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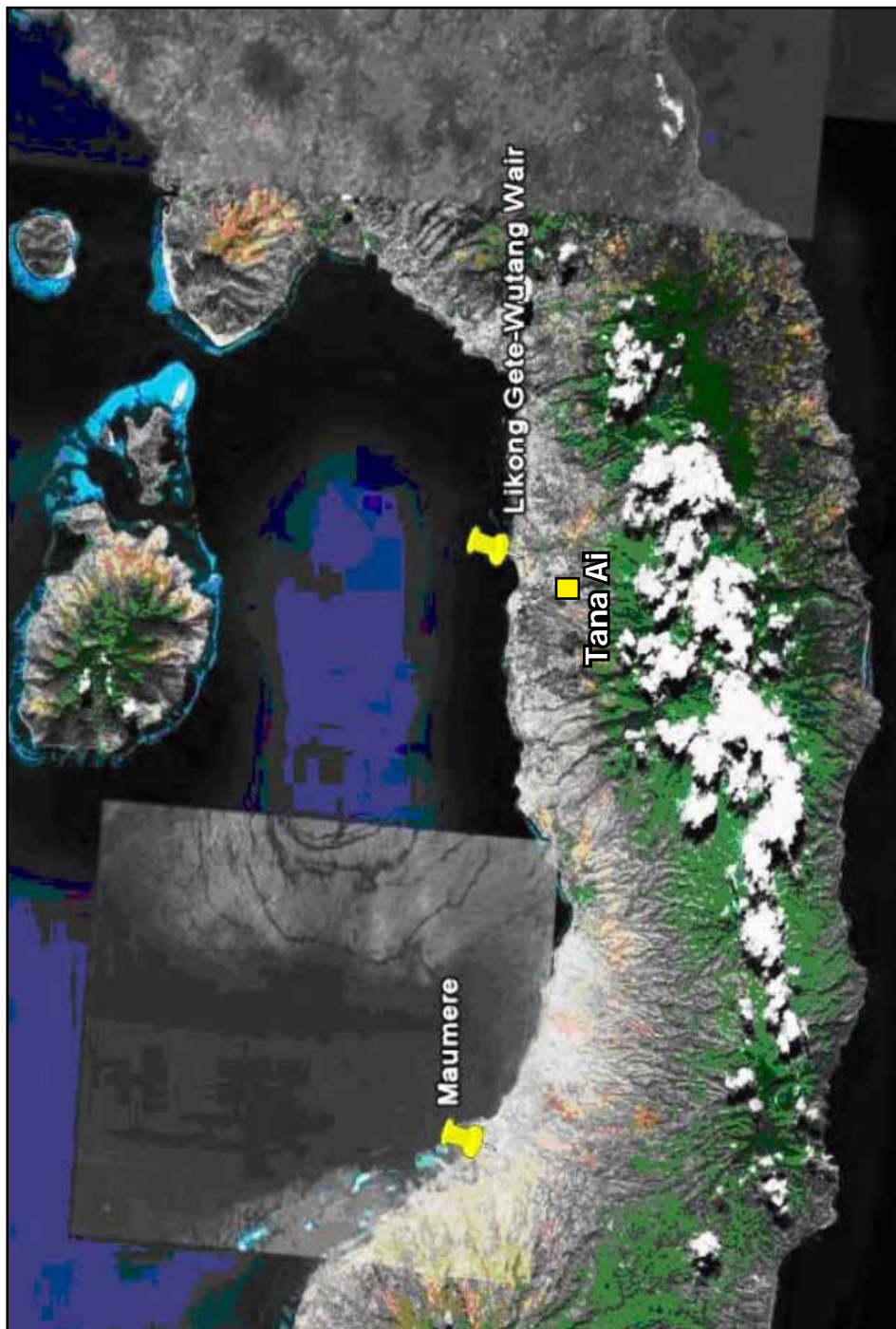
TANA AI INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES EAST FLORES

Maintaining traditional culture as a way of
protecting the environment

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General Location of Tana Ai in Flores



I. INTRODUCTION

Tana Ai is now described administratively as the eastern part of Sikka district on Flores in Nusa Tenggara Timur province. However, several centuries ago, it extended over most of the central and eastern parts of the island. Central Sikka later came under the control of a local sultan (*raja*), but the east remained as loosely associated customary domains - each with a key ceremonial site (*mahe*)². The several hundred communities (*natar*) who live in that area still share strong cultural and historical links, including a bond to Mother Earth, which is one meaning of the term Tana Ai³.

The neighbouring traditional villages of Utang Wair and Likong Gete are located around 34 km east of Maumere, the district capital of Sikka district. Both are now officially part of the village of Nangahale in Talibura sub-district⁴. This is considered a coastal location, but the communities' customary lands – which together cover some 2,000 ha – include extensive upland areas.

The Utang Wair's customary land is bounded by Le Watu Bain Wair Kolon (in Talibura village) to the east; Wawa Wair Hekang (in Wair Terang village) to the west; the Flores Sea to the north; and Reta Gele Bihat to the south. Likong Gete's customary land is bounded by the river Waer Hek (in Natar village) to the east; the river Patiahu (in Runut village) to the west; the Flores Sea to the north; and Tana Beta Beegawan (Runut village) to the south⁵.

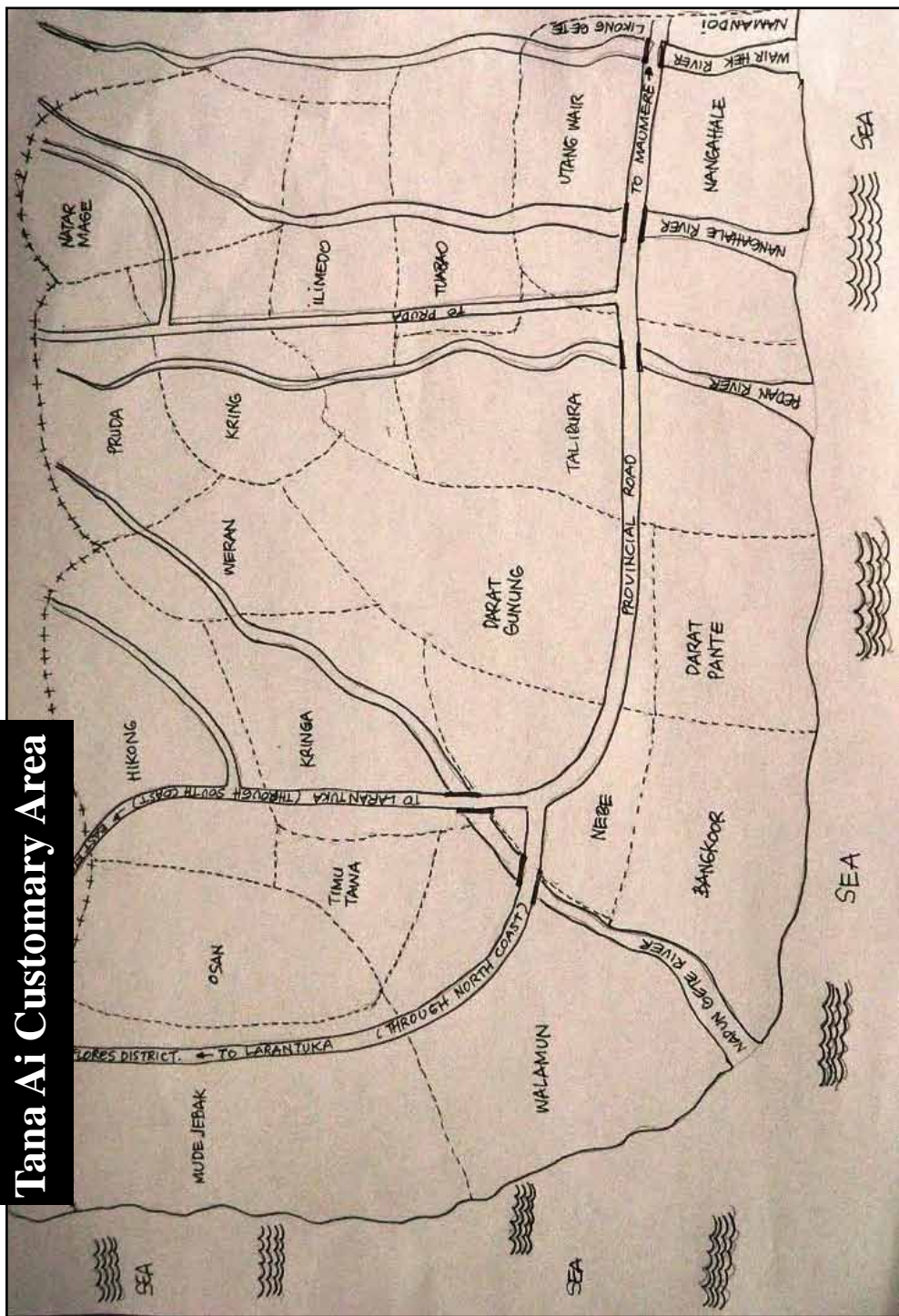
² *Mahe* are symbols of community unity as well as sacred or ritual sites. They are often marked by large stones, megaliths or ceremonial stone altars. Mahe Wai Brama is considered the 'mother' of all other *mahe* and unifies Tana Ai communities. Mahe Tana is a sacred site to ask for blessings for those living above ground. Mahe Nuhu is a sacred site commemorating a battle.

