

Cultivating Food Sovereignty

Understanding the diverse economies of sago
in Luwu Utara, Indonesia

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A master's thesis

Cultivating Food sovereignty:

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Glossaries and Abbreviations

<i>passambe</i>	: Sago harvester
<i>Balabba/tumang</i>	: Sago container
BPOM	: Food and Drug Surveillance Agency
BUMDes	: Village-owned enterprises
<i>dangé</i>	: A sago-based food in Malangke Barat and the form is plate, rectangle, and with sandy texture
<i>Datu</i>	: Noble person in Luwu
FGD	: Focused Group Discussion
GEMPITA	: <i>Gerakan Pemuda Tani</i> / Young Farmer Movement
<i>Gereq</i>	: A piece of cleaved sago tree
IAASTD	: The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development
<i>Kampung</i>	: Village
<i>kapurung</i>	: Traditional cuisine from Luwu Utara made of sago with vegetable broth
KRKP	: <i>Koalisi Rakyat untuk Kedaulatan Pangan</i> / Peoples' coalition for food sovereignty
<i>Macella</i>	: Red
<i>Maddui'</i>	: A process of rolling the glutinous ingredients of <i>kapurung</i> to make it smaller form
<i>Malotong</i>	: Dark
MUI	: Indonesian Ulema Council
<i>Nawacita</i>	: Consist of nine priority agendas or visions proposed by Joko Widodo in presidential election in 2014
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organisation
<i>Passambeang</i>	: The location of sago harvesting work (garden)
<i>penggarap</i>	: Landless farmer
RPJMN	: National Medium-term Development Plan
RPJMP	: National Long-term Development Plan
<i>sompa</i>	: Dowry provided by a man to marry a woman in South Sulawesi
<i>syukuran</i>	: Thanksgiving
<i>Tabaro</i>	: the starch extracted from sago tree, used as the main ingredients for <i>kapurung</i> , <i>dangé</i> , and other local cuisine
<i>Tae'</i>	: An ethno-language that is mainly used by tribes in Luwu peninsula
<i>To Luwu</i>	: People of Luwu
<i>To Ugi'</i>	: People of Bugis regions
UPSUS PAJALE	: Special effort to improve the production of rice, corn, and soybean

Abstract

Indonesia has taken up food sovereignty in the constitutional document Food Act number 18/2018 that animates the food policy and program implementation in Indonesia. However, it remains largely rhetorical since the food program implementation has undermined the local food system in many places. This study explores the implementation of food sovereignty in Luwu Utara that is predicated with productionist paradigm, where self-sufficiency is the main goal and transnational corporation are involved in the process of enactment. The implementation put pressure on the local food system in Luwu Utara, particularly in relation to sago. The sago food system encompasses complex issues ranging from the relationship between people in the system to their relation with sago. The diverse economy framework is applied to unravel the diverse forms of economies that lie within the sago food system, and to legitimate the value of food sovereignty existing in Luwu Utara. Diverse economies of sago in Luwu Utara are dominated by non-capitalist practices that can challenge the dominant discourse of capitalist economy as food sovereignty against for. The different forms of food sovereignty at different scales necessitates reflection on food sovereignty implementation. Cultivating food sovereignty requires reflexivity, creating the basis of food sovereignty and building recognition are the strategies to develop a multi-scalar sovereignty. Administering multi-scalar sovereignty is a challenge that must be overcome in the development of a democratic food system in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Food sovereignty, diverse economies, sago, Luwu Utara*

Chapter 1

Introduction

Food sovereignty has been taken up in the new Indonesian constitution, Food Act number 18/2012 (Food Act 2012, s.1). This law has been advocated by food movements and small-farmers organisations in Indonesia through political lobbies since 2007 as an outcome of the global food sovereignty movement. The constitution animated the national planning document (2015-2019) on the issue of welfare, namely to improve and to strengthen national food sovereignty by achieving national self-sufficiency of rice, soybean, corn, meat, fish, and salt (BAPPENAS, 2014 p.6-145). In the broader context, many countries have been implementing food sovereignty as a national constitutional framework, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela (McKay et al, 2014), or enacting it through different strategies and tactics such as in France (Larzac) and the US (Vermont) as a localised resistance to McDonalozation and corporate agribusiness (Ayres and Bosia, 2011).

However, food sovereignty in Indonesia remains rhetoric. It is mainly situated within the productionist paradigm in policy narratives and its implementation. Indonesian peasants' union has criticised the implementation due to its high dependence on industrial agriculture and high involvement of transnational corporations (Ramalan, 2017). For example, the president of Indonesia announced a plan to continue to develop Merauke as a "national rice barn", to increase rice production on 4.6 million hectares of land to equal national rice production through modern agricultural mechanisation (Tempo.co., 2015). Previously, in this district where the Malind indigenous community lives, the state megaproject Merauke Integrated Food Estate (MIFEE) (2004-2014) was created to establish a large rice plantations. This resulted in the destruction of forest on tribal lands where local and indigenous staple food sources had grown. Ito et al. (2014) identified the spatial fix and the legalised dispossession (land grabbing) by an alliance of state-corporate-local elites, who used the policy rhetoric of food and energy crisis to justify their actions.

Productionist food policy practices have created injustice for the local community and diminished the local biodiversity. From Indonesia's experience with food sovereignty, the challenge of enacting food sovereignty is evident, especially in contesting the concept with the existing food security policy, as described above, which favours the dominant productionist paradigm and promotes monoculture rather than agroecological-based practices. As Edelman (2014) explained, "both have been protean concepts, frequently imprecise, always contested and in ongoing processes of semantic and political evolution". Likewise, Indonesia's food sovereignty implementation has been a state-centric and top-down approach. The unclear use of the concept of food sovereignty, according to Hospes (2014), leads to an ongoing deadlock with public authorities in implementing it.

A critical question, who is the sovereign in food sovereignty has invited scholars to examine the governance aspect of food sovereignty. Patel (2009:668) has argued that "food sovereignty layering of different jurisdiction over which rights can be exercised". This means various actors in the state have the sovereignty to be contested when they need to define and regulate their own food system at a certain level and scale. Yet the question remains in terms of how to administer those multiple sovereignties. One central element in the food sovereignty debate is the definition of scale. Some define the local food system scale in terms of size, level and network (Robbins, 2015), Iles and Montenegro (2015) propose multi-scalar sovereignty by integrating the concept of 'relational scale', which is defined as "networks of elements and processes in a complex adaptive system". They argue that using the relational scale view could develop multiple sovereignty and create a more egalitarian

food system. However, examples of multiple sovereignties by integrating relational view need to be provided in greater number and depth.

Employing an ethnographic study of a specific community and staple food in Indonesia, this thesis intends to provide an example of multiple sovereignties as mentioned above. Drawing on 'diverse economy' as developed by Gibson-Graham (2006) as a theoretical lens, this thesis will describe a myriad of economic diversities in a specific region in Indonesia. It reveals not only capitalist but also alternatives and non-capitalist forms of economy which constitute the interdependencies between different actors. This thesis also describes how identities are performed and negotiated through food production and consumption in a specific place. Understanding the socio-cultural and historical context of the food and the people will enrich the reference on the dynamics of multiple sovereignties. Food sovereignty implementation in Indonesia, especially at the local level, needs to be analysed in order to understand how actors involve themselves in and perform their roles, and how other sovereignties are undermined. Therefore, this thesis will draw on the state of food sovereignty in Indonesia and its implementation in the context of the ethnographic site of this study. It juxtaposes and analyses the current implementation of food sovereignty in the region with the dynamics of a local food system, that comprises of different forms of sovereignties, to provide insight on administering the concept in Indonesia.

1.1. Luwu Utara

In order to provide an example in the emerging view of multiple sovereignties, this thesis will portray a study from Luwu Utara district. This place encompasses different ethnicities and local food systems. One of the prominent staple foods in this region is sago. It has long been a staple food in Southeast Asia (Flach, 1977). In Luwu Utara, the staple food made of sago is called *tabaro*, which is used as the primary ingredient in various local cuisines such as *kapurung* and *dangé*. It refers to the starch extracted from sago palm (*Metroxylon sagu*). It is grown in freshwater, swamps, and wet-/lowlands, and found in warm tropical temperature areas where it can grow about 10 to 12 meters tall with a trunk diameter of 35 to 60 centimeters. The plant takes 8-12 years to reach a maturity that is suitable for harvesting (Ehara et al., 2018).

Luwu Utara district is located in South Sulawesi province in Indonesia with Luwu district and the Bone gulf on the southern border, West Sulawesi province and Toraja district on the western border, and Central Sulawesi on the northern border. Geographically, Luwu Utara lies mostly in the lowland area. The total area of Luwu Utara district is 7,502 km², consisting of nine sub-districts which are located at 15 to 17 meters above sea level, and three sub-districts which are located over 1,000 meters above sea level (BPS, 2018). The population in this region consists of different ethnicities. The major ethnicities living in Luwu Utara are Buginese, Torajanese, Makassarese, and Javanese. Regarding its most prominent staple, sago, related archaeological findings in Luwu Utara show that the first Buginese kingdom palace was established around the 13th century in the Malangke sub-district, and it was abandoned in the early 17th century. They found that the kingdom was heavily reliant on sago as a staple food, supplemented by water buffalo and fish for protein (Bulbeck et al., 2007).

However, sago production and consumption in South Sulawesi has declined drastically from 2006 to 2013 due to the lack of government support and the pressure to grow more profitable monocultures (i.e., rice, palm oil, and cacao) (Metaragakusuma et al., 2017). South Sulawesi province is known as one of the largest rice producers in Indonesia, exporting rice to other provinces in Indonesia. The so-called Food Sovereignty Program implemented by the state has put pressure on the local authorities

in South Sulawesi, including Luwu Utara, to increase the production of rice through agricultural mechanisation. Moreover, under the umbrella of food sovereignty, big agricultural infrastructure such as dams have been built in Luwu Utara to produce a massive amount of rice to feed the population within and outside the region. Despite these pressures to shift to strategic commodity production, sago remains as a local staple food and is produced for strengthening food security at household and community level. Moreover, the tree components are utilised to produce roofing material, animal feed, baskets, mats and any other kinds of products which could enhance household income (Ehara et al., 2018). Luwu Utara and its local food system is relevant in this study due to its complexity of actors and food system and the engagement with the dynamics of the current food sovereignty enactment.

1.2. Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapters one to three cover the introductory chapter explaining the problem statement, the theoretical framework, the methodology, and the structure. The empirical chapters lie in chapters four to six. In chapter four, I explain the meaning of sago for the people in Luwu Utara. This encompasses how food takes place as a medium to construct identity in this region. In chapter five, I present the analysis of diverse economies that lie in the sago food system, showing how actors in the system maintain their subsistence through everyday practices. In chapter six, this thesis focuses on how food sovereignty by the state-centric actors is implemented in Luwu Utara, which is rice-biased and laden the interests of transnational corporations. Likewise, I outline the challenge posed to the sago food system by the Intellectual property regime (IPR) issue and the rise of sago-based industrialised food. This section will also capture the different views of actors (the state, local government, and civil society) in conceptualising food sovereignty. I elaborate on the findings chapters in chapter seven. I argue here that in administering food sovereignty, moving from the state-centric to multi-scalar sovereignty is necessary. These strategies are aimed at understanding the dynamics of the local food system, engaging with a different lens to enrich the literature, and taking action to cultivate the best practices of food sovereignty in the specific local context. The concluding chapter calls for more research, of various forms, on enacting food sovereignty at different scales and places, especially in Indonesia.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

Food sovereignty has been taken up in Indonesia's constitution, but faces many challenges in the implementation. One of the challenges is transitioning the food system from a productionist to a socially just and sustainable that can support local livelihoods. To address this challenge, understanding the local food system is essential. Integrating food sovereignty program in the local context with the lack of understanding the concept and the local food system has brought to the failure of food sovereignty implementation in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to explore food sovereignty practices in the local context by understanding the local food system around sago production and consumption in South Sulawesi lowland. The concept of diverse economy is useful to identify the existing capitalist and non-capitalist (alternative) economic practices around sago production, distribution, and consumption in area of this study, Luwu Utara district. Examining diverse form of economies around sago food system in Luwu Utara will help to develop the new reference for enacting food sovereignty in the local context that promote sustainability and social justice, thus enhancing local livelihood.

2.1. Diverse economy

This study will use the framework of diverse economy introduced by feminist economic geographer Gibson-Graham (2006). Beyond the dominant capitalist system, there are various and complex forms of economic practice in our society. Gibson-Graham uses the analogy of the iceberg to describe how wage labour, market exchange, commodities, and capitalist enterprises are visible but various other activities, site and people where the value is produced, exchanged, and distributed remain submerged (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The iceberg. From *Community Economies* collective 2001; drawn by Ken Byrne (Gibson-Graham, 2006)

The diverse economies framework places attention on ‘marginal’ economic practices and forms of enterprise that have been neglected and always seen as a ‘fuel of capitalist development’ rather than a driver of change. The marginalised economic practices mentioned by Gibson-Graham include unpaid labour, social enterprises, enterprises that focus on the environment, local food movement, and more form of diverse economy shown in figure 2. According to Gibson-Graham (2008), enacting diverse economy is a performative ontological project that makes alternative economic practices “more ‘real’, more credible, more viable as objects of policy and activism, more present as everyday realities that touch all our lives and dynamically shape our futures”. In this research, the importance of diverse economy framework is to recognise and legitimise the existing economic diversity around sago production, distribution and consumption in Luwu Utara district. Moreover, this framework will consider the sago producers as an essential subject that is actively shaping the local food system by creating a diverse form of economic activities in the region.

Transactions	Labor	Enterprise
MARKET	WAGE	CAPITALIST
<i>ALTERNATIVE MARKET</i> <i>Sale of public goods</i> <i>Ethical ‘fair-trade’ markets</i> <i>Local trading systems</i> <i>Alternative currencies</i> <i>Underground market</i> <i>Co-op exchange</i> <i>Barter</i> <i>Informal market</i>	<i>ALTERNATIVE PAID</i> <i>Self-employed</i> <i>Cooperative</i> <i>Indentured</i> <i>Reciprocal labor</i> <i>In kind</i> <i>Work for welfare</i>	<i>ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST</i> <i>State enterprise</i> <i>Green capitalist</i> <i>Socially responsible firm</i> <i>Non-profit</i>
<i>NON-MARKET</i> <i>Household flows</i> <i>Gift giving</i> <i>Indigenous exchange</i> <i>State allocations</i> <i>State appropriations</i> <i>Gleaning</i> <i>Hunting, fishing, gathering</i> <i>Theft, poaching</i>	<i>UNPAID</i> <i>Housework</i> <i>Family care</i> <i>Neighborhood work</i> <i>Volunteer</i> <i>Self-provisioning labor</i> <i>Slave labor</i>	<i>NON-CAPITALIST</i> <i>Communal</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>Feudal</i> <i>Slave</i>

Table 1. Diverse economy (Gibson-Graham, 2006:71)

2.2. Food sovereignty

Food sovereignty is a form of resistance and regaining control to food system. It is accentuated in the Nyéléni Declaration as a collective understanding and action to fight against “Imperialism, neoliberalism, neo-colonialism and all systems that impoverish life, resources and ecosystem, and the agents that promote the above such as international financial institutions, the World Trade Organisation, free trade agreements, transnational corporations, and the governments that are antagonistic to their people” (Patel, 2009:675). Furthermore, Grey and Patel (2015) described food sovereignty as decolonisation, a radical anti-colonial project, and a daily mode of resistance in indigenous politics that is visioning more democratic engagement. They provide an example of how indigenous community struggles in Northern America dealt with the neoliberal market and policy, re-localising their food system and fighting for their right to protect their land, produce their local food sustainably, and define their local trading system. Therefore, food sovereignty is aimed to

return control of productive resources to farmers, and the control of food distribution to communities, in ways that shift power to make the food system more democratic and socially just.

Localism, empowerment and sustainability are the emphasised issues in food sovereignty, cited in Nyéléni Declaration, “Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal – fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability” (Patel, 2009:674). It describes the critical relationship between the scale and the actors in managing the food system. Food sovereignty requires action at multiple scales, yet the realisation is dominantly local.

Food sovereignty is centralising right. The narrative is not just having a right to food, but having a right to make decision about production and consumption activities (Trauger, 2014). As a framework, food sovereignty advocate to manage the local food system based on the right of people to access and decide their own food system. It promises a wide range of examples in taking control of the local food system, empowering local actors toward more sustainable food production and consumption and socially just society. In operationalizing food sovereignty as a framework, I would differentiate this concept with the current dominant food system in Indonesia (food security) that has been laden neoliberalism in its practices. Later, I would identify the practices within the sago food system that reflect the value and principle of food sovereignty and linking it to the broader movement toward changing the dominant food system.

2.3. Linking diverse economies and food sovereignty

Linking diverse economy and food sovereignty in the context of this research is not only as a framework for identifying food sovereignty practices from Luwu Utara, but also as a part of experimentation in building food sovereignty indicators through diverse economy lens. Gibson-Graham described that diverse economy as a new proposed language “to expand our economic vocabulary, widening the identity of the economy to include all of those practices excluded or marginalised by strong theory of capitalism” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 60). In constructing the language, Gibson-Graham conceptualise three practices of radical diversity of economic, namely transaction, labor, and enterprise. Food sovereignty seeks for alternative form of economy that can challenge the hegemony of global capitalism. In this sense, diverse economy is a framework to recognise the radical form of food sovereignty.

Chapter 3:

Methodology

3.1. Research question

The objective of this study is to understand the local food system in Luwu Utara district and to identify existing and potential food sovereignty practices in this region. As a theory-oriented objective, this research aims to contribute to the local system inquiry in the context of food sovereignty discussions in the global south. Moreover, in the policy context, the aim of this research is to develop new examples of food sovereignty practices in the local context in Indonesia to encourage better food sovereignty implementation at national level. In order to achieve the objective of this research, I provide a main research question:

How does the local food system in Luwu Utara district contribute to food sovereignty?

In answering this general research question, the following sub-research questions are employed:

1. *What is the role and meaning of sago for local people in Luwu Utara district and what motivates them to persistently produce and consume it?*
2. *What types of diverse economic practices exist around the sago food system in Luwu Utara district?*
3. *How is food sovereignty implemented in Luwu Utara district?*

3.2. Research design

This research is designed to answer the questions listed above. There are two main topics in the general research question, namely: (1) understanding the local food system and (2) investigating the way in which it contributes to food sovereignty. The central issue of the first sub-question is understanding the meaning and the role of sago for the local community, and how it is related to identity construction. In the food sovereignty discussion, a lack of understanding of the complexity of local food systems leads to the misconception of its implementation. Thus, data from the field that comprises the socio-historical and political context will help to reveal the complexity of the local food system in Luwu Utara, that is so far under-scrutinised. This helps to unravel how actors within the place engage and perform their identity through food production and consumption. The second sub-question is aimed at exploring economic engagement within sago production in Luwu Utara through the lens of diverse economy. This lens helps to unravel the various forms of economy that lie within the sago food system, at individual, household, and community levels, ranging from capitalist to non-capitalist economies. It shows how different actors are interdependent and shape the sago food system in Luwu Utara. The third sub-question addresses the state of food sovereignty in Indonesia and its implementation in Luwu Utara. This question is aimed at understanding the discourse beyond the simple implementation of the current state-centred national food sovereignty program, which pushes local state actors towards a certain goal. It aspires to investigate the local level negotiations involved in the implementation process, in the context of the prevailing local food system in Luwu Utara.

I will employ ethnographic research, a data collection method that has been widely applied by sociologists to understand local cultures by engaging in the everyday life of a specific community. Ethnographic research allows us to gain deeper insights into the motives and the reasons why people do what they do in a particular society. Ethnographic works feature the study of everyday contexts of people, a range of sources of data gathering, relatively 'unstructured' data collection, facilitating in-depth study by focussing on a small-scale case. Data analysis involves interpretation, and produces descriptions, explanations and theories (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Various research in food studies has been using ethnography as an effective approach to understand specific foods and their various linkages (social, economic, environment). Cook and Harrison (2007) used an ethnographic approach to 'follow the thing', providing a biography of a specific food and describing the complex relationship of people, place, and capitalism in the supply chain. In this case, I follow the sago or *tabaro*, the local staple food of the Luwu Utara people, from production to consumption. By following this food, with questions and theoretical framework in mind, I captured actors involved in the sago food system, their logic, understanding and connection to sago.

I started the research fieldwork from 'everywhere'. I met a random informant in the central market and he led me to a sago harvester family in Radda village, in Masamba sub-district, near to the capital city of Luwu Utara. I decided to stay for a month in this place due to its proximity to the city and to important actors such as government officers, sago traders, and others. During my months stay in Masamba, the narratives of the actors I encountered led me to a place called Waelawie hamlet in Malangke Barat sub-district, which became the second research site of this study. According to the literature, this place is the centre of good quality *tabaro* production. Many governmental projects are conducted in Malangke Barat, it is also known as the 'city of sago'. However, it is far from the capital city of Masamba and the majority of sago production in this region is distributed to the city and other regions in Luwu Utara. It is more practical to explore the sago food system in Masamba first, and then afterwards in Malangke Barat.

