

The Implementation of Good Governance by the Local Government in the Management of Sasi in Morella Village, Leihitu Subdistrict, Central Maluku District

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Abstract: *This study aims to examine the implementation of 'sasi' (traditional ecological management) in the management of natural resources in current indigenous territories, particularly the government policy in Negeri Morella, Leihitu District, Central Maluku Regency, in organising the management of nutmeg plant resources. The enforcement of 'sasi' by the indigenous community for natural resource management represents a form of responsibility and manifestation of good governance in implementing natural resource management policies in Negeri Morella. The research approach used is qualitative, with a case study design. The research results indicate that the implementation of 'sasi' in indigenous territories in Maluku, especially in Central Maluku, has significantly reduced and, in some cases, is not implemented at all. Negeri Morella itself only enforces 'sasi pala' (nutmeg prohibition) with the main objective of supporting the economic resilience of the community households. The active involvement of the Negeri Morella Government in natural resource management through the enforcement of 'sasi' has had a positive impact on the community, ensuring the sustainability of the available resources for future generations.*

Keywords: *good governance; sasi; management; natural resources.*

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Introduction

The Maluku Province, as an archipelagic region with 1,392 small island clusters, exhibits diverse procedures and distinct characteristics, including governance systems, resource management systems, and local customs or cultures deeply embedded in the lives of rural communities. The diverse cultural heritage of the Maluku region is a source of pride and, simultaneously, a challenge for both the present and future generations. The traditions reflected in the culture, which have been passed down from ancestors for centuries, are vital aspects that need to be understood and preserved as guiding principles in the lives of the Maluku community.

In the resource and environmental management system in Maluku, there is a cultural heritage known as "sasi," which is a specific tradition applied in almost all traditional villages in Maluku. Sasi involves the prohibition of exploiting specific natural resources during defined periods. It serves as a regulation to harvest certain potential yields available in nature without causing environmental harm. During the implementation of sasi, the community is restricted from harvesting specific products both on land and in the sea for a predetermined period set by the government. Sasi incorporates cultural

values that bind the community to manage and sustainably utilise natural resources based on the wisdom of local knowledge passed down through generations (Betaubun *et al.*, 2019; Elfemi, 2013). Sasi can be described as a sustainable development practice characterized by efforts to utilize natural wealth by aligning economic (production) and ecological functions. This alignment creates opportunities for the sustainable utilisation of available resources for the common good (Karepesina *et al.*, 2013).

The practice of sasi in Maluku society is believed to have been carried out since ancient times and is understood as one of the local wisdoms implemented by the community. Initially, sasi was conducted by the kings in Maluku since the pre-Indonesian independence era (Subekti, 2019). Sasi holds a legal position compared to tradition because its purpose is to regulate human actions through a set of rules to encourage wise behaviour in resource utilisation (Damardjati & Kusri, 2015).

Sasi is an agreement among traditional leaders, figures, and the community in a village to preserve and sustain the natural resources within the customary territory of a specific community across generations, guided by the local wisdom possessed by that

community. The practice of sasi has been carried out in various areas from the Maluku Islands to West Papua, such as in Kaimana, Nabire, Numfor, Fakfak, Sarmi, Waropen, and others (Alvayedo & Erliyana, 2022; Haulussy *et al.*, 2020; Patriana *et al.*, 2016; Lestari and Satria, 2015; Astika, 2016).

Sasi can be understood as an intellectual construct, and its development is inseparable from the interests of the actors involved. It is a tangible and creative action aimed at responding to contemporary needs closely related to political power, citizenship, identity, and local cultural practices in Maluku (Patriana *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, according to Sahusilawane *et al.* (in Farid, M., & Hendriko, 2017), "sasi" can be understood as part of the cultural institution regarding the utilisation and management of biological natural resources and the environment. This creativity and intelligence are manifested in the regulation of the allocation of time for harvesting and periods of restraint until the next harvest season. This regulation is implemented to ensure the life cycle of marine life or plants to be harvested can thrive adequately until the community can obtain good and desired results.

