

Dusung Dati and Dusung Pusaka in a Livelihood Sustainability
(Case Study in Ullath Village Maluku)

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ABSTRACT

Utilization of management of *dusung* (agricultural land) communally by a household (clan) is part of the tradition of the people of Ullath Village, Maluku province, passed on for generations. This research highlights the phenomenon of norms and cultures that impact internal conflicts from the perspective of household and livelihood transition. This study aims to explore and analyse the causes of the household livelihood transition and identify the household's strategies for livelihood sustainability. Observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews were conducted with clove farmers, *tuan negeri* (landlords), and *kewang* to collect relevant data. The results show that the dynamics of communal management of *dusung* in one household led to conflict. To resolve the conflict, the resolution was to plant cloves together with different *gadihu* plants as a symbol or identity of each owner. However, it did not resolve the whole conflict due to fraud, and in the end, the farmers chose to do other work. For their households' livelihood sustainability, they did *tipar mayang* jobs by keeping and renting the *dusung*, and implementing the *maano* system. This study emphasizes the norms and culture of local communities related to the management of *dusung*, which can lead to conflicts and livelihood transitions.

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INTRODUCTION

The life of rural communities is generally and highly related to agricultural land. The land is the principal capital and a means to gain income. However, population pressure causes an agricultural land crisis as the increase in population is not followed by the availability of agricultural land as a place for their activities. In addition, the population pressure also affects the low economic scale and income of farmers. Currently, it has become a severe problem for the farming community as the increasing population impacts on the land use demand, yet its availability is relatively limited (Pujiriyani, Soetarto, Santosa, & Agusta, 2019; Saptawartono, Widen, Segah, & Yanarita, 2019). This situation leads to conflicts (Babagana, Yakubu, Harris, & Hussaini, 2018; Batlajery, Pattiselanno, & Kakisina, 2017; Dhialulhaq & McCarthy, 2020; Ferdian & Soerjatisnanta, 2017;

Fisher & van der Muur, 2020) and livelihood transitions to the non-agricultural sector (Ahmad, Oxley, & Ma, 2020; Ahmad, Oxley, Ma, & Liu, 2023; Pritchard, Rammohan, & Vicol, 2019).

The sustainability of rural household livelihoods highly depends on the agricultural land. This resource is classified as the most critical asset that can generate income and ensure the sustainability of household livelihoods. (Pour et al., 2018). Chambers and Conway argued that a livelihood, in its simplest sense, is a means of gaining a living, and a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims, and access), and activities required for a means of living: a living is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, (Natarajan, Newsham, Rigg, & Suhardiman, 2022)

Assets (capital) are the most crucial part of household livelihood sustainability. Assets and livelihood sustainability are like two sides that synergize with one another. Asset ownership is not separated from human, financial, natural, physical, and social capital (Pour et al., 2018). These assets contribute to supporting the economic life of the household because they can respond to pressure and shocks when experiencing difficulties so that there will be sustainability in meeting the economic needs at that time (Udoh, Akpan, & Uko, 2017).

Hou, Huo, & Yin (2017) viewed land asset (agricultural land) ownership as important for the rural agrarian communities to maintain their livelihood. This means that ownership of natural resources (agricultural land) is a dominant factor for farmer households to facilitate their economic life or livelihood sustainability. In addition, ownership of land would ensure that the residents and subsequent generations could continue agriculture-based livelihoods. and avoiding conflicts (Fisher & van der Muur, 2020; Vel & Makambombu, 2019). However, land problems create structural problems, often called rural crises, characterized by decreased socio-economic capacity, as the land is a source of livelihood for most rural communities (Shohibuddin, 2016).