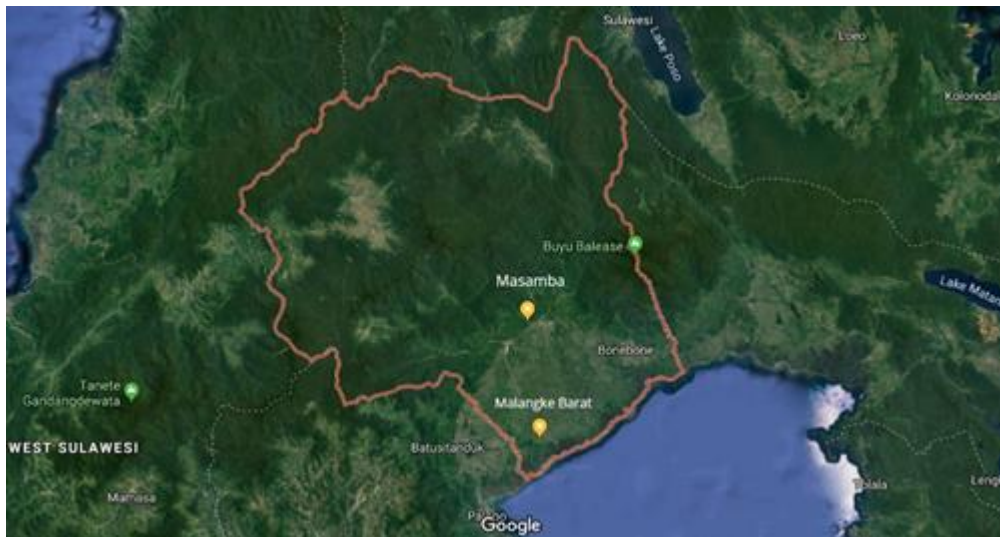


Figure 2. Research location in Luwu Utara district, South Sulawesi province, Indonesia

The areas chosen were also based on the diversity of culture and practices related to sago. Sago production and consumption take place in both areas. However, there are different ways in which people eat and serve the staple. In Masamba, *kapurung* are mainly consumed, while in Malangke Barat *dangé* is more common. Moreover, the language used in both areas is different. In Masamba,

most people use the tae' language while in Malangke Barat the Buginese language is spoken. These differences provide diverse information that contributes to the complexity of the data in this study.

3.3. Research methods

This research was conducted from 4th October until 24th December 2018, and consisted of various data gathering methods including participant observation and semi-structured interviews. During the fieldwork, I also attended a Food Sovereignty Conference in Jakarta held by KRKP, a national-based NGO working on food sovereignty issue.

Participant observation is about going to the field, diving into society through everyday interaction with people and the environment in which the study is conducted. This method attempts to understand people's culture through listening, informal conversation, and being involved in their daily activities. As Bernard (2011) explained, "Participant observation involves immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself every day from that immersion so you can intellectualise what you've seen and heard, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly". I lived with sago harvesters and was involved in sago harvesting work during my fieldwork both in Masamba and Malangke Barat. This allowed me to view the visceral relationship among harvesters and the way in which they treat the food. Most of the data was gathered through informal conversation during observation. I also attended some events, such as thanksgiving held by a *passambe* family, or negotiations between sago traders and their customers at a traditional market. Eating together and having informal conversation during this research provided insights on how people talk about food and related issues.

I conducted participant observation during the Food Sovereignty conference in Jakarta. It was attended by various farmers groups, local and central government representatives, researchers, and civil society. Most of the participants were connected to KRKP as partners or as part of a network. The forum was examining the current food sovereignty implementation by the state, and presented initiatives from across the KRKP network in different regions that were implementing the right to food approach. I had an opportunity discuss with some participants in the conference and to follow the panel and focus group discussions, which were aiming to generate a strategy for an improved and more sustainable food system in Indonesia. Most importantly, the *Bupati* (head of district) of Luwu Utara was invited in this conference to present the food policy arrangement from an initiative in her region. This conference contributed to an understanding of the food sovereignty movement, strategies presented by non-state actors, and how they connect their movement to local actors and the government.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifteen respondents during this study. The aim was to get specific information from the key actors within the the sago food system. I interviewed policy makers in Luwu Utara including from the food security council, the estate crops officers, and farmer group leaders (cacao farmer and GEMPITA) who are responsible for food policy making and the implementation of food programs at district level, including policy on sago. In Jakarta, I interviewed a journalist who produced various reports regarding sago in different parts of Indonesia, a researcher from the Ministry of Agriculture regarding the food sovereignty concept of the state, and civil society representatives (KRKP) that were concerned with food sovereignty advocacy at the national level. For sago food system actors in Luwu Utara, I conducted interviews with five *passambe* families and joined the harvesting work, also talking with the wives during the break time from cooking or preparing the local cuisines. I visited a sago flour manufacturer in Masamba and

interviewed the owner (a Buginese migrant from Bone district), workers, and the sago trader in a traditional market to get information on the network and the management. In Malangke Barat, I encountered the head of village in Waelawie hamlet (in Malangke Barat) who has responsibility for the management of the 'city of sago' and maintaining the sago culture in the region. I visited a *dangé* trader at his home, accompanied by a sub-district officer of Malangke Barat, to understand the networks of the *dangé* trade and its relation to the sago harvesters in Malangke Barat. The interviews were recorded, having been granted permission by the informants before the interview was conducted.

In deciding the informants, I used snowball sampling strategies, especially for the *passambe*, manufacture owner and workers, sago trader and informants who were involved in sago food system both in Masamba and Malangke Barat. I started from the market, continued to the *passambe* family, and then through this family I received a lot of information about the complex relations between actors in sago food system in Luwu Utara. The policy makers, NGO representatives, researcher, and the journalist were listed prior to research fieldwork. Those were purposively listed as informants due to their specific knowledge and responsibilities related to sago and food policy issues that could contribute to this study.

3.4. Positionality

Since this research employs the ethnographic method, the issue of positionality is important to consider. My cultural and linguistic background, from both Luwu and Wajo (a Buginese region) was advantageous. I spoke both *tae'* and *Buginese* during the research fieldwork, which helped me to clearly understand the conversation and the context of the issues addressed by informant, especially during the informal conversation. Ability to use the local language and understanding the local context contributed to a better interpretation of the information. Moreover, the shared culture made it easier for me to immerse myself in the local community and gain trust from informants.

When I was asked about where I come from and who funded my research, I felt that I needed to be as transparent as possible about this research. Therefore, I firstly introduced myself and shared important information about this research with my informants, such as personal information, study background and the fact that I was not affiliated to any funded project or any political party. Likewise, it was a political election season in Indonesia, including in Luwu Utara. Some of my colleagues in Luwu Utara were involved in the political contestation in the region. Avoiding being affiliated with a political party movement, I distanced myself from any political events or invitations related to a certain figure or party during the fieldwork, to avoid distrust from certain communities in the sago food system.

Usually, researchers from outside the region or foreigners would be directed to certain sago harvesters, who have been working with noble families or became a 'client' for researchers or the government. I started to get informants from the market through random encounters with people who led me to sago harvester families in Radda. The research was intentionally conducted this way to prevent a bias in the data source. I tried to gather information from the 'hidden', 'unrecognised', or 'voiceless' actors in the sago food system in Luwu Utara rather than starting from informants who have already been a client for many researchers. This approach contributes to providing deep and critical information for this study.

Chapter 4:

Tabaro and To Luwu

The sago tree is a symbol in the Luwu Utara district. The plant on the district logo means harmony, robustness, and obstinacy¹. There is a well-known proverb from this region, “wanua mappatuo naewai alena”² (the living and sovereign land). It conveys that this region can feed its people, preventing them from suffering hunger. Thus, food plays an important role. People eat specific local cuisines such as *kapurung* and *dangé* made from *tabaro*, a starch processed from sago tree. However, the production and consumption of sago has been contested with other domesticated crops such as rice and imported (and industrialised) staple foods (i.e. wheat). In some areas, local staple foods have been diminished and even forgotten. In Luwu Utara, sago has been persistently produced and consumed but it is now facing a decline and marginalisation. In understanding the context of the change, I examine the role and meaning of sago for the local community through an exploration of the way in which the people (*To Luwu*) and the food (*tabaro*) are interwoven in the construction of the cultural identity in the region.

4.1. *To Luwu*: a blurred identity

To (people) *Luwu* (from Luwu) refers to *To Luu’* or *To Lau’* that means people from the sea. It is a pair word of *Tau ri-aja* that refers to people from the highland, and has now become the name of a region called Toraja (Pakan, 1977). Luwu was a large district in South Sulawesi before it was fragmented into several districts, and each fragmented district has administrative boundaries and autonomy to control the resources therein. Currently, the lowland areas of Luwu consist of Luwu, Luwu Utara, Luwu Timur, and Palopo city, following the territory of the *Luwu*³ kingdom surrounding the Bone gulf. The people of Luwu are associated with the Buginese, because the Buginese predecessors are believed to come from *Tana Luwu’* or the *Luwu’* kingdom. However, being involved in the community during my research fieldwork provided a different reality of people’s identity in Luwu Utara.

Before my research fieldwork, I also assumed that the people of Luwu were Buginese. But my informants talked differently, especially in the valley regions of Luwu Utara (Masamba) where my first ethnographic site was located. I found an aversion from a certain community to being associated as Buginese, and that they would rather refer to themselves as *To Luwu* (*orang Luu’*). In many of my informal conversations with people of Luwu, a phrase along the lines of the following was expressed: “*Kita itu orang Luwu beda sama orang Bugis*” (we are people from Luwu are different than the Buginese people). So, if the origin of the Buginese is from *Luwu’*, then is *To Luwu* also Buginese? At least, there are several reasons I encountered as to why the people of Luwu in my fieldwork did not want to be associated as Buginese. First, the salient socio-linguistic differences

¹ The meaning of district symbol: <http://portal.luwuutarakab.go.id/blog/page/lambang-daerah>

² This proverb was delivered by the head of *Dinas Tanaman Pangan, Hortikultura dan Perkebunan* (Departement of Food crops, horticulture, and estate crops) of Luwu Utara in his office during the visit of agricultural department office from Pringsewu district, Lampung province, November 2018.

³ I follow what Pelras (2006) stressed on the word Luwu and *Luwu’* to differentiate between Luwu as an administrative district and *Luwu’* as a kingdom.

between *To Luwu* and the Buginese, especially the language. Second, the historical differences that lie in the region between these two ethnicities. Third, the food production and consumption patterns, in this regard, sago and wet-rice cultivation culture between *To Luwu* and Buginese which I will further explore in this chapter.

Christian Pelras, a French anthropologist that has studied Sulawesi, produced a monumental book entitled *The Bugis*, which is widely used by scholars and the public to understand the genealogy of the Buginese, “the origins of Bugis history are clad in obscurity and uncertainty” (Pelras, 2006:23). He used different types of sources such as: archaeology, external sources, comparative linguistics and ethnography, including the chronicle of Bugis and *La Galigo*⁴ epic texts. The *La Galigo* is an ancient manuscript transcribed from the oral tradition of pre-Islamic Bugis, mirroring the socio-cultural condition of Bugis society around the thirteenth to the fourteenth century. The manuscript comprises the myths as well as the historical elements of South Sulawesi’s past, or the so-called “age of *La Galigo*” or pre-Islamic history of the region (between the eleventh and the thirteenth century) that Pelras believed could be used to reconstruct the history of the society. To date, some people in South Sulawesi are still referring to *La Galigo* as a historical text and the presence of *The Bugis* book has been complementing the comprehensive literature about South Sulawesi’s history and culture. However, I argue that seeking different perspectives of this history is important in providing an overarching understanding of the various communities present in the region and the different ways through which power is negotiated. In this case, understanding *To Luwu* as sub-ethnic Bugis should be read critically, especially when we find differences in the way people perform their identity. Therefore, in the following paragraphs I present the perspectives of some scholars who have done studies in South Sulawesi, especially Luwu Utara, to add nuance in reading the history of *To Luwu* and their food.

During my my fieldwork, both in Masamba and Malangke Barat, I used different languages. In Masamba, my informants spoke the *tae’* language, which is mainly used by the Rongkong tribe and other ethnicities in the highland of Luwu. Conversely in Malangke Barat, I used my mother-tongue language, which is Buginese, to communicate with my informants. This depicts the anthropological difference present in Luwu Utara. Bulbeck and Caldwell (2000) described that there is a contrasting language between the Bugis in the coastline (such as Patimang and Cerekang, around Malangke Barat) and the Luwu ethnic in the hinterland towards the valley (such as Baebunta and Rongkong, near Masamba). The book depicts the people of Luwu as a sub-ethnicity of Bugis, yet in his footnotes Pelras explained:

Actually, in the beginning, *Luwu’* kingdom was not a Bugis kingdom but a multi-ethnic kingdom; eventually, as a consequence of the marriage process among the high nobility in South Sulawesi, it came to be led by an elite that identified as Bugis. In *sure’ Galigo*, it is clear that the Bugis inhabitants do not understand the language of *Luwu’* people, and in the history of *Wajo’*, at least until the fifteenth century, *Luwu’* people and Bugis people are still distinguished. (Pelras, 2006: 124)

The early section of the *La Galigo* epic poem explains that the origin of the Bugis is from the *Luwu’* kingdom. However, this was critically questioned by some scholars who studied South Sulawesi. Through a big excavation project in Luwu region published in the book “Land of Iron”, Bulbeck and

⁴ *La Galigo* is an ancient manuscript consist of encyclopaedic work about the important knowledge to Bugis society (Koolhof, 1999), it is inscribed in 2011 as the “memory of the world” by UNESCO and the current original texts are stored separately in different areas, including the most texts are placed in Leiden University library in The Netherlands.

Caldwell (2000) detailed a new chronology of the key economic, social and political development of the region. They found that the origin of Bugis is not from the lowlands of Luwu, but from *Cina* kingdom (*Tana Ugi'*) in the western Cenrana valley, located near Lake Tempe (*Figure 4*). There is no evidence about the settlement of Bugis before the late thirteenth century (as referred in *La Galigo*) in Cerekang, around Bone gulf. Instead, a small Bugis trade settlement had grown up in the mid-thirteenth century on the southwest of Lake Tempe and the Lowland *Luwu'* seemed to be occupied after the fourteenth century by the semi-permanent Bugis settlement in Malangke (Bulbeck and Caldwell, 2000). They argued that the engagement between the Bugis and Luwu was conducted through economic activities after the fourteenth century, particularly iron trade from Baebunta and another valley region in Luwu. The advent of Bugis in *Luwu'*, especially in strategic locations on the coastline, was aimed at trading with the Luwu ethnic group and building alliances.

Bulbeck *et al.* (2007) archaeologically explored the Utti Batue, around Malangke in Luwu Utara district, to trace the relicts of the first palace of the Bugis kingdom as described in *La Galigo* texts. The main finding of their research is that sago was the major plant species around the kingdom palace before, during, and after the period of Bugis occupation in Malangke, and water-buffalo and fish and turtles as marine resources were the main source of protein while rice and other food crops were not identified in the macro-botanical remains. The introduction of rice in the lowland of Luwu was shown to be the outcome of the trade relationship between the *Cina* kingdom in the Western Cenrana Valley and the people in the Luwu highlands. Bulbeck and Caldwell (2000) suggest that the rice culture brought by the Bugis people to Malangke allegedly originated from the Bugis settlement near the Lake Tempe, and their external trade relationships with places such as China and Southeast Asian regions, through to northeast Java. Moreover, the trade relationship with the local ethnic communities in the Luwu highlands in Baebunta was based on the iron that was used by the Bugis settlement in Lake Tempe for cultivation activities and forest clearing for agricultural expansion (Bulbeck and Caldwell, 2000).



Figure 3. The map of lake Tempe and Luwu Utara district

As mentioned above, the people from the Buginese region and people of Luwu have a different staple. The interesting part in the *La Galigo* epic story is the position of sago and rice. Sago is the staple food of the people in the *Botting langi'* (the world above), the food of *Batara Guru* and his family. While rice is the food of *Sangiang serriq*, the god of paddy, as described here:

Sangiang Serri is the name given to the rice deity, who is thought of as a young and beautiful woman. There are several traditions concerning her which at first sight may seem contradictory. The best-known of them is the *La Galigo* story about *Batara Guru's* descent to Earth. His first child is a girl named *We Oddang Riwu'*, who dies shortly after her birth and is buried; this is the first death on Earth. A few days later, when *Batara Guru* visits his daughter's tomb, he discovers that it has been overgrown by strange kinds of grass: these are in fact different kinds of rice. He is later told by *Datu Patoto'* that his child has been given to humankind, in the form of *Sangiang Serri*, for its subsistence; he himself does not have to eat the new crop and can content himself with sago, millet and Job's tears. Much later, on his visit to the afterworld, *Sawerigading* sees *Sangiang Serri's* house there and is told by his guide that while her body (rice) has remained on Earth, her soul (*banappati*) reigns here on over those children who have died in their infancy. (Pelras, 2006:107)

The position of rice in *La Galigo* texts reflects the current dominant agriculture in South Sulawesi. It hints at the shift from the old staple to the new emerging staple, rice, that is symbolised as a gift from the upper world. In fact, compared to various foods that are consumed in South Sulawesi such as sago, taro, and banana, the Buginese only conduct traditional agricultural ceremonies for rice (Pelras, 2006), from the preparation of planting to the harvesting. The different characteristics between Buginese as an agrarian society and *To Luwu* who eat sago as a subsistence staple can be viewed until today, particularly in the form of their main cuisine. Moreover, the history of cultural domination presented above might have a relation to the main shift of the mode of food production and consumption in Luwu Utara, from sago-based to rice-based cuisine.

4.2. The Buginese migration in 19th century in Luwu Utara

The history of South Sulawesi cited in different sources is mostly related to the history of migration. Discussing identity in Luwu Utara cannot be separated from the event of domestic migration, how identities are assimilated between ethnicities, such as the engagement of the Bugis in Luwu region, as explained above. Nowadays, in Luwu Utara administrative district, The Buginese people are one of the most significant inhabitants. There is no statistical data on the population of Buginese that inhabit Luwu Utara, but in everyday conversation it is said that the percentage amounts to around forty percent of the total population of the region.

Linton (1975) identified the factors behind Buginese migration to other regions. In the colonial period, around the sixteenth century, the arrival of the Dutch trade company and the development of Makassar port as the centre of trade in the eastern archipelago, triggered tensions between political groups and kingdoms in South Sulawesi, between Gowa and Bone. The turmoil induced the domestic migration of Buginese to other places. In the late twentieth century, the history of famine in the 1970s around the Southern region of the South Sulawesi peninsula (Wajo, Bone, Sidrap, and Soppeng district) caused the decline of rice production. For small-scale rice farmers, their vulnerability pushed them to move to more fertile regions. Another factor was that the revolt of DI/TII Permesta, led by Kahar Muzakkar that operated in the Southern regions, had created an unsafe condition for people in the affected areas and forced them to move to safer places.

One effect of emigration Lineton (1975) recorded was the clearing of land scrubland or forest for paddy or coconut production. The same pattern happened in Luwu Utara when migrants from the southern regions such as Bone, Wajo, or Sidrap came to find fertile land to live on. The land clearing was massive during the period of famine in the southern Bugis regions. In addition, the cheaper price of land in Luwu Utara is one factor that lured migrants into the region. They brought the agrarian culture of wet rice cultivation, which was characteristic of the Buginese region. They grew paddy (*sawah*), corn, cacao, and more recently palm oil or other cash crops. As a migrant coca farmer in Luwu Utara told me, “we burned the sago” (*itunu riyolo yero tawaroe*).

In Luwu Utara, Buginese entrepreneurs are considered by the local people as wealthier groups, dominating large resource business such as cacao, corn, palm oil plantations, and fish ponds. During my fieldwork, I unintentionally met several Buginese entrepreneurs operating different types of businesses, including cacao and palm oil plantations, sago manufacture, and a fabric store. As migrant dwellers, they were always excited to tell the story of how they arrived and adapted to their new place. They explained that the first time they came to Luwu Utara to open a village (*membuka kampung*) was around the 1970s-80s. Safri who runs corn, cacao, and palm oil plantations in Luwu Utara was telling me:

“I first arrived in Malangke in 1983; we were walking to enter (the area). We opened the village. I was with my parents. It was famine season in Bone. [...] No more (sago tree) here. It used to be sago tree here, but people made it become paddy field. In Malangke it was indeed a scrub area. Here, people turned it into paddy field (*galung*), all of this area was sago tree. Even in Radda. If I’m not wrong, around seventies to eighties, there was a big sago manufacturer owned by a Chinese. But the sago tree had gone.” (Safri, 27 November 2018)

I also met Zenal. He came from Sidrap district of the Buginese region to Luwu Utara in the 1980s, and he currently owns a cacao farm and other enterprises in Luwu Utara with his family:

In the morning I talked with Zaenal. I asked him why are so many Buginese here (in Luwu Utara)? He answered, “I think. This is my opinion. Masamba used to be a forest. My grandfather was living here and invited us to visit this region. Coincidentally, there was a rice crop failure in Sidrap, and there were many burglars. So, we went here. We bought the land. It was cheaper here, three hundred thousand rupiahs per hectare. It was the Buginese who built up Masamba. At night, Masamba had become quiet, no one passed by. Currently, it is only thirty percent, local people. The rest are Buginese. [...] I was the first dweller here (in Pongo village). It used to be a forest. Around the 1980s I came here with my father along with thirty relatives. Some decided to stay. Some were only visiting. The (local) people here liked fishing. If they have a handful of sago, they were just fishing. Here, I grew paddy piecemeal. It was because we were coming; people were growing the paddy.” (House visiting, Zaenal 15 October 2018)

The process of migration in Luwu Utara was been followed by the eradication of many sago trees in the region. The characteristics of the agricultural society brought by the Buginese from the Southern region has contributed to the degradation of the sago tree landscape. Nevertheless, things that are still visible regarding the position of sago in society are the consumption of -sago-based cuisine and the existing practices of *tabaro* production by *To Luwu*. Amidst the changing agricultural pattern in the region, *tabaro* production remains in existence and is persistently practiced by *To Luwu*. The following section will describe the role and the meaning of sago for *to Luwu*.

4.3. The meaning in the making of *tabaro*

Tabaro is the local name for wet sago starch, the main ingredient for *kapurung* and other local cuisines such as *dangé*, *lanya*, *bagea*, and *sinole* that are mainly found in Luwu peninsula, including in Luwu Utara. The starch is traditionally extracted from the sago palm tree (*Metroxylon sago Rottb.*) through a series of steps from cutting the tree, shredding, milking, and packaging conducted by a sago harvester called a *passambe*. In the history of the Luwu kingdom, sago was a prominent subsistence crop in the fourteenth century in and around the Bone gulf (Bulbeck et al., 2007). Sago palm has provided a source of calories for millennia and is considered as the oldest foodplant of humankind (Ave, 1977 in Flach, 1997).