Terminologically, "sasi" originates from the word "sanksi," which means prohibition. The prohibition on implementing "sasi" signifies regulations for managing natural resources, both on land and in the sea, and preserving them from damage within a specific period for the sake of achieving sustainability and conservation of natural resources (Kusumadinata, 2015). "Sasi" is related to the existence of members of the customary community in the regions, generally linked to prohibitions imposed by the regional government on harvesting specific fruits

on land and capturing certain marine resources for a designated period.

"Sasi" refers to regulations for territorial claims, rules regarding natural resources and their utilisation, and sanctions and penalties for violators. The practice of "sasi" for resources in Maluku, both maritime and terrestrial, is viewed within the framework of communal management, focusing on discussions among users within the community. In general, maritime "sasi" is considered communal property (deemed a resource provided by nature). This differs from terrestrial "sasi," where resources subject to "sasi," aside from communal ownership, can be individual property (family, clan). We will find that communal ownership in the context of "sasi" related to community rights varies in its arrangement based on how the community interprets and categorises it, with different positions and roles in a village or region, such as ordinary people, village/regional government, or customary leaders (Soselisa, P.S., 2001).

"Sasi," as an expression of the rights of its holders in managing and utilising resources, gives rise to flexibility and diversity in its practices. With these rights, specific holders can include or exclude other rights holders or can be included or excluded in the management of communally owned resources. Certain rights may become more dominant than others, and this is related to other factors inherent in those rights, such as the status and position of the holders within the community (Soselisa, P.S., 2001).

Warawarin *et al.* (2017) outline that sasi, which evolves in community settings, is generally classified into: (1) water sasi, including sea sasi and river sasi; (2) land sasi, including forest sasi, animal sasi, personal sasi, religious sasi, village/camp sasi, and babaliang sasi

related to efforts to improve the well-being of the community's children. Each sasi contains values of protection and prohibitions against the exploitation of objects, areas, plants, water, or animals, all of which are related to the livelihoods of the community.

One region in Maluku that still practices sasi to this day is Negeri Morella, situated on the Leihitu peninsula, covering an area of 2,880 hectares resulting from the amalgamation of several traditional lands (hena) or old villages, namely Kapahaha, Iyal Uli, Putulesi, and Ninggareta. These four old villages form a single traditional land, or Negeri Hausihu Morella. Negeri Morella is known as a coastal village where a significant portion of its population relies on marine resources for their livelihoods. In addition to the coastal area, the people of Morella also engage in agriculture, with cultivated fields or plantations covering 27 hectares, while the remaining area is forested land within the jurisdiction of Negeri Morella. Administratively, Negeri Morella borders Negeri Liang to the north, Negeri Mamala to the south, Negeri Waai to the east, and the Seram Strait to the west.

The current implementation of "sasi" in Negeri Morella originated from the fall in clove prices in the market during the era of the Clove Buffer Stock and Marketing Body (BPPC), which controlled the clove market in the New Order era, and the spread of conflicts with ethnic and religious backgrounds, resulting in high unemployment in Maluku. As an alternative, the community turned to nutmeg cultivation to support household economic resilience. While 60 percent of indigenous territories in Ambon discontinued the practice of nutmeg "sasi," Negeri Morella, on the contrary, strengthened this nutmeg "sasi" practice (Azuz, 2015).

The implementation of "sasi" in Negeri Morella is carried out by the traditional village government. The village, as a legal community unit under customary law, continues to live, grow, develop, and be maintained in the social life of the community in Central Maluku Regency. As a unit of customary law, the village is genealogically territorial, with defined boundaries of authority to regulate and manage community interests based on ancestral rights and local customs as stipulated in the Regional Regulation of Central Maluku Regency Number 01 of 2006 concerning villages.

Public involvement through traditional institutions, or "saniri negeri," in managing "sasi" can be seen as a breakthrough in the practice of local governance, indicating post-1998 democratization. The Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning villages states that villages and customary villages, or by other terms, are legal community units with territorial boundaries authorised to regulate and manage local government affairs based on community initiatives, ancestral rights, and/or traditional rights recognised and respected within the governance system of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of regional autonomy marks a period of decentralisation in the governance management system (Andriana, D., 2023). Regional autonomy also encourages better services for the community as it is designed to address specific needs such as education, economy, and the implementation of "sasi" in Negeri Morella, carried out by the regional government led by a king determined based on the rights of the matarumah or from specific lineages.

