if there is no collaboration between institutions related institutions, the natural resources will not have any reason. Unlike the research conducted by Mehlum, *et al* (2006) who found that countries rich in natural resources will increase and decrease in economic growth due to the quality of regulatory agencies these natural resources.

The inconsistency of the results of the above research encourages researchers to reveal and explain the phenomena and existence of the Lompa fish culture in Haruku Island, Maluku province which is a commodity in the implementation of sasi. Lompa fish sasi is opened every year using a budget sourced from non-governmental organizations so that it seems that there are no regulatory agencies that have contributed to the implementation of the sasi tradition which incidentally has been carried out by the Haruku village community itself. Lompa fish sasi itself has no sale value so it cannot be marketed and is only consumed by villagers. Lompa fish are dried so they are durable and can be consumed for more than 1 year. From an economic standpoint, Sasi Lompa fish is very helpful for villagers in meeting food needs but as time goes by and increasingly sophisticated technology, the sustainability of local wisdom will be increasingly threatened.

This research is interesting according to the researchers because :

1. Local wisdom is an ancestral heritage that is sometimes overlooked and sunk by the modernization of the times.

2. The lack of researchers who researched a variety of local wisdom related to customs from an economic perspective
3. Stimulating the involvement of local governments, especially the tourism office in developing the potential for local wisdom in Maluku.

## II. STUDY LITERATURE

Some previous studies have already explored a lot about cultural customs in Maluku in terms of fisheries and marine affairs, socio-cultural environment and legal aspects, but there was still little research interested in it from the side of the economic context. One of the researchers in Indonesia who willed to explore detail from the economics side was Sangadji. In his dissertation (2010), he examined the customs as an effort to maintain economic sustainability from a social capital perspective. The research showed that *Adat* had huge implications for economic performance (increased productivity, distribution of people's income, income in the village's treasury). But in terms of social conditions that are not conducive to occur where there is mutual suspicion between the community towards the Village staffs and towards the king who allowed the process of *Sasi* will not run or last long because the implementation of *sasi* currently tends to ignore social norms and more leads to economic content where there are a division uneven or more dependent results on fishermen. The results of this study essentially state that there are positive and negative impacts of the implementation of *adat sasi*. The existence and sustainability of *adat sasi* will depend on the parties involved in it so that *sasi* which is a natural wealth will still exist and provide benefits to humans.

*Adat Sasi* is a national heritage that actually benefits the people who preserve it. Experimental research conducted by Van Der Ploeg (2010) actually proves that the inherited natural resources can not only be a blessing or a benefit for humans but can also be a curse and a loss due to several factors including the conflict in society and weak economic growth. The research also proves the conditions and reasons why some regions can be rich in natural resources while other regions actually suffer losses. Related to this, Gazuda (2015) in his paper revealed that the sustainability of natural resources is very dependent on the management of renewable natural resources including how to increase the intensity of reproduction and consumption of natural resources. These studies prove that the existence and sustainability of natural resources will depend very much on the people who run them and the ability of resources nature to renew itself because if the higher the ability of natural resources to reproduce, the higher the level of consumption and will directly bring benefits to humans. *Lompa Fish* used as a commodity in Haruku Island, Maluku has a high ability in reproduction, but unfortunately *Lompa fish* It has no sale value so it cannot be marketed and is only consumed within one's own community. Thus the *Sasi* custom which aims at preserving and balancing natural resources seems to be ignored.

## III. RESEARCH PURPOSES

The objectives of this study are:

1. Reveal whether the implementation of the *Sasi Lompa fish* is beneficial or detrimental to the community

2. To explore the rule of the local government in this case, the Tourism office in the preservation of the Lompa fish culture
3. To explore the existence of Lompa fish in culture improves the rural and regional economy.

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was a descriptive qualitative approach which had explored and revealed more deeply about the existence of “Lompa fish custom” in Haruku and its impact on community economic development. Data were obtained from 3 informants who were interviewed. They were the king of Haruku village, Kewang in Haruku and Haruku village community leaders. Besides the primary data, this research was supported by some secondary data sourced from online news, books and other references. The location of this research was in Haruku village. The researchers tried to choose this village because it is the only one which still maintaining the tradition of Lompa fish custom until now.