When I was in Luwu Utara, I asked some informants about the origin of sago, but they could not exactly remember when the tree was first planted in the place where they live. The only thing they know that their grandparents told them that their great grandparents planted the crops. Although sago palm is a primitive food plant exploited in the hunter-gatherer system, it is not purely a wild plant. As the Luwu people explained, their ancestors planted the sago, making it a semi-cultivated plant (Flach, 1997). Jared Diamond and Ordunio (1999) describes the competition of hunter-gatherers and food production in explaining the way latter human foodways turns to food production. He explained the two misconceptions about the origins of food production. First, it was not a discovery nor an invention, “food production evolved as a by-product of decisions made without awareness of their consequences”, and secondly, the idea of a dichotomy between the food producer as a productive land manager and the hunter-gatherer as a wild collector (Diamond and Ordunio, 1999: 106).

Conversely, in Luwu Utara, the sago harvester is also an active land manager. The practice of the Luwu people regarding managing the land involves removing and transplanting the sago seedlings along the riverside, keeping the channel of the sago swamp clear, identifying wild food surrounding the sago tree, and harvesting the mature sago tree to promote the growth of new shoots. That is why sago is considered as a semi-cultivated plant. Although some people in Malangke Barat have tried to grow the sago tree from seed, they often face failures. They argue that it is difficult to cultivate the seed out of its natural environment. Moreover, the seed is hard to collect. It takes years to wait for the sago tree to flower, and the seed can only be accessed by waiting for it to fall from the mature sago tree.

The sago tree represents social structure. Following the hierarchical characteristics of Luwu society, I found out how the type of sago tree is differentiated through an informal conversation with *passambe* in Waelawie hamlet in Malangke Barat. There are two kinds of *tawaro* (in Masamba *tabaro*), *tawaro datu* and *tawaro kampong* (village). The distinguishing feature of *tawaro datu* can be viewed from the water colour in the pool during processing. If the water colour is red (*macella*), then it is *tawaro datu*. *abaro kampong* is characterised by the darkish colour of the water (*malotong*). The story regarding this classification lies in the reciprocal relationship between the noble family (*datu*) and the commoners. “There was a story from local people in Jampu hamlet. The people were given land because the *datu* asked for two buffalos to slaughter in Palopo (the palace), and *datu* gave the sago trees in return. *Datu* gave his land in exchange for buffalos from the people”⁵, said Rahman. I was in Malangke, following the sago harvesting process either with Rahman’s family or doing some visits to other *passambe* in the hamlet. Rahman’s *tabaro* pool had a red colour while some of the other *passambe*’s pool had a purple or darker colour, but not red.

⁵ Informal conversation with *passambe* in Malangke Barat, 11-12-2018

I was joining Rahman to visit his neighbour, Saleh and his wife. We had a conversation about the social and cultural context in Malangke Barat, especially in Waelawie hamlet. It was a warm and very thoughtful discussion. I was asking about the function of the sago tree for people in Malangke Barat. One of the social functions of the sago tree is that it can be used as dowry or sompa in a marriage ritual in this region. In South Sulawesi, *sompa* is a devoted material provided by a man to propose to a woman in the marriage ceremony. *Sompa* could be in the form of gold, land, trees, or money depending on the endowments of the groom. My informants, both Saleh, his wife and Rahman, had experienced it themselves and explained⁶:

Saleh: When I was married, I used sago as dowry.

Rahman: Me too

Saleh: Three clumps. The most important in the marriage is how many clumps for dowry, two or three clumps. Here, son, it is the average.

Mutiara: There used to be two kinds of dowry, sago tree and coconut tree.

Saleh: It was the saying of the people in the past, son. The sago tree and coconut were used as sompa because they are living creatures. Sago tree is the most common as sompa. This is because sago would not die, unless you deliberately kill it. It flourishes, always gives birth. Sago tree is also stealing the land because it spreads.

Rahman: They even occupy another people's land if it is not trenched.

Saleh: Even if we make a trench, it goes through.

Rahman: Sago is indeed a sturdy plant.

Saleh: I have never killed my sago tree, even a clump. I am clever enough in *tabaro* making. However, I witnessed the orange season come to this region. When it was the orange season, many people destroyed their sago trees.

Rahman: Here, in the hamlet, there was more than a hectare (sago trees) destroyed by the people.

To date, the use of sago trees as dowry in marriage ritual has been degraded. It has changed with the use of money. People tend to provide material such a gold or cash money to be devoted to the bride by selling their harvested sago tree. For example, In Salobongko hamlet in Malangke Barat, the younger men come together to harvest sago and produce *tabaro* to sell in the market or to middlemen. Then the money is used to help their friends or relatives in providing sompa. Therefore, people in Malangke Barat, especially those who are still using it for subsistence needs such as providing food or sompa, will choose to not destroy their sago trees. However, there was a time when a new commodity, the so-called *Jeruk Malangke* (Malangke orange), boomed in Malangke Barat around the 2000s, and many people from the region converted their land from sago cultivation to orange gardens in pursuit of faster and greater amounts of cash.

Geographically, Luwu Utara is located in the lowland area around Bone gulf, the estuary of rivers in the northern part of South Sulawesi. The Luwu Utara region hosts big rivers such as the Rongkong, Meli, and Balebo amongst others. People depend on the river for their livelihood activities,

⁶ Informal conversation with *passambe* in Malangke Barat, 11-12-2018

including bathing and food production. Water is an inextricable element within *tabaro* and has metaphorical meaning for To Luwu. As Boomgaard (2007:2) stated, “seawater, water from heaven, and water-as-a-metaphor all have in common that they can be ‘good’ or ‘bad’”. In the past, passambe harvested sago on the river using a canoe, using the water stream to produce the *tabaro*. In this regard, water serves a positive function for To Luwu. Metaphorically, To Luwu consider sago as *to manurung* (to go down). As explained by the passambe during my fieldwork:

Sago is *manurung*. Sago is *to manurung* because water makes it into being, water makes it solid, water makes it cooked because water is the source. Water makes it solid, water is used to make kapurung. It is not eating kapurung but drinking. Sago is taken down (*dipanokkoq*). (Ando, home visiting, 28 November 2018)

Thus, the river plays a positive role in the food production of To Luwu. A shift in water quality could affect the quality of *tabaro*. Currently, only a few passambe are using river water to produce their *tabaro* because the water has been polluted. In the rainy season, pasambe who depend on the river to produce *tabaro* decided to stop their work and wait for the river to be clear again, or at least not too muddied. This affects the quality of *tabaro* and reduces its price in the market. Most of the passambe in Luwu Utara now prefer to use swamp water or groundwater, using a water machine and pipe channel for extracting the sago starch.

In Southeast Asian society, food and eating can be used to understand the construction of kinship. Janowski and Kerlogue (2007) described the concept of ‘flow of life’ to explain the existing belief in a quantifiable ‘something’ which may be described as a life force, potency, or power in the Austronesian world. Life force is associated with the reproduction process in a community. The key for a successful reproduction is channeling the life force through both through sexual reproduction or food provision from the source (coupled married at the most basic) to the recipient (Janowski and Kerlogue (2007)). In South Sulawesi, the concept of life force is called *sumange’*. Errington (1983) described the relationship between *sumange’* and the body and the way it functions in South Sulawesi. He explained that the body is constituted in a place like “house”, “kinship groupings”, and “kingdom”, that has a navel or a centre as a source of power or point of origin. The *sumange’* attaches in the center. Thus *sumange’*, according to Errington (1983), enlivens humans, it is the vital energy that makes people effective, conscious, and healthy. However, *sumange’* can be lost through different occasions, including shock and routines, and therefore this energy should be protected, handled gently and cared for. During my ethnographic fieldwork, I found a similar concept of *sumange’* in the way passambe or sago harvesters produce the *tabaro*.

One night, I was visiting Ando, a retired passambe who has spent half of his life working to harvest sago from the south to the far east of Luwu peninsula. I asked him about ritual practices in *tabaro* production, because I was curious about what Budi did when he was about to harvest the *tabaro*. He had made a tied sago leaf and placed it on the surface of the *tabaro* in the pool. I finally found an explanation:

If we want to draw the sago, to make it draw further, we make a tie from sago leaf. People in the past mentioned *Anqu*. A suffered person, no one suffered more in this world than this person. We make a tied leaf to avoid *Anqu* to take away our sago. There is also a practice, for example, if the sago is going to be drawn, a pinch of sago is put on the edge of the pool to prevent the spirit taking our sago. (Ando, home visiting, 28 November 2018)



Figure 4. A tied sago leaf on the surface of a tabaro pool

Like the human body, the *tabaro* embodies *sumange'*. It should be protected from any disturbance, including any spiritual forms such as *Anqu*. Another disruption could be a form of human activity that is considered to display an imprudent attitude, such as being noisy or angry. Separating *tabaro* from these behaviours is the way to gently handle the *sumange'* and avoid it leaving the body (*tabaro*). The reason why *sumange'* is important, in my interpretation, is linked to the matter of the volume of *tabaro*, and today the volume is associated with the income gained from selling the *tabaro*, as Ando described:

People in the past, if we are sitting together around the *passambeang*, many of us gather and talk, and Budi wants to draw the sago, he will tell the people, "Are you going to stay or go home? If you are going to leave, you must be leaving before I draw my sago into the *balabba*". Because if we are drawing the sago into the *balabba* and someone is leaving, it is considered as taboo. People here explain it as if half of its *sumange'* has been carried away, thus it could not be thrive, and would draw less. *Massiruaq* (drawing) requires many rules. For those who are experienced in *massiruaq*, if they view a little amount of sago, and the sago has *sumange'*, they will be able to draw a plentiful amount. If they see a little yet much more to put into *tumang*. [...] If we are noisy during *massiruaq*, the *sumange'* would be gone. Therefore, many people do not talk during *massiruaq*, they put water in their mouth. The sago making, indeed, only the patient one could do it. (Ando, home visiting, 28 November 2018)

It was surprising to realise that there is a sexual difference in *tumang* after my night visiting Ando's house. The explanation connected to my experience during the process of crafting *tumang* with his family in the garden, as he described:

Tumang consists of male and female. If we are stitching it for the first time, connecting three ropes to the tip of the edge by stabbing it, and when the last rope tip is not in the stabbed position, it is considered as a female. In contrast, if you are stitching it and all of the rope tips are connected or stabbed, then it is a male. It means that the sago would embody *sumange'*. The *massiruaq* process would be getting much more sago. Like the life, if there is no man and

woman, there would be no prosperity. No *sumange'*. The sago would not be able to *mambeaq* (flourish) if there is no male and female *tumang*. (Ando, home visiting, 28 November 2018)

In producing *tabaro*, the presence of both male and female *tumang* is prerequisite for *tabaro yang bersumange'* (*tabaro* that has *sumange'*). Both male and female *tumang* are inseparable in the cosmology of sago society in Luwu Utara. It symbolises the reproduction process, channeling the life force *sumange'* through the source of coupled *tumang* to the *tabaro*. Their existence (male+female) allows the *sumange'* to flourish, and is what *passambe* should always protect.

The sago tree and the making of *tabaro* encompasses various socio-cultural and ecological issues. It has a meaning and function for society. Many practices regarding *tabaro* production have disappeared along with its social function. Now people produce *tabaro* for subsistence and most of them for gaining income to provide other needs such as paying school fees. Not only the plant and the production process have socio-cultural and political meaning, but also the preparation and eating process. A number of issues can be revealed, especially the way in which To Luwu perform identity.

4.4. Culinary encounter: eating and identity

Social boundaries between ethnicities, groups, or other forms of kinship can be indicated through food. In Luwu Utara, for instance, the decision to eat sago-based cuisine, particularly *kapurung* (for the community in Masamba) and *dangé* (for the community in Malangke Barat), rather than or together with imported foods is a way for Luwu to perform their distinctiveness. At my first encounter with *passambe*, both in Masamba and Malangke Barat, staying with the community, and eating together, I found various expressions such as, “it is sago, the staple food of our people (*To Luwu*)” or “we (*To Luwu*) live on sago” meaning that there is an embodied identity in sago for people of Luwu. I will explain briefly about *kapurung* and *dangé* as representative of food in Luwu Utara, and the way it is made and eaten by the community. I also capture the assimilation of eating between sago and rice to capture the process of cultural engagement between *To Luwu* and Buginese through food preparation and eating experience.

Kapurung may be one of the most nutritious foods I have encountered. The word *kapurung* refers to the glutinous component resulting from the gelatinisation process of *tabaro* when boiling water is poured over it. The glue-like substance then be formed into small pieces through a rolling process, utilising a chopstick that is called *maddui'*, then putting it into a big bowl or pan with vegetable, fish, or chicken broth. Roasted peanut mashed with chili is mixed into the bowl together with salt and sour ingredients (such as torch ginger, lime, *dengen*, *kadundung* leaf, or other wild plants). *Kapurung* is not a single meal. It is always served together with leaf vegetables and boiled fish. To Luwu rooted in the valley region (Masamba, Baebunta, Lamasi, and other sub-district) of Luwu Utara consume *kapurung* as a daily meal or at least once a day, whereas others eat it occasionally within a week.

I was having a conversation with Ando when his daughter came and shouted, “*Awweeee... namabusa te' kapurungna*” (This *kapurung* is whiter). She commented on *kapurung* made by her mother. Her father then told me:

Kapurung made by your mother is a little bit harder. “But it’s very soft”, I said. The softer the better. If she added more water during the making process, it would be better. Sometimes,

it is because the way Rudi processed it (*tabaro*) was not good enough. If we pour the water, it is difficult to be roll it, *didui'*. "Why?", I asked. It is coming from the (*tabaro*) making process. If it is meaty, he threw it (the pulp) too fast. The pulp has not been squeezed enough. We call it *naparratibe*. It influences the *kapurung*. When it is tossed during *maddui'*, the result will be not good. But there is a way to cure it. We pour hot water over first and then agitate it. Later we pour again with much more water. There is also a way to use *kayu-kayu* leaf or *benduruq* leaf, soaked in hot water and then poured into *kapurung*. Also, using *paredean* leaf or calcium. If we roll or *dui'* the *kapurung* and displace it to another bowl, it will not be broken off, if the *tabaro* is good. We term it here *tabaro mabannang* (stringed *tabaro*). If we displace it to the bowl with vegetable broth, the string-like component would not be broken off, pulled like a string. (Ando, home visiting, 28 November 2018)

There is a good and poor quality *kapurung*, and this depends on the texture and its performance. For me, that was something new. I have been enjoying eating *kapurung* since I was a child, but I have less knowledge on how to recognise a good or bad quality of *kapurung*. As far as I knew, my mother makes the best *kapurung* with her technique of mixing all the vegetables and making the broth. Here, as explained by Ando in our conversation, I gained specific knowledge on how to improve the glutinous component of this dish, and it is even affected by factors from the *tabaro* making process. The quality is determine from the way in which the sago tree is chosen, the starch is extracted, and the *tabaro* is processed into *kapurung*. The standard of food is inevitably socially constructed. For instance, in Luwu Utara, softer *kapurung* is favourable while in the Southern part of Luwu the *kapurung* is harder. Some of my informants argued that the quality of *tabaro* in southern Luwu is poorer than in Luwu Utara because they use less fresh *tabaro*, and the majority of *tabaro* in southern Luwu is brought from Luwu Utara. However, this argumentation needs further inquiry to provide evidence of the decline in quality. Taking into account the expansion of the city and development of cash crops in southern Luwu is necessary in relation to the shift of *kapurung* formation.



Figure 5. The process of *maddui'* in the making of *kapurung* in Radda village in Masamba (left) and a traditional *dangé* making the process in Waelawie hamlet in Malangke Barat (right)

Another staple food made of *tabaro* in Luwu Utara is *Dangé*. The *dangé* is characterised with plate form, rectangle, and sandy texture. If we mention this food, people will direct us to the Malangke region (Malangke and Malangke Barat subdistrict), a famous place in producing the best *dangé* in

the Luwu peninsula. *Dangé* making undergoes a series of complex processes, from the preparation of the sago tree wood for fuel, sun-dried *tabaro*, the mold made of clay to the mixing process of dried and wet *tabaro*, sieved, then printed it to the clay mold on the smoldering fire. The form of this food is plaque, pale in colour, and sandy in texture. There is a local standard for the end product of *dangé*⁷. It consists of *mawowo*, *mabusu*, and *botowowo*. These standards are predicated on the texture. *Mawowo* refers to a crumbly, porous, and melt-in-the-mouth texture, favourable for the middle-aged consumer. Conversely, *mabusu* is hard, consistent in structure, and with a shelf life of up to a month in open air. This type is aimed for those who want to keep it as a gift or send it to outside the region. The last type is *botowowo*, the most modest type that is mostly favourable for the consumer in the domestic market. These types of quality are prepared following the key technique in the mixing process of dried *tabaro* and wet *tabaro*. The less dried *tabaro* put in, the more *mawowo* the *dangé* is. Also, the quality of *dangé* is influenced by the *tabaro* quality, the weather and drying process, the firewood – only sago wood provides the best *dangé* -, and the clay mold. A poor quality mold would make the *dangé* stick to the sides and result in poor quality *dangé*. A *dangé* trader mentioned Bua region as the source of the best clay mold.

Seafood-based side dishes such as shrimp, raw boiled fish, grilled fish, and *lawaw*' (mixed vegetable and fish), are important for *To Luwu*, consumed together with *kapurung* and *dangé*. The cuisines represent interconnectedness between places and interdependency between people in the region. For example, both my informants in Masamba and Malangke Barat mentioned:

[...] In Belopa market, I was lost. There was a fish stall vendor talking about old men who always sell fish to Masamba. The old man who sells dried fish said, "Go down to Masamba, fulfil out your fish basket, as the god's will, there is no one back. Only in Masamba, the 'disposal' place of fish, they only eat *kapurung*". They cannot eat anything else with *kapurung* except with fish. (Ando, home visiting, 28 November 2018)

People here, there were no buying-selling term, people shared. People from the beach could not process and provide sago. They brought their fishes and they get sago here⁸.

As I mentioned earlier, most people are not eating *kapurung* or *dangé* as a three-times-a-day meal anymore. Rice has become a part of diets for Luwu people in Luwu Utara today. Mothers provide their children with rice for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and *kapurung* has been treated as a companion meal. In Ando's family, *kapurung* still becomes the main dish, but it is accompanied with rice as a part of the staple food. As grandparents, he and his wife feed Lala, the grand daughter *kapurung* and rice. In Rudi's house, they eat *kapurung* only as dinner while in Jamal and Juwita's house, they eat *kapurung* only when they want, usually three times a week. In Malangke, rice is the staple food for everyday diets and *dangé* is seen as a companion staple dish. In Rahman's house, the *passambe* I lived with during my ethnographic fieldwork, *dangé* is always served on the table in a plastic jar. However, not all the family members eat it frequently. His son as his fellow *passambe* does not even like *dangé* that much, including his grandchildren. His neighbour, Saleh, a retired *passambe* said, "Yes, indeed this is a village of *dangé* but not all people are eating *dangé*. It is consumed when *lawaw*' is served. Even my son, he will eat *dangé* when rice is not served".

An interesting phenomenon to capture in relation to food consumption in Luwu Utara is the assimilation between sago-based food and rice. To date, rice has been an important staple in Luwu

⁷ I combine the information from Sari's husband (13-12-2018) in Waelawie hamlet and an interview with *dangé* trader (14-12-2018) in Tokke' village, both in Malangke Barat sub-district.

⁸ Informal conversation with *passambe* in Malangke Barat, 11-12-2018

Utara beside sago. The consumption is part of the daily diet in the local community. However, the eating process between sago-based cuisine and rice in every meal of people in Luwu Utara is necessary to zoom in on, in order to understand how identity is negotiated through eating practices. For example, the influence of rice in the food consumption of Luwu Utara society is portrayed in their eating structure. During the dinner *kapurung* is consumed first before the rice. The structure of eating *kapurung* before rice generated a new term called *tindis* (lit. press) among *To Luwu*. It expressed that to create the pleasure of eating, eating rice is necessary. Here, rice becomes part of the eating culture of *To Luwu*. It has been incorporated into everyday meals of people in Luwu Utara through a selective domestication process, or what Dietler (2007) terms as indigenization.

Another differentiation is the side dishes, the way Luwu and Buginese people eat fish. It is boiled or grilled. I was having an after-lunch conversation with Rudi's wife during my stay in Masamba. She told me about her experience when she met Buginese migrant workers in a cacao plantation in Lamasi sub-district in Luwu Utara. They prefer to grill the fish rather than boil it like *To Luwu* in Luwu Utara. She expressed,

“When I was in Pongo, the Buginese people were always coming to my place, eating *kapurung*. They went fishing and then grilled it. When they first came, they think we are the same with them. They grilled their fish, mortaring the chilies to make sambal combined with squeezed lime, and the grilled fish was eaten with the sambal, then they ate it with *kapurung*. Buginese grilled their fish. We are here, boiling the fish” . (Nina (Rudi's wife), Home visiting, 27 November 2018)

Nowadays, the process of grilling the fish or vegetables in the *kapurung* preparation is mainly found in Luwu Utara. For instance, Juwita was always served grilled fish for their family's everyday meal. Moreover, one of the main ingredients of *kapurung*, the eggplant, is firstly grilled by Juwita, but originally *To Luwu* boiled the eggplants, as her aunt (Nina) practices everyday. The explanation of how this indigenization process occurs may be an interesting topic to be explored further.

Dietler (2007) put into consideration feasts as key arenas for value construction and transformation and the validation of new kinds of foods. For example, the distinction between *To Luwu* and Buginese is visible in *kapurung* eating practices, and rice consumption in Luwu Utara is articulated in the feasts such as *syukuran* (thanksgiving) or weddings. In ceremonies such as wedding parties and *syukuran*, rice is always served as the required main course for the guests or visitors, served with meat, pickles, noodles or mixed vegetable soup. Interestingly, *kapurung* is consumed behind the scenes or in the kitchen, or before or after the ceremony has started. It is the main course. Not in the main guests, but for the people who cook or work for the feast.

