

Research Article

Community Perception of Sasi Lompa Fish Culture: A Sociological Analysis of the Negeri Haruku Community

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Abstract.

Sasi Lompa fish culture is a cultural tradition that the people of Maluku know well because it has values and meanings that deeply touch the people's lives. It has a positive impact on the survival of the community to defend themselves and continue their lives in situations and natural conditions that are currently loaded with various offers of new values, which can erode the mindset of its citizens so that deviant behavior appears so that it can harm the balance between humans and their natural creations. This study aims to determine the perception of the people of Negeri Haruku toward the existence of *Sasi Lompa fish* as a cultural tradition. The research was conducted in Negeri Haruku, Haruku Island District, Central Maluku. The study results found that the community's perception of the *Sasi Lompa fish* cultural tradition is that *Sasi Lompa* is an ancestral heritage tradition. *Sasi Lompa fish* is part of natural resource conservation, and *Sasi Lompa* is an orientation of community life guidelines. Although some people still do not appreciate this cultural tradition, the implementation of *Sasi Lompa fish* still takes place today. It provides great hope for creating togetherness between communities to increase the community's economy and become a tourism asset.

Keywords: perception, community tradition, *Sasi* culture, Lompa fish *Sasi*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sasi is the local wisdom of the Maluku and North Maluku communities in natural resource management. Sasi contains obligations and sanctions so that their environment becomes better. Sasi is a way of managing natural resources to be sustainable. Currently, Sasi is still being applied as a prohibition to protect natural resources considered valuable to the community, such as forests and fishing. A sign is given in Sasi fruits so that people refrain from taking products such as coconuts, walnuts, areca nuts, and campedak before a specific time. Usually, Sasi is valid for a certain period, for example, 3 months, 6 months, or even up to a year. For example, in Tanimbar, Sasi in the 1990s was deliberately manipulated to allow work on a new church, prevent



advance harvesting when seafood prices rose, generate village revenue, take produce out of fines, and facilitate interest traders rather than regenerating stocks [1]. Kewang is in charge of enforcing Sasi and considering if Sasi is necessary through a customary hearing, which takes place every week [2]. Likewise, in Kei Islands, Southeast Maluku, they still apply the sea Sasi system to maintain the natural ecosystem. They believe there will be scarcity if crops can be taken continuously [3].

The potential of customary marine tenure systems to support conservation goals and avoid resource degradation has stimulated research interest. *Sasi* refers to a traditional system of natural resource management and includes prohibitions on taking resources on land and at sea. Sea *Sasi* describes specific rules and regulations governing access to fishing grounds, fishing gear, target species, harvest times, and locations [4]. Sea *Sasi* also includes a range of institutional roles with varying degrees of influence held by religious and government authorities. *Sasi* is one of the modern-day best practices in marine planning and management frameworks, and it includes participation, flexibility, and adaptability [5]. Studies of *Sasi* in Indonesia have shown that villages with *Sasi* are more active in managing marine resources than those without *Sasi*, suggesting that the presence of *Sasi* is positively correlated with the potential for natural resource development and modern marine management strategies. However, the limitations of traditional resource management systems such as *Sasi* must be recognized. Data shows that most of the *Sasi* culture has been lost in some areas of Maluku [6]. Such a situation can be worked on in the rescue of cultural assets developed by the ancestors in ancient times, and this practice is excellent as part of maintaining the integrity of nature from human activities that destroy the order that has been applied from time to time [7]. What can be done is the implementation of learning and cultural activities in the form of ethnosience activities in schools so that generations can maintain every culture that has been applied so far [8].

Sasi's effectiveness needs to be improved by adequate enforcement capacity, including boats and staff, poaching by outsiders who do not follow local customary regulations, and the erosion of traditional practices and authority. Furthermore, *Sasi* is unlikely to support pelagic or migratory species effectively; small areas of managed reefs are only adequate to protect larger fishery reefs if the area is a critical spawning or nursery habitat [9]. According to the *Sasi* type and dispersed category, the study results show that *Sasi* has decreased and even disappeared by more than 75% in Saparua revitalization efforts. It is contrary to the contribution of *Sasi*, in this case, the management of natural resources to support the sustainable life of the Saparua community in terms of economic, societal, and ecological aspects as illustrated in the pillars of sustainability, namely the

economy and society limited by environmental boundaries. Therefore, preserving *Sasi* culture can be the right way to survival [10].