This situation is challenging for the land-based farmer households, as is the case among clove farmers in Ullath Village, East Saparua District, Central Maluku Regency. Although their territory is located in coastal areas, their life is still based on land products. Communities in Ullath Village regulate their land (*dusung*) ownership by dividing it into two categories, including *dusung dati* (land owned by one of the clan groups. It is under the authorization of the boys of the clan) and *dusung pusaka* (land owned by one of uku(s) *mata rumah* as an inheritance). Their ownership has been registered in Register Dati since 1823, specifically for Lease islands, including Ullath Village. Since that time, no new *dati* has been formed (Bartels 2017). Both *dusung dati* and *dusung pusaka* belong to the clan or *mataruma*, which cannot be traded because it involves communal ownership rights. Traditionally, *dusung dati* is passed down for generations to unmarried boys and girls. Meanwhile, *dusung pusaka* is passed down to all family members to be managed together. With this provision, the farmer households in Ullath Village find it increasingly difficult to rely on their livelihoods from agricultural products as the land of the same size must be done by more and more people from generation to generation. To sustain their household livelihood, farmers do other work.

Farming households' strategic choices vary depending on asset ownership and the ability to combine them to maintain livelihoods. This strategy is carried out so that economic needs can be met. Hou et al. (2017) found that human capital, natural capital, and financial capital influence

the livelihood strategies of farming households on the Tibetan Plateau to switch to non-agricultural work. Meanwhile, Bhandari (2013) found that households in Nepal combine labour capital and natural capital to generate new income. Pour et al. (2018) argue that combining several assets creatively and innovatively can create sustainable livelihoods.

Previous research describes several exciting cases in Indonesia that examine the issue of customary (*ulayat*) land ownership and the sustainability of community livelihoods. Land used as agricultural land was taken over by companies and the government, causing conflict. In the end, people lost their livelihoods. This situation occurs in several regions, including Sumatra (Dhiaulhaq & McCarthy, 2020; Yusuf & Syafrial, 2019), Sorowako (Robinson, 2019), Mindanao, and Kalimantan. (Rutten, 2016), and Sulawesi (Fisher & van der Muur, 2020). However, they focus on conflicts between the government and the community and the company and the community in several areas. Meanwhile, this research highlights a different aspect, including the dynamics of internal conflict in families who use land communally about their local norms and culture with the ownership status of *dusung dati* and *dusung pusaka*. Thus, this research is fundamental, and the results are expected to contribute to livelihood studies in rural area communities about the norms and culture of local communities and the sustainability of household livelihoods.

Based on the above description, it can be explained that the norms and local culture of the Ullath Village community cause a livelihood transition. Therefore, the research problem of this study is “How does the process of livelihood transition take place in Ullath Village?” and “What is the household strategy for their members’ sustainability?” This study aims to explore and analyze the causes of the household livelihood transition and identify the households’ strategies for livelihood sustainability.

METHODS

This research was done qualitatively, aiming to explore and analyze the causes of the household livelihood transition and identify the households’ strategies for livelihood sustainability. Data collection techniques are observation, documentation, and interviews. Researchers carried out observations and documentation to ensure the truth of informants' statements about the existence of *dusung dati* and *during pusaka*, to see clove plants planted together with *gadihu* plants as a symbol of ownership, as well as *tipar mayang* activities as a source of livelihood, where researchers together with informants visited their *dusung*.

In-depth interviews with 10 informants ((shown in Table 1) are considered appropriate because the data obtained is credible and does not show transitions or changes, so the data is valid. The interviews used Ambonese-Malay language as their native language to make it easier to understand, and the interviews were recorded using a recording device. The informants consisted of those who used to work as clove farmers. Then they shifted to *tipang mayang* workers due to difficulties in utilizing *dusung* communally and farmers who did not have the opportunity to use the *dusung* at all and then shifted to *tipang mayang* workers. In addition, the researchers also interviewed essential figures in indigenous communities, such as the *tuan negeri* (landlords) and *Raja*, who understood the ins and outs of *dusung dati* and *dusung pusaka*.