#### V. RESULTS

After searching and interviewing relevant parties, this research found that there were several reasons why this tradition still survived in this modern era. We tried to ask the Kewang of Haruku village about the reasons for this sasi to survive and how far the existence of the Lompa fish sasi custom currently in the midst of technological advances are. Surprisingly he explained more detail about (1) what is Sasi in general; (2) Sasi Lompa in Haruku; (3) the reasons to prevent Sasi Lompa: (a) economic value sides; (b) educating the villagers; (c) preserve the environment; (4) contradict about interest and uninterest of the villagers to promote Sasi Lompa (technology sides). The following were the results of an interview with Kewang Haruku, Elisa Kissya, who was responsible for the implementation of “*Sasi Lompa*”.

Researcher: ‘What are the reasons for this sasi to survive and how is the existence of the Lompa fish sasi custom currently in the midst of technological advances?’

Mr. Eli: "It has been a decision of the results of the family meeting that I have to stay in the village to preserve this tradition. I, the only one who passed “Sekolah Rakyat” (Elementary level) should have the responsibility in handling this tradition. At that time, my position was to be a Kewang. This profession was not interested in those who accomplished their education out of Haruku village. As they did never care to preserve this Sasi tradition. So to whom can we trust this tradition? "Sasi can survive until now because sasi has a high selling value in tourism and sasi has social values that can educate people in acting and respecting their environment. I have to give up everything because I really appreciate this ancestral custom and am determined to keep preserving sasi until the end of my life.

Researcher: "What is the involvement of the local government in the existence of this sasi tradition?"

Mr. Eli: "As you can see here, all the things that you see and touch were assisted by several countries such as Japan, Italy and several things from Pattimura University. I always try to promote this tradition to local even international people so they can be involved with us here and will to give their hands. As a result, I was invited by the Ministry of the Environment from Jakarta directly to present the result of Sasi Lompa Tradition in Haruku.

You see, how the central government cares about us but we never accepted such a helping from the Maluku government. That is why for opening Sasi Lompa, the fund we've got from non-governmental organizations. We cannot wait for the disbursement of funds from the government which must pass through a decent bureaucracy and it will slow us down to open sasi.

Researcher: "Does this sasi bring benefits to the villagers or does it cause harm instead?"  
Mr. Eli: "These Lompa fish live everywhere but at the time of opening sasi, these fish will gather in only one river in Haruku. This is the fact and we believe that the gathering of these fish is due to God's grace for us and if we do not maintain this custom carefully, the curse will occur in this Haruku country. Maluku is very rich in natural resources but it is also this province is one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia, what's the Barometer? I am surprised. Sasi itself is a real example of Maluku's wealth. The people here can survive with Lompa fish for one year or more, one *Sagu Tumang* (a container made from banana fronds to put raw sago instead of rice) can be consumed for six months, star gooseberry, bamboo shoots, Moringa oleifera, Gnetum gnemon. They will find easily here so what is the hardest thing that we cannot get from this land? Sasi Lompa fish is certainly a great gift for us and I hope that the government and the tourism office can see this as an income for our beloved province. Seeing this fact, they will work together, hand in hand to maintain and introduce this sasi tradition to foreign countries. No one feels disadvantaged from these customs. I will feel a loss if the local government and the tourism industry are reluctant and hands-off in empowering this custom. I think it is a big loss. "

The research data was also obtained from the king of Haruku and an indigenous community leader who stated that basically, the Sasi tradition has many economic, social and religious benefits. Sasi also teaches the community not only to maintain environmental balance but also balance in social life. Based on data from Haruku village apparatus, by the opening of the Lompa fish tradition, the income of Haruku village in the last 3 years has already increased significantly. Local residents believe that the Lompa fish culture brings blessings even though for them, local government participation is still minimal but profit or loss depends on the community itself. Based on answers from 2 informants namely Haruku community leaders, the amount of community self-help sasi in the amount of Rp. 1,500,000 and money in the form of Rp. 1,000,000. – The demographic and income data of Haruku village can be seen in the table below.

**Tabel 1:** Demography of the Haruku Community

The amount of Male	1609 person
The amount of female	1800 person
Total	3409 person
The number of family head	712 person

Source: Apparatus of Haruku, 2018.

**Tabel 2:** Village's Income in a Previous 3 years

Year	Total Income (Rp)
2016	2.750.500,-
2017	3.168.450,-

2018	3.844.800,-
------	-------------

Source: Apparatus of Haruku Village, 2018

The data above shows that there is an increase in income of the Haruku village about 20% per year. According to the father of Haruku, the increase is due to the tradition of open sasi which is carried out annually.