In Negeri Haruku, one of the *Sasi* in Negeri Haruku is *Lompa fish Sasi*. *Sasi* is prohibited from catching Lompa fish (*Thryssa baelama*), a small sardine fish. *Sasi Lompa* only prohibits taking Lompa fish and not other fish. The people of Haruku and Sameth believe in *Lompa fish Sasi*. *Lompa fish* is believed to be a combination of sea and river *Sasi* because this fish lives in rivers and the sea. This *Sasi* has been going on since the 15th century and has become the identity of Negeri Haruku. *Sasi* on this type of fish cannot be found anywhere else. Learisa Kayeli River is a sacred place in Negeri Haruku because it is in this river that the opening and closing ceremony of *Sasi Lompa fish* is held every year. The river's estuary becomes a traffic route and breeding ground for Lompa fish, following the tidal cycle of the sea [11].

Sasi has regulations that are stipulated in a decision of the customary council meeting (saniri; in Haruku, called saniri; a *Lo'osi Aman Haruku-ukui* or 'Plenary of the Customary Council of Saniri Negeri Haruku). The decision of this customary meeting is delegated to the Kewang Institution, a customary institution intended to supervise the implementation of *Sasi* regulations. The development of the *Sasi* tradition over the decades, as recognized by the people of Negeri Haruku, has declined. Now, *Sasi Lompa* is only carried out once a year, whereas in the past, the *Sasi* tradition could be carried out more than once a year. However, there is something quite encouraging about the development of the *Sasi* tradition in Haruku. Since the Haruku Kewang Corps received the Kalpataru award in 1985, many experts, especially foreigners, have been interested in researching customary law on the *Sasi* tradition and its relation to the environment. This has raised optimism among customary observers and leaders in Haruku that the future of the *Sasi* tradition will be brighter and more valuable when people preserve the nature around them [12].

Haruku people also benefit from the tradition of *Sasi Lompa fish*, which is very famous in Haruku. Many local and foreign tourists come to witness the opening of *Sasi Lompa*. Many people come from Ambon City and neighboring countries when *Sasi* is held. Their presence adds income not only for Negeri Haruku in introducing its local wisdom but also for the people who sell its specialty food, so it cannot be denied that the existence of *Sasi Lompa* has a good impact on the community's economy [13]. *Sasi* implemented in Negeri Haruku is a tradition of preserving the natural environment that shapes human culture. Conversely, the natural environment provides color for the formation of culture. A community can view its environment more meaningfully. The reality that occurs in the Negeri Haruku community significantly impacts their lives in the surrounding community

[14]. The future of *Sasi Lompa* tradition and its preservation depends on the people of Negeri Haruku when they realize that *Sasi*, be it *Sasi Lompa* fish or other *Sasi* applicable in Negeri Haruku, will provide benefits for the sustainability of people's lives and their environment. Therefore, the research aims to determine the perception of the people of Negeri Haruku towards the existence of *Sasi Lompa fish* as a cultural tradition.

2. METHOD

Researchers use qualitative research, which is a method or procedure for solving research problems by describing the state of the object under study as it is, based on actual facts that exist in the object of research [15]. The research location of this study was conducted in Negeri Haruku, Haruku Island District, Central Maluku Regency, Maluku Province. Research informants are vital informants considered by researchers who can provide accurate information about this research, which amounted to nine people. The informants were chosen because they were qualified to provide information on research data related to the problems studied. The research informants are the King of Haruku (1 person), Head of Kewang (1 person), Head of Soa (1 person), Community Leaders (1 person), Youth Leaders (2 people), Ordinary people (2 people).

The data collection technique, direct observation, is to observe the condition of the Negeri, the social and economic activities of the community, the facilities owned, and the habits of the community related to the rules that must be followed in the *Sasi* rules in Negeri Haruku. Interviews were conducted by dialogue and question and answer with the informants that have been determined. Documentation was done by looking for data on things or variables in the form of notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, inscriptions, meeting minutes, and agendas.

The type of research data was primary data collected through words and actions. This data can be collected through interview notes, recorders, videos, and photographs. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained by researchers from written sources such as documents, books, and archives, which are considered necessary for the research. Documentation in this study was documentation in the form of Secondary data available at Negeri Haruku related to the problem and documentation in the form of photographs as authentic evidence for research needs in the field.