³ *Natar* means 'village' in the local language. This is synonymous with an indigenous community and its customary lands.

⁴ Confusingly for outsiders, both Talibura and Nangahale (also spelt Nanga Hale) are also the names of neighbouring customary villages which have been adopted by the government to designate much larger administrative areas. As in the other case studies in this book, boundaries imposed by the government in the late 1970s and again around 2000 (following regional autonomy) have cut many traditional villages and customary domains in Tana Ai into several pieces. Several *natar* are now included within the village administration of Nangahale.

⁵ The spellings *Wai*, *Wair* and *Waer* seem to be used interchangeably in place names. The term refers to a river or source of fresh water.

Tana Ai Customary Area



The total population of Utang Wair and Likong Gete is around 800 households or 3,000 people. Some 80 per cent of the indigenous inhabitants can trace their ancestry back to the origins of the village (see following section). They make their living from farming. The ‘outsiders’ (the 20 per cent of the community known as *Pahar*) mainly originate from the Buton and Bugis ethnic groups from Sulawesi and depend on fishing for their livelihoods.

Field crops include rice, maize, cassava, beans, peanut, sugar cane and pineapple. Other commodities produced by agroforestry are banana, mango, jackfruit, cocoa, cashew nut, candlenut, mahogany, teak, palm sugar and bamboo⁶.

II. THE UTANG WAIR & LIKONG GETE CUSTOMARY LANDS

1. Historical origins

Although the indigenous Utang Wair and Likong Gete communities are closely located and contain many of the same clans, they have different legends about how they acquired their customary lands⁷. However, as the following account shows, they share similar institutional structures and indigenous knowledge and there are also similarities in their land use planning and natural resource management systems. Both traditional villages are part of the broader Natar Mage community within Tanah Ai⁸.

a. Utang Wair

According to local legend, the first people to live in the Natar Mage area were the two founding fathers, Moang Sugi and Dua Sao, together with the following fifteen clans: Soge; Liwu Jawa; Liwu Urung; Liwu Anak; Liwu Tana; Liwu; Liwu Kubang Bura; Watu; Lewar; Lewuk; Ipir; Dewa; Dewa Lewuk; Mage and Mau.

⁶ Palm sugar is collected from the *lontar* tree, *Borassus flabellifer*.

⁷ The indigenous community strongly believes that the fact that the places described in the traditional stories are still recognisable from natural features and still bear the same names demonstrates their customary rights over the area and therefore these are described at length.

⁸ Natar Mage is also the name of one of the traditional Tana Ai villages.



Writing process and knowledge sharing, Flores, NTT

The community's oral history tells how Moang Sugi and Dua Sao got stranded on the coast near Talibura while on a voyage eastward from their homeland on mainland southeast Asia⁹. Hungry and thirsty, they decided to rest there. They dried up all the surrounding sea and dug holes along the beach to find fresh water. The area is now known as Wair Kolong.

Moang Sugi and Dua Sao went to Pedan where they used their swords to mark out land suitable for farming and building a settlement¹⁰. They moved on to an area now called Sao Wair whose local name recalls how the two pioneers dug up the beach to find drinking water to quench their thirst. After a short while they continued their journey to Nanga Hale where, by the riverside, they made a place to hold customary rituals¹¹. This site is still a traditional sacred place to

⁹ The original story, locally called *Talibura Wua Bahang*, names their origin as *Tanah Malaka*. Malacca is now a state in Malaysia.

¹⁰ Pedan is short for *Soge Pedan Tana Gere* which literally means the place where swords marked the ground.

¹¹ In the story, this event is called *Mula Nuba Nipar*. The word *nuba* refers to any sacred thanksgiving site.

pray for rain and to celebrate other ceremonies. Because Moang Sao and Dua Sugi were so impressed by the shining water, the Nangahale river was originally called Hulu Hilek after them¹².

The two ancestors continued on to a place they called Wair Hek Krada Wara because of the way the water kept changing colour¹³. Soon afterwards Moang Sugi and Dua Sao returned to the area which is now Likong Gete, celebrated in traditional stories for the beauty of the sea and the mountains. They named it Likong Gete Wan Rua because it was by the estuaries of two large rivers - Nanga Tahi and Nanga Wair. Another local site still known by a name that recalls the community's ancestors is Mage Layar or Lajar Sewa Lian, where the sail from a ship wrecked on the reef was blown ashore.

Moang Sugi and Dua Sao first started to work the land and to build houses at Lirih Watu. The name of this location refers to the way they built their homes using upright stone blocks¹⁴. This is where they allocated land and the rights to control it to the 15 clans that had migrated with them. The Soge clan was given land at Nuba Nanga and entrusted with responsibility for the sacred areas¹⁵. From that time onwards, these family groups have spread out in all directions.

Moang Sugi and Dua Sao moved on to Ledu Labang and decided to settle down there. They cleared the forest so they could plant crops and build houses but, when crop yields began to decline, the two men moved further east to the current location of Natar Mage. There they cleared another patch of forest for farming and their efforts were rewarded by abundant harvests. At the sacred site, they inscribed the words: "We hope for good harvests from our fields and *lontar* palms"¹⁶.

¹² *Hulu Hilek* means 'ancestors'.

¹³ Another local river estuary.

¹⁴ *Lirih watu laba lepo sorong woga nora ua uma kare tua* in the original. *Watu* = stone.

¹⁵ The settlement of Nanga Nuba is traditionally the heart of the Utang Wair community (*Nanga* = village; *nuba* = shrine).