The implementation of "sasi" has various impacts on different community groups in Maluku. For instance, the

community of Negeri Nuwewang still preserves the "sasi" culture in their area as a conservation effort for marine resources such as sea cucumbers and lola snails (Rakusa, H., & Pinoa, W.S., 2023). On the other hand, "sasi" influences the economic level of the community in Negeri Lima through the harvesting of nutmeg and coconut, the proceeds of which can be sold. Violations of the implementation in Negeri Lima are subject to corporal punishment as a deterrent (Launuru, M.I., 2019). Symbolically, Warawarin *et al.*'s research (2017) indicates that the implementation of sea "sasi" in Central Maluku Regency aims to prevent disputes between neighbouring communities, serve as an avenue to improve the economic livelihood of residents, and preserve the sustainability and stability of the sea. Boli *et al.* (2014) elaborate that the implementation of sea "sasi" can also be directed towards regulating the use of fishing gear and types of marine biota that are allowed to be caught. Periodic restrictions on capturing marine biota have proven effective in preserving the supply of marine resources and providing ecological, economic, and social benefits to local fishermen. Typically, the captured marine biota are high-value species that can be traded for the general public (Putri, 2020).

The existence and implementation of "sasi" in traditional villages in Maluku, especially in Central Maluku, have significantly decreased and, in some cases, are not implemented at all due to various factors. There are three main threats that can hinder the implementation of "sasi" in the present, namely, commercialization, rapid modernization, and the decline of traditional values (Harkes and Novaczek, 2002). Therefore, government policies at the local level are crucial and necessary to continue enforcing the "sasi" culture in the

management of their resources. This is essential considering the increasing demand for resources with high economic value, which can negatively impact both the community and the environment if not managed properly. Government intervention is vital to organise and manage existing potential, ensuring a positive impact on the community and the sustainability of the available resources. "Sasi" remains one of the viable options for sustainable resource management in these regions.

Based on the above explanation, this research aims to illustrate the implementation of good governance by the local government in managing "sasi pala" in Morella, Leihitu District, Central Maluku Regency, which has allowed the tradition to persist until today. The implementation of "sasi pala" in Morella contributes to the local economy, contrasting with other regions in Maluku where the practice has largely ceased. Through effective management of "sasi pala," the policies and role of the Morella local government in executing good governance enable them to engage with the Morella public to pass down this cultural tradition through generations.

Method

The method employed in this study is based on a qualitative approach with a case study design. This qualitative approach refers to research procedures that yield qualitative data to understand individuals personally, perceiving them as they express their views, capturing their experiences in their daily activities, and examining experiences that we may not be aware of (Moleong, 2006). The selection of a case study research design is fitting for the research's needs, aiming to describe the distinctive activities and processes still carried out by the government and the

community of Negeri Morella collaboratively in realising the implementation of *sasi pala*. Therefore, this research cannot be separated from the social context in which this phenomenon occurs (Prihatsanti *et al.*, 2018).

Result And Discussion

The Process of Sasi Protection in the Land of Morella

Negeri Morella, situated approximately 35 km from the provincial capital of Ambon in Central Maluku, is a traditional community led by a king. Renowned for its picturesque coastal landscapes, Morella is not only a popular tourist destination but also a significant producer of cloves, chocolate, coconuts, walnuts, sago, and nutmeg. With a predominantly coastal geography, the majority of Morella's population engages in fishing and farming. The abundant natural resources of Morella propel the development of its coastal and marine areas, necessitating a sustainable approach to preserve and harness the environmental and economic potential for the well-being of the community.

The land of Morella is known for preserving traditional values through the enactment of various customary rituals such as Pukul Manyapu, Lawa Safar, and Sasi. These cultural rituals embody the virtues of fostering community brotherhood across regions, safeguarding communities from disasters and perils, and preserving the environment for long-term utilisation, thereby providing economic benefits to the populace.