Data reduction analysis is making an abstraction of all data obtained from all field notes from observation interviews and document reviews. Data presentation is organized information that gives the possibility of concluding acting. The process of presenting this data reveals the whole group's obtained data so that it is easy to read

and understand. The most used method for presenting data in qualitative research is narrative text. The data can illustrate how the community views Sasi as part of the life of the Haruku people.

Conclusions and data verification organized in this way (categorized, focused, and arranged systematically) were then concluded to find the meaning of the data. However, these conclusions are only temporary and general. To obtain “grounded” conclusions, finding new data to test these tentative conclusions on community perceptions of Sasi Lompa fish is necessary.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Sasi Lompa as an Ancestral Tradition

Tradition is a concept that describes a behavior or action that relies on a previous time. Hence, the term “traditional culture” describes the beliefs and practices of a particular group of people that they have inherited from their ancestors or parents and their environment [16]. *Sasi* Lompa was implemented approximately in 1600, as Elisa Kissya said: “The tradition of open *Sasi* Lompa has existed and been implemented since 1600 by our ancestors. According to Haruku folklore, a long time ago, there was a female crocodile in the Learisa Kayeli River. Since only one crocodile inhabited the river, the crocodile was nicknamed by the people the “King of Learisa Kayeli.” The crocodile was very familiar with the people of Haruku. The locals can ask the crocodiles to help them cross the river when it overflows or floods. In return, the villagers usually provide rings made of palm fiber and put them on the crocodile’s fingers.

One day, there was a fight between the crocodiles on Seram Island and a giant snake in Tanjung Sial. In these fights, the crocodiles from Seram Island were always defeated and killed by the giant snake. Because they often lost to the giant snake, the Seram Island crocodiles came to the Kali Learisa Kayeli crocodile to help them face the giant snake. Even though she was pregnant, Learisa Kayeli crocodile still went to help her friends face the giant snake. There was a big fight between the Learisa Kayeli crocodile and the snake. Long story short, Learisa Kayeli finally killed the giant snake, but the crocodile was severely injured. As a sign of gratitude, the Seram Island crocodiles gave Learisa Kayeli crocodile gifts such as Lompa, make, and parang parang fishes to feed her baby when it was born. Learisa Kayeli crocodile returned to Haruku by walking along Liang and Wai beaches. Upon arriving at Wai Beach, Learisa Crocodile could no longer continue her journey because her wounds worsened. She was stranded there,

and the locals beat her vigorously, but still, the crocodile did not die. The crocodile said to her beaters: “Just take a broomstick and stick it in my belly button .”The Wai people followed the advice and stabbed the crocodile in the navel with the broomstick, and the “King of Learisa Kayeli” died.

Before breathing her last, the crocodile gave birth to her child. The cub returned to Haruku with various gifts from the Seram Island crocodiles. The cub traveled along the Tulehu coast but got lost at Passo Beach. Because of the long search for the way back to Haruku, the gift of parang parang fish was left behind in Passo, while the Lompa fish and make could be brought to Haruku. Thus, Lompa and make fish (*Sardinilla* sp) are the annual marine products in Haruku, while parang parang fish is Passo’s most significant fish product.

The folklore above illustrates how meaningful a legacy of tradition is that is left behind and revered as part of the community’s life. They consider the historical story of the *Sasi* Lompa fish tradition to exist and become a consumption for them wherever they meet or are in specific formal and informal forums. The people of Negeri Haruku always tell the history of *Sasi* Lompa to generations so that today’s children are aware of the existence of *Sasi Lompa fish* as a natural resource, complete with culture and traditions that must be preserved.

3.2. *Sasi* Lompa as Part of Natural Resource Conservation

Natural resource management must be oriented towards conserving natural resources to ensure the preservation and sustainability of natural resource functions, using a comprehensive and integrated approach. When enforcing rules that are part of the State’s legal mechanism, then consciously, it triggers the potential for community movements that tend to underlie thoughts on actualizing their potential as regional children who certainly have absolute customary status and rights. The traditional type of action explains that “*social action* that tends to be carried out by the community is always based on the process of regenerating values that are continuously maintained. Seeing this explanation, the social movement carried out by the community is a rare early protection of cultural values maintained since long ago. It is consciously a traditional value that is kept and maintained to encourage the creation of a dynamic life between humans and the nature in which they live [17].