In the process of transferring values from feasts to home, individual members have an important role. As Valentine (1999:521) portrayed, home is a site of complexity, “... consumption practices and identity formation in the home can shape or be shaped by consumption practices and identity formation in other spaces”. The practice of rice and other imported food consumption, or even the rejection of mixing *kapurung* and rice, could be gained by an individual member of the household for example from a cultural ceremony or feasts and everyday interactions outside the home. The structure of eating rice and *kapurung* or *dangé* could be obtained from individual household actors and transformed into everyday meal practice at home.

Conversely, from the migrants' perspectives, the Buginese, *kapurung* was considered as disgusting food. When they tried the cuisine for the very first time, my Buginese informant expressed:

“The first time I ate that food, kapurung, I did not like it. I ate it in Padangasappa region. I did not like the presentation, mixed up. It looks like dog vomit. However, later I get used to eating it, and I like it”. (Zaenal, home visiting, 15 October 2018)

Stories about rice and kapurung from the wife of a passambe, her encounter with the Buginese migrants, and the different way of preparing the dish portray the dynamic relationship either between migrants and their ‘new home’ or between the host and the new type of food and cooking styles. Longhurst et al. (2009), through a visceral approach, explore how women migrants in New Zealand adapt in their new place through cooking and eating with them. They explain that the women migrants might not be simply changing their traditional diets to a new one, but food and eating are being used to generate a familiar sense of taste, texture, and smell that help them to create a new visceral association between “home” and their “new home”. The Buginese migrants might at first not like the glutinous texture of kapurung or eating only boiled fish in their new place. Through the creation of eating style, kapurung with grilled fish, or with corn, or even mixing it with rice, they create the taste that connects them to their home. Thus, the study of food, migration and the body are important to understand the broader context of food system change in a certain region. Abbotts (2016:128) suggested, “... migrants do not live in a vacuum, but are instead entangled in networks of relations, all of which potentially shape their food practices and, in turn, inform those of others”.



Figure 6. Traditional sago extraction mural on the wall of a Kapurung restaurant in Makassar city

In the end of September 2018, flashback to the first day of my arrival in South Sulawesi before going to Luwu Utara, I went to my hometown in Sengkang (Wajo district). My mother asked me to join in a social gathering at her friend’s house. The event was serving a southern Luwu style *kapurung* (with meat and vegetables mixed). They chose to serve kapurung because it comprises vegetable and protein sources and is cheaper compared to other staples. Once, I went to Makassar, the capital city of South Sulawesi province. I was asked to join in a lunch with a colleague together with his guests from Jakarta. He brought us to a popular Luwu cuisine restaurant. For sure, the main menu we were served was Kapurung. I was attracted with an exciting view. There was a traditional mural of sago-making on the wall of the restaurant. Kapurung has become a favourite food outside of its original region, particularly in South Sulawesi. Many factors might be influencing the emergence of kapurung as an iconic food in the province, and one of them is inevitably the interplay between eating and migration.

Chapter 5:

Diverse economies of sago in Luwu Utara

This story is about a diverse economy. A language that encourages us to view beyond the capitalist economy. If the economy is an iceberg, we also see the mountain below. In understanding the diverse economies of sago in Luwu Utara this chapter tries to map the different practices of transaction, labour and enterprise. I explain the experience of figuring out diverse economies of sago in two distinctive regions, namely Masamba and Malangke Barat to understand how various actors in the sago food system in Luwu Utara sustain their livelihood.

5.1. Story from Masamba

5.1.1. *Passambe* (sago harvester)

My first encounter with *passambe* was in Radda, a village close to the city of Masamba. I visited a sago harvesting site accompanied by a motorcycle-taxi driver that I met accidentally in Masamba central market. He told me about the *passambe* and offered me a ride to the place he meant. It was in a small garden, close to the main road. We had to drive through a footpath between the rice fields to enter the garden. In the garden, We met a father and his son, who were processing sago. I spent most of the exploration in a garden with sago clumps in Radda village. There are several families of *passambe* live in the surroundings of the garden. During this research, I interacted with these families and paid attention to their relationship with other actors involved in sago production, joining in with sago harvesting work, from cutting the tree to the selling process, not to mention the consumption process.

In starting their work, the *passambe* need to find a clump of sago in certain areas and to check whether the trees are good enough to harvest. If the trees have been identified, the negotiation will be the next step. The *passambe* will ask the owner of the land for permission to cut the tree(s) growing in the area. Nowadays, asking such permission means buying. The *passambe* will negotiate the price of each tree with the landowner. The current price is about Rp100,000 to 150,000 per tree. Rudi received a lower price, Rp120,000 per tree in Opu Ceme's garden. A fixed price has been agreed. The negotiation then continued, relating to putting the tools for sago harvesting in the garden, close to the tree clump. Sometimes the landowner does not allow the *passambe* to process the sago in their garden. Therefore, the *passambe* needs to roll the pieces of sago to the main road. For Adhi, *magguling* (rolling) is the most challenging work in producing *tabaro*. Fortunately, Opu Ceme allowed him to build sago harvesting facilities (*passambeang*) on his land. This makes it easier Rudi and Adhi.

Sago harvesting is started from tree cutting to *masseroq*⁹. Tree cutting involves two or three men, one cuts the tree using a chainsaw machine and the other peels off the outer skin of the tree. Rudi was helped by the husbands of his nieces, Haris and Allun. Haris is the machine owner, and a multi-skilled worker, while Allun is a skilled yet unemployed worker who has been waiting for a call to operate types of heavy equipment (i.e., truck, bulldozer) in manufacture. Haris has no reason to not help Rudi, as he is the machine owner and Rudi's relative. He also needs to help Rudi to use the

⁹ Draw on *tabaro* into *tumang* (container)

machine because he is not as strong as before Allun needed to renew his roof. Thus he took the sago leaves from Rudi's tree.

The sago tree has been felled. Rudi peeled off the outer skin using a machete, Haris cut the tree into 17 tubes including the top with the leaves, and Allun together with his wife were ready to take over the top part of the tree. Allun and his wife started to pull out the fresh leaves from the midrib while the son treated the location as his playground. It was enough to add to their new roof. The wife brought the leaves to their house to sew. There is no need to buy the roof, and it undoubtedly contributes to providing for domestic needs. Currently, a sheet of the sewed roof is priced at Rp4,000. It has been more commodified since people started to use iron sheeting or concrete roofs for their houses. Rudi was once asked to find workers to sew a roof and paid Rp1,000 per sheet. Moreover, in Luwu Utara, many migrants from Java island work to sell sewn leaves for roofing. It has become a source of economy for the citizens. Since the roof needs to be changed, sewing rooftops has become Allun's wife's daily work beside childcare and other domestic activities.



Figure 7. Cutting the sago tree into pieces of gereq

Adhi is a nineteen-year-old young *passambe* currently living together with Rudi and his mother. He has been involved in sago harvesting work since he was a child, even before he started elementary school. He was paid by a small *tumang* to do easier tasks. In the third grade of elementary school, he began to help in the milking process, cavorting the sago, working for the family. He did not continue his high school due to the financial problems his family faced. He decided to wait for high school exam to get a certificate for a job. He plans to work in a mining company in Kalimantan to follow his elder brother who has been working for a year. This requires money to at least to cover travel costs and his accomodation. Therefore, he works with his father in *passambeang*, harvesting sago tree by tree to achieve his desire to work outside the island. He received money, enough to buy new pants. For Adhi and the community I lived in during the fieldwork, the 'real' work is associated with routines, an office, and wearing a uniform. Civil servants (*pegawai negeri sipil*), cigarette couriers

with a uniform, or mini-market cashier are considered as work, while *passambe* is not a job; it is for staple food.

The sago trunk (*gereq*) contains the meat; white and smooth fibres. To produce white starch, it passes the shredding process using a small machine made of wood. The *gereq*, once it is cleaved, should be processed into sago. Otherwise, the enzymatic process will occur and deteriorate the quality of sago flour — most of this work done by Adhi. The pieces of sago trunk are stacked behind the machine to make it accessible for the shredding process. They only use the white part by shredding it using a machine that is owned by Haris. These works, from dragging to filtering of the harvested tree take no more than three days to produce wet sago flour.

Rudi and his son started shredding the sago trunk in the early morning. Adhi cleaved three to four *gereq* then shredded them. Rudi helped to collect the shredded sago meat and put it in the plastic container and sometimes to scavenge the meat to avoid it being scattered out of the tarpaulin. The meat had been shredded, and Adhi went on to the filtering stage. It was Rudi's role to pass over the plastic container that consists of shredded sago to milk. Adhi went to the small pool close to the *passambeang*, turning on the water machine (*alkom*) that has been set up next to the pool to drain the water from the lake for milking the shredded sago. Instead of using the groundwater, they used the surface water that is free to access.

The water machine has turned on, signaling that the milking process is ready to be done. Adhi went up to his 'crown' and grabbed the water pipe to make a channel on the stack of shredded sago. He lifted the plastic container and poured it to the the-square-stage of the milking space. The milking process in sago production are done traditionally by cavorting the shredded sago while flushing it with the water from the pool. The milk flows through the filter made of fabric, sedimented to the floor of the sago pool. During this process, drawing of the shredded sago trunk into the plastic container is continuously conducted. I took the role of drawing the shredded sago to the plastic container and passing it to Adhi, while Rudi welcomed his friend Uwa visiting the *passambeang*. Uwa brought a sack of t-shirts for Rudi as he promised. The t-shirts are second-hand, given to Rudi to use for sago processing. They were talking like youngsters, mocking each other and laughing. I was curious about their relationship and got involved in their conversation. I recorded their conversation through my field notes¹⁰:

[...] Uwa, Rudi's best friend was coming. From a distance, I saw a skinny faced man with his *songkok* (black hat), wearing pink shorts and a modern designer t-shirt, coming and yelling. He carried a rice sack that contained his working t-shirts, which he promised to give to his best friend. As usual, every time he meets his best friend they both always act in a funny way. This time, Uwa acted as if he wanted to slap Rudi's head, and made fun to bury his friend under the stack of sago. Then he released a pack of Bintang Mas cigarette from his pocket given to his best friend. [...] Uwa asked for a piece of cleaved *gereq* from Rudi. Rudi then cleaved two pieces of *gereq*. He said, "take this!", While making a joke for Uwa. I asked what the piece was for and Uwa told me that it was for feeding the chickens. A big piece of cleaved *gereq* free for him. Rudi wanted to take Uwa home and borrowed his niece's motorcycle. Rudi took Uwa to home with a piece of sago in his hand.

¹⁰ Fieldnotes, 23 October 2018

The place of sago harvesting work is an open space, in the garden. People are coming and visiting the *passambe* and having conversation, sharing life stories, as Uwa' did. When friends coming, the *passambe* often stop their work and take a break to greet their friends. Break time can be done any time, unlike in the manufacture work. The *passambe* free to schedule their time for resting during the work. It is free work without such a manager or foreman. All the schedules are managed by themselves. Therefore, Haris once said, "this is (sago harvesting) work without a foreman. Free to rest anytime if we are tired"¹¹.

The final stage of production is packaging. The *passambe* needs to prepare the container (*tumang*) to hold the *tabaro*. The two steps of preparation are providing the material from the garden and then crafting it to become *tumang*. This is made of sago leaves taken from a young tree. Both Rudi and Adhi are working to provide the materials. I followed Adhi to look for it while his father searched for *Lintobong* (local name) leaves to cover up the *tumang*, to protect the *tabaro* from heat or sun exposure. Adhi took a bunch of leaves, and a metre-long green stick pulled from a young tree in the area where they had felled the trees. He sat down in the middle of the garden and peeled the outer layer of the stick to form a rope-like material. Crafting the sago leaves to become *tumang* takes several days. Therefore, his family members who live next to *passambeang* came and helped him to finish the final part of the work.

The *passambeang* was crowded, seven people were sitting with sago leaves on their hands. All of them worked collectively to craft the *tumang*, dividing the work and sitting close to each other. Rudi was collecting the material and making sure that the stock is available, while the others sewed the *tumang*. Allun waited for the sewed *tumang* then trimmed the edge by a machete while his wife is sitting and watching people work. They worked voluntarily, to fill their free time in the afternoon. The kids were playing around, while the adults were talking and crafting. I joined the work, diving into the sewing process and dealing with the fine thorns of the sago leaves.

During the fieldwork, I lived in different places. Sometimes in the rent house next to the garden owned by Ando and in Rudi's house. Rudi wakes up every day at around 3.30 AM, sitting in his chair before going to the mosque for *subuh*¹² prayer. Every day, he goes to the mosque around 4.30 AM to do *adzan*¹³ voluntarily. After coming back from the mosque, he feeds his gold fishes in the pond that is located around a hundred meters from his house while his wife feeds the chickens in the yard with rice grain. Rudi's wife always prepares breakfast. A plate of rice and a portion of mixed vegetables was always on the menu. This is also served in the lunch box for working in the *passambeang* (the garden). When they have a day off, *passambe* will always eat their lunch at home, with *kapurung*, vegetables, fish and rice. I had several conversations during lunch with Rudi. One day we had *kapurung*, and I mentioned about the leftover. He said, "no more fish to feed (from the leftover)". The leftover then is thrown to the ditch beside his house.

Rudi rented two plots of a pond (less than 1 hectare), a million rupiah for one year from his neighbour. Fish farming is one of his sources of additional income for his family. He feeds the fishes with household food waste such as rice, corn, fish bones, vegetables, or *kapurung*. To manage the water in the ponds, he voluntarily checks the water flow from the upstream area of the irrigation

¹¹ Fieldnotes, 18 Oktober 2018

¹² Subuh refers to pre-dawn praying. For moslem, there are 5 specific time for praying in a day. Subuh praying in Indonesia is around 4.30 AM.

¹³ A calling for moslem congregation to conduct *shalat*.

channel that is connected to several ponds in Petambua village, including his ponds. He always removed the waste that inhibits the water stream. However, the pond did not provide him with more income. The management from the upstream area was less organised. One day, the upstream gate of the irrigation channel was clogged up and dried his pond. To avoid a more significant loss, He decided to harvest the fish and sell it to the buyer. I recorded the disappointment from Adhi, his son:

[...] The ponds have dried and converted to cassava. Adhi considered it is more profitable and will be bought by *paborong* in Masamba. 200 small fishes were sold for Rp2,000 to 3,000 per fish. They stopped (the fish farm) because of the water problem. Adhi said, "This happened because people do not want to cooperate, they were too lazy to remove the coconut stems that clogged the channel". (Fieldnotes, November 24th, 2018)

Rudi's family rarely buy vegetables for their household meal. They grow cassava to substitute the fish farm. This contributes to his diverse choice of vegetables for domestic consumption besides providing cash for household income. Cassava leaves are always picked for a dish to complement *kapurung*, taken from the dyke next to his ponds. Moreover, different vegetables and fruit are grown in his yards such as lemongrass, lime, papaya, as well as *suka* (*Gnetum gnemon*), and *kadundung* (*Spondias pinnata*) leaves for *kapurung* ingredients. The *suka* leaves are for herbal medicine. I remember visiting the house at night, and a neighbour came to ask for the leaves. His wife just let her take as much as she wanted.

While Rudi and his son work at *passambeang*, his wife will stay at home, cooking, interacting with the neighbour, harvesting vegetables around the pond, and sometimes selling fruit to create more income for the family. The family once opened a stall made of bamboo in front of the house to hang out bananas harvested from their garden and sell them to people who pass by the house. They also sold *tabaro* that they harvested, but this more capital to be an independent seller; thus they stopped it. They sometimes sold seasonal fruit such as durian or rambutan that they took from their garden.

Rudi has carpentry skills. He made a chair to put on his terrace where we always sit and talk in the afternoon. The materials were obtained from a furniture enterprise opposite his house. He took waste materials and crafted them into valuable furniture. Some neighbours offered to buy it, but he rejected their requests. One day he repaired his chicken coop in the yard, and his neighbour came and asked to buy the craft for Rp100,000. He gave it cheaper because they are his family and I helped to move the chicken coop to the neighbour's yard with Rudi and the son of the neighbour.

Passambe do various jobs to improve their livelihoods. A retired *passambe*, Ando, currently runs a room rental business next to his house and the garden. It was built by his son in law, Haris, who has construction skills. I rented a room to get closer to this family. Therefore, I met Ando almost every day including lunch and dinner. He is still collecting sago tree skin for firewood, peeling off the fibre from the surface and drying it under the sun. His wife sells vegetables in Sabbang traditional market every Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday and her husband usually accompany her to the market, leaving at 4.30 in the early morning. She peddles vegetables such as spinach, long beans, taro, wild mushroom, and cassava leaves harvested from their garden. They eat *kapurung* every day, and they rarely buy their side dishes. The wife takes fish or snails from the river or neglected ponds near the house, or *wati* (larva of *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*) from the stem top of the sago tree. They have a small amount of poultry next to their home for both sale and for household consumption.

5.1.2. The Machine owner

One important actor in small-scale sago production is the machine owner. I met Haris and Ita, husband and wife in Radda who rent the machine to Rudi and his son. They own all of the tools to process the sago to become *tabaro*. The tools include the grinding machine, water pump machine, the pipe, tarpaulin, and gasoline. The cost is equal to one part of the sago production income. So if the work involves three workers, then one-third of the income goes to the machine owner.

How did they become machine owners? The wife was always enthusiastic when talking about their past experiences with sago harvesting. The husband is a Buginese man from the Southern part of South Sulawesi. After getting married, he joined in harvesting sago in a small group. Ando, Haris's father in law, was a *passambe*, and Haris was joining him as a member to harvest sago. They went to different villages, Malili (Eastern Luwu) and Larompong (Southern Luwu). Having obtained savings and the skills to harvest, Haris decided to provide his machine and recruit members, starting an independent business.

To have a machine means having more power in the sago production system. The machine owner will look for 2-3 members to be involved in the group for a sago harvesting project, hunting for anywhere where sago is abundant. They decide where to do the project and which trees to cut down. They usually provide cigarettes and gasoline for the operational work, but do not include the coffee and the meal (in the case of Rudi). They provide capital including transportation fee and expenses to buy the sago trees if the harvesting work is outside of the village. Therefore, working outside needs capital. For Haris and Ita, the money was from their savings, "we, the machine owner should sacrifice at first for the sake of the continuity of the machine. We did not count the transportation fee, and we bear the expenses".



Figure 8. Sago harvesting machine

The most memorable stories of sago harvesting work for Haris and Ita might be about Malangke Barat subdistrict, the city of sago. They spent two years moving from village to village, *Labbu*,

Pembuniang, Waelawie, and Labece to process the sago. They built a temporary tent to live in the sago forest during the harvesting. To contribute to the work, Ita decided to provide a meal for which the members paid Rp30,000 per day, and she refers to her job as a “stocker.” They also brought the children to Malangke Barat and took care of them, and sometimes the children helped her in the kitchen.

In most cases, the machine owner’s role is to negotiate with the landowner in buying the sago tree when they work in a team. They bargain and determine the fixed price with the landowner. However, many machine owners are not transparent with their members. Ita and her husband explained that there are many of them (machine owners) that deceive their members. For example, they get a fixed price of Rp120,000 from the landholder then telling the members they paid a higher price, Rp150,000. They added¹⁴:

J: I am different. (I) Buy sago, tell the members, this is the price per tree. If you are agreed, let’s take it. If not, we are not taking it.

U: Communicated?

J: Yes, it should be. People get their part, and we get our part. Mutually. It is not appropriate if just one side gets the profit. If it’s not the fortune for us, then maybe ours is somewhere. People said, “you will be not improved if you do like that.” Indeed, my principle is different. However, it (the money) would be not blessed for our body.

I: But, you know, the “trader’s thought,” it is difficult to cope with, we are dying to work (with them). They must be getting a higher percentage. Honestly. I want to be like that, (laughing). However, we consider the continuity of our work. If there were no more members who want us to bring (the machine), it would be abandoned, and we would make a loss.

Haris and his team produced 300-400 *tumang* in a month during the work in Malangke Barat. It is favourable for the middle man (*pabborong*) because demand for sago is always increasing. They can improve their business scale. Not only for *pabborong*, but the work also inspires more *passambe* to harvest sago in Luwu Utara through innovation. The *passambe* transfers knowledge among members. In our discussion in his house, Haris described how he brought a new way of harvesting sago using the water machine and a carpentry machine, and harvested dozens of trees together with his members in Malangke Barat, including Ridho, a young man from Waelawie hamlet. Ridho started to produce sago in a more considerable amount with Haris, and then he provided a machine for himself to harvest sago in a modern way with his father and brother.

Adventurous experiences in Malangke Barat was fulfilled with the story of sharing and caring provided by the locals. They are often treated like family, people provided them with fishes and food or even sold their trees for a lower price. It was because “I invested. For instance, people asked the leaves, and I gave them. Because I want (the work) to sustain, not just harvest the sago, being humble. Thus people (there) did not hesitate to give me their own (sago tree). For example, I bought Rp80,000, someone bargained Rp100,000, but they still give me. Because of our (way) approach to others”¹⁵.

¹⁴ Interview, 28 November 2018

¹⁵ Interview, 25 November 2018

In 2011, Haris quit sago harvesting. Harvesting sago is labour intensive and tough work. He decided to build a house in Radda and continued independent construction work, as a freelancer. He is currently receiving calls to build houses, construct wells, and build structures for beekeeping. His wife works at home, providing food, cooking, caring for the children and managing the sago harvesting machines.

When Haris worked as *passambe*, his wife used to open a kiosk in the traditional market and to sell their harvested *tabaro*. They were unlikely to join in the middle man (*pabborong*) scheme who gained more profit than *passambe*. Due to pregnancy, she could not continue the marketing work. Selling *tabaro* in the market requires extra work. For example, the seller needs to lift the dozens of *tabaro* and take it to the outside of the market (side road) without extra payments. However, she has a plan to buy one more machine and ask the members to take over to provide more income for the household and job opportunities for their friends or relatives. Considering buying more machines might be both a rational and an ethical choice for Haris and Ita.

Once I asked about the development of sago in Luwu Utara. Haris advocated the sago replanting activities because of the soil issue. He considers the sustainability of the sago area as a form of ethical thinking on the environment among *passambe*. He argued, "It is greening the earth. The sago is in fact for greening. It is about the environment. If there is no greening, the areas would be saturated"¹⁶.