Informants	Gender	Age	Job	Education
Melky	Man	60	Government and farmers	Senior High School
Bernad	Man	72	Traditional leaders and farmers	Senior High School
Andre	Man	56	Community leaders and farmers	Elementary school
Tos	Man	87	Famer	Senior High School
Yopi	Man	58	Famer	Senior High School
Nus	Man	51	Famer	Senior High School
Beni	Man	77	Famer	Senior High School
Zander	Man	58	Famer	Elementary school
Koni	Man	50	Famer	Senior High School
Yani	Man	84	Famer	Senior High School

Table 1: List of Informants

The interview questions were not structured so that they could explore various experiences related to the topic. Ultimately, the researchers could no longer obtain new information (data saturation). The results of the interviews were then made into transcripts so that they became research data and then made meaning of the informant's statements. Then, the researchers determined themes based on the data obtained and interpreted them. Data categorization was also done based on theme similarity as the researchers would use thematic analysis, which would be synthesized by constructing empirical data and field context

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cloves Used to be the Economic Power of Farmers' Households in the Past

The Ullath Village is located in East Saparua District. The population is 1,591 people, of which 835 people are women and 756 people are men. Administratively, the area of Ullath is 6.80 km². Ullath Village is located in East Saparua District. The population is 1,591 people, of which 835 people are women and 756 people are men. Administratively, the area of Ullath is 6.80 km².

In Ullath Village, the community worked as farmers. Their life relied on agricultural products and plantations in *dusung*. In the *dusung*, some plants had been prepared by nature (sago and *mayang*/palm sugar), and results of household businesses such as long-life plants (cloves, nutmeg, coconut, fruits) and short-lived plants (cassava, banana, and taro). However, the households grew more cloves because they had a high economic value compared to other plants

The clove plants were superior crops for farmers of Ullath Village for generations before the 1990s. It was undeniably one of the most wanted commodities since the Dutch colonial era. It was a symbol of identity for the people of Maluku, including Ullath Village. The yields could meet all the needs of farmer households, such as consumption needs, school-to-university tuition, building houses, and buying household furniture. As explained by the informant 1 (72 years old):

Our children can be successful and get jobs because of cloves. In addition, all items in this house, such as these two beds, two sets of plastic chairs, a 24-inch Panasonic television complete with a DVD player set, a Sharp fridge, and kitchen utensils, were purchased from Clove Harvest. It also enabled us to build this house. Therefore, our lives are indeed dependent on the clove harvest”.

The above information explanation illustrates that the clove had been such a support for the household economy until the 1990s. They tried to plant these in the communal *dusung*, including *dusung dati* and *dusung pusaka*. There has not been any conflict because there are few owners (generations) who use the land. However, as time goes by, the generations of each family in the clan increase; this situation causes the amount of ownership in the use of *dusung* to also increase and gives rise to conflict within the family.

Management of *Dusung Pusaka* and *Dusung Pusaka* and Their Problems

Every family in Ullath Village had their *dusung* and their unique name. The *dusung* name had been regulated since the *datuk-datuk* era (ancient times). There was no clear division of specific areas or rotation of *dusung* utilization in the family in the application pattern or management of rights of the *dusung*. Instead, there was freedom for all users who had the authorization to use the *dusung*. Regulations could only be applied to clove plants, i.e., each owner must have a specific identity (symbol) as a symbol of their ownership. This means all brothers and sisters in one house should have the same access to managing the *dusung*.

Previously, the *dusung* in each *petuanan* (region) seemed quite extensive because the number of owners was only a few. However, as time went by and generations increased in one house or clan, the use of *dusung* became limited as the number of owners who used the *dusung* also continued to increase while the land area remained. It certainly limited farmers doing activities in the *dusung* and naturally triggered conflicts within the family. It had been a challenge for households to maintain their main livelihood as clove farmers. Informant 5 (51 years old) explained:

"Usually, the owners of dusung dati and dusung pusaka are siblings, and they do not try to understand each other. I still have some clove plants in the dusung, but the siblings had already taken them. Since then, I no longer go to the dusung".

Informant 2 (56 years old) explained that there were no funds to fight for their *dusung* ownership rights so her husband preferred to budge. She said that:

"Anes had monopolized the dusung which made it difficult for us to use it although we have the same rights. We have no money to bring this problem to court. So, we let it be".

The effort made by the farmer households to avoid conflicts in managing the *dusung* communally was by planting croton or *gadihu* plants in the local language in each clove plant to distinguish the ownership.

***Gadihu* Plants as Symbol of Ownership**

One of the strategies done to avoid conflicts was by planting different types of *gadihu* plants beside the clove plants so that they could be easily recognized. Planting clove plants and *gadihu* plants was done simultaneously to distinguish clove plant ownership in the *dusung*. Informant 3 (87 years old) explained:

"I do not plant cloves with gadihu, but my kids do. It is done to avoid conflicts. That is my rule. Thus, everyone can recognize which one is theirs".



Picture 1: Clove Plants Together with Gadihu Plants
Author [source]

The effort made by the household to avoid conflicts by planting *gadihu* had been a clever solution. However, many still cheated. Some even monopolized the *dusung*, as explained by the following two informants.

"I planted the cloves with my common type of gadihu, but they pulled it out and even replaced them with their type". (informant 6, 77 years old)

"I have about 15 clove plants, some of which were given by my grandfather, and some were planted by myself. However, there have been many conflicts, and I decided not to go there anymore. Although everyone has clove plants, my cousin still wants to dominate the dusung, and I do not care about it". (informant 4, 58 years old)"

The informant's statement above clearly illustrates that it took a lot of work for them to maintain the clove plants as their primary source of income. For their household livelihood sustainability, they decided to be *tipar mayang* workers.

Switching to *Tipar Mayang*

Mayang plants were rare cultivation crops in Ullath Village. They were natural or wild plants grown in open locations and could always be found in all *dusung*. They spread and grew naturally in hilly and humid areas. They did not require special treatment, and their processing did not require specific expertise.

Tipar mayang has existed since the older generation. The older generation preferred to work as a clove farmer because it was more profitable. However, when the generation increased, the owners of the *dusung* also increased. This resulted in difficulties in using the *dusung* as a source of livelihood. Therefore, the farmers who did not have access to both the *dusung dati* and *dusung pusaka* chose to do *tipar mayang* work to avoid conflicts within the family.



Picture 2: *Mayang* plants
Author [source]

The *tipar mayang* work aiming to produce *sopi* (a traditional drink) was simple enough. It was optional. One could do it just by directly paying attention to the process, starting from tapping the *mayang* bunches as the raw material to distillation. It also did not require a lot of labour and could be done individually. However, if there were lots of *mayang* bunches to tap, then the kids or wife would come to help with the distillation process. In addition, the results were also promising and quite fast to bring income to households.



Picture 3: *Sopi* production activities
Author [source]

The demand for this product was very high as they were not only consumed by local people but also by people outside the island. The marketing went smoothly because each *tipar mayang* worker already had loyal customers. The average daily production was 10 -15 litres, and the selling price per litre was IDR 20,000. This product met various household economic needs, including children's school tuition, buying land to build a house, and buying two-wheeled vehicles. The results of *tipar mayang* work had replaced the clove plant position as the primary

source of livelihood among the farmers. This condition led the households to try to be *tipar mayang* workers in various ways, such as *jaga dusung* (taking care of other owner's *dusung*), *sewa dusung* (renting the *dusung*), and implementing a *maano* system (a profit-sharing work system of the *tipar mayang* work between the *dusung* owners and workers. The workers get more parts than the *dusung* owner).

Jaga Dusung (Taking Care of Other Owners' Dusung)

Households who found it difficult to use *dusung dati* or *dusung pusaka* chose to take care of others' *dusung* while working on *tipar mayang*. This was done so that there was an additional source of income for the household. The following statement is what was expressed by informant 8 (50 years old) and informant 9 (84 years old):

"We had some clove plants in the dusung pusaka, but they took them. We did not want to be noisy, so we decided not to go there. My husband worked on the tipar mayang for our family. Initially, he intended to rent a dusung owned by Tuhaha community. However, the owner did not want to receive the fee and instead asked my husband to stay and live in the dusung and take care of all their plants. In return, my husband was allowed to do tipar mayang work there. So, we have been taking care of the dusung for 23 years now".

"I was a tipar mayang worker for 30 years. In 2002, I was in an accident and decided to stop. However, my children replaced me and they still work on tipar mayang now. We have been living in the other's dusung for 46 years since 1972. Our job is to ensure that the clove plants are free from parasites and to take care of the dusung".

Sewa Dusung (Renting the Dusung)

Sewa dusung is the term in the local language for renting the *dusung*. It did not necessarily mean that the *dusung* was for rent, and instead, the clove plants in the other owner's *dusung*. It was a household strategy for their livelihood sustainability when they experienced difficulties in managing the *dusung* communally; informant 6 (77 years old) and informant 2 (56) explained:

"I do not want to destroy family relationships. I prefer to do tipar mayang, and it is not done in the dusung, but instead did sewa dusung in various places. When the one-year lease ends, and I want to extend the lease, I can pay. In the past, the rent fee was IDR 500,000 per year, but now it's millions".

"We have many siblings, and everyone works there. I better do jaga or sewa dusung to avoid conflicts. I am currently renting Rudy's dusung (sewa dusung). I have done one-third of the period per January (2019), and there are 2 more years. The rent fee is IDR 1.3 million. I am also taking care of Obet's dusung (jaga dusung). These are all done to make enough money for my family".

Renting *mayang* plants among farmers only required simple verbal rules.

Maano (Profit-Sharing of Tipar Mayang)

In addition to the strategies of *jaga dusung* and *sewa dusung*, the households in Ullath Village had another unique way to do *tipar mayang* work, namely by implementing the *maano* (profit-

sharing system). It was done by sharing the profit based on the initial agreement between the worker and the *dusung* owner. Generally, the worker got more parts (two-thirds) than the owner (one-third). After the worker produced three jerry cans or 15 litres of *sopi*, the worker and owner would divide them. One-third or five litres of *sopi* was given to the *dusung* owner, and the remaining two-thirds or ten litres of *sopi* was the workers. informant 4 (58 years old) explained:

“I have been doing tipar mayang for 20 years. I used to sewa dusung in Negeri Itawakam but now I am implementing maano system with Mr. Andre. If I produce 3 jerry cans of sopi, two of them will be mine, and Mr. Andre will only get 1 jerry can. I can get more sopi because it has been agreed upon”.

Impacts of *Dusung Dati* and *Dusung Pusaka* Utilization

For the Ullath Village community, *dusung* was the most critical asset and the primary source of livelihood. However, the ownership status required the management to be done communally, which caused many households to experience difficulties, limiting them to work as clove farmers. The utilization of *dusung* was based on something other than specific regulations or area division among them. This led to several imbalances in its utilization. This phenomenon could trigger conflicts within the family and in a *mata rumah*. The increase of family members in a *mata rumah* caused an increase in the number of *dusung* owners, which eventually became highly limited as the *dusung* area was constant.

A study by Fisher & van der Muur (2020) found that the utilization of *dusung* communally in Kajan was carried out in rotation, in contrast to what happened among farmers in Ullath Village. The utilization of *dusung* communally creates internal conflicts within the family. The research results of Lisapaly, Pattinama, & Thenu (2018) in Paperu Village explained that the ownership of *dusung* involved kinship and communal mastery, and managing *dusung* required an agreement based on the type of *dusung* ownership. This also happened in the Ullath Village, but there were different findings in this study, namely that there was fraud in utilizing the *dusung* because there was a desire to monopolize the *dusung* from the families.

The fraud was caused by factors including the desire to obtain personal benefits and the monopoly of the rights of others (economic motive). In addition, there was no opportunity for negotiation between them. Thus, overcoming the injustice resulted in one of the parties deciding not to use the communal *dusung* and tended to do other work in the sustainability of meeting the economic needs of the household. A study by Robinson (2019) found conflicts occurred due to forced land grabbing by companies, impacting the loss of household livelihood in Sorowako. A difference to the results of this study was that the occurrence of conflicts and land grabbing (*dusung*) was carried out by families in a clan, which caused a transition in household livelihoods.

Susanti & Sabariman (2021) argued that the sociocultural factors were also crucial as they contained values that were sometimes in contact with the fundamental rights of individuals or that the existence of a community might result in the process of adaptation and innovation becoming difficult. These statements were consistent with the research results in Ullath Village, which also confirmed that the norms and cultural phenomena among the Ullath Village community led to conflicts and livelihood transitions. The governance of President Joko Widodo tried to prosper farmers by carrying out Agrarian Reform. It was based on the Constitutional Court Decree No.