Sasi is a customary rule relating to territory and natural resources management. *Sasi* for the Maluku people is known as customary law and is local wisdom that plays an important role in preserving natural resources and the environment at sea and on

land [18]. The Maluku indigenous people are highly dependent on natural resources. Community life requires local wisdom passed down from generation to generation as heirlooms. Over the centuries, customary law has influenced various aspects such as governance, economy, management, and environmental protection. To date, customary law has proven critical in strengthening the natural, social, and economic context. The socio-cultural life of the Maluku people cannot be separated from customary law used to manage natural resources, fulfill daily life needs, and preserve biological resources and ecosystems [19].

The *Sasi* regulation system under Kewang consists of two major parts, namely Natural Resource Management *Sasi*, which includes *Sea Sasi*, regulating the utilization of resources in the sea, *Kali Sasi*, regulating the utilization of rivers and how to take resources in the river, such as fish, sand, stones, bathing behavior, washing, and soon. *Forest Sasi* regulates forest resources and how to take them. *Sasi* can also be interpreted as a prohibition to take the results of natural biological resources (animal and vegetable). The regulations in implementing this prohibition also involve regulating human relations with nature and between humans in the area subject to the prohibition. In essence, *Sasi* is also an effort to maintain the manners of social life, including efforts towards equitable income distribution from the surrounding natural resources to all residents. *Sasi* has regulations stipulated in the customary council's decision [20].

Sasi Lompa fish is a part that regulates manners, norms, and values that are imposed on the community to comply with the rules that have been made since their ancestors, such as the rules of the Negeri that have been agreed upon together, which are usually read out when *Panas Sasi* or at the *Sasi Lompa fish* event will be opened. Some people of Negeri Haruku see *Sasi* Lompa Fish as a part that can provide compliance value to maintain the balance of nature, especially the Leirissa Kayeli River, which must be kept clean because that is where Lompa fish breed until they can be harvested.

3.3. Sasi Lompa as a Guiding Orientation for Community Life in the Land of Haruku

Culture is a series of rules, instructions, recipes, and strategies consisting of cognitive models humans use selectively to deal with their environment, as manifested in their behavior and actions [21]. It shows that culture is a collection of guidelines for humans to adapt to their environment. Culture becomes a frame of reference containing a view of life, norms, laws, and human knowledge to understand its environment [22].

Sasi Lompa Fish is an unwritten guideline for the community in carrying out social, cultural, and economic life, as shown through symbols, and has a high adaptation value, which is appreciated by the community as a noble value of Haruku community culture. *Sasi* Lompa fish, as the essence of life, is valued and appears as a value that lives in the community through symbols that are seen with the naked eye and interpreted by the Haruku people as a noble appreciation that develops in a positive value order that can become a pattern of life for the community. It can be seen when *Sasi* is closed and opened. There is obedience lived by the community even though it has begun to change in space and time, where there is a shift in the value of obedience, which is an order for the maintenance of the *Sasi* custom. *Sasi* is also a traditional wisdom of the people in Maluku-Eastern Indonesia, which has social influence, cultural values, and ecology and is used as a community-based instrument for managing fisheries resources [23]. Since the 16th century, natural resources in Maluku have been managed by a system called *Sasi* [24].

The Haruku people also consider the *Sasi* in their negeri to be an integral part of community life, which is reflected in the principles that after the arrival of the Lompa fish, there are rules that must be adhered to by the community. These can serve as guidelines for conducting activities involving the *Sasi* Lompa culture, adhering to the rules so that activities from children to adults clearly understand what should and must be done, ensuring continuity between nature and human life. Although many in the community still do not fully understand, they always remind each other to preserve and sustain the cultural tradition of opening *Sasi*, which is not only a tradition but also provides an economic benefit.

The experience of the people of Negeri Haruku interacting with their natural environment, especially in the context of implementing the *Sasi Lompa fish* tradition, shows that the people of Negeri Haruku have a high environmental ethic because their life orientation is not centered on humans, but centered on all living things about efforts to overcome environmental problems. *Labuhan Sasi* in Haruku Village is divided into two parts: *Labuhan Sea Sasi* and *Labuhan Sasi Lompa fish* [25]. Through the *Sasi Lompa* tradition, the people of Haruku have long practiced their environmental ethics. Being in harmony with nature is not just a conception but has been implemented in real action. Nature has provided everything the people of Negeri Haruku need. Therefore, it is natural for them always to maintain the natural environment. Various efforts in enforcing customary rules through the Kewang Corps have yielded promising results. Nowadays, it is rare for people to violate the rules of *Sasi Lompa*. The community has become accustomed to not violating customary rules, so the habit has become a community

character that does not like to break the rules. However, there are, but not to the extent that it harms the *Sasi Lompa* cultural tradition. The effectiveness of customary law can guide the community into individuals who are obedient and guided by rules that become values that build a balanced life both among humans and the nature around them.