¹⁶ The original says: *Sugi Sao Saro Welin Wai Duu Welin Inan, Ua Uma Di Hiin, Kare Tua Di Dolo, Mula Wua Plehok Mahe, Litin Gi'it, Ler Mangan*.

That is why the whole Natar Mage indigenous community, including the people of Utang Wair, honour Moang Sugi and Dua Sao as their ancestors. It also explains the special significance of Nuba Nanga to these indigenous people and their ancestral lands, and the role of the Utang Wair in protecting this and other sacred sites.

As the community grew, Moang Sugi and Dua Sao decided to call the area Natar Mage, meaning ‘Tamarind village’, because of an unusually-shaped tamarind tree growing in the northern part of the inhabited area. The tree is still there and is held sacred by the indigenous community.

b. Likong Gete

The people of Likong Gete have two different versions of the legend of how their ancestors settled there.

According to the first version, the original settlers were Moang Krai Soge and Moang Sugi Sao who came from ‘the land of Malacca’. Their sailing boat was washed ashore at what is now Nangahale beach. Here they created a site to hold rituals which they marked by planting crops¹⁷. This also signified that the land was theirs.

Moang Krai Soge and Moang Sugi Sao then went to Wair Hek where they also established a sacred site. The location’s name is connected with the story that an old man fell into the river there and drowned.

The two ancestors later moved on to Ledu Labang, west of Natar Mage. Here they cleared some forest to set up a settlement and to work the land. However, after some time they agreed to split this area between them. From then on Moang Sugi Sao controlled Natar Mage, while Moang Krai Soge had the area to the west (Tanah Runut) from the mountains down to the sea - including the area now called Likong Gete.

¹⁷ This site at Watar Anak is known locally as Mula Mahe (literally, the first sacred site). It is also called the Mahe Tana as it is where traditional ceremonies are held to ask the spirits for permission before planting crops.

Moang Krai Soge first settled at a place he named Mage Heni. This village was burned down during the period when Sikka was ruled as several small kingdoms. When the villagers rebuilt a settlement on the same site, they called it Natar Holon. His descendents became the Soge clan and were later joined in the western part of Tanah Runut by the Liwu Urung, Liwu Jawa, Liwu Anak and Lewar clans.

The other version of the traditional story holds that the first inhabitants of western Tanah Runut belonged to the Goban clan. They also originated from the Malacca region and got shipwrecked at Dobo. According to local legend, their boat was washed up onto high land. From this vantage point, they had a good view of the surrounding countryside and decided to go east.

They walked to the coast where they built a temporary settlement at Hito Halok before continuing their journey to Watu Gete. There the Gobo people founded the first settlement in the Runut area and cleared some of the local forest for farming. Other groups followed, such as the Watu people and the Liwu Jawa, Liwu Urung, Liwu Anak, Soge Laka, Soge Rutak and Kali Raga clans.

The Goban later instructed the Watu people to build a place to hold *adat* ceremonies and called it *Gren Mahe*. Since then, the Goban clan has spread out to the current location of Likong Gete.

2. Sacred historical sites

- The boat-shaped rock at Talibura beach (in front of what now is the military sub-district command office) is regarded as a relict left by Moan Sugi Sao.
- There is a rock at Watu Baing/Wair Kolong showing a footprint of Moang Sugi Sao, an arrow and the shape of a domestic animal.
- The sacred tamarind tree at Natar Mage, after which Moang Sugi Sao named the village, still survives.
- Other rocks of historical or spiritual value are:

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- Wuu Letu at Ledu Labang
 - Koja Wulan East of Natar Mage
 - Mahe Papar North of Natar Mage
 - Mahe Hiong Dueet in Karok Natar

III. THE INDIGENOUS LAND USE SYSTEM

1. Forest functions

The forest

- protects the soil from erosion;
- is a source of the plants needed for various *adat* rituals;
- provides materials for house construction;
- is a place for hunting.

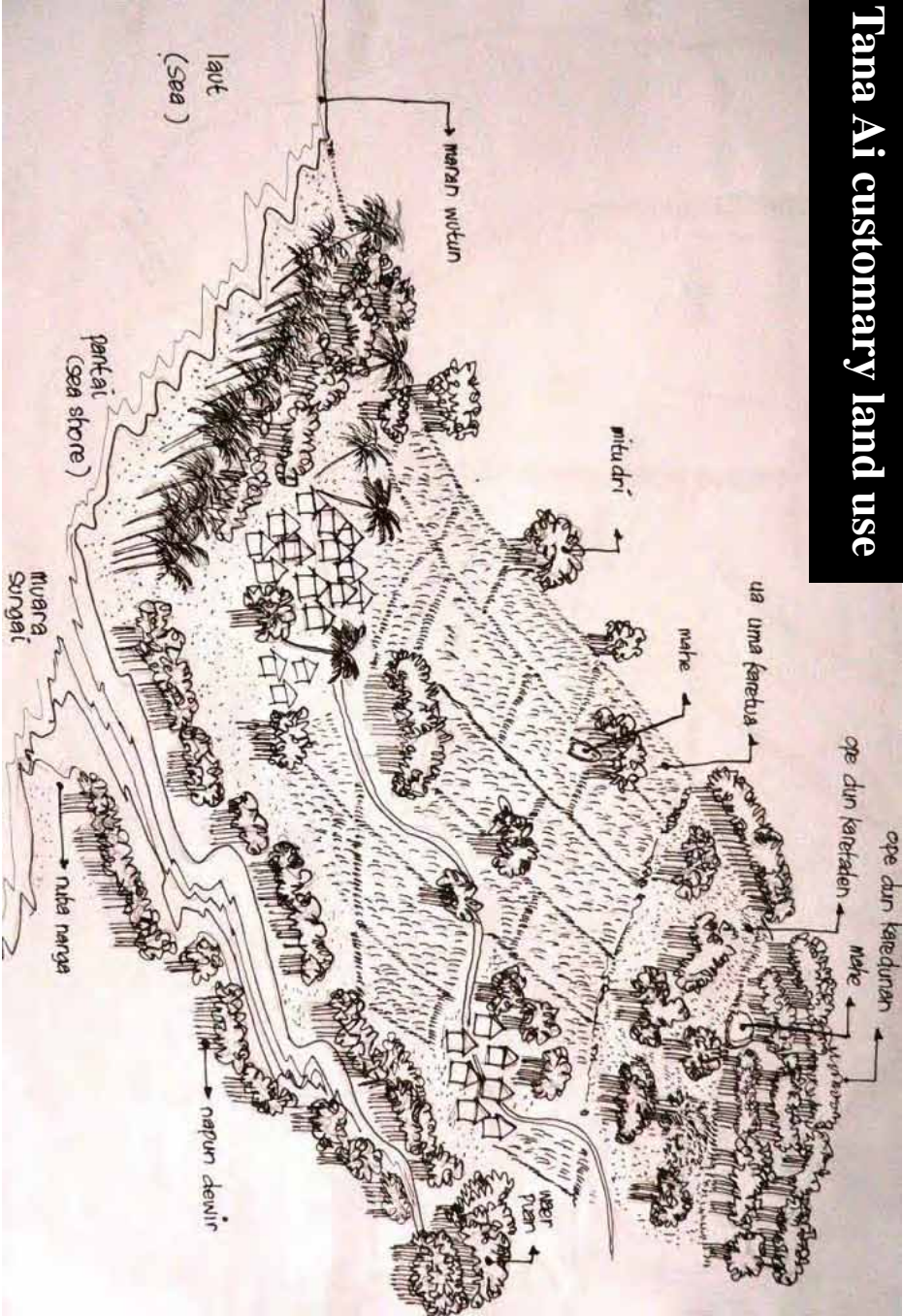
2. Land use zoning¹⁸

The whole of Tana Ai, including Utang Wair and Likong Gete, is a steeply hilly region close to the sea. So the only place to grow food is the hillsides. The traditional land use system practised by the Utang Wair and Likong Gete communities recognises a number of zones each with different purposes. This system distinguishes clearly between forested land which may be cleared for agriculture and forests that must be kept intact¹⁹. No-one is allowed to use certain parts of the forest which are inhabited by spirits. Other parts of the forest are protected as the resting places of ancestors' souls. Before someone dies, s/he tells the family the chosen place in the forest where his/her soul will reside after death.