The traditional rituals are bound by customary laws that instruct individuals to preserve the sustainability of other living beings and avoid excessive exploitation of natural resources that may disrupt the balance of nature. Sasi can be understood as a set of local legal rules,

encompassing norms related to customs, procedures, habits, and conduct that include ethics and standards derived from values highly esteemed by the local community (Judge and Nurizka, 2008).

Sasi represents a manifestation of local knowledge consistently practiced by indigenous communities in the Maluku Islands. Local wisdom indicates the resilience and developmental processes of the local community, realised through perspectives and various life strategies to find solutions to the challenges faced in their efforts to meet needs and preserve their culture (Putri *et al.*, 2020).

The implementation of "sasi" in the Land of Morella is marked by two significant moments: the need for mosque construction in 1968 and subsequent moments from 2004 to the present, primarily aimed at the economic needs of Morella's households (Azuz, 2015). In other regions, it is common for "sasi" to be utilized for religious purposes. Therefore, tracing back the history of "sasi" implementation in Maluku reveals the practice known as "sasi masjid" or "sasi gereja," both closely linked to the religious practices of the communities adhering to them. For instance, "sasi gereja" is exclusively carried out by communities practicing Christianity, as seen in the Lease Islands, while in predominantly Islamic communities, the implementation of "sasi" is overseen by the local government, as observed in the case of the Land of Morella.

The enduring presence of "sasi" in the Land of Morella reflects a sense of cooperation, respect, compliance, and pride among traditional leaders and the community towards the practice of "sasi." The community experiences tangible benefits from the implementation of "sasi," as it protects their crops from theft. In the case of "sasi" for nutmeg plants, it is

applied to both state-owned and privately-owned crops. Typically, nutmeg plants under "sasi" are marked with a prohibition sign, often in the form of a red cloth. This sign serves as a reminder to residents not to harvest the fruits or take any actions before the designated period for lifting the "sasi" is reached.

The implementation of "sasi" does not always proceed as desired, and in cases of violations, such as theft of plants before the lifting of the "sasi," the violator will face sanctions. The narrative of imposing sanctions against such violations serves as a deterrent, discouraging individuals from engaging in plant theft. In the Kei Islands community, these sanctions are referred to as "Larwul Ngabal," involving penalties based on the nature of the violation, ranging from monetary fines through customary hearings to the confiscation of property or ancient cannons (Renjaan, M.J., 2013). Meanwhile, in the execution of "sasi" in the Land of Morella, the imposed penalty takes the form of a monetary fine, which can reach up to Rp1,000,000.

The practice of nutmeg plant "sasi" in the Land of Morella is a cultural richness that distinguishes it from other regions. In the Maluku region itself, "sasi" is not ubiquitous in every community, making Morella stand out as one that has successfully maintained the tradition. The consistency and determination of the Morella community across different eras serve as tangible evidence of their commitment to preserving and perpetuating "sasi."

"Sasi" educates the Morella community to cultivate sentiments, creativity, and behaviours aligned with the environment, ensuring that the surroundings remain undamaged and the wealth of flora and fauna within them doesn't perish, allowing future

generations to appreciate them. The current challenge lies in the younger generation formulating best practices amidst the advancements in information technology, which could potentially support the continuation of "sasi" in the future, enabling it to persist and colour the life of the Land of Morella.

The Implementation of Good Governance in the Practice of "Sasi" in the Land of Morella

The government is an organization vested with the authority to formulate policies through the enforcement of laws and regulations in a specific region under their jurisdiction. In a broad sense, the government is defined as a form of organization tasked with the duty of running a governance system, encompassing the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. In a narrow sense, the government is an entity with its own policies for managing and regulating the operation of a governance system (Amelia *et al.*, 2014).

Like the customary lands in Ambon Island and the Lease Islands, the government organisation of Negeri Morella adheres to the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation Number 84 of 2015 concerning the Organisation Structure and Work Procedures of Village Governments. However, as a customary land, the government organization of Negeri Morella is also adjusted to the existing government structure. In the organizational structure of the Negeri Morella government, the local institution "saniri negeri" is included as part of the government. Based on this, the government organization of Negeri Morella not only refers to the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation Number 84 of 2015 but also accommodates the Central

Maluku Regency Government Regulation by incorporating the local institution "saniri negeri" into the organizational structure of the local government, especially in the customary lands within the administrative area of Central Maluku Regency.