3.4. Haruku Community Expectations on Sasi Lompa

As social creatures living in a society, humans cannot live alone without the help of others. Therefore, helping each other is necessary. In this view, there is an essential concept that in this world, human beings cannot stand alone; they always need help from others. This concept provides a solid foundation for his sense of security in life. In addition to being assisted in times of difficulty, the concept of social solidarity also gives some obligations to continuously try to maintain good relations with others, continuously pay attention to the needs of others, and, as far as possible, always share the benefits with others equally. The Indonesian cultural value system is related to the concept of social solidarity. Local values of wisdom in specific communities are fundamental values commonly found in every region and can strengthen national integration. The value of local wisdom can usually be recognized through the cultures found in specific communities and groups [26].

The traditional activity of *Sasi Lompa*, from the beginning of *Sasi* closing to the opening of *Sasi*, requires all the efforts from the people of Negeri Haruku, especially the Kewang corps of Negeri Haruku. The people of Negeri Haruku independently provide various support, both in the form of funds and labor, for the success of the *Sasi Lompa* event [27]. There is no government assistance for implementing the *Sasi Lompa fish* ceremony, but it encourages the people of Negeri Haruku to continue implementing this ancestral tradition. The tradition encourages Haruku people to understand the meaning of *Sasi Lompa*, which gives hope for the future when the country can be recognized internationally, not only in Indonesia. The *Sasi Lompa* tradition is an added value for tourism development in Maluku. Community expectations in the future related to the *Sasi Lompa* tradition are very influential on policies carried out by the State government and local governments, where policies are taken both through regulations and local negeri regulations such as the *Sasi Lompa* tradition.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Environmental conservation is a pressing issue faced by all parts of the world due to irresponsible human actions that disrupt the balance of nature and its environment, including humans as nature's beneficiaries. The community of Negeri Haruku, in maintaining life with their environment, employs various methods to preserve their natural surroundings through the cultural tradition of *Sasi Lompa* fish. Despite various complex challenges, they continue to practice the culture known as *Sasi Lompa*, which is an inseparable part of the Haruku community because it represents the local wisdom of the people of Negeri Haruku, located on Haruku Island, Pulau Haruku Sub-District, Central Maluku Regency. They view it as an ancestral heritage that has grown and evolved within the local community's way of life, valued and safeguarded to this day. Essentially, *Sasi Lompa* also serves to maintain the environment for the sustainability of their community's life, ensuring a balance between humans and the nature they inhabit. The worldview of the Haruku community also focuses on *Sasi Lompa* as a component that impacts communal life. *Sasi Lompa* fish holds excellent hope for fostering unity among the community, the government apparatus of the negeri, and Kewang environmental guardians to synergistically work together to develop the *Sasi Lompa* tradition, with the hope that Negeri Haruku can become a tourism icon in Maluku in the future.

Sasi Lompa Fish has a role for the people of Negeri Haruku as a heritage site that must be preserved because it has an ancestral historical momentum that is still maintained today. *Sasi Lompa* is also a community behavior builder because it has rules that bind the community, so it must be obeyed to preserve natural resources. Sanction of *Sasi Lompa* also serves as a guideline for social life in Negeri Haruku. The history of *Sasi Lompa* is an inseparable part of the Haruku people because it is the local wisdom of the people of Negeri Haruku located on Haruku Island, Haruku Island Sub-district, Central Maluku Regency, which they see as an ancestral heritage that grew and developed in the life order of the local community which is valued and maintained to this day. *Sasi Lompa* is also an effort to maintain the natural environment for the sustainability of the community's life to balance humans and nature. The Haruku people's worldview is also oriented towards *Sasi Lompa* as a part that impacts their life together. *Sasi Lompa fish* provides great hope for the creation of togetherness between the community, negeri government officials, and Kewang environmental guardians to synergistically work together to develop the *Sasi Lompa* tradition to provide a hope that Negeri Haruku can become one of the tourism icons in Maluku in the future.

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