¹⁸ A more appropriate term may be 'Traditional natural resource management' since this also includes fishing.

¹⁹ The customary lands of Utang Wair and Likong Gete together cover around 2,000 ha, but the communities have access to very little of this. The Dutch colonial administration designated the higher forested slopes as watershed protection in 1932 and the Department of Forestry maintained this status following Independence, extending the area of Protection Forest in the 1980s. A plantation company owned by the Catholic church (PT Diag) also controls some of these customary lands. See box, Maintaining Adat Control, later this chapter.

Tana Ai customary land use



a. Protected forest (*Uin watur tuan loran*)²⁰

Extensive areas of forested land remain within the indigenous community's management system. No-one is allowed to clear this. The Utang Wair and Likong Gete people see these forests as a source of water and also a place to hold *adat* rituals. They contain sacred places where people commemorate their ancestors and pray to them about their hopes and needs.

b. Forest for rotational agriculture (*Opi kare tutun tepan*)²¹

The indigenous communities have always cleared forests to grow crops just as their ancestor, Moang Sugi Sao, did²². The fields, where rice, maize and vegetables are grown for a few seasons, together with tree crops, are a traditional form of agroforestry²³ (see box, next page). Within this zone are protected forest areas where cultivation is prohibited (*tuan dudun*). These include:

- Steep slopes²⁴
- Hunting grounds²⁵
- Places inhabited by spirits.

These pockets of forest also safeguard water sources.

c. Ritual sites

- Places to pray for rain, a good harvest and protection from pests and natural disasters (usually in clumps of forest by a river)²⁶;
- Places for other traditional ceremonies and rituals (usually marked with large rocks)²⁷.

²⁰ In other parts of Tana Ai, such as Hikong-Boru Kedang (see box, later in this chapter), this protected forest is known as *ope dun kare dunan*.

²¹ In Hikong-Boru Kedang, forest which can be cleared for agriculture is called *ope dun kare taden*.

²² The same term - *ua uma kare tua* - is used to describe both the first planting carried out by Moang Sugi Sao in the community's oral history and all fields and agroforestry areas in the customary rotational cultivation system.

²³ The whole of this zone is, in the eyes of the Forestry department, Protected Forest, so any land clearance or farming is officially illegal.

²⁴ The steepest land (with a gradient of over 60°) is classified as *Repit goit raen ra'at* and, according to customary rules, is not allowed to be used.

²⁵ Wild pigs, deer, monkeys and porcupines may be hunted in the *tige kopor/rakan lera* zones.

²⁶ *Nuba puan nanga wan* – elsewhere known as *wair puan*

²⁷ *Wua mahe litin ler*



The protected forest and rotational agriculture areas

d. Housing/settlement area

e. *Kroang Kleren*

Where the *adat* meeting place is built and also where livestock is kept. Traditionally, animals are kept in stables, stalls or pens but may be tethered or allowed to roam freely.

f. Recreational areas²⁸

g. Fishing grounds

- Tidal zones where people catch small fish at low water using a plant extract (*tuba*) to stun them;
- Deeper waters where people go by canoe to catch larger fish.

²⁸ Forests must not be cleared around what are locally called *nari wain plo nain* or 'resting places'.

CULTIVATED PLANTS IDENTIFIED IN THE LIKONG GETE AND UTANG WAIR AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM

1. Food crops: there are 14 local varieties of rice, 10 varieties of maize, 10 different kinds of edible tubers and 9 different sorts of beans.
2. Agroforestry species: at least 8 tree species including coconut, papaya, jackfruit, mangoes, tamarind, candlenut, coffee and resin-producing trees (*damar*).
3. Vegetables: 11 different kinds of vegetables including gourds and aubergines.
4. Medicinal plants: more than 14 species are used for various human ailments such as fever, headache, boils, swollen limbs, diabetes, stomach ulcers, coughs, colds and kidney problems; 8 different plants are used to fight pests of agricultural crops; and 8 sorts of medicinal plant are used to treat animal diseases.
5. Fruits: more than 17 species (see also agroforestry above).

It is important to note that farmers report that local seeds tend to produce higher yields than introduced varieties.

3. Customary institutional structures

The customary institutions of the Utang Wair and Likong Gete communities have similar structures and similar roles with respect to determining land use.

Traditionally spatial planning (land use zoning) was the responsibility of the community leader and other *adat* elders. Over time their role has weakened and now their main function is to perform *adat* rituals.

The customary institutional structure is as follows:

- a. **Community leader (*Tana Puan*)**: overall ‘coordinator’; responsible for determining customary land use zones.
- b. **Clan leaders**: implement customary law within their clans and are responsible for assigning land to clan members.

c. **Bian Wuun**: individuals with specific skills related to *adat* rituals. These include:

- The *Bian Sobe* who carries the container holding the nail clippings and hair of the deceased during the *Wihi Loe Unur* and other rituals.
- The *Bian Luka* who is responsible for handing over the nail clippings and hair of the recently deceased to the *Bian Sobe* as part of the *Wihi Loe Unur* ritual.
- The *Bian Henin* who calls the souls of ancestors to escort the souls of the recently deceased so that they can all be reunited in the spirit world.
- The *Bian Karat* who makes the animal sacrifices during the *Wihi Loe Unur* ritual.
- The *Bian Seko* or *Gareng Lamen*: circumciser for the *Gareng Lamen* ritual.
- The *Bian Marang*: healer and fortune teller who makes predictions by reading the livers of sacrificed animals.
- *Bian Teli Apur*: women who provide all the things necessary for the rituals to be performed properly²⁹.
- *Bian Dua Puan*: women who oversee the performance of rituals and welcome guests.

d. **Members of the *adat* community** are divided into those from the founding clans (*Me Pu Ari Anak*) and others (*Ai Aur Wair*).

In addition to these traditional structures, the Utang Wair and Likong Gete have also created community organisations to defend their rights to their customary lands and to manage their natural resources (see box on Maintaining *Adat*).

3. Succession within customary structures

All posts within the traditional customary institutional structure are hereditary: there are no community elections for these.

²⁹ This and the following traditional role illustrate the fact that women play an important part in *adat* ceremonies and in sustainable natural resource management in indigenous Tana Ai communities. Another example is that many of the dyes that women use in making traditional cloths in Flores still come from forest plants.

4. Customary sanctions

If a customary rule is broken, the *adat* institutions hold a purification ceremony. For example, if the customary marital law is violated, a ceremony will be held to ask the Almighty to forgive the couple. This is presided over by an *adat* institution called the *Pati Demu*. An animal offering is made and handed over to the head of clan, witnessed by the community leader. The community leader is also entitled to animal offerings as payment of fines, generally if people have violated customary law pertaining to environmental issues - for example, burning protected forest or cutting down trees in that zone.