The local institution "saniri negeri" in the government of Negeri Hausihu Morella consists of several officials with roles and memberships based on their tasks and authorities. The "saniri negeri," serving as the legislative body, comprises 11 members representing the clans in Negeri Morella. The members of "saniri" from the Kapahaha clan, also known as the Tomasiwa clan, are 5 people, from the Iyal Uli clan, also known as the Hatalessy clan, are 3 people, and from the Ninggareta Putulesi clan, also known as the Pisihatu clan, are 3 people.

The local government plays a crucial role in implementing "sasi," because by consistently preserving this tradition, the local government strives for a sustainable environment and the preservation of resources. As part of the governance system in Indonesia, the local government also has the obligation to safeguard and conserve customs, traditions, and culture that have been passed down through generations in a particular region.

"Sasi" in Morella has existed and been practiced since ancient times. It encompasses regulations applied to both marine and terrestrial natural resources. The implementation of "sasi" covers coastal areas and marine resources, while, on the terrestrial side, it historically applied not only to nutmeg plants but also to coconut plants. However, in Morella today, "sasi" is specifically enforced for nutmeg plants, and other terrestrial resources are no longer subject to it. This is due to the economic value of nutmeg,

especially its seeds and flowers (fuli), which remain in high demand and provide a source of income. Additionally, most nutmeg plants in Morella are owned by the community, although there are also individual owners. Those owned by the community are subject to "sasi" regulations, with their management mechanisms governed by the local government.

"Sasi" is implemented with the involvement of various parties to manage and operate the system within it. Specifically, "sasi" is managed by a traditional institution with its own structure and functions. According to Etlegar (in Persada, N. P. R. *et al.*, 2018), one crucial party in the implementation of "sasi" is the "saniri negeri," a traditional institution responsible for making decisions and overseeing the legislative body in every decision-making process, assisting the king in decision-making. Meanwhile, the local government itself is led by a king who has the authority to initiate and conclude "sasi." In addition to the role of "saniri negeri," the king is also assisted by a state secretary responsible for carrying out administrative governance and providing services to the community.

The local government, in implementing "sasi," is an entity that adheres to the principles of good governance, viewing it as a responsibility to serve the community based on customary and local administrative regulations to execute "sasi." Governance, according to Dwiyanto (in Dasor, Y.W., 2023), implies the collective involvement of both the community and the government in collaborating to achieve beneficial government management for the public. This aligns with the argument of Kincaid & Stenberg (in Madubun & Madubun, 2023), emphasising that

governments no longer hold a superior position compared to other actors involved in governance. Furthermore, a government practicing good governance is characterised by the systematic management of governmental structures to obtain public legitimacy. This legitimacy is specifically directed towards the government, policies, non-governmental institutions, and processes directly related to human rights (Botchay, F.N., 2000).

The implementation of good governance in the present era still has shortcomings, as highlighted by Grindle (in Hidayat, S., 2016), who states that in the reform era, the implementation of good governance still faces challenges, especially in developing countries. This is because the implementation of good governance tends to homogenise the measurement into a single model of application for all. This condition often overlooks the temporal context, historical situations, and capacities in place, resulting in neglecting the prioritisation of essential needs. In practice, in the indigenous territories of Maluku, including Negeri Morella, attempts have been made to address this through the involvement of the local government, specifically carrying out roles and tasks in "sasi" to accommodate the needs of the community within the Morella traditional unity that still practices "sasi pala."

The principle of good governance comprises three main elements: the government as the policy executor, the private sector actively involved in the economic domain, and civil society as a balancing force. The practice of good governance can be implemented effectively when these three elements synergize well, considering the prerequisites of fostering participation, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and justice. A well-performing

government will provide even services by embodying three fundamental principles of governance that prioritise sustainable development, encompassing the environmental, economic, and human resources domains (Handayani, F.A., & Nur, M.I., 2019). Additionally, according to Rosidin (in Safrijal, M *et al.*, 2016), aside from the principles of effectiveness and efficiency, transparency, and participation, good governance also requires principles of responsiveness, consensus orientation, accountability, strategic vision, and rule of law.