## VI. DISCUSSION

This research focuses on 3 parts, namely:

1. Indigenous Sasi Lompa fish in general, provide benefits and benefits for the community of Haruku village, Maluku.
2. Participation and involvement of related parties, namely the local government and the tourism service in Maluku province, are considered not yet optimal until now. This will greatly affect the quality of the regional apparatus in facilitating and promoting customs and other Maluku cultures. Compared with the findings previous studies that indicate natural resource losses are caused by the lack of participation from regulatory agencies.
3. The existence of the Lompa fish system and its sustainability is the responsibility of villagers and local government. Thus the cooperation and synergy of the parties will greatly assist the existence and sustainability of the Lompa fish culture.

Based on the findings of several studies that have been described previously, this study proves that the natural resources in the form of Lompa fish that are made into sasi are a great wealth so that the customs of sasi need to be preserved. This study also illustrates and explains that this natural resource is not a detrimental curse. Losses arising from humans or persons who manage these resources because the perceived profit or loss depends on the level of satisfaction from humans themselves. The custom of Lompa fish fish can run until now by not expecting full local government participation but self-sufficiency and responsibility as a responsible person. Thus the findings of this study reveal that regions that have abundant natural resources will have abundant economic results as well. These results are inversely proportional to previous research which proves that the area which is abundant in natural resources is actually low in economic results. The most important reason is because the people of Haruku village believe that Lompa fish is a gift from God to be thankful for and all-natural resources on this earth are a bonus from the creator so that it is unwise and reasonable to say that the natural resources in the form of the Lompa fish that are harmonized cause harm to them.

This research will add new ideas, concepts or thoughts in the economic field related to sasi cultural customs as an addition to rural and regional income, more to show Indonesia's 'National Identity' in the international world by claiming that sasi customs from Maluku are beneficial and unfortunate assets of the Indonesian nation harmful. Directly this study also introduces the culture of Lompa fish sasi culture in Maluku as an attractive tourist destination. This research is inseparable from the limitations of time limitations so that researchers have not received accurate and written data related to the inclusion of these Lompa fish sasi customs so it is expected for future researchers in order to go directly to the destination location to get statistical data, especially income from SASI.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

Referring to the findings and also the discussion results, it can be concluded that:

1. Indigenous Sasi Lompa fish provided huge benefits for the people of Haruku village. This shows that the more natural resources they have, the greater the economic results they will obtain.
2. The participation of the regional government, especially the Maluku provincial tourism office, is still lacking and has not been proactive in introducing and preserving the culture of the Lompa fish culture in Haruku. Performance The local apparatus also determines the existence and sustainability of the Lompa fish culture in Haruku.
3. Lompa fish culture must be maintained and preserved because it will have an impact on Haruku village and regional development.

## REFERENCES

1. Auty, Richard, M.(1993). 'Sustaining development in mineral economies: The resource curse thesis. 20(1): 77-78
2. Fadlun, A.A. (2006). "Juridical review of sasi as a model of community-based natural resource conservation in Central Maluku (Unpublished). Thesis University of Samratulangi.
3. Farid Kiswara,(2016). 'Sasi Law in Maluku Island' Wages: <http://faridkiswara.blogspot.co.id/html>. (Accessed 12 Juli 2018).
4. Gazuda,Michael. (2015). 'Determination of processes of use, preserving and, reproduction in the system of renewable natural resources management.Baltic Journal of Economic Studies.1(2): 28-32
5. Judge,Zulfikar dan Nurizka,( 2008). The role of customary law in protecting the environment in the village of Eti West Seram district West Seram regency. *Lex Journalica* 6(2).
6. Leibbrandt Andreas and John Lynham, 2018. "Does the paradox of plenty exist? Experimental evidence on the curse of resource abundance," *Experimental Economics*, Springer; Economic Science Association, 21(2): 337-354
7. Mehlum ,Halvor. Karl Moene and Ragnar Torvik, (2006). 'Institutions and the Resource Curse,' *Economic Journal*, Royal Economic Society. 116(508): 1-20.
8. Nendissa, Renny H. (2010). Existence of Customary Institution in Implementation of Sea Sasi Law in Central Maluku. *Journal Sasi*. 16(4): 1-6
9. Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs (Permendagri) No. 3 of 1997 on Empowerment and Preservation and Development of Customs, Habits of Communities and Customary Institutions in the Region, Article 6 on the Rights and Powers of Customary Institutions.wage (www document) <http://www.ireyogya.org/adat/peranan.htm> (accessed 20 September 2018).
10. Sangadji, Maryam. 2010.. Strengthening the existence of cultural sasi as an effort to maintain economic sustainability (Review of social capital perspective). Dissertation at Brawijaya University.
11. Van Der Ploeg, Frederick (2010). Natural resources: Curse or Blessing?, CESifo Working Paper, No 3125. Center for Economics Studies and Ifo Institute (CESifo), Munich