An example of customary rules on the environment (expressed as a traditional poem) says that whoever cuts a tree or damages any other plant in the protected forest will be severely punished by hunger, illness or severe rains or drought. The *Nu Ai Sube Tali* ritual must be held in the event of any violations. In this ceremony, offerings of a pig or goat, rice, eggs and traditional cloths are made to appease the guardians of nature. These also represent a kind of customary fine on the offenders.

5. Key principles of the customary land use system

1. Economics: Natural resources should only be used to meet basic needs (for subsistence), not as commodities to be traded or distributed to other places.
2. Social relations (kinship): The indigenous people of this area have very close family ties due to the tradition of marrying within the community. However, it is becoming increasingly common to marry people from other places and ethnic origins.
 - Culture: The values and physical and spiritual aspects of the culture handed down through the generations should be preserved.
 - Politics: The community leader (*Tana Puan*) holds the most powerful post within the customary governance structure. The clan chiefs and the community elders support him in his work.
 - Security: The community holds certain ceremonies to protect itself from any external dangers or risks.



Preparing the offering before the ritual in the sacred place

6. Other cultural practices associated with customary rules

- *Rau Ekak*: a ceremony where food offerings are made to the spirits of the ancestors so they will continue to guard the community's houses, agroforestry and agricultural land from natural or man-made disasters. This ceremony is usually celebrated at a special ritual site (*mahe*).
- *Earth cooling*: a ritual celebrated after clearing (burning) part of the forest for agriculture. It is usually held in the middle of the new fields to pray for soil fertility and a good harvest.
- *Pati blatan tebo took*: a ritual held for someone who has been ill for a long time or if someone has committed an offence such as theft or rape.
- *Pati neni ihin dolo*: a ceremony celebrated in the fields at the beginning of the (agricultural) year after harvest time.
- *Pati neni uran wair*: a rain ritual, usually celebrated at the sacred site of Nuba Nanga.

7. Traditional arts related to environmental conservation:

- a. **Dances:** *Wai Alu*, *Gong Ilin Puan*, *Labit* to express gratitude for a good harvest or some kind of victory.

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- Other customary artistic expressions:
 - *Lagar* (a kind of war dance)
 - *Hobo Blan Blean* (a contest of physical strength)
 - *Gareng Lamen* (a dance welcoming guests to the initiation ceremony for boys who are going to be circumcised)
 - *Awilabit* (a victory dance)
 - *Togo Jago* and *Blasi/gatong*: (dances expressing thanks for friendships and engagements)
 - *Suling rang* (a kind of flute used at celebrations and thanksgiving ceremonies)
 - *Kara Lata* (recitations of community history and prayers)
 - *Loru Lana* (traditional weaving skills – *ikat* cloth and baskets woven from palm leaves).

8. Land ownership system

Under customary law, land was held communally by the various clans, based on the division of land carried out by the community leader back in the days of Moang Sugi Sao. This system is no longer used and, nowadays, clan chiefs allocate land to individual families/members of their communities.



Xuyun Indrati [DTE]

Forest for rotational agriculture (*Opi kare tutun tepan*)

IV. INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

1. Land management system:

When agricultural land is allocated to members of the indigenous community, the first step is to hold an *adat* ritual to ensure everything goes well. This is followed by a clan meeting, chaired by the clan leader, where the decisions are taken. Environmental aspects are also taken into consideration when deciding whether a plot is suitable for cultivation or not. This can be seen from the following detailed account of the process.

a. *Lohor Blupur*

Once consensus has been reached regarding land allocation, offerings are made to the ancestral spirits to pray for a good harvest and the health of those who will work the land.

b. *Patin Roin*

On the first day, the ritual dedicated to nature's guardians and all the ancestral spirits is followed by the initial preparations. These consist of the clan leader marking the boundaries of the section of forest to be cleared.

c. *Diri Mipin*

Whether the land is suitable or not for farming is determined by the clan leader's dreams that night. A nightmare indicates that part of the forest should not be used, whereas good dreams confirm that it is an appropriate choice.

d. *Proi Holin*

The first stage of land clearance is to clear some of the surrounding forest to prevent the fire getting out of control and spreading to areas.

e. *Holo Roan*

Bamboo torches and a special type of wood³⁰ are used to light the fire to clear the trees and other vegetation on the selected land. By tradition, all those involved in land clearance should chew betel leaves, areca nuts

³⁰ *Klate boga* is similar to *Schleirosa oleosa*, known as *kesambi* in Indonesian

and ginger and then spit on the torches. After burning the area, everyone goes home and eats together.

f. *Tege*

The next step is to clear away the larger pieces of wood left by the fire.

g. *Duen Dure Leen Lepeng*

Once the land has been cleared, people mark the boundaries of the plots assigned to them.

h. Planting

- *Blatan Tana* – Cooling the land. Traditional verses are recited to ask the guardians of nature to allow the soil to cool so that the crops can grow well.
- *Pahar Wini* – Preparing the seeds³¹. The spirits are asked to protect the seed to make it yield a good harvest.
- *Mula Ai Pua* - The first part of the planting ceremony consists of reciting traditional verses while planting a sapling in the middle of the new fields. Its two branches are carefully orientated: one must point East, towards the sunrise, to symbolise prayers to God the creator of the universe/the guardians of nature; the other must point West, where the sunset symbolises prayers to the ancestors' spirits. The small tree (*Ai Pua*) becomes the site for further rituals during the agricultural year to pray for the right balance between sunshine and rain and for a good harvest.
- *Pahe Nona* - The first seeds are sown around the *Ai Pua* to the accompaniment of more traditional verses. People believe that the rice plants emerging from those first seeds contain a spirit (*Nalu Maeng*) that will protect all plants in that field and produce high yields.

i. *Pati Papa Hewar*

During the rainy season, once the plants have reached a certain height, all *adat* officials must attend the *Pati Papa Hewar* ritual. The container holding the ancestors' sacred remains is brought to the special tree. This

³¹ Seeds are sorted by size then soaked overnight. Only those which sink are selected.



The head of clan is reading the pig's liver before the customary ritual invites the ancestors to visit the fields. The ceremony is intended to honour the spirits prior to the harvest celebrations.

j. Rape Watar - Maize harvest

- *Hemit Watar*: a ritual meal is cooked when the cobs of maize first appear. During this ceremony the community prays to the ancestors to ensure a good crop when it is harvest time.
- *Rape Watar* – harvest of the ripe maize.

k. Poru Nalu – Rice harvest

Just before the rice is harvested a ceremony is held where traditional verses are recited. This urges the ancestors to ensure an abundant harvest

which fills all the ceremonial containers. During the harvest, the holders of certain customary positions are not allowed to wash until the day of the main ceremony, *Ri*. If they do, the harvest will fail.

l. Mesu Nalu – Threshing ritual

A ritual is held to make sure the rice grains fall away from the stems during threshing.

m. Ri and Wihi Loe Unur³²

These ceremonies are held when the harvested rice is put into the rice barn.