This principle aligns with the concept of implementing "sasi" by the regional government, aimed at protecting all natural resources, whether in the sea or on land, and regulating their use for the benefit of the public to be enjoyed over the long term. As a result, communities strive to comply with all regulations set by the regional government. The convergence of services provided by the regional government and the obedience of the community can prevent conflicts arising from a sense of injustice due to the monopoly of natural resource management by a few individuals and deter people from attempting to steal natural resources, both on land and at sea (Kusumadinata, 2015). On the other hand, anyone who violates the rules for implementing "sasi" will face penalties.

Negeri Morella, as part of the administrative region of Central Maluku Regency, is also framed by the Regional Regulation of Central Maluku Regency Number 01 of 2006 concerning the region. In Chapter II, Article 2, it is stated that the region, as a unity of customary law communities formed based on history and origin, functions to regulate customary matters, customary law, and the culture of the local community, as well as to conduct general governance affairs in accordance

with applicable laws and regulations. Furthermore, in Chapter V, clauses 22(m) and (o) state that the head of the regional government has the obligation to nurture, foster, and preserve social, cultural, and customary values, develop the potential of natural resources, and preserve the environment.

As a regulator, the regional government can act to set the direction and goals of activities through regulations. Various regulations aimed at preserving sasi have been established in the Head of Negeri Morella Regulation Number 1 of 2022 concerning Local Wisdom of Pala Sasi, which governs the implementation of pala sasi in Negeri Morella. This regulation serves as a reference for the implementation of pala sasi, is the result of discussions and agreements, and is signed by the head of the regional government, Saniri Negeri, and the mosque imam (religious figure).

Here is the content of the regional government regulation, including: (1) the pala sasi is effective from the date it is opened; (2) anyone is prohibited from taking and collecting pala without the permission of the sasi members; (3) the distribution of the opening of the pala sasi; (4) anyone/collector is prohibited from buying raw pala from within the administrative area of Negeri Morella or from outside, except for sasi members; (5) in case of pala loss, it should be reported to the sasi members and will be followed up; (6) anyone intentionally violating the rules, such as stealing, taking, collecting, and buying raw pala, will be subject to a fine of Rp1,000,000 (one million rupiah); and (7) matters not regulated in this regulation will be further regulated in the sasi group regulations.

This regulation is issued by the government of Negeri Morella and becomes effective upon announcement

through the tabaos method. However, nowadays, tabaos is being replaced by posting announcements in the form of writings, notifying that a sasi is being conducted on nutmeg plants in Negeri Morella. This regulation serves as a tool containing standards and provisions as guidelines resulting from decisions made in a binding, limiting, and regulatory manner during the conducted deliberation, which must be obeyed and adhered to. The regulations are then implemented by the government of Negeri Morella, which has the authority to manage the nutmeg natural resources. With this regulation in place, it can serve as a legal basis for the regional government to sustainably manage natural resources.

In the future, the implementation of "sasi" in Negeri Morella and other regions in Maluku will face significant challenges, especially due to the rapid use of technology, while currently "sasi" is still carried out in a traditional manner. Additionally, it is crucial to consider the potential weakening of the role of the regional government and communal involvement in executing "sasi," which may lead to external parties becoming involved in managing "sasi" with an interest in reaping profits, thus causing an uneven distribution of harvest results (Subair, 2015). This shift in orientation, as stated by Patriana, R. *et al.* (2016), is driven by the desire to accumulate prosperity for personal gain and the concentration of accumulation only within the elite households that own the land.

Conclusion

"Sasi," as a cultural heritage of Maluku performed to protect various natural resources, is still implemented in Negeri Morella. Currently, "sasi" in Negeri Morella is limited to land-related restrictions applied to the nutmeg plants.

The regional government of Negeri Morella has clear policies for managing the implementation of these nutmeg-related "sasi," based on regulations issued by the regional government. The execution of "sasi" is no longer done through traditional ceremonies or "tabaos" but is conveyed through notice boards posted or hung at the "sasi" locations. Therefore, in managing "sasi," the regional government needs to revitalise other local institutions that can support the implementation of "sasi."

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