5.1.3. *The middlemen (pabborong): The passambe perspectives*

In a subsistent food production such as sago, the role of *pabborong* is essential. Rather than focussing on entrepreneurial effort, *passambe* focus more on providing their household staple food. Sago harvester only operate from tree cutting through to selling to the middlemen, while some of them are going to the market and sell their *tabaro*. In this research, the *pabborong* is known as an individual who collects the sago from the *passambeang*, valuing harvested *tabaro* and re-selling it in the traditional market or in kiosks.

There are numerous *pabborong* in Luwu Utara, small and large. The large *pabborong* are small in number, four or five are well known by *passambe* whom I followed. They could buy dozens of *tabaro* from different areas and different sago harvesters. Moreover, they have big networks and members (*anggota*) of re-sellers in the traditional market, *kapurung* restaurant, and small *pabborong*. The small *pabborong* buys *tabaro* in a small amount from *passambe*, and directly sells it in the traditional market or roadside market. Big *pabborong* have a booth in Masamba central market or Sabbang traditional market. They sell sago which is picked up from their networks of (*anggota*) *passambe* across the region, as well as selling it to different resellers.

Nevertheless, I had no chance to interview any *pabborong* (middlemen). I approached two of them (the large middlemen), but due to the mobility of their work, they had no time to discuss. Therefore, to draw information about this entity, I compile perspectives from different actors in Radda and Malangke Barat. I analysed the expressions when we discussed the middle man.

The *pabborong* assesses the product quality and decides the price of *tabaro* harvested by *passambe*. The quality standards consist of the whiteness, rough contaminants, and packaging quality. The

¹⁶ Interview, 25 November 2018

whiteness level affects the price and the more reddish the *tabaro*, the less quality it has. The water quality influences the whiteness of *tabaro* during the process, and also the duration between the tree cutting process to the milking. The product should have no or at least less rubbish (i.e., dried leaves, gravel, or sludge). Lastly, the packaging quality is determined by the cavity within the *tumang* and how *passambe* covers it. There are two kinds of covering, by plastic bag or by *lintobong* leaves. Thus, *passambe* should fill it by pressing and make sure that there is no cavity left.

Once the *pabborong* visit and view the *tabaro* they can immediately measure how much it is worth. The current price in *passambe* range Rp35,000 to 42,000 for a *tumang* and they will sell it for around Rp45,000 to 47,000 to their networks of resellers in traditional markets in Masamba. Aside from the profit margin, the price reflects transportation costs required to pick up dozens or hundreds of *tabaro* from *passambeang*, also depending on the top cover. If the *passambe* does not provide the plastic and the rope, the *pabborong* will cut the cost of the material and reduce the selling price of *passambe*.

The *pabborong* have different reputations in *passambe's* eye. In this study, only two *pabborong* were discussed, those who paid for Rudi's *tabaro* and Haris (when he was working in Malangke Barat). Buying with a higher price is a reputation for Abdi, a young *pabborong* from Masamba. He is well-known for a higher standard assessment, particularly whiteness and the density of *tumang*. While Adhi did *masseroq*, I had a conversation with his father and Haris about Abdi. Rudi expressed about the way this *pabborong* deal with sago harvester:

“Abdi, he did not determine the price when he took our sago, not telling me when he picked up my sago. This person has a good side and a bad side. He wants the sago to always be flushed, compressed. He took a lot because he wants denser individual *tumang*. That means we can produce less *tumang*. However, the price does not change, staying around Rp40,000.”¹⁷

Moreover, Abdi puts trust with certain *passambe* if they have already been consistently producing qualified *tabaro*. The trust is shown by the intensity of the questioning during the transaction process. Rudi then explained, “Abdi has trusted my sago quality. Usually, he is always questioning if I produced a poor quality work. But lately, I never found an issue”¹⁸. The *pabborong* either Abdi or the others work based on trust for *passambe* who have been consistently producing *tabaro* in the region, such as Rudi or Haris.

Regarding the payment method, both *pabborong* are different. Although Abdi pays in a higher range of price, it always takes more days to pay the *passambe*, sometimes a week. While Mama Eva is favourable among *passambe* in terms of payment, she provides cash for them no more than three days average after picking up the *tumang* from *passambeang*. The payment intervals are varied depending on the market demand in the city. Detailed reasons for this may exist, but would require more inquiries into the marketing system of *pabborong*.

Interestingly, I recognised a secure network and informal economic relationship among actors in sago production either between *pabborong* and *passambe* or among *pabborong*. For instance, Abdi would pay for 73 of Rudi's *tabaro*. Because of the quality problem, Abdi decided to divert it to Mama

¹⁷ Informal conversation with *passambe*, 25 October 2018

¹⁸ *ibid*

Eva, another big *pabborong* in Masamba. Mama Eva is not that strict about the standard, though she has a lower price. Therefore, Rudi's *tabaro* was fallen into Mama Eva's hands at Rp38,000 per *tumang*. This kind of economic practice on the one hand could create market certainty for small *passambe* and on the other hand can ensure the availability of *tabaro* for *pabborong*.

Mama Eva is an older *pabborong* than Abdi and one of the biggest in Masamba. Her operational range encompasses different sub-districts including Malangke Barat. Haris and Ita had many experiences with both Mama Eva and Abdi. However, we much more talked about how they worked with Mama Eva in Malangke Barat. Being a big *pabborong* requires a significant amount of capital. Ita remembered the moment Mama Eva was seriously expanding her sago business, "Imagine, when I worked in Malangke, Mama Eva used to be reckless to take capital from the bank, she took 100 million rupiahs. It showed her recklessness because she viewed too much (sago)"¹⁹.

Informal forms of the transaction between *passambe* and *pabborong* have been developed in an interdependent relationship. I argue that the kinship system in Luwu Utara influences it. The strong kinship system creates ethical-laden-values in its economic system of sago, between *pabborong* and *passambe*. The promise that Abdi made to buy the next harvested sago from Rudi after handing over Rudi's *tabaro* to Mama Eva showed a form of effort to maintain the sustainable relationship between *pabborong* and *passambe*.

5.1.4. Sago reseller in the traditional market

Fieldwork in Luwu Utara has taught me that the traditional market reflects the people and the culture of a place. I began the journey through a traditional market in Masamba. I met different people, learning of the diverse life experiences that they have encountered. I visited Masamba central market (*Pasar Sentral Masamba*) and Sabbang traditional market (*Pasar Sabbang*) to understand how the people value sago. I tried to interact with sago resellers as well as take note of how they connect with the consumer. I viewed different types of diverse economies, through unstructured conversations and participant observation.

The market is located next to the iconic bridge of Sabbang that connects to the road toward the Northern part of South Sulawesi province. The Rongkong river lies below the bridge, one of the biggest rivers in the Luwu region. Sabbang market is operated every Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday. Ita asked me to visit when it is crowded, where I can meet the sago reseller. I drove her to the market, fifteen minutes by motorcycle heading to the South. Arriving at the market, we entered the Northern gate. I viewed a bunch of *tumang*, neatly arranged on the sidewalk in the market, with resellers standing behind every stall. I visited the stalls that were standing next to each other in the open air section I thought that market discourse was merely about competition, until I met these people, and realised that it is not the only way the market manifests.

The traditional market is a space of hope, especially for those who are attached to sago. For example, Dodi, Siraj and Riri have been working in *pasar Sabbang* since several years ago as sago resellers "to live the kitchen." They buy *tabaro* from *pabborong* or directly from *passambe*, creating margins for educational purposes, paying debts, or just doing something with their day. Therefore, selling sago is the primary source of income for these people.

¹⁹ Interview, 25 November 2018

The bargaining process, yelling and persuading are characteristic of economic activity in Sabbang market. The reseller supplies *tabaro* from *pabborong* with the price around Rp43,000 to 45,000. They could get a lower price and create more significant margins if they buy it from *passambe*. They sell *tabaro* with the fixed price of Rp50,000 while the customer is always striving to get a lower price around Rp45,000. Dodi, Riri, and Siraj need to convince the customer that they have an excellent quality of sago for them. However, it is not only the bargaining process that makes this part exciting but also the stories of the economic activities of these people.

The sago reseller starts their activities at 6.30 AM, preparing and bringing out the *tumang* from the shed. The shed is collectively owned and managed by these resellers to place hundreds of *tumang* that they bought either from *passambe* or *pabborong*. The *tumang* are neatly arranged on the sidewalk of the entrance gate to attract the customer. There are different sizes of *tumang* sold by the reseller. This is repackaged to align with consumer needs, such as making it into smaller (5 kilograms) amounts, or even selling it per ounce. Thus, to accommodate the smaller size, they make smaller *tumang* and sell it for half the price.



Figure 9. Sago reseller in Sabbang traditional market

In convincing the customer, the reseller adds more services such as figuring out and choosing the better one from the shed when asked. Some expressions such as, “Is the *tabaro* white?” or “Find me the better one!” requested by the customer will be responded to through the offer to visit the shed and point out what they want, which in the end is often picked by the reseller. Furthermore, the reseller will ask their customer after paying the *tabaro*, “do you want to leave it here and take it later?” or “where should I bring this?”. It means that they provide service to save the *tabaro* while they continue to enter the market and provide labour to bring 15 kilograms of *tumang* to outside the market or customer’s vehicle for free. Riri explained to me that only in Sabbang market we provide different free services for customer, in contrast to Masamba central market:

In Masamba, the customer brings (*tumang*) themselves, only here we lift for them. For instance, a plastic bag, (in Masamba) they pay for the plastic bag. Here, we got used to providing the bag for the customer, we bring the *tumang* to their car without additional

cost, voluntarily. Otherwise, they will not buy our sago. They are lazy to lift it out. It is better in Masamba (central market), here, we need to bring it up (main road). Sometimes, there was a new visitor who did not know the market track. It was tiring my shoulder carrying the sago. We went around the market, and finally, we found it (laugh). (Riri)

It has been several hours, the buyers have yet to come, just one. Whereas, Riri has been there since 5.30 in the early morning. He complained about the recent *tabaro* problem. Almost two weeks 80 sago (*balabba*) were sold. However, it used to be hundreds. It has changed due to the increasing number of resellers in Luwu Utara. Riri has been in Luwu Utara for seven years. He became a sago reseller after marrying his wife who has worked for more than 20 years. Currently, the wife helps Riri to sell *tabaro* in Sabbang market. I saw her moving and watching in beside the booth while her husband served the customer.

Siraj has another story. He was working to harvest sago before selling *tabaro* in the traditional market. He expressed how difficult the sago harvesting was when people were still using traditional tools, while he showed me a scar on his toes slashed by a hoe-like tool. He started being *passambe* since he was a teenager, around the 70s, until he had children who entered university. "It is tough if you have children and are still working as *passambe*," he said. Even his cousin once told him, "Child, I just ask one thing, if I die tomorrow, do not *massambe* (harvest sago)." However, sago has an advantage, "If we process it, we could immediately get food to eat. However, if we do agricultural (*kerja tani*) work, it takes time. This (sago), we process in that hour, we could eat it in that hour too". His experiences in sago harvesting work reflect that *passambe* is a highly subsistent and labour-intensive form of agriculture.

[...] I have been through quite a lot of suffering. When my children entered the university degree, what I did is borrow money. If it was running out, I then borrowed from another person, but I have a warranty. I said, "If I have no more land to sell in Malili (East Luwu) and I have yet to pay you, you can yell at me in front of the people that I am a liar, deceiver." I have three children, and the only thing I did was take credit from BRI (conventional bank), and borrow from a neighbour. However, I have passed all those difficulties, my children have finished their study [...] My wife used to be a vegetable peddler, she collected snails in the swamp and sold it on the market days. Once, my brother in law suggested to me, "It's better for you to take credit from BRI, guarantee your land certificate." However, I could access a small amount of credit, only 7.5 million maximum and it has interest. There was a neighbour who wanted to lend me money, and sometimes was not able to. I convince them of the land. (Siraj)

The conversation showed that there are diverse forms of financial access for sago reseller, the neighbour, family or conventional bank. However, a land guarantee is the only asset that Siraj could provide to convince either the neighbour or financial institution. This neighbourhood lending system has helped Siraj and his family to pay educational needs. Compared to the conventional one, it is distributed without interest.

Independent enterprise among resellers exists. It is done in the free day, or outside the working hours of selling *tabaro* in Sabbang market. For example, Haris and his wife sell retail gasoline in front of the gas station. I remember during my fieldwork, every time I passed by the gas station, I found Haris and his wife standing behind a small booth (table) with bottles of gasoline. There was a fuel

scarcity. There was a long line of vehicles waiting for gasoline, and it could be hours to wait. People like Dodi and his wife take benefit from this situation, retailing gasoline that they bought every midnight in the gas station. They sell it for the drivers who are not able to stand in the line but desperately need to fill up their vehicle. Haris's independent business was important in this situation, to ease the access of gasoline.

Meanwhile, Siraj works in his small garden of cacao outside the day of selling *tabaro*. He also has a paddy field to harvest for subsistence production and sale to the middlemen. He could not work alone in his paddy field. Thus, he hired someone to manage the rice field with a fifty-fifty profit share. His wife runs a small vendor enterprise in their house selling household needs (*campuran*) to provide additional income for the family. Besides, Siraj provides sago delivery service for his neighbour if it is ordered. His neighbours are also his customer.

Sometimes my neighbour bought my sago. When I have good quality sago, they will promote it. However, when I received less quality, some people tell others that "do not buy there". For my loyal customer, even if it is less quality, they will say "today, your sago is not good enough", but they still buy it. Some of them were offensive, "you give me bad sago!". I just bought it without knowing whether it was good or not. Some are respectful, and some are grumpy. I have been through it. [...] There are various kinds of customer, some are the neighbours. Sometimes our neighbour did not want to buy. Some ordered and asked me to deliver to their home, and sometimes they picked it by themselves, it depends on order. (Siraj)

Riri works three days a week and about to eight hours per day, accompanied by his wife. In their free days, Riri and his wife stay at home and craft small *tumang*, unpacking the big *tumang* and splitting it into smaller ones. It gives more profit for Riri and other resellers, at least to cover the cost of a plastic bag for the customer. No more other jobs are done by Riri. They have no children and selling sago is the primary source of income his family's income.

5.1.5. A Buginese haji and the sago factory

On November 27th, 2018, I visited the factory and met Haji Anca. He explained his factory in a quiet humble and open conversation. To run his production, he works with some networks of *passambe* including one in Baliase village (which I will describe in the next sub-chapter). He buys the sago by the kilogram, not *tumang* like the small scale ones. He or his workers go to the production site to pick up hundreds of sacks of wet sago with a price rate of Rp900-2,000 per kilogram. The price is considered from the quality (the whiteness and residue) and the production cost. However, before agreeing with the big *passambe* to supply the factory, he makes sure that the quality is as consistent as he wants. Therefore, he provides an offer for the networks, as he stated: "My members (*anggota*), I guided them, I gave them a down payment (*panjar*), they should improve the work." Furthermore, he explained the way he considers the product:

Sago, although it's dark, the most important is having less residue. If it's dark, we can wash it to be white. But if it has rubbish, we can experience a 50% loss, it's better if it's just 30%, because the chemical material (*obat*) is also expensive. It's *kaporit* (calcium hypochlorite). Because if we are not applying it, the residue will not be separated. With *kaporit*, it (rubbish/residue) will rise to the surface and the sago will remain sedimented on the floor. [...] There

are eight pools there (in the factory). The sago goes into the pool, is flushed with water, and a little amount of *kaporit*. The sago will then be dried. (Haji Anca)

The business is promising, and he has no competitors in Luwu Utara, “I think this is the only sago flour factory in Luwu Utara”, he said. The factory could produce sago flour in tonnes, exporting it to Tasikmalaya or Surabaya. The industry in Java repacks it in smaller sizes and distributes it around the province. He thinks that the product might be sent back to South Sulawesi in a different brand. However, a big enterprise such as this factory has been unrecognised by the local government. I once asked him about the communication with the government, he said, “Never. Maybe no one (the government) knows that I established a business here”.

He explained the story to express the urgency of supervising the workers in the factory. He does not want to be deceived. Therefore, he is taking over the business, and every day he comes to the factory. He hires ten workers in his factory with a contract system (*borongan*). The workers are led by a team leader who had been working with a Chinese businessman (not the one who deceived him). Haji re-recruited him to work in his factory with the scheme. This worker leader seeks members to work to achieve the target collectively. They get paid 9.6 million rupiahs after the freight day when 24 tonnes of sago flour have been lifted into a cargo truck to be delivered to Java island. This occurs twice or three times in a month, depending on the weather (the sun). In the rainy season, the freight will be twice a month. Using an oven or drying machine is too expensive. Therefore the *borongan* system is the preferred choice for Haji to tackle this limitation. He used to apply a daily contract system for the workers, but he did not want to rebuke them every day, “it was bothering [...] I give them the freedom to work, but with targets”.



Figure 10. Sago drying in factory

The working system in this factory is flexible. The target-oriented scheme allows the workers to help each other in the process. Most of them have a specific task, but some are multi-tasking. For example, I met Sumantri, a young man worker who was holding a sewing machine during my visit. He is the only skilled worker who can operate the machine. Besides, he works in the drying field,

moving sacks of sago flour and the freight process. The workers do not need to come every day to the factory. Some of them have independent work outside sago flour production. For example, Sumantri manages his father's farm alongside working as a laborer.

My father owns the farm. I work there while also working here. If the farm needs to be sprayed with pesticide, I skip the work here. We are not working here every day. It depends on us. If we want, we go to work. Nevertheless, if we are not coming here, our fellow workers will be overwhelmed when it is raining. (Sumantri)

I met another worker in the factory, Samsir. He guided me to see the flow of sago flour production in the factory. His roles are drying, bleaching and lifting the sago. It is interesting, the way he was recruited in this factory. He harvested sago and sold to *pabborong* (Mama Eva), but the *tabaro* was not accepted because of the abundance stock she had. Instead of letting the *tabaro* go unsold, Mama Eva recommended that he should sell it to the factory. He went to the location and got paid Rp1,800 per kilogram. It was the first time he became aware of this location. After selling the *tabaro* he thought that he had no work to do. Therefore, he followed his friend's advice to apply for work in the factory. Coincidentally, the factory needed workers, and he started to work in the following days.

The story reveals how the factory is connected to *pabborong*. I asked Haji Anca regarding the issue of the middlemen around *tabaro*. He explained, "they are just selling it in the traditional market. They rarely sell it to me. Sometimes if it is not saleable, they will bring it. I give them Rp1,800 per kilo. There was also *tabaro* packaged in *tumang*, the producer wanted to sell it in the market, but no one bought it, so they brought it here. I bought it, the *tabaro* with *tumang* is better". The abundance of stock held my middlemen means that *passambe* are susceptible to the risk of not being able to sell due to oversupply.. The factory, although buying the *tabaro* at a lower price, at least provides the option to save the *passambe* from a bigger loss.

Samsir is a devout Muslim. Together with the other workers, he routinely establishes the *shalat* in the workplace. In the factory, Haji Anca is currently constructing prayer facilities for them. In our discussion, Samsir expressed some other assistance given by Haji. Besides the praying facilities, the workers are provided with lunch. Haji provides the rice and hires the wife of a factory worker, although they are still paid per month. He lends money for the workers who need it, without interest. For example, Samsir once needed money to pay his debts and cover his daily needs. The payment will be deducted from his wage when the freight is loaded.

5.1.6. *Passambe* Baliase

Baliase is a village with an iconic bridge and constructed dam – one of the biggest in the country. There is a long line sago resellers standing on the side road next to the bridge as if a big red wall, viewed from the driver's eyes. Here, there is a sago harvesting activity supplies the sago factory. When I visited the sago factory, the owner gave me directions to get to the *passambeang*, I drew on my notes, and I used it to meet the biggest sago harvester in town.

This *passambeang* is the biggest in Luwu Utara, according to some people I met. It has a large machine compared to the carpentry-like tools used by Rudi and his son. The sago shelter or pool is more extended and permanent, built from ceramic and cement. If Rudi and his son could process one tree in a week, they could produce nine trees in a day, supplying 300 sacks of *tabaro* to Haji

Anca's factory. The machine was brought by the owner, Reza Salim from Palu, Central Sulawesi. He used to be a carpenter in Luwu Utara, then became a durian seller, driving tonnes of fruits and selling it to Palu. He had a car accident that made him stop selling fruit and start a sago processing business. The machine itself is second-hand, he brought it from Palu from a retired sago processor and re-modified it in Luwu Utara.

It was the first day of December and raining. I went down a winding road towards the location. I finally found it in the middle of the forest at the edge of a river. Sago tree skins piled up like a hill, and a big machine lay under a ceiling made of sago leaves. The sound of the river flow echoed in the middle of the forest. There are five *passambe* sitting in a gazebo, having a break. There was not much work to do because the machine was in trouble. They offered me a fruit soup, I offered them questions.

I sat down on the gazebo and talked with all the workers. The hill of sago tree skin was saliently drawing my attention. A worker explained to me that the wood was often picked up by people for a wedding party, "It is not for sale, they bring us a cigarette. However, if they want us to deliver it with our truck, they will give us Rp200,000. We don't accept if it's far". Their labour is remunerated by cigarette for lifting the wood into the customer's car, taking the leftover of the sago harvesting process. The sago harvesters also benefit from this transaction. Otherwise, the leftover will not be accommodated. Different from the sago pulp, claimed by the owner, the solid waste of the sago filtering process could be thrown into the river as a natural fish feed, "to make the fish fleshy".

Sacks of *tabaro* covered with blue tarpaulin sprawled beside the sago pool, waiting to be picked up and delivered to the factory. Haji buys it at a lower price yet in a large quantity. To provide more income for the business, they serve resellers orders in Masamba, mostly from the vendors next to the Baliase bridge. It is because they are unlike the current food industry with a formal agreement, "[...] it's not only Haji, we produce for any buyer. We don't have any debt there (the factory), no contract", Reza explained. The vendors buy at a higher price, around Rp40,000 per *tumang*. Reza does not need to provide anything, it is a net price. Although they run a more profitable business of serving sago vendors, they are still loyal in supplying the factory.