The *Ri* ceremony includes the following steps³³:

- *Plaha Kliat*: a mat is spread on the ground for use later in the ceremony.
- *Pregang Tada Lero Wulan*: palm, millet and papaya leaves are tied to a bamboo stick as a decoration to honour the Creator.
- *Long Nalu Howe e Kliat*: the rice is taken out of the barn, spread on the mat and symbolically cleaned before the *Bian Luka* removes the first husks by hand. Then the *Bian Luka* takes the ancestors' nail clippings and hair and puts them into a special container (*sokar*).
- *Pati Widin Uma Ara*: the animal that will be sacrificed as an offering is presented.
- *Pati Saden*: the animal is sacrificed to honour a particular ancestor or someone who has just died. Relatives will not eat any meat from the sacrifice as it symbolises the soul of the deceased.
- *Pati Lepe Luka* is a ritual to pray that the crop will last until the next harvest.
- *Pati Sobe* expresses the family's wish that the ancestors will welcome the spirit of the recently deceased and include it as one of them.

³² *Wihi Loe Unur* is a ceremony to welcome and show respect to the ancestral spirits. It usually forms part of all major ceremonies, including the harvest festival.

³³ Each stage of the prayers and offerings (*pati*) has a different purpose: to thank the spirits, the ancestors and the land and to ask for good harvests in the future.



Clearing the ritual site

- *Wihi Bian Hiti Kare*: prayers are recited when the ancestors' sacred remains are put back.
- *Wuwu*: the final stage of the ceremony when rice and meat are given to all guests.

2. Ceremonies to fight different pests and diseases

- Animal pests**: a ritual is used to drive out rats, locusts, caterpillars and other insect pests of rice. The ceremony is held at sea, usually in September or October before the planting season begins. Only men can take part. The journey is conducted in silence: no one on the boat is allowed to speak except for the person who recites the traditional verses which urge the pests to return to their place of origin and to not damage the crops. No-one must look back on the way back to the shore. For four days after the ritual no cultivation of the land is allowed and people cannot light fires in their homes.
- Fungal infections**: Pieces of wood and other materials are placed in each corner of the field and lit one by one following the direction of the wind³⁴. Whoever carries out the ritual must not go to that field during the next four days and nights.

³⁴ These offerings are sea salt (*hini*), mangrove shoots (*tube*), a specific bamboo (*bawa latan*) and a kind of coral (*tahi puhen*).

c. Rice-stem borers (*walang sangit*)

Certain kinds of wood³⁵, insecticide and paraffin are pounded together then the mixture is poured over the plants. Whoever carries out the ritual must not go to that field for the next four days and nights.

V. CHANGES IN CONTROL OVER THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY'S LANDS³⁶

1. What is changing?

- a. The customary land use system (zoning) has not changed.
- b. The customary institutions still exist, although they now play a weaker role.
- c. Land ownership has changed from communal ownership (where clan usage rights were assigned by the head of the community) to individual or family ownership.
- d. Agricultural practices and the physical conditions of the land remain the same.

2. Factors of change

In recent years, the main drivers of change have been internal. There is a trend within the community towards easier or more practical ways of doing things. For example, the shift towards individual land ownership was due to difficulties in sharing out the harvest between community members.

3. Land use conflicts

The communities of Utang Wair and Likong Gete are in dispute with the local government who has issued a land use permit (*HGU*) to the company PT Diag on their customary lands. Another part of their land has been declared Protection Forest³⁷ by the local forestry authorities who, in 1984, extended the boundaries. Both these cases have yet to be resolved³⁸.

³⁵ A type of hibiscus (*lili hear*) and meranti (*raon*, *Shorea sp*)

³⁶ Some additional information from the editors is presented in the box on Maintaining *adat* control.

³⁷ Protection Forest (*hutan lindung*) is a category of forest use employed by the Indonesian Forestry department to protect watersheds and to prevent erosion and flooding. No logging, cultivation or settlement is permitted within this zone.

³⁸ See also J M Prior (undated), The Church and Land Disputes: Sobering Thoughts from Flores, Candraditya Research Center for the study of Religion and Culture, Maumere.

MAINTAINING ADAT CONTROL¹

Most of the Utang Wair and Likong Gete communities' forest lands have been under direct or indirect government control for over 70 years. In 1912, the Dutch colonial administration allocated 879 ha to a plantation company. Ownership was soon transferred to a Dutch church organisation as a means of supporting the spread of Catholicism in Flores. This was done, not surprisingly, without any consultation with the indigenous landowners. Since Independence, the Indonesian government has continued the colonial policy and, in 1989, granted a land use permit over the same area to PT Diag, a plantation company owned by the archdiocese of Ende².

The church initially established a coconut plantation with some cattle grazing. Later teak and cashew trees were also planted. This concession extends from Nanghale to Patiahu and occupies customary land traditionally allocated for rotational cultivation (*opi kare tutun tepan*) and some important historic and sacred sites, including the first settlement at Lirih Watu. Pressure on the indigenous communities' customary domains was further increased when the forestry department unilaterally extended the Protection Forest (*hutan lindung*) zoning in 1967 and again in 1984.

The Catholic Church in Flores is very powerful and enjoys widespread respect and popular support, so the indigenous communities were reluctant to challenge the occupation of their customary lands by the plantation. However, community opposition to the extended watershed protection zone was met by intimidation, violence and imprisonment from the authorities during the Suharto era. So, for many years, these indigenous people had little alternative but to try to continue their traditional livelihoods as best they could.

The people of Utang Wair and Likong Gete are not against all government forestry policies *per se*. Their resistance to the national reforestation scheme (*Gerhan*) is a case in point³. The original aims

¹ Additional information provided by Emil Kleden and Yuyun Indradi.

² PT Diag: *Perseroan Terbatas Diones Agung* = Archdiocese Ltd.

³ *Gerhan* is an acronym for the *Gerakan Nasional Rehabilitasi Hutan dan Lahan* (GNRHL) or National Movement for the Rehabilitation of Forests and Land.

of this central government initiative were to reduce the risk of erosion and increase timber production by planting trees in deforested areas. Unfortunately, unscrupulous contractors had sought to profit by logging commercially valuable timber before replanting the denuded land. As this illegal practice threatens forests protecting sacred areas and ritual sites, the indigenous community has vigorously resisted the implementation of the *Gerhan* programme by outsiders. Instead they demanded to be allowed to carry out operations themselves. This, they argued, would be more effective and bring genuine benefits for the community.

Nevertheless, the future role of *adat* in forest protection in Utang Wair and Likong Gete is not clear. On the one hand, as in many other indigenous communities in Indonesia, the *adat* governance structure has officially been supplanted by the government administrative bureaucracy for nearly three decades. Traditional animist belief systems are not recognised by the government and are opposed by church and mosque leaders; most communities in Flores have converted to Catholicism. The *adat* structures and practices which remain could be said to be largely ceremonial.

On the other hand, the continued practice of *adat* ceremonies by these two indigenous communities has ensured that traditional structures and beliefs also persist. *Adat* leaders can still transmit traditional knowledge and skills associated with managing and protecting natural resources. The current use of customary land use zoning again helps to sustain the existence of *adat* structures, particularly the key role of *Tana Puan* as community leader. In this way, customary rules – for example about permanently protected forest and forest that may be converted for agriculture – continue to be internalised and utilised by these communities.

