Spirits of Marapu Underpinning Livelihoods in Sumba

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Outline

A. Rationale, Research Question and Research methodology
B. General information of research area
C. History and Marapu Beliefs
D. Survival strategies
A. Rationale, Research Question and Research methodology
A.1. Rationale

- How do Wunga people survive in an area of limited natural resources and what does this mean for future community development.
  - Three primary characteristics of their lifestyle:
    (a) Rugged areas (at the top of hills/summits) which are far from water sources and farming areas.
    (b) Survival through dry-land agriculture
    (c) Religious-based community lifestyle (Marapu beliefs).
  - Interconnection between their agriculture activities and the Marapu beliefs - Studies in this aspect are limited.
A.2. Research Question

- What problems are faced by the Wunga community as a community existing in a dry-land area?
- Why does the Wunga community choose to live in a dry and difficult area?
- What are the survival strategies of the Wunga community in the dry and difficult area?
- What does the future hold for the Wunga community who exist in a dry and difficult area within the context of development?
A.3. Research methodology

Qualitative Research

Study Area:  
Wunga Village, Sumba Island, Eastern Indonesia

Method of data collection:  
>> In-depth Interview  
>> Observation  
>> Focus Group Discussion  
>> Documentation Study
B. General information of research area
Field Study
Total area is 76.4 km². More than half of this area (69.24%) or 52.9 km² is savannah. While 25% (19.7 km²) is forest, and the remaining area 4.9% (3.8 km²) is used for farming and settlements. Total population 701 with 173 households ± 9 people/km².
Distribution of kampong: Paraingu (main kampong) and Uma Woka (farming house)

1 big kampong and 18 small kampong.
Farming Area
Soil with Stones
Soil with Stones
Fence form stones
Spring in Horak
Spring in Lendi
Spring in Lendi
Decline to Spring in Lendi
Rainwater Tank
Way Kulup for People
Way Kulup for animals
Rainwater well
Economic Condition

- Almost all households (173 households) are below the poverty line.
- Foodstocks are sufficient if harvests are successful, however they experience food shortages if harvests/crops fail.
- Buying/selling activities are conducted once a week outside of the village (10 km) and incur high costs.
- The market economy system often disadvantages the local community - middle-traders can inflate by up to 100%.
Education and Health

1 Primary School, 6 class, 2 teacher and 4 assistants

Infrastructure exists, such as buildings i.e. community health centres and midwife houses, but there is no health staff. The community are treated by Indigenous health practitioner (medicine man/woman).
# Agriculture Activity

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Agriculture Activity</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Persiapan/Preparation</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>Clearing, fencing, building fire-beak, burning</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Penanaman/Planting</td>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>Maize, Manihot, Ground Nut and Sorgum</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Pemeliharaan/Cultivation</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>First weeding</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
<td>Second weeding</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Panen/Harvest</td>
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<td>4.2</td>
<td>Maize (Jagung)</td>
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<td>Ground Nut (Kacang Tanah)</td>
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<td>Sorgum (Jagung Rote)</td>
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<td>Manihot (Ubi Kayu)</td>
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<td>5.2</td>
<td>Ground Nut</td>
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<td>5.3</td>
<td>Manihot</td>
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<tr>
<td>NO.</td>
<td>Kinds of food</td>
<td>Month</td>
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<td>3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 1 2</td>
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<td><strong>Harvest: Successful</strong></td>
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<td>Maize</td>
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<td>From their own farming</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Variation</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Buying form local market</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Manihot</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>From their own farming</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Iwi (wild yams)</em></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>From forest</td>
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<td><strong>Harvest: Shortages</strong></td>
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<td>From their own farming</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Buying/Subsidize from Government-NGO</td>
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<td>Manihot</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>From their own farming</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Iwi (wild yams)</em></td>
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<td>From forest</td>
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<td><strong>Harvest: Fail</strong></td>
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<td>Maize</td>
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<td><em>Mandara (barter)</em></td>
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<td>Rice</td>
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<td>Manihot</td>
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<td>Buying/Government-NGO</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Iwi (wild yams)</em></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>From forest</td>
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C. History and Marapu Beliefs
Sumbanese people believe that their ancestors come from the Malacca Peninsula and land for the first time in Wunga village. In the first meeting of the ancestors, the Wunga clan decided to live in and protect the area. The other clans spread to other areas of the island.

All aspects of community life in Wunga village are influenced by Marapu belief systems. The Marapu is a supernatural power. The word ‘Marapu’ can mean ‘pure’, ‘noble’ or ‘divine power’. Because of this people must pay respect to Marapu. (C. Nooteboom in Wellem, 2004)
C. History and Marapu Beliefs

- Every clan has their own Marapu ancestor. Marapu is present in community life through mediums such as gold, silver, chinaware, various Marapu tools or *katoda* (in the form of rocks or trees).
- Permission must be sought from Marapu for use of natural resources.
- Every activity involving the utilisation of nature must be preceded by offerings/prayers (*hamayang*) to Marapu.
- The *hamayang* is led by the religious leader called *wunang*.
- Marapu’s response will then be interpreted by the religious leader.
- Responses from Marapu must be followed. If not followed, problems will result.
Katoda Wendi

Katodo in the front of house
Process of praying (Hamayangu)
Interpreted by the religious leader
D. Survival strategies
Local Organization

God

Marapu

Worldly life

Clan Leader (Tokoh kabihu/Maramba)

Ritual life

Religious Leader (Wunang)

Member of clan and public
D. Survival strategies

Religious life: Relation with Marapu

(a) Ritual basis of agricultural practice

(b) Communal life and relational economy

(c) Organisation for sustainable use of natural resources

Marupu is the owner of the environment: respectful and orderly use in harmony with resources.

Relationship with natural environment

Relation with others

As family: Cohesive, Trust, reciprocity, harmony.

Dry land farming based on communal and religious practice
(a) Ritual basis of agricultural practice
(b) Communal life and relational economy

- Extended Family’s food stockpile
- Kampong’s organisation of agricultural practice
- Village’s responsibility for food security
- Surrounding Villages available for bartering

Surrounding