Yes, (the factory) supplies to Java, wet sago. If just once it doesn't matter, but if it's routine, I am hesitant to have Haji as a regular customer. If the buyers are small-scale and not routine, it's no problem. However, if it's a big buyer, I don't want it. I am afraid Haji will be disappointed, because he needs it (the sago) every day. (Reza Salim)

This business operates depending on the demand from the factory. The demand is always increasing yet the availability of sago tree is declining. Besides, the labour factor is prominent to run this business. Reza employs people who merely want to work, without a paper contract and just informal agreement on fees. Therefore, he explained that sometimes in the honey harvesting season they will prefer to seek honey in the forest rather than processing sago. It can result in up to 16 bottles and is more advantageous.

Most of the current workers are Reza's family, such as his brother in law, cousin, and migrant neighbour, and they live in the same neighbourhood. Before the processing unit existed, they used to work in plantations or housing construction works. The wage system in this *passambeang* is paid per day, averaging around Rp80,000 depending on the business demand. If the demand is high, Reza Salim will provide cigarettes for the workers. The boss provides meals every day. In the break time,

the workers often to cook for the group in traditional ways using the wooden fuel from the tree skins. Sometimes their children also come to play. Like when I visited, Reza's children were there to play around. This is not only space for working, but the *passambeang* is also a space for caring for the children.

Another factor that affects the business operation is the machine. When it is trouble, the processing will be stopped. It is an old modified machine and should be replaced with a new one, according to Reza. The technicians are the workers themselves, on a voluntary basis. There was no processing work during my visit because the machine was under maintenance. Therefore, the work was changed while renovating the place. It is a muddy place when the rainy season comes. The floor of the processing place is only utilising the tree skins. Therefore, during the machine maintenance, Reza with the workers decided to repair the muddy floor and constructed it with cement.



Figure 11. Constructing a permanent floor for the processing place together with in Baliase

I asked Reza about the land status of his business. Interestingly, he does not own the land. He borrows it from a man living in Mappedeceng village. He wanted to pay, but the owner did not want to release his land, and he just lent it to Reza for an indefinite time. He also constructed the *passambeang* to be a semi-permanent unit with cement and ceramic with the permission of the landowner. The free access to an owned-land is like Rudi's case of sago harvesting. Most of the landowners permit *passambe* to process the sago at the site without taking any payment. In most cases, in return, the user provides a gift, services or harvested sago for the landowner. This informal transaction exists in the sago production system in Luwu Utara due to the importance of sago for their livelihoods.

5.2. A story from Malangke Barat sub-district: The city of Sago

5.2.1. *Passambe* in Waelawie hamlet

At my first arrival, we went to Ridho's house, a former member of Haris when harvesting sago seven years ago. Ridho's wife helped by Ita served me a spicy *kapurung* cooked in a big pot. Later, Haris and I went to a sago forest close to the house, and we met Rahman, his son, and his grandson working to produce *tabaro*. Ridho's father is one of the oldest *passambe* in Waelawie. He passes down the knowledge of sago harvesting to his son, and now to his grandson. I identified diverse economy activities in Malangke Barat. An abundant informal economy exists in the household, *passambeang*, and society around sago. The economies such as self-employed, independent enterprises, and self-provisioning and other alternative and non-capitalist are exist in this region.

Every morning roosters crow, ducks quack, and boat machine from the river were audible from Ridho's home. At around 6 AM, Anca goes out to the backyard and brings a jar with kernels of corn to feed his wild chickens (*ayam kampung*). There are two chicken coops there, one belongs to Anca, and another is his grandmother (Ridho's sister). Releasing and feeding the chicken is what Anca and his grandmother do in the early morning, for household consumption and to sell when *Ied Fitr* or *lebaran* comes or paying school fees for Anca. He also hangs out his birdcages in different spots outside the house. Various vegetable and fruits are also grown in the backyard such as mango, guava, and lemongrass for domestic consumption. There is a shed filled out with the roof from sago leaves and firewood from tree skins for fuel. The woods are for *dange* making that uses a traditional stove to cook. It is independent work done by Rahman's wife, but she was hospitalised when I was there. They also have a small boat parked in the river near the shed that is used to distribute sago harvested across the river. At the same time, his mother prepares the breakfast and school equipment for Ugga (Anca's little brother) while his grandfather repairs a motorcycle which will be used by Anca to go to school.

The *passambeang* work is started around 7 AM. Ridho started to prepare the equipment in the forest. It was the beginning the rainy season, many mosquitos were in the field and Ridho set up the fire to make smoke from coconut fibre to repel the insects. Ridho, who lives in a different house, was coming to *passambeang* and started to help his father. Ridho cleaved the *gereq*, and Ridho returned to pick up bread for a snack and turn on the machine. Anca arrived, and the work was started. Ridho cleaved the *gereq*, Anca shredded it while Ridho stayed with a water pipe to milk the shredded sago. After finishing one part, Ridho left the *passambeang* with a machete on his waist; he was going to herd the cows.

This family is herding cows and buffalo through a sharing system with a neighbour in Malangke Barat. By grazing the cows, Ridho gets paid with the calves. The grazing times are in the morning and afternoon after the sago harvesting is done. Besides grazing the livestock, they also started a fishpond placed in the neighbouring hamlet and collectively managed by the family members. The pond dredging was so expensive, using heavy equipment such as a bulldozer. They could not provide money to rent the machine with dozen millions of rupiah. Therefore, they offered a piece of land for a man who could operate the machine.

"I give away my land, he cultivates it. Because I have no capital to cultivate the land by myself. So, I need to figure out. Instead of (the land) being neglected. The young man said that just this once there is someone who wants to give him land to manage, and it's me."
(Rahman, December 12th, 2018)

Sago tree processed by Ridho and his children was taken from across the river where the sago clones that they own are located. In Malangke Barat, *passambe* like Ridho buys sago, not per tree, per clone. For *passambe* like Haris or Rudi, he hunts for and chooses the ready-to-harvest trees and processes it over a period of weeks. For Ridho, cultivating sago trees has occupied his family for generations. He could not leave the sago harvesting work as it is his culture. He is so attached with sago, “No, I cannot. I could not be detached from sago. I cannot go outside the village because I also have cows”, he said. Sago is an influential staple food and source of income for Ridho and his family, he bestow the knowledge and the trees to his future generations such as Ridho, Anca and Anca. This is reflected by way in which the men in this family work at *passambeang*.

Anca comes to work after school or in the weekend, to help with light works of sago harvesting while his brother Ugga comes for playing and sometimes helping the process. Moreover, he also accompanies his grandfather to graze the cows in the morning at weekends. The sago harvesting and other agricultural knowledge are introduced at early ages by the older generation to the younger one. Strong kinship systems depict how sago harvesting is maintained in this region.



Figure 12. Family work in sago harvesting in Waelawie

It is different here from the way *passambe* sell sago in Masamba, where they *usetumang*. In Malangke Barat they just put it in sacks and sell it. Sacks of *tabaro* are picked up by *paborong* from Masamba or Salobongko in a significant quantity, and each sack is valued at 50 kilograms. The quality in Waelawie is higher yet has a lower price than in Masamba. This is because of the transportation cost incurred by *paborong* to pick up the sago. Once the sago is handled to *paborong*, it is time for kitchen to be fired up. Mama Eva used to pick up Rahman’s *tabaro*, but the latest production was taken by *paborong* from Salobongko. Not only *paborong* from the market, the *tabaro* is sometimes bought by Madi, a resident in Waelawie who works for the food industry in Makassar. A slightly different story from Haris and *passambe* in Radda, *paborong* have a different reputation for people in Waelawie. When I asked about their connection with *paborong*, compromise narratives were articulated by the *passambe*, for instance, “the *paborong* here, everyone knows who they are. They are doing both sago harvesting and buying sago. At least they

get Rp5,000 profit”, said Anca. Mama Eva once lent Ridho’s family money to pay daily needs, which was returned after the sago had been harvested.

I Meet Zul, a young *passambe* who lives in Waelawie opposite Ridho’s house, studying in a college in Palopo city. I recognised him from his experimental site in Waelawie where he grew sago seed in polybags when I visited the clave of sago in the hamlet. None of his seed-growing research was succeeding. He cultivated the shoot instead and showed me the result. He takes a part-time program in his college while harvesting sago to pay the tuition fee. He works with his father, brother and his brother in law to harvest the sago across the river where the sago claves are located.

His father inherited the knowledge of sago harvesting like what Ridho did to his sons. Similar to his neighbour, Zul’s father told me that he planted sago tree on his land for his generations because it is a promising investment. Learning from his father and brother, Zul has understood how to pick up the best trees and the technique to produce a whiter *tabaro*. I was surprised to come across a pool with *tabaro* soaked in very clear water. It was Zul’s brother’s production. I found several pools with clean and white *tabaro* in the hamlet. It is not surprising that Malangke Barat is well recognised as a place for high-quality *tabaro*.

I meet three other young men living in the neighbourhood. They had been working to process sago in another clave. They harvested sago to provide quick cash for celebrating the upcoming new year. These young men live in the same neighbourhood. One of them owns a workshop to repair motorcycles or bikes, while the others are working on different projects such as fishponds or freelancers in construction work.

Once I visited their *passambeang* and prepared for cutting a new tree. I was with Anca (Ridho’s brother). When the young men left to the forest to cut the trees, Anca voluntarily threw out the water in his friend’s pool. I often came across volunteer assistance among *passambe* in Radda and Malangke Barat. Moreover, collective works are also conducted outside the sago harvesting work. For example, I was sitting and gathering with the young men in a gazebo, when a young guy came and asked for help to shatter ice for fish distribution.

Exploring the social life around *passambe* in Waelawie has brought me to think of the way in which sago remains in existence for harvest and to consumption. Different generations are still involved in sago harvesting work and it is done collectively at a household and community level. Moreover, the relationship between *passambe* from outside the region like Haris has contributed to improving the quality of *tabaro*. People in Waelawie used to be doing sago harvesting in old-fashioned ways, shredding without carpentry tools, drawing and providing water from the river without a water pump. After Haris come to Waelawie, asked Ridho to join in his team, Ridho then applied the machinery system in sago harvesting work. “It used to be difficult to harvest the sago. We cut the tree here then we bring it far to the river to milk. There is an easier way to provide water, damn it, there it is beneath us to take. If there were no people from Masamba, people here would stop the harvesting work”, expressed Ridho. Anca replied, “If there is no one to harvest the sago, there is no *kapurung* to eat”.

5.2.2. *Dange and its local trade system*

Dange is a staple food for the inhabitants in Malangke Barat. All the making process involves women, from firewood preparation to drying the *tabaro*. They wrestle with the heat in order to make it and sell it in the traditional market.

Sari sorted out the dried firewood made of sago tree skin in his backyard. He took the firewood from Ridho's *passambeang* behind his house, for free. Her husband cleaved it to small pieces, and she neatly arranges it to be exposed to the sun. At a different spot, she places *tabaro* flour to dry as the main ingredient for *dange*. Then, she invited me to her house and explained everything about *dange* making while she started to make the food.

The neighbours in Waelawie buy from her because it is delicious and cheaper. Ten sheets of *dange* are priced Rp1,000 while in other places it is Rp5,000 per 30 sheets. A neighbour came while I was conversing with Sari in the kitchen. She bought ten for household stock, and Sari gave her more sheets as a bonus. "*Dange* is a staple food for people in Malangke. The skull will be soft if we are not eating *dange*", said the neighbour.

Dange sometimes becomes a gift for a ceremony. Sari and his husband planned to attend a family wedding in Makassar. She prepared *dange* and donated it to the wedding as a gift for the family. Outside the region, *dange* is always an important food for the people from Malangke and some regions in Luwu.

There is always a jar of *dange* in most houses in Waelawie. As a staple food, "We cannot eat without *dange* even just one day", said Sari. She produces *dange* to sell and for household consumption. She sells her *dange* in Amessangeng and Palopo city. She distributes thousands of sheets of *dange* to the reseller in a traditional market in Amessangeng accompanied by her husband. To send the *dange* in Palopo city, she gives it to a car rent driver who is every day passing by her house, and she pays around Rp10,000 for the cost.

There is a middleman in *dange* food system. I met Anca, a person who buys *dange* from households in Tokke village and distributes it around Malangke and Malangke Barat. I was informed by a sub-district officer, and he also brought me to this man. They are a business partners in a swallow cage enterprise. The officer drove me with his motorcycle to meet Anca.

Anca orders and picks up the *dange* from independent household enterprises like Sari. He collects and distributes it to more than ten small resellers throughout Malangke main road (*jalan poros*). From the business, he gets one million rupiahs in two to three days or even two million rupiahs depending on the demand from the small vendors. Besides selling *dange*, he runs a swallow cage business from which the profit is more significant than *dange* business. Therefore he said, "It is solely a small business. If I go to buy fuel, I will take and deliver the *dange*". He bluntly explained the way he works and the profit he gets from both *dange* and the swallow cage business.

I am not taking advantage, only the profit from selling *dange*. This (*dange*) is a commodity for Luwu Utara. If small enterprises (*UKM*) need to improve, these groups should be empowered. There should be a salient program in the society done by members of *Program Keluarga Harapan* (PKH). However, none of the programs are done. (Anca, 14 December 2018)

The PKH or Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) program is a national program under the Ministry of Social Affairs aimed at tackling poverty by providing basic facilities for the poorest families. Anca commented on the implementation program in his village and tried to relate it with *dange* makers

empowerment. Moreover, I asked what he thinks about *dange* management in his region. He continued, “I think about making a specific processing location, where there is a weekly marketing target, and produce is labelled with *dange* from Sappong”.

The place-based food becomes a focus issue for Anca. I listened to his development plans for his *dange* maker networks in the region. It triggered him to provide assistance for a household that needs capital to provide sago for *dange* production. He realised that *dange* is the main staple food in Malangke and Luwu Utara in general. The demand is always increasing, and the market should be managed. Therefore, he decided to build the network and organise the distribution system in his village as his support for the *dange* makers.

As I said, I help those who need capital. I help to provide sago. I could help, if they need documentation about *dange*, sago, including the process. If people mention sago Tapping, for sure, it is famous here. (Anca, 14 December 2018)

As the main staple food in Malangke Barat, the *dange* food system encompasses a complex relationship between *passambe*, households, and middlemen. Exploring the *dange* actors in the sub-district illuminates the present informal economies in the region, such as the practices that Anca and Sari have been engaging in.

5.2.3. A Small-scale sago flour enterprise in Malangke

The *tabaro* quality is the attraction for Malangke Barat sub-district. People are looking for the product to bring it home or as a gift. It encouraged enterprises in Luwu Utara and other regions across Luwu to produce *tabaro* flour. One of the existing small-scale enterprises in Malangke Barat is DS product. I figured out the information through an online marketplace. It is labelled “from Malangke Barat”, yet the seller is in Makassar.

December 3rd, I met Dila, the owner of sago flour enterprises. Currently, the business serves orders on a small scale and send them to Palopo, Pangkep, and Ambon. In Makassar, it is promoted through an online marketplace, a website that I visited before. Because of the uncertain demand, Dila only hires several workers and pays them per kilogram of production. The workers are widows and neighbours, sustaining the relationship that has been built by her father. The *tabaro* is also derived from the local *passambe* who used to work with his father. Not only the demand, but a principal factor also drove her to not take a loan for her business, as she explained, “Yes, It is a pity. They hope that this business is developed. I am not taking any loan. I do not want to have debt. I am doing (the business) slowly with all I have”.

There is no formal working agreement with the *passambe*. Dila owns the machine used by *passambe* to supply the material for her business. However, she let the *passambe* use her machine to produce *tabaro* outside the flour production, for instance, selling it to *paborong* to make their own profit. She maintains this system because the workers have been considered a family. The kinship system underlies these enterprises.

5.2.4. An agent of food industry

In the rainy night, a young man enjoyed his cigarette while asking his wife to make coffee for his guests. He started to explain his work as a *paborong* in Malangke Barat, that is about collecting a significant amount of sago from small *passambe* and sending it to a food industry in Malino, close to

Makassar city. He retired from sago harvesting work and shifted to an industrial agent to supply the primary material for the food industry.

Madi has worked as a sago collector for several years. He worked for different people and in different places. There is one issue that he has in mind related to the work of supplying material for industry. It is the payment system. For him, the imprest system (*panjar*) is risky. The boss could distrust him. For example, he was in charge of a job to collect sago in Toli-toli in Central Sulawesi to supply to Surabaya. His boss provided capital for advanced payment because the sago farmers needed the money to buy a machine and produce the wet sago. In the end, he failed to meet the supply to Surabaya.



Figure 13. Sacks of sago collected by Madi

He experienced accusations and refusals from *passambe* because of distrust created from the previous *pabborong*. Once, he was accused of having no money to pay for the sago. He once bought *tabaro* from a middleman who took the sago from *passambe* at a lower price. Then Madi came again to buy *tabaro* but directly from the *passambe*. The *passambe* was telling the story to Madi when coming to buy. He sold 200 sacks of sago to the middleman with Rp100,000 rupiah and the middle man sold to Madi with Rp110,000 for a significant margin. The *passambe* was losing money, up to two million rupiahs. The *passambe* have been traumatised in a considerable amount of orders. Therefore, he is concerned about the trust issue.

Thus, if they need (the sago), the money should be ready because I promised the people, “do not humiliate me”. So, if the goods are ready to distribute, he needs to prepare the money. He came here and checked the price himself, asking people until Masamba. I informed the prices. Therefore, I demanded him to pay directly, not through me because I do not want to be suspected of taking profit for myself. (Madi, December 12th, 2018)

As a resident in Waelawie and intermediate agent between local people and food factory, Madi is aware of building trust both with the locals and the food industry. He once asked an industrial agent to come and directly check the price as proof. He agrees with neither the imprest system nor the after-production payment and contract system. He was in touch with Abdi, a well-known *pabborong*

who buys at a higher price. Abdi supplies Pugalu restaurant in Masamba, and this restaurant pays at a higher price for a good quality *tabaro*. However, Abdi does not give a direct payment. The *passambe* need to wait approximately a week to ten days. Therefore, Madi insisted on not applying the imprest system and demanded the industrial agent provided cash that is ready to use in paying the *passambe*. There was also an offering from Japanese traders by contract system, “[...] the demand was too much, here (Waelawie) we are not ready yet. Because sago is our staple food here and it is different compared to Kalimantan, it is not a staple food there”.

In our discussion, Madi resisted a sago manufacture establishment in his village. It is because sago (*dange* and *kapurung*), he considered as the main staple food in his village. He admired a local practice from Saloppokko hamlet that that is using sago to help others. People are collectively harvesting ten to twenty sago trees to help a friend who needs to provide money for a dowry. Madi wants to maintain the local practices in Waelawie, “For me, the current practices are good. Building a big industry, the sago will run out. Today’s practice is better”. He also argued that the government should be focussing on utilising the fallow lands to cultivate sago instead of building manufacturing units. When he heard from the chief of the village that the government will create a cultivation program and factories, he said, “do not build factories. Now, the manual machinery is enough”. He added:

If I own land, I will keep planting the sago, although there is no order from the government. It is difficult to invoke people who do not want to grow even they have land. In the future, I think sago is a big asset. Sago should not be gone, it should be improved. In the future, if not us to harvest the sago, it might be our descendants. (Madi, December 12th, 2018)

Supplying sago for food factories has been recorded in Malangke Barat since long time ago. It encourages the producer to increase their productivity amidst the decline of sago in the region. An intermediary actor such as Madi plays an important role in the dynamics of the sago food system, particularly in Waelawie hamlet. In my interview, he recognised the existing local culture and system and at the same time faced the dilemma of the manufacturing establishment. He argued it was crucial to keep maintaining and improving the important role of sago as a staple food and as a part of local culture in his village.

Mapping out the diverse economies of sago both in Masamba and Malangke Barat presents the various form of economic engagement, interdependencies and the way people in both regions build a connectivity in sago food system (Table 2). Sago food system in Luwu Utara is dominated by alternative and non-capitalist economies ranging from different kind of transactions such as *tabaro* selling in traditional market, various ways of gift giving, and household flows. We can find many forms of unpaid labour in the sago food system such as crafting the *tumang* or cooking traditional cuisine during the community feast. Independent enterprises are plentiful, helping individual to diversify their income to improve their livelihood.

Table 2. Diverse economies of sago in Luwu Utara

Transaction	Labour	Enterprise
<p>MARKET</p> <p>Product exchanged in the market, sago flour, snack made of sago</p>	<p>WAGE</p> <p>Sago harvesting worker (<i>passambe</i>), government officer</p>	<p>CAPITALIST</p> <p>Sago flour industry, supermarket</p>
<p>ALTERNATIVE MARKET</p> <p><i>Local trading system</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Tabaro</i> sold in traditional market in kiosk - <i>Pabborong</i> (middle man) pick up the <i>tabaro</i> in the harvesting site - <i>Dange</i> trading system. From trader to small vendors <p><i>Informal market</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Machine (shredded, water pump and tarpaulin) rental - Selling the <i>tabaro</i> to <i>dange</i> maker 	<p>ALTERNATIVE PAID</p> <p><i>Self-employed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work in palm oil or cacao plantation, retail gasoline, construction work after sago harvesting <p><i>Reciprocal labour</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cook in wedding party, funeral, or other ceremony among neighbours <p><i>Barter</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Livestock herding paid with calves 	<p>ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST</p> <p><i>Socially responsible</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Dange</i> middleman provides assistant for household who needs capital
<p>NON-MARKET</p> <p><i>Household flows</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vegetable and fruit produced from the garden - Meal share to family and kin - Neighbours sharing fruit and vegetable - Selling fruit and <i>tabaro</i> at home for family - Selling wild chicken <p><i>Gift giving</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Passambe</i> gives the leaves and tree skin to people who need in small amount - <i>Passambe</i> gives piece of sago to friends for livestock feed - <i>Dange</i> for wedding ceremony <p><i>Indigenous exchange</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child care by grandparents <p><i>In-kind</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ceremonial help with food stock <p><i>Food gathering</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gathering food from the river and neglected ponds, or wild mushroom 	<p>UNPAID</p> <p><i>Household</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housework, cooking, cleaning, money management, child care <p>Volunteer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family help to make <i>tumang</i> - Help to cut the tree - Lifting <i>tumang</i> to the main road - Light helps in <i>passambeang</i> from other <i>passambe</i> (i.e cleaning the pool) - Women cook <i>kapurung</i> and other food in gathering <p>Self-provisioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chicken and vegetable from the garden - Vegetables from the garden 	<p>NON-CAPITALIST</p> <p><i>Independent</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small farm (pepper, cacao, or beekeeping) - Well construction - Machine rental to mill the paddy - Gasoline retail for sago reseller - Motorcycle workshop - Making craft and sell to neighbour - Small-scale <i>tabaro</i> producer and <i>dange</i> maker <p>Cooperatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dividing the task with the son and machine owner with and sharing profit 1/3 for them from sago harvesting

Chapter 6:

Food sovereignty: From Jakarta to Luwu Utara

Sago is under pressure. The large-scale cultivation of rice and other cash crops has come to dominate the food system in Luwu Utara. This chapter addresses how food sovereignty policy and program implementation by the state in Indonesia influences sago food system in Luwu Utara. Moreover, the notes from a food sovereignty conference in Jakarta held by civil society during my fieldwork research will be presented to describe the updated role of civil society in challenging the current enactment of the state-centric version of food sovereignty.