As the author notes, traditional practices are changing. Increasing demand for agricultural land due to population growth means that it is no longer possible to practise rotational cultivation, especially since these communities do not have access to most of their customary lands. It remains to be seen whether the people of Utang Wair and Likong Gete can reclaim their customary rights over their land and resources or, at the very least, negotiate new agreements with government and church agencies. Despite the repressive political atmosphere, by the 1990s, indigenous

communities in Tana Ai were considering setting up new organisations to challenge government decisions to change the status of their customary forest lands to plantations or Protection Forest. Such ideas were realised after the downfall of Suharto in 1998 when, with the assistance of the environmental NGO forum WALHI, a network of indigenous communities called JAGAT was set up in the province⁴. People from Likong Gete and Utang Wair became members. Representatives of JAGAT took part in the inaugural conference of the Indonesian indigenous peoples' movement, AMAN, in 1999. Later that year, communities from several villages, including Likong Gete, founded the new local association PEMAT-TULI which became a member of AMAN⁵. Indigenous people in Utang Wair set up their own community organisation too (Wairkung). These organisations have taken part in the second and third national AMAN Congresses and have also become a vehicle to raise issues of concern with the local government⁶.

Since 1996, villagers from Utang Wair and Likong Gete have written numerous letters to the local administrator (*bupati*), governor of NTT province and various ministers requesting that their land and resources be returned to them. Representatives of their community organisations have met with members of the district assembly and forestry service and several meetings have been held with local government officials and the police. In the absence of any concrete results, several families reoccupied part of the PT Diag plantation in August 2000, cutting down some trees to establish a new settlement. Ironically, since the Catholic church promotes peace and human rights, this action was followed by interrogations, arrests and mass protests. The conflict has yet to be resolved. PT Diag's licence expires in 2013 when the land rights officially return to the district government.

⁴ JAGAT, *Jaringan Gerakan Masyarakat Adat NTT*, was founded on 28th October 1998.

⁵ PEMAT-TULI = *Persatuan Masyarakat Adat Tuan Paut, Runut, Likong Gete*.

⁶ Further information on community organisations and forest advocacy in eastern Flores can be found in Chapter 8 of EL Yulianti *et al* (eds), 2006, *Kehutanan Multipihak: Langka Menuju Perubahan*, CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.



Customary protected areas

4. The communities' expectations

- a. Spatial planning policies must not ignore indigenous peoples' rights or violate their cultural values.
- b. Customary institutional structures should be preserved even if their role and functions become weaker or change.
- c. The government should take peoples' livelihoods more seriously and address their real needs. The priority for the Utang Wair and Likong Gete communities is to regain control over land allocated to PT Diag and to return the boundaries of the government-designated Protection Forest to their 1932 position. These are crucial issues because the communities are running out of land for farming and building houses.
- d. The government's village administration should co-operate with the customary governance institutions. There has been no cooperation between the two systems to date.
- e. NGOs working to improve indigenous peoples' standard of living need to show much greater commitment to their work and more integrity. It is a great pity to see NGOs exploiting

the ‘backwardness’ of indigenous communities for their own benefit³⁹. NGOs should act as mediators in cases where the government has acted unfairly to the indigenous people.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that the Utang Wair and Likong Gete people know their historical roots, celebrate traditional rituals related to the management of natural resources, value their customary laws and have a functioning customary governance structure. They have sacred places and objects for ceremonies which are symbols of their strong ties with their ancestors and their natural environment. This is why they still retain their cultural values, even though some have become less important or have changed over time.

The indigenous communities of Utang Wair and Likong Gete therefore make the following recommendations:

1. Future policies should involve indigenous peoples, not just be decided by policy makers.
2. The support of all stakeholders is needed to recognise the existence of customary governance structures and rules and to preserve and further develop them.
3. The government and the indigenous community need a common policy forum to discuss land use planning issues and to resolve existing conflicts.
4. The existence of customary law needs to be officially acknowledged and national law enforcement should accommodate it.
5. The state’s land use planning should not be based solely on

³⁹ This is a sensitive issue since a whole range of NGOs operate in eastern Flores, all with their own motives and ways of working. There are cases where NGOs have been established by government officials primarily in order to access funding sources for their own needs. Other problems have been project proposals which are too frequently short-term in nature or drafted without community consultation or consent. These have tended to increase dependency rather than building capacity or developing community-led initiatives. In contrast, some NGOs have actively supported indigenous communities’ struggles for a number of years. For example, the community mapping organisation, JKPP, helped several clans to produce a map of their customary lands in order to negotiate return of control from a plantation company.

macroeconomics because land issues are closely associated with the existence and the rights of indigenous peoples. The government should therefore support and promote small-scale community-based economic development.

6. It is vitally important to accommodate indigenous land use systems into measures to protect the environment and to sustain ecological services.

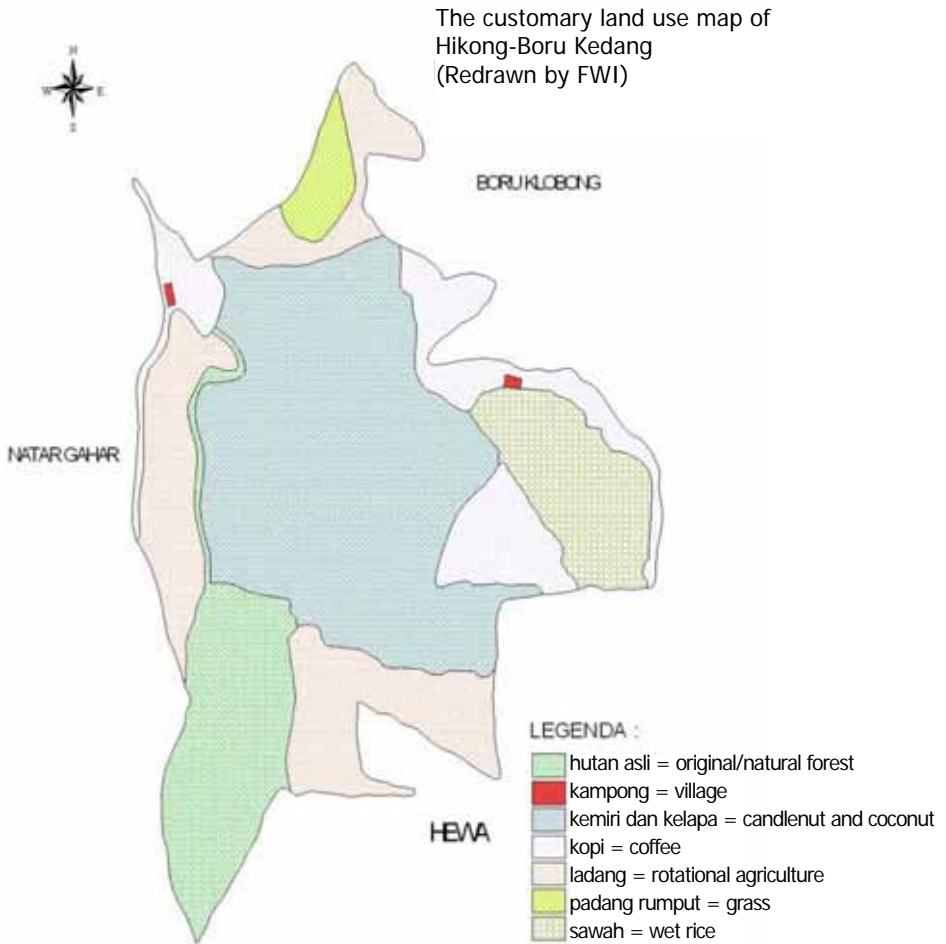
HIKONG-BORU KEDANG

Introduction

Another upland community in Tana Ai, called Hikong-Boru Kedang, located around 15 km from Utang Wair, is facing similar or even more serious problems. Culturally both communities are similar, in terms of history, custom, rituals, the way they manage their natural resources and customary structures. Most of the population depends on agriculture activities for their livelihood. The commodities which they grow in Hikong-Boru Kedang include: coffee, cacao, cassava, corn, rice and fruits. Access to Hikong-Boru Kedang is easy, with a good asphalt road and the village just beside the road, on the border of Sikka and East Flores Districts.