35/2012, which allows the recognition of customary land and legalizes customary land ownership rights (Robinson, 2019). During that time, the *dusung* ownership status – part of the local norms and culture – was an obstacle to the farmers' prosperity. Dhiaulhaq & McCarthy (2020) viewed that the customary framing remained challenging to implement because it forced people to agree on a limited customary bureaucracy. These constraints could make the customary frameworks inaccessible and not be applied in some communities, considering the local norms and culture.

The norms and culture cannot be ignored; they must be implemented (Soulisa & Marasabessy, 2023). However, the norms and culture of the Ullath Village community influenced and encouraged the household decisions to determine livelihood to achieve sustainability. The norms and culture had indirectly contributed to the spread of poverty among rural communities in Ullath Village. The more owners (successor generation in a line of *mata rumah*) who managed the *dusung*, the more fragmented the *dusung* would be. On the other hand, the lower the productivity, the lower the household income would be. This condition also affected the welfare of farmer households. Other researchers also found similar results that fragmentation of land greatly affected the production capacity of farms and had an impact on household economies of scale (Susanti & Sabariman, 2021). The land fragmentation continuously illustrated involution in the agricultural system. Therefore, the land area was fixed / constant, while the generation would gradually increase and ultimately reduce the household welfare.

The Role of Social Capital in Livelihood Strategies

Social capital is a social network that benefits all parties with positive impacts such as networking, trust, and cooperation to meet needs and mutually benefit each other. Social capital had an essential role in the household of clove farmers in making a livelihood transition for their livelihood sustainability. A tradition of helping each other – originating from values and norms in social life – also indicated that there was still hope for the farmer households to access assets (*mayang* plants) owned by other households for their survival. Wuepper, Ayenew, & Sauer (2017) argued that social capital was an investment in the form of social relations as informal insurance among rural communities and had economic value.

The research results in Ullath Village explain that social capital is vital in facilitating household livelihood strategies. This finding is consistent with the results of the study by Scuderi, Tesoriere, Fasone, & Pedrini (2023) in the African region and Wola, Purwanto, & Kawung (2023) in Tonsawang Village, which explains social capital is an essential factor for rural communities in the livelihood strategy. Establishing a cooperative relationship between the owner of the *dusung* (patron) and the workers (client) was possible due to the reciprocal relationship and the exchanges and the benefits they obtained. Therefore, this could be referred to as an economic motive-based social behaviour. Dapilah, Nielsen, & Friis (2020) found that social capital contributes to the adaptation measures of the farmer households in northern Ghana when experiencing shocks through trust and cooperation.

Not only was the trust given by the owner of the *dusung* to the workers but this cooperative relationship was also based on the principle of justice. The client got more parts than the patron as the owner of the *dusung*. This situation contrasted to Adisel, Suryati, & Riswanto (2023), where the patron deserved greater rights than the client. In the Ullath Village community, the trust was

given by the patron to clients to process the *mayang* plants. Thus, the social capital could be an informal guarantee of the sustainability of livelihood for the farmer households in Negeri Ullath.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study explained that the farming households in Ullath village were initially the income of their livelihoods from clove plants. This plant is cultivated in the *dusung* communally, both in *dusung dati* and *dusung pusaka*. As a symbol of ownership, they plant cloves together with different types of gadihu plants. However, this method has not been the right solution, there is fraud between them. To avoid conflict, households prefer to do *tipa mayang* work as their source of income. The strategy helped them to do the *tipar mayang* work by doing *jaga dusung*, *sewa dusung* and implementing the *maano* system.

Research on *dusung dati* and *dusung pusaka* concerning household livelihoods is rarely done by previous researchers. This study focused on only one village, Therefore, it is hoped that there will be further research by conducting comparative studies on the use of *dusung dati* and *dusung pusaka* in the sustainability of household resolution, to enrich livelihood studies. The implication of this study is that norms and cultures that must be preserved for generations cause conflicts and livelihood transformation, this is caused by economic factors.

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