6.1. The state of food sovereignty in Indonesia

The notion of food sovereignty spread in 2002 in Indonesia, five years after the 1996 world food security summit in Rome, as a response to the failure of the food security framework in tackling global hunger. Serikat Petani Indonesia (SPI), or La via Campesina Indonesia, together with civil society organisations united to implement the idea of food sovereignty through a national movement. Described in SPI (2019), the people's movement gained a response from the parliament by issuing a Sustainable Agricultural Land Protection act number 41/2009 to avoid land conversion. Moreover, tackling the reliance on food imports (i.e., rice) was one of the prominent issues behind the act, with the being that by protecting the land from conversion to non-food uses, Indonesia could tackle its food dependency issues.

Peasants and small-scale farmers were under pressure, unprotected from the impact of the neoliberal food system, and trapped under the poverty line. The people's movement continued to urge the state to change the food system and protect small scale farmers from the unfair impacts of international food trade. Therefore, the advocacy was done through a legal framework by revising the national food act. The Food Act number 7/1996 was considered to have failed to guarantee the fulfillment of peasant rights in Indonesia. The goal was prioritising the food security and the issues of small-scale farmers were absent in the constitution. Thus, farmers organisations and civil societies including SPI, *Aliansi Petani Indonesia*, *Indonesia Human Rights Committee for Social Justice* (IHCS), *Koalisi Rakyat Untuk Kedaulatan Pangan* (KRKP), *Solidaritas Perempuan* (SP), and *Bina Desa* worked with scholars to prepare an academic draft to renew the act to accommodate the concept of food sovereignty in Indonesia's constitutional document. Since 2012, the new *Food Act number 18/2012* became the legal document underpinning the food and policy program in Indonesia.

In 2014, two years after the ratification, the presidential election was held to choose a new president for the period of 2014 to 2019. There were two candidates with respective strategic plans stated in a vision and mission document. Both strategic development documents explicitly identify food sovereignty as one of the priority agendas. National television channels aired the open debate and food sovereignty became a critical point addressed in the presidential campaign. The new president with Nawacita as the strategic mission was elected. Nawacita comprises nine development priority agendas offered by the elected president. After the election, Nawacita animated the national development program. The agendas were translated into the National Medium-term Development Plan (RPJMN) for 2014-2019 as the third phase of the National Long-term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2005-2025. RPJMN is an imperative policy document used by the central

government and ministries to create integrated development programs from the national level to the district level.

With regards to strengthening food sovereignty in the RPJMN, the state would first, improve food availability in six strategic commodities: rice, corn, soybean, meat, sugar, and salt. Second, the government aims to improve food distribution and accessibility supported by distribution control to prevent food speculation and to improve the national rice stock by strengthening price stability as well as establishing a national logistics system in the fisheries sector. Third, improving the quality of food consumption to achieve the standard of protein intake through increased fish consumption levels. Fourth, providing irrigation facilities by improving 1 million hectares of irrigation network services, rehabilitating 3 million hectares of irrigation network services, operationalising and maintaining 7,3 million hectares of irrigation networks, establishing 115 thousand of the aquaculture water network channel, and building 49 new dams (BAPPENAS, 2014).

The strategic plans became the primary reference for the ministries to implement the food program on the ground at district and village level. The Ministry of Agriculture is the leading institution that enacts the national food strategies of the new government. Based on the RPJMN 2014-2019, the Ministry of Agriculture marshaled the strategic plan document for 2015-2019 by striving “to achieve a sustainable agriculture-bioindustry system that produces various and healthy food and with high added value based on local resources towards food sovereignty and farmer prosperity.” The vision consists of four main points, namely food sovereignty, bioindustry, farmer welfare, and reforming the bureaucracy. To achieve food sovereignty, the main targets of the ministry are to achieve self-sufficiency (swasembada) of rice, corn, soybean and improve the production of sugar and meat through the well known national program UPSUS PAJALE, and improve food diversification based on the improvement of the protein intake score and calories consumed.

6.2. Transnational corporation and UPSUS PAJALE

UPSUS PAJALE, the key food sovereignty program of the government, has set the goal of achieving national self-sufficiency in rice, corn, and soybean. However, this is criticised for its ineffectiveness, the involvement of the military, and for being laden with corporate interests. During the fieldwork, I encountered the implementation of the PAJALE program Tonnes of corn seeds were distributed to 260 farmer groups in two different districts, Malangke Barat and Sabbang, as part of a facilitation program from Ministry of Agriculture subsidised by the government. In Luwu Utara, the distribution management was handled by the Young Farmer Movement (GEMPITA). This is a government ‘agency’ established by the minister of agriculture to strengthen farmer regeneration and to implement agricultural modernisation in Indonesia. Therefore, this organisation is a vehicle of the government to distribute and implement agricultural assistance at the local level, relating to seeds, agricultural machinery, and other agricultural inputs.

During my fieldwork, I encountered the secretary of GEMPITA in Luwu Utara. Besides managing the GEMPITA, he was running for election in the local parliament of Luwu Utara district with representative regions of Malangke and Malangke Barat sub-district. I remember he explained to me the way in which politics is strongly related to agricultural programs in Luwu Utara. When we met, he was clutching a pile of papers in his hands. They were registration forms, and he was working to register hundreds of farmers as members of GEMPITA, and intended to send the forms to the Ministry of Agriculture in Jakarta. A hectare of land plus agricultural input packages, including corn seeds, will be allocated to each registered member.

He explained, “90 tonnes of corn will arrive on 3 December in Luwu Utara, 41 tonnes will be distributed to Malangke Barat”. Through the national food sovereignty program of PAJALE, the hybrid corn will be distributed to several sub-districts through GEMPITA. The hybrid corn variety distributed as part of the packages is NK22. The seed is one of the excellent seeds (benih unggul) registered in the Indonesian Agency of Agricultural Research and Development (Balitbang Pertanian) improved by PT. Novartis (Thailand) and patented by PT. Syngenta Indonesia (BALITSEREAL, 2012). The sub-district of Malangke Barat is known as the city of sago, and with this ambitious and large-scale corn seeds distribution, the government of the sub-district plans to create another name for Malangke Barat: “The city of sago, corn and milk fish.” The aquaculture industry has also expanded rapidly in Malangke Barat. In 2019, Indonesia reached national self-sufficiency in corn. Nevertheless, the corn self-sufficiency program is aimed to serve the needs of feed industry, instead of being for human consumption.

In the regions included where the minister of agriculture has had ‘power,’ GEMPITA is actively consolidated by young actors, including the secretary here, to succeed the national PAJALE program to accelerate crop production, including corn. No wonder, in the allocation of land and seeds for GEMPITA, corn is abundant. When I saw the form, I asked him, “When will the harvested corn be distributed?”. He answered, “It is supplied for Charon Pokhpan and Japfa, and also exported to the Philippines.” (Fieldnotes on 10 October 2018)

The circle of agri-food corporations has become a part of the agricultural assistance in the PAJALE program. This practice contradicts the principle of food sovereignty itself. The involvement of transnational seed corporations in the local agricultural system brings agribusiness practices to the local community, household, and individual level, eroding local knowledge on seed cultivation. Most importantly, the massive assistance and implementation of PAJALE in Luwu Utara puts pressure on the sago food system. Since the demand for corn is high from the transnational feed corporation, it is alluring for the local people to grow this crop, rather than engaging in the highly labour-intensive work of sago harvesting.

6.3. The raising starch for food industry

In November 2018, a group of people consisting of six experts from the research and development department of estate crops from the Ministry of Agriculture met the Bupati to discuss the potential development of sago in Luwu Utara. They discussed certification of high yielding sago varieties. Specifically, these groups from the Ministry of Agriculture’s Palmae Research Centre came to conduct an assessment of seed source in Luwu Utara. The certification here is aimed at protecting and producing an excellent source of sago seeds in order to support the development of sago in the region. The assessment of the seed source is the main issue in sago industrialisation scheme. This could be an orientation towards sago development in Luwu Utara like in other regions in Indonesia such as in Riau and Papua.

Sago is a potentially useful source for the food industry due to its starch content. Hirao et al. (2018) assessed that sago starch has high potential to act as a substitute for corn, potato, or cassava starch in terms of gelatinisation and retrogradation characteristics, as well as amylose content, that has been widely used in cooking and food manufacturing. Sago starch is the main ingredient for glass noodles (soun), meatballs, biscuits, and other street food ingredients in Indonesia, while in other countries such as Japan, China and Korea it is used as an important coating material for noodles, soba, or ramen. According to the Directorate General of Estate Crops (*Direktorat Jendral*

Perkebunan) (2017), sago production in Indonesia has increased by 300 thousand tonnes between 2007 and 2017, with a total area of production is 190,454 hectares in 2017. In 2015, 9,680 tonnes of sago starch were exported to different countries mainly to Japan (3,742 tonnes), Malaysia (3,356 tonnes), and China (207 tonnes).

In Indonesia, the starch flour has been produced mostly in Sumatera and Papua by several big industrial corporations such as PT. National Sago Prima (NSP) in Riau, and both PT. ANJ Agri Papua (ANJAP) and PT. Perhutani operating in West Papua. PT. NSP is a subsidiary of PT. Sampoerna Agro Tbk, one of the leading producers of palm oil in Indonesia that manages more than 120,000 hectares oil palm plantations across the country. PT. NSP is a diversified business of the Sampoerna Group that has acquired 21,620 hectares of land concessions in the district of Meranti in Riau province, and produces sago starch with the brand name Prima Starch. Around fifty percent of the production has been exported to other countries. The brand has been standardised and labeled with two certificates from the Food and Drug Surveillance Agency (BPOM) and the halal certificate from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). However, the operations of the industry have created problems in forest areas. In 2015, the Ministry of Forestry and Environment (KLHK) filed a lawsuit against PT. NSP for the forest fire in 2014 that affected 3,000 hectares of forest land in Meranti district and demanded a Rp1 trillion (USD69 million) fine as compensation for the damages following the emergence of evidence proving that this area fell within the concessions of the company. At the end of 2018, the court won the lawsuit and demanded PT. NSP to pay the fine (Mongabay, 2019).

In Papua, the most significant concession lands for sago plantations belong to PT. Perhutani and PT. ANJAP. PT. Perhutani is a state-owned enterprise that possesses 16,000 concession, the biggest in the country, and with a production target of 100 tonnes of sago per day aimed at meeting both domestic demand from Java as well as cater for foreign markets such as Japan, Korea, Thailand and China (The Jakartapost, 2016). It operates in the hinterland of Kais sub-district of Southern Sorong in West Papua province, and was launched by Indonesia's president on January 2016. It is not claimed as the biggest, but PT. ANJAP in the same area in Southern Sorong district has a license to manage 40,000 hectares of natural sago forest conservation. By 2018, the manufacturer will improve its capacity to produce 2,500 tonnes of sago starch flour per month. PT. ANJAP and PT. Lestari Sagu Papua are subsidiaries of PT. Austindo Nusantara Jaya Tbk. They are owned by the Tahija family-run business conglomerate. This group focuses on palm oil business spread throughout Sumatera, Borneo, and Papua. Besides this, it focuses on power plants (geothermal and coal) and agribusiness (sago, edamame, and consumer products). The large-scale operation of estate crops by the industry raised protest from the locals. In early 2015, students and inhabitants of Metamani sub-district in Southern Sorong marched to the district government office to protest and demanded justice for the neglect of people's rights, the land, and sago forest use as well as unemployment caused by the sago and palm oil plantation operated by PT. ANJAP (Pusaka, 2015).

A journalist who did some explorations on sago development in Papua and Riau stressed the importance of reflecting upon the impact of industrialisation in sago sector. He emphasised that the development of sago should be sensitive to socio-cultural conditions:

Talking about food production, or food security, locally-based food industry is essential. However, if we mention food sovereignty, even the locally-based resource industry is not the answer. Obviously, in Papua, the industry is interested in extracting local unutilised resources, and local people do not do it. The aim is to meet the flour demand, and this is currently export-oriented. Papuan people who convert from the consumption from sago to non-sago have not been affected, even by the presence of industry, because they do not have any orientation towards it (the industry). Locally sourced food industry might be the

answer to food security, for instance, to tackle the imported flour dependency, but it is not the answer for food sovereignty. I was in Meranti, where the food industry extracting the local resource is market-oriented. The problem is not solely industry or not. It is a consumption problem. Furthermore, it requires a cultural approach, socio-cultural, and it is a matter of dietary change. I do not know whether the people in Meranti could be sovereign in food or not when they convert to the industrial system, because they sell sago and earn money to buy rice. (Arif, Interview on 15 November 2018)

In Luwu Utara, sago manufacture takes place in the sub-district Masamba, with a capacity of more than 50 tonnes per month, employing eight locals under a contract (*borongan*) system. The starch flour product is distributed to Sukabumi, West Java for the soun industry and repackaged for sale by small vendors. In Malangke Barat, sago production started to link with the food industry through a local agent. The agent collects sago from passambe and distributes it to PT. Nutrindo Bogarasa, a flour manufacturer operating in the neighboring capital city of South Sulawesi. The manufacturer is a subsidiary of Mayora Group, a consumer goods industry that mainly produces biscuits, wafers, candy, cereal, instant food, and beverages. Lately, the sago starch flour has become a useful substitute for tapioca flour for biscuit industries in South Sulawesi due to the low productivity of cassava. People are inclined to grow other crops such as corn or rice rather than cassava. Therefore, food industries which use starch as ingredients have begun to utilise sago starch. This could create rapid logging of sago trees in Luwu Utara for industrial needs.

6.4. Sago and seed certification regime

The local authorities might encourage the emergence of industrial interests to make Luwu Utara a source of starch as a raw material. Slash and burning activities to convert sago forest to other agricultural plantations such as corn, cacao, or palm oil have been monitored. Therefore, in 2017, local parliament issued a local regulation 11/2017 on Conservation and Management of Sago plantations. The local act aims to conserve sago, improving its productivity for domestic needs and export, creating jobs and increasing local income. The rule encompasses prohibition of converting sago land and building facilities that provide potential harm to sago trees.

The government efforts to conserve sago in Luwu Utara contributes to increasing production and productivity. However, this was the goal before they shifted their concern from conservation to sago certification in Luwu Utara. A representative of the estate crop department described the story behind the shift:

In our department, the goal is directed to production. Conservation programs like we used to implement – before the new regulation on seed certification emerged – involved sago seedlings assistance in some locations, especially in sago endemic areas where sago has existed for a hundred years. This year, initially, we planned to assist the seedlings but were constrained by the regulation of the Ministry of Agriculture (Permentan) stating that seed deployment that should be certified. The only sago seed that has certification in Indonesia is in Meranti. Meranti is far away, across the ocean, and it is inefficient because the transportation cost is higher than the seed price. As a result, in the mid-year regional budget re-arrangement, we replaced the seedling assistance program with a certification program. It means we consider that we (Luwu Utara) have potential [...] the regulations are similar, but in the case of estate crops, the regulation is stricter in comparison to forest commodities (wood). Because it is directly linked to people. With food, for instance, bad quality of seed

will induce a big impact on society. (Estate crop department officer of Luwu Utara, Interview on 17 December 2018)

The regulation mentioned is Permentan number 50/2015 on production, certification, proliferation, and surveillance of estate crop seeds. It aims to ensure the availability of estate crop seed in a sustainable manner. Before, sago was a forestry crop managed under the ministry of forestry. Afterwards, sago became an estate crop controlled under the ministry of agriculture. The local government needed to adjust sago management to the current seeds and introduce another legal draft that regulates sago as an estate crop, including a certification scheme. The government took it not as a hindrance but as a challenge to improve the quality of sago from Luwu Utara and to promote sago as a national priority commodity.

There is a local name in society. Similar to cacao, it was cacao M45. The 45 refers to the whole beans inside. After it was certified nationally, the name became the Masamba variety. Sago could be like that. I want sago because it is endemic in Luwu Utara, it has been here for a hundred years. It is different from cacao which just arrived later yet became an excellent commodity. Sago, why not? We could make cacao – that came from outside the country – to be an excellent clone on the national level. (Estate crop department officer of Luwu Utara, Interview on 17 December 2018)

Following the success of cacao seed development, the Luwu Utara government targets national recognition as a producer of excellent sago seed. Therefore, the idea of establishing a sago source area in Luwu Utara has become prominent. Previously, the invention of a new variety of cacao MCC 02 or M45 brought pride for Luwu Utara as a district. The excellent seed has been certified and is now widely used by cocoa farmers in Indonesia.

It might be a slightly different case between cacao and sago as the main crop is grown in Luwu Utara. However, the plan to promote sago to follow the glory of the cocoa case in Luwu Utara by starting the priority to build a sago seed source through certification could create a significant impact in the sago farming system in the future. In Permentan number 50/2015 on estate crops seed regulation, there are a series of administrative requirements to meet in producing seeds for estate crops, as explained in article 13, including the license, facilities, and expertise in managing the seedling. To get the license, a seed producer should get a permit from different stakeholders at the national level. After the permit process, the national authority will send a team to assess and decide on the permit. In breeding the seed, the act requires that the seed should be certified and labeled. The certification process involves an assessment team from national and province level, and seed producers must pay a fee for this process.

Watnemm (2016) described that seed laws in the Global South emerge due to transnational enforcement from agribusiness companies and bilateral agreements, and the WTO and particularly the TRIPS that reinforce the national intellectual property regime. Seed standardisation in Indonesia has become an important process in agricultural modernisation since the onset of the Green Revolution. The argumentation on the importance of certification, as expressed by the estate crop department, is that sago is aimed at consumption, and therefore the seed should be qualified. Through the certification, standardised and qualified seed can be produced. This logic has been used by the authorities to legitimate the certification, as stressed by Watnemm (2016:11), “unregulated seeds are presented as ‘*dangérous*,’ potentially contaminated by some disease, or as a threat to national agricultural health and even food security.”

During the fieldwork, the sago harvesters recognise best seedlings that are good to plant and relocate. Some of them are still practicing the breeding of seedlings on their land or along the riverbank. The practices seen in this research that characterize the informal seed system is not recognised by the state or local authorities. The certification scheme has created tension between compliance with state regulation and the local government seed assistance initiative mentioned earlier. Although the local government ended up adjusting their program with the national regulation, food sovereignty is then called into question in terms of how sago has been managed both at local and national level.

6.5. Beyond food security: redefining farmer's right to food

Today's implementation of food sovereignty in Indonesia is seen as a major misunderstanding of the concept by the state. As one of the promoters of food sovereignty implementation, KRKP held a conference themed "Beyond food security: redefining farmers' right to food" in Jakarta. The conference is a response to the failure of the state to implement food sovereignty in Indonesia through a series of productionist policies and programs, despite the constitution adopting the term.

On the one hand, it is a triumph when food sovereignty has been accepted by the state, government, through the constitution. On the other hand, we have failed, because we fail to transform the collective understanding of the society and other stakeholders so that there are different perceptions. When there are differences in the definition, thus the contextualisation of the food sovereignty concept will not be compatible, and it is happening today. (Said Abdullah – KRKP Coordinator, Interview on 15 November 2018)

The event aimed to consolidate members around the strategic plan of furthering food sovereignty implementation. The forum was attended by local NGOs, farmer organisation, research institutes, and national government, and local government representatives. It began with a seminar with panels on the current state of food policy in Indonesia and continued with Focussed Group Discussions (FGD) involving the invited participants. The panel presented examples of local initiatives implementing food sovereignty in Indonesia. The Bupati of Luwu Utara was invited as one of the speakers in this panel to present lessons learned from her region, together with other representatives from the districts of Bantul (Yogyakarta province) and East Flores (Nusa Tenggara Timur province). They described their experience in building sustainable agricultural enterprises that empower farmers to cooperate to provide their agricultural inputs without dependence on government assistance. The case in Bantul is local soybean farming through cooperatives, while the case in Flores Timur involves village-owned enterprises managed by farmer cooperatives and distribution of organic fertiliser.

The leader of Luwu Utara district brought up the case of good governance in food sovereignty. She opened her session with a proverb from the Buginese ancient manuscript "*Narekko malupuko, mattamako ri tengngana Baebunta*²⁰" (If you are hungry, go into the middle of Baebunta). The proverb is a parable that means Luwu Utara is a place of abundant food, "No one should be hungry. In Luwu, there is no more food problem", she added. She described some examples of how the local government involves different actors such as civil society and journalists in food development in Luwu Utara, especially on the issue of the right-to-food. For example, in the case of fertiliser subsidies, the government of Luwu Utara work with civil society and journalists to make sure that the agricultural inputs are equally distributed and effective. For instance, fertiliser is a prominent

²⁰ Baebunta is a name of sub-district in Luwu Utara

material for farmers in Luwu Utara, especially in the rice sector. Through inclusive implementation and monitoring, access to agricultural inputs can be improved, and the right to food can be fulfilled. Hence, she emphasised that food governance should be improved and the key actor to implement it is the local government, “the Bupati is the one who could ensure the food sovereignty could be achieved”²¹. This actor has the power to coordinate the actors on the ground level and directly control the implementation of the food program in the region.



Figure 14. The Bupati of Luwu Utara delivered her presentation in Food Sovereignty Conference in Jakarta (doc. KRKP)

Sago has been promoted as an influential staple food in Luwu Utara, and the government policy must protect it. However, massive land conversion and slash and burn of sago plants has threatened the sustainability of these crops. In her speech she expressed her perspectives on the current food programs:

Sago is both a food commodity and a symbol of protection. However, its potential is lower than other food crops. This should not be lost because it is a part of local wisdom. I told the assessor team of the seed breeding program, “If sago disappeared in Luwu Utara, no more sago tree, visibly Luwu Utara still exist. However, it does not exist anymore substantively”. The challenge is how to make sago farmers proud to grow the sago tree. The problem is massive land conversion. I do not want to criticise the national government program on expanding the rice fields establishment, but it is a fact. The focus is extensification. [...] We are talking about neither the scale nor the productivity now, but how farmers can flourish, and become prosperous through their own choice to be a farmer. Because the essence of development is humanising the human. [...] I apologise, to date seed has become a special problem. The seed from the central government, excuse me, might be suitable in other places but not in our place. That is the reason that, starting this year, we asked, I directly met the minister (of agriculture), “do not assist us with the seed that is not suitable for our

²¹ Speech of the *Bupati* of Luwu Utara in the second session in Food Sovereignty conference in 6 November 2018, Jakarta

local conditions, our local needs.” (Bupati of Luwu Utara, Speech in Food Sovereignty conference on 6 November 2018)

The statement by the Bupati expressed how sago plays important role in protecting people in Luwu Utara from the threat of hunger. Moreover, it represents the symbol of the region because many people’s livelihoods in Luwu Utara are dependent on sago sago trees, especially for staple food. neffective state programs with unsuitable input assistance induces farmers to switch to other agricultural sectors by converting their lands to paddy fields, cacao, or palm oil.

A significant session in the conference was how the participants envisioned furthering the strategy to achieve food sovereignty, which was addressed through the focussed group discussion on the first evening of the conference. As mentioned, this meeting was the most highly attended by KRKP members and networks since the first one when the organisation was established in 2003. Historical actors involved in food sovereignty advocacy re-convened in this meeting. Opening the session, the former national coordinator of KRKP (2003-2016) delivered a presentation entitled with a question “Food sovereignty: from *lumbung*²² to landscape-based farmer corporation?”. In his introductory slides, the initial KRKP movement was re-traced. It was a community food stock (Lumbung pangan komunitas) development program in several villages where members of KRKP took place. From various experiences in community food development, farmer movements, and advocacy, KRKP was involved in promoting food sovereignty in the constitutional framework through the draft concept of the national food act.

KRKP stands on the argument that the food security framing fails to address the food problem in society. It has failed to improve prosperity for small-scale farmers. They are still trapped in cycles of poverty due to the neoliberal food system. Thus, food sovereignty is the answer. The former coordinator termed food security the “mathematical paradigm” that refers to the calculation of how to feed the people, without considering the ecological consequences and the livelihoods of the producers. He later addressed the critique of food sovereignty since it was introduced in the early 2000s and implemented as a predicated concept in the state constitution. In his presentation, he criticised food sovereignty in terms of the vague definition of its geographical autonomy (who has sovereignty) and the actual mechanism of its regulation. The statement is similar to the critique of food sovereignty theory addressed by Edelman (2014):

“Food sovereignty theory has usually failed to indicate whether the ‘sovereign’ is the nation, region or locality, or ‘the people.’ This lack of specificity about the sovereign feeds a reluctance to think concretely about the regulatory mechanisms necessary to consolidate and enforce food sovereignty, particularly limitations on long-distance and international trade and firm and farm size.” Edelman (2014:959)

Edelman’s critical argument had inspired him to propose the concept of the farmer corporation to further the food sovereignty movement in Indonesia. There are two main points in this concept, the landscape-based agriculture and farmer-based corporation, as he presented:

Is the possible transformation of our food system from community food stock to landscape-based farmer corporation? It is not only mechanisation and subsidies that have been poorly managed. If you want to fight in the market, I imagine, there is no other way except creating the corporation. Either the corporation of Yais (from Bantul) through Credit Union finance system, or corporation of Don Boruk (from Flores Timur) through its village-owned enterprises, or corporation in Paninggaran village through tea production. If we are not

²² *Lumbung* refers to community foodstock

doing it, we could fail again. Think about how our rice production cost is more expensive than other (countries). The President said, “If you are united in PT (Perseroan Terbatas) and manage a thousand, two thousand hectares, for sure it would be efficient. There a unit to produce the seed, saving and loan, processing industry and to be able to enter the market”. This is the President's dream, and I think this is plausible and could be contextualised with your conditions on the ground. (Witoto – former KRKP coordinator, presentation in Food Sovereignty Conference on 6 November 2018)

The presentation was a trigger for the forum to think about the implementation of food sovereignty under the pressure of transnational agri-food with massive production of hybrid seeds and pesticides, and the hegemony of food retailers with highly processed cheap foods. After the introductory presentation, a facilitator took over the forum and challenged the participants with questions about problems and the situation on the ground, and the strategies to achieve food sovereignty. The participants were asked to provide a comment on tackling the issues that could obstruct peasant rights.

The topic of the comments from participants was broad, they bring out their specific problems from their respective regions. From the meeting, KRKP secretariat summarised the result and find that partnership and farmer regeneration are the main issues were discussed. In the discussion, it was emphasised that the consolidation of members to strengthen the partnership is important to improve the agricultural collectivism among the members in the region.

Promoting corporate farming through village-owned enterprises (BUMDes). For example, in Sidoraya, farmer lands are consolidated by BUMDes, and the workers are the *penggarap*, managed in managerial ways. Today, BUMDes has connected to the market in Jakarta. Capital accumulation using village budgets, where the shares are held by rural citizens, and the management involves the locals. This concept could achieve and strengthen the rural economy, protecting local seed, and creating employment in rural areas. (Wening, farmer representative from Central Java Province, on 6 November 2018)

This statement agreed with the corporate farming concept brought up by the former coordinator of KRKP because the existing policy and local enterprises in the village could support the implementation of the concept. Moreover, in Central Java, the major employment in rural areas is rice farming. Therefore, the region especially where rice farming system is a culture and people mostly work on it as a livelihood strategy could accept the idea.

The conference was ended with notes that every participant should take home and reflect upon. For KRKP, the panels and FGDs results will form the material to arrange the organisation's strategic plan for the next four years. What can we learn from the food sovereignty conference held by KRKP and how does it contribute to further strategies in achieving the goal? I argue that the dynamics of issues within this conference are in line with the theme of the farmer's right to food.

The bulk of what people discussed since the conference was started revolved around how to improve farmer income, protection and livelihoods. However, I noted some issues related to the critical analysis of food sovereignty that failed to be discussed during the conference. For example, the consumer, nutrition, and local staple food (e.g. sago) systems. The focus of the advocacy strategies actively addressed rice as an imperative commodity. This is because KRKP members mainly consist of those involved in the rice farming sector and are located in areas where rice is the staple food and major source of employment. Moreover, the domain work of KRKP is focusing on national advocacy and monitoring food situation and policy in Indonesia. Since the 1960s the

dominant rice policy of central government has been an important focus for civil society to monitor. It has affected the advocacy pattern of KRKP. The conference have provided a picture of the dynamics involved in enacting food sovereignty amongst non-state actors. This could not be generalised as representing the whole picture of the food sovereignty movement in Indonesia. As mentioned earlier, KRKP is not the only civil society organisation that is actively promoting food sovereignty in Indonesia.

Chapter 7:

Cultivating food sovereignty

Different cases have been presented in the earlier chapters. This study has sought to provide different views to immerse the reader in the complexity of the social, historical, cultural, and political landscape of the food system in Luwu Utara. As a result, change cannot be seen in a single factor but as a multi-dimensional process. In this chapter, I will try to connect the lines of divergent chapters based on the theoretical debates on food sovereignty that have been articulated among scholars.

7.1. Contested discourse between food sovereignty and food security

The first issue that needs to be discussed in connecting the lines is a reflection on how food sovereignty is implemented in Indonesia from the national level to the local level. It can be viewed that food sovereignty remains a rhetoric, as mentioned in earlier chapter of this thesis. Although food sovereignty has been incorporated in the national constitution as stated in *Food Act number 18/2012* and animated the national development plan (RPJMN), the implementations described in the findings are often contradictory to the value of food sovereignty. In this case, the state facilitates the farmers to improve food production (corn) through a subsidiary system using hybrid seed produced by transnational seed companies. This is aimed at supplying the demand of livestock feed companies monopolized by transnationals, in order to produce enough to achieve national self-sufficiency in meat. Corn and meat, as explained in the previous chapter, are commodities that are targeted for improvement, coordinated under UPSUS PAJALE, the food sovereignty program articulated by the state.

Intellectual property regime issues in seed certification emerge in this study, as a part of the implementation of the food security paradigm. To date, seed certification has become the key prerequisite in local commodity development in Indonesia. In the case of sago in Luwu Utara the breeding of sago seedlings stimulated by the local government was constrained by the central government regulation because the seedlings had not been certified. This shows that the path dependence of seed regulation as a legacy of the green revolution in Indonesia has a strong influence on local food system regulation initiatives. The case of Luwu Utara shows that the food policy is contradictory to the understanding of the food sovereignty movement that takes a stand against “Imperialism, neoliberalism, neo-colonialism and patriarchy, and all systems that impoverish life, resources and ecosystems, and the agents that promote the above such as international financial institutions, the World Trade Organization, free trade agreements, transnational corporations, and governments that are antagonistic to their peoples”, as stated in the Nyéléni Declaration on Food Sovereignty (Patel, 2009:675).

The productionist paradigm that animates the current food policy is still dominant, especially in the Food Act number 18/2012. In this act, food sovereignty, food self-sufficiency, and food security are placed alongside each other. However, the application of this prioritises self-sufficiency and food security while the notion of food sovereignty is not fully accommodated. Reflecting on the formulation process of the act, different actors including the parliament, the government, experts,

and civil society representatives were pursuing different interests. As the national coordinator of KRKP stated:

[...] and 2011 to 2012 we were not only preparing the academic draft but also making the draft motion of the act although it was not more than thirty percent accommodated into the food act. Why was it not fully accommodated? Because there was a serious problem, namely the different understanding of the concept by all stakeholders, there was parliament, government, the food security council, and others that had different perceptions. When (the ideas) were contested in the context of the Act, a long debate happened. In the end, because of the limited common understanding, (the act) used the 'old' paradigm, the food security paradigm, just adding the term food sovereignty. This happens in the new *Food Act number 18/2012*. If we check it today, almost all the articles, frankly, are the articles in the *Food Act number 7/1996*, meaning that nothing has changed with the newest food act. (Said Abdullah, interview on 15 November 2018)

The contested paradigms in the national Food Act number 18/2012 has been analysed by Indonesian scholars. Syahyuti et al (2015) assess the implementation of food sovereignty and argue that this concept can be integrated to the concept of food security without viewing them as rival concept. This argumentation is in line with Jarozs (2015) who draws on the interrelatedness between food security and food sovereignty from the The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development (IAASTD) report in 2009 and several examples from different regions. She argues that both discourses are not solely oppositional, but also interrelated, it is dynamics changing across scale on different food system. For instance, although food sovereignty represents an anti globalization movement and food security is related to the global market, at the local scale both discourses are complemented (Jarozs, 2015). However, I argue that we need to understand the history of the food security discourse that has been hegemonizing the global food system and has generated the established institutional system that complies with the market and creates exclusion in the local level. For example, it is challenging to restructure the system such as the seed certification which is inseparable from the national food development. This will always create tensions between the state actors as the authoritative institution and local groups which have a marginal position in the state food policy scheme. Therefore, the state-centric food sovereignty is something that needs to be revisited. Food sovereignty movements are seeking to radically change the productionist discourse in the food system, that accommodate the works of heterogeneous food systems and interests of marginalised groups at different scales.

7.2. Cultivating food sovereignty: from State-centric to multi-scalar sovereignty

[...] We are talking about neither the scale nor the productivity now, but how farmers can flourish, and become prosperous through their own choice to be a farmer. Because the essence of development is humanising the human. [...] I apologise, to date seed has become a special problem. The seed from the central government, excuse me, might be suitable in other places but not in our place. That is the reason that, starting this year, we asked, I directly met the minister (of agriculture), "do not assist us with the seed that is not suitable for our local conditions, our local needs." (*Bupati* of Luwu Utara, Speech in Food Sovereignty conference on 6 November 2018)

The statement above was expressed by the *Bupati* of Luwu Utara in front of many participants from different regions, organisations as well as national representatives in presenting the experience of Luwu Utara in implementing food sovereignty. She plans to resist the seed assistance from the state, which she considers unsuitable for Luwu Utara. She prefers using the local varieties from Luwu Utara to distribute to the farmers. Here the *Bupati* as a leader tried to define food system in her territory by challenging the state subsidiary program, which could be argued as a form of defining sovereignty. In this regard, some scholars in food sovereignty raise the issue of different sovereignties at different scales. Iles and Montenegro de Wit, (2015:483) argue, “the concept of multiple sovereignties sees the growth of many actors, communities, and institutions wielding or seeking sovereign power over things such as seeds, knowledge, and farming practices; parts of food systems; and their cultural and territorial worlds.”

In the sago food system in Luwu Utara, multiple sovereignties as well as competing sovereignty can be viewed from different layers by analysing the issue of food and identity around the sago food system. The historical process of engagement between *to Luwu* and Buginese encompasses negotiation of identity through food production practices. For example, the *passambe* who chooses to maintain his sago harvesting work rather than shifting to cash crop agriculture, or the separating of sago and rice during eating practices. However, both ethnicities are related and assimilate their culture. This reflects the process of indigenizing food through process of culinary encounter. Massive irrigation developments for rice production, exacerbated by the clearing of sago trees, might threaten the sovereignty of *to Luwu* who live their life based on their sago staple.

Applying the diverse economy framework is useful to understand how alternative economies could maintain subsistence lifestyles of people in Luwu Utara, especially those who are involved in the sago food system. Diverse economies of sago in Luwu Utara are dominated by non-capitalist enterprises, unpaid labour, and non-market transaction. Practices such as negotiating land use for harvesting *tabaro* in Masamba without rent payment do exist, and the land user gives some of the harvested *tabaro* to the land owner. In harvesting the sago tree, the *passambe* share the tree skin, sago leaves for roofing, or pieces of sago trunk for livestock feed with those in the surrounding neighbourhood. The *tabaro* is sold to middle men with negotiable prices, then sold on to resellers in traditional markets. In the traditional market, the competition between is obscure, rather they share the sheds to store their *tabaro*. Sago enterprise owners help their workers by providing loans without interest, or some sago flour enterprises are aimed at creating jobs for family in the village. In the household, numerous diverse economies take place in the sago food system in Luwu Utara, such as backyard gardening, to provide vegetables and bee keeping, crafting the sago leaves for rooftops, selling fruits at home, providing meal for family, or giving sago-based cuisine for feasts.

Mapping the diverse economies of sago can unravel the various forms of economies that have been hidden by the hegemonic order of capitalocentrism in our food system. It is in line with food sovereignty that seeks to de-commodify food and transform our capitalistic food system. As Trauger (2014:1149) stressed, “Food sovereignty is as much about changing systems of production as it is about something more fundamental and perhaps more ontologically threatening to capitalist modernity: the transformation of meaning, primarily around the meaning of capital, exchange and decision-making authority”.

People who work in the sago food system in Luwu Utara are different than the other farm workers, especially the cash crop farmer. They are not recognised as farmers. However, they remain active,

defining their own food system, building networks with other *passambe*, traders, and consumers without any kind of state intervention such as subsidies or agricultural assistance. They are still actively navigating their food system through relations between actors and negotiating their sovereignty in the form of deciding prices and maintain their subsistence in their everyday life. I agree with what Figueroa argues:

“These everyday social forms of subsistence, especially as they relate to food, could be a fertile ground for building the kinds of self-determined food systems that food sovereignty seeks to champion. In the spaces where people resist, or are discarded by, the march of capitalist development, the diverse social networks, practices, and resources they have always marshaled for daily subsistence become salient building blocks for new social configurations of collective survival that—if recognized, cultivated, and defended by conscious political action—can potentially emerge as practically viable, culturally meaningful, and self-determined pathways to food sovereignty as a means of transcending life under capitalism (Figueroa, 2015:506)”

Moving from state-centric to multi-scalar sovereignty requires an analysis of scale. Regarding this issue, Iles and Montenegro (2013) present a notion of thinking of food sovereignty as relational to scale, applying a relational approach in providing practical strategies in achieving effective food sovereignty based on the case of a potato park, Peru. According to Iles and Montenegro (2013:14), “Relational scale is defined as the spatial and temporal relations among processes at different levels, as well as the processes connecting elements within levels”. Iles and Montenegro (2013) proposed two strategies in applying relational sovereignty, namely creating the base of food sovereignty and building recognition of sovereignty. Creating a basis of food sovereignty here is creating an interdependent human – natural systems in particular socio-geographic conditions. Building recognition from the important institutions and decision makers are critical in supporting the food sovereignty movement. Therefore, drawing on this notion and reflecting on the complex socio-ecological and economic diversity in sago food system in Luwu Utara, enacting multi-scalar sovereignty could be possible.

In cultivating food sovereignty in Luwu Utara, applying multi-scalar sovereignty does not negate the role of the state. Shifting focus to more effective sovereignty is necessary. The sago food system in Luwu Utara encompasses meaning, values, and more importantly interdependent relations between the people and their environment. Sago has been persistently produced in this region because of the connectivity between actors at different scales. Building the basis of food sovereignty in Luwu Utara is possible, presented through the mapping of economic diversity and the relations between people and sago. Moreover, recognition of the traditional sago food system in Luwu Utara remain invisible. Influential institutional actors and policy makers, especially from the state, are still unaware. However, local authorities have paid serious attention to recognising the sago food system in Luwu Utara. Cultivating food sovereignty thus needs to strengthen the basis of the sago food system and build alliances with civil society and the government, particularly at the local level.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to understand the local food system and how it contributes to food sovereignty in Indonesia. The case is sago, a prominent staple food in Luwu Utara. It has “followed” the material from the production to its consumption in Luwu Utara, as a method to understand the role and meaning of this food. Following the sago – from the harvesting to consumption – has allowed this research to unravel the socio-cultural and political narratives behind this subsistence staple, particularly in relation to the current national food policies and programs in Indonesia.

There is a complex historical process that lies behind Luwu Utara and sago as the staple food of *To Luwu* (people of Luwu). Drawing on the anthropologist-archaeologist nuance on Bugis and Luwu studies in South Sulawesi, this thesis points out that there has been a blurring process of *To Luwu* identity through political and cultural influences for centuries, along with the marginalisation of sago as a prominent staple in favour of rice and cash crop cultivation. The marginalisation of *To Luwu* and their food system in Luwu Utara cannot be viewed as a static condition. For centuries, sago tree, *tabaro*, and its derivative products have had different socio-cultural functions in society. The important position of sago in Luwu Utara society is reflected in how this food is produced and consumed. The people have also engaged with migrants who have brought with them different ways of food production and consumption. Preparation and eating of the sago-based cuisine by *To Luwu*, in this case, *kapurung* and *dangé*, mirrors how identity is performed and negotiated.

Understanding the cultural practices of sago under the globalised capitalism discourse needs to be further explored. Therefore, this study makes use of the concept of diverse economies to map the diverse forms of economy in the sago food system in Luwu Utara, that has been hidden by the deterministic idea of capitalism. This language enables us to view the fact that the ethical-based relationship between *To Luwu* and their environment, and the way in which social relationships are maintained, lies in the production and consumption of sago. Diverse economies of sago are dominated by non-capitalist and other informal economies. This makes visible the practices of self-provisioning, sharing, and interdependencies between people in the sago food system in Luwu Utara that have been neglected in the dominant economic discourse. The diverse forms of the sago economy is predicated with the ethical values of *To Luwu*. It represents the self-determination process in the food system. It represents a form of radical sovereignty enacted in everyday life.

The state has put forward food sovereignty to animate their food policy and programs, yet the implementation is the laden with the productionist paradigm, engaging with transnational seed corporations and rice-biased programs which food sovereignty movements stand against. This suggests that food sovereignty in Indonesia remains merely a rhetoric. The civil society actors agree upon the deterioration of the food sovereignty definition by the state and its associated actors. However, the advocacy patterns of civil society has been rice-biased due to the characteristics of members and other factors, and it is one of the reasons why food sovereignty has not been progressively enacted in creating a more just food system. Both the state and the civil society have set aside local identity and local food systems in the framework of food sovereignty, including that of sago. More importantly, the understanding of food sovereignty is different both between the state and non-state actors. This condition has brought many scholars in food sovereignty to question its implementation. As in Indonesia, it is still rhetoric, since food sovereignty is exercised as a state

authority and neglects the sovereignty of others in its enactment. Therefore, rethinking food sovereignty from a state-centric notion towards multi-scalar sovereignty is necessary.

Scholars have placed attention on understanding food sovereignty in different ways, particularly in defining the 'sovereign', scale and place, articulating how sovereignty is performed at multiple conjunctures (Shattuck et al., 2015; Iles and Montenegro, 2015) and centered in the people (Figueroa, 2015). Employing the relational approach in the application of the multi-scalar sovereignty presented by Iles and Montenegro (2015) in Peruvian society could be taken as an example in enacting multi-scalar sovereignty in Luwu Utara. By mapping the diverse economies of sago and the socio-cultural and historical context of the sago food system in Luwu Utara, creating the basis of food sovereignty is possible. However, building a recognition from influential decision makers needs greater attention. Understanding the complexities that lie in the local food system in Luwu Utara is a crucial starting point towards achieving better food sovereignty in Indonesia.

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