The population of Hikong village is less than Utang Wair, at around 200 households. The name Hikong-Boru Kedang refers to the community who live in one customary area, which is split over two districts: Sikka District (Hikong village) and East Flores District (Boru Kedang village). This community faces the same problem of Protection Forest being extended into agricultural zone of their customary area.

The approach of the two local governments has been different. The Hikong villagers have been experiencing very strong pressures from the East Flores local government, whereas the Sikka District authorities has been more positive in that it has shown it is willing to resolve the conflict. The text below is an attempt to picture the situation in Hikong in more detail.



Changes in availability of land for farming

The reality facing the indigenous community is that there is far less land available for cultivation. Much of the agricultural land bequeathed by their ancestors was declared Protection Forest by the local government (in this case by the forestry service) in 1984. Prior to that, there was plenty of land. Since the official change in status of the Hikong-Boru Kedang's customary lands, people have experienced a shortage of land for agriculture and even for housing.

Reasons for these changes

a) External factors:

- The extension of the protected forest area by the local forest service has led to a reduction in the area available to the community for cultivation.
- Government programmes, such as the five initiatives for farmers¹.

b) Internal factors:

People are attracted to new things. This is particularly the case for the younger generation who do not want to be labelled old-fashioned. Also, levels of education and basic skills are still very limited in the Hikong-Boru Kedang community².

Land conflicts and natural resource management

The main conflict at present is between the indigenous communities and the government over the status of *adat* lands which the government has declared as Protection Forest. The people of Hikong-Boru Kedang never agreed to the boundaries set by the government in 1984. They continue to defend their position because, according to local history, the area now designated Protection Forest is land passed down through the generations from their ancestors. To this day some members of the community continue to live and to cultivate land there.



The rotational cultivation areas

¹ *Program panca usaha tani*

² *Sumber daya manusia*: literally human resources

A summary of continuing conflicts is presented in the table below.

YEAR	INCIDENT
1955	Members of the Hikong-Boru Kedang community are forced out of the Kaliraga area because of the local forestry service's first 'regreening' project - the planting of eucalyptus.
1967	The state's Protection Forest area is extended by 2km from the 1932 boundaries.
1979 - 80	Second stage of the 'regreening' project, intercropping eucalyptus and <i>johar</i> . Hikong-Boru people cultivating their land in the Bao Logun area were evicted and fined by East Flores forestry officials. Members of the community who continued to resist were arrested and investigated by the security forces of Wulanggintang sub-district, East Flores.
1982	30 indigenous people were arrested because they took part in a traditional hunt to drive away pests (wild pigs, monkeys and deer). Their hunting equipment was confiscated and they were made to work as labourers on a government project.
1984	The Protection Forest boundary was extended by 4 km from the 1967 boundary (6 km from the 1932 boundary). From then on, the indigenous community has continued to protest against these boundaries, which were imposed without their consent. They reported this case to the Sikka regional assembly who did not take it up.
1999	50 indigenous people accused of forest clearance were arrested and taken to the sub-district head's office in Wulanggintang to be interrogated. They had to pay a fine of Rp75,000 (approx US\$7).
May 2001	A survey by the East Flores local government for the construction of a tourist information centre in Bao Logun, on Hikong-Boru Kedang customary land, led to protests by the community. The Wulanggintang sub-district head promised he would set up a dialogue, but this never took place.

September 2001	The Wulanggitang sub-district head made public the result of the tourist information centre survey. The community protested.
1 October 2001	The East Flores local government quietly began to lay the foundations of the tourist information centre.
8 October 2001	The Hikong people occupied the site to disrupt a ceremony for laying the centre's first foundation stone. As a result of negotiations with the East Flores security forces and the building contractor, the workmen for this project were sent home.
9 October 2001	The indigenous people continued their occupation, forcing the cancellation of the foundation stone ceremony. They followed this up by sending a statement of their objections about the construction of the tourist information centre to the East Flores district assembly and administration, with copies to the provincial governor and the Sikka district government and assembly.
6 Nov 2001	The Sikka district assembly considered the letter and began a dialogue with the people of Hikong-Boru.
12 Nov 2001	The site for the tourist information centre was moved 30 metres to land which was still in Bao Logun on the site of a former Hikong-Boru village.
25 January 2002	The district head sent 1 lorry load of police from Sikka and 2 lorry loads of soldiers from the East Flores division to break up the community action and to frighten the indigenous people. The district and sub-district forces arrived because the Wulanggitang sub-district staff and the local government of East Flores did not communicate properly and because the results of the local government investigation were inaccurate.

Hopes for the future

The people of Hikong-Boru Kedang hope for:

- policy changes which provide recognition of their customary rights over the area which the forestry service has declared Protection Forest;
- intensive para-legal capacity building to enable them to tackle future problems;
- a government which is more supportive of indigenous peoples and respects their dignity and worth as Indonesian citizens;
- a greater contribution from the government's village administration to indigenous peoples' lives and closer co-operation with the indigenous community on many issues;
- closer co-operation between NGOs and indigenous communities, with NGOs playing a mediatory role on behalf of communities.

Alternatives for the Indigenous People of Hikong-Boru Kedang

The changes which are taking place have led to the development of new responses at the community level. The indigenous people of Hikong-Boru Kedang are aware that, if the hopes they have expressed above are to be realised, a number of issues must be addressed. Foremost among these are tackling institutional difficulties, strengthening community representation and improving people's basic skills and education.

The community's attempts to strengthen their society by addressing weaknesses in its traditional institutions have included looking into alternative organisational models. They are now trying to use a different institution to build and develop links with other parties, particularly in the areas of resolving conflicts over natural resources and obtaining justice in their efforts to access to these resources. They have set up a new indigenous peoples organisation called *Nian Ue Wari Tana Kera Pu* of which all indigenous inhabitants of Hikong-Boru Kedang are members.

A major reason behind the establishment of this organisation is the very real prospect of ‘vertical conflict’ between indigenous peoples and the (national) government. Government policies on land and forest use are acting against indigenous peoples’ interests. Unilateral government decisions on forest use zoning result in the loss of forest resources to indigenous communities. This, together with rapid population growth, explains why there is so much less land available for cultivation – a serious issue which requires immediate action. The overall effect of all these problems is that indigenous people suffer from reduced food security due to the loss of their livelihoods.

The process of regional autonomy presents new opportunities

Indigenous people are aware that a centralised forest management approach which only pays attention to timber management needs to be replaced by a new system – one oriented towards multiple forest uses which focuses on balanced ecosystems and community-based forest management.

For indigenous communities, a forest is not merely a stand of timber: it has a very strategic role as a source of life and as a place for carrying out rituals which link us to the Creator. So, the forest management concept that must be promoted is “prosperous communities and sustainable forests” not “sustainable forests and suffering communities”.

The people of Hikong-Boru Kedang are hopeful that, under the new political system of regional autonomy, there are opportunities for government programmes to increasingly accommodate their aspirations and concerns as members of their community and Indonesian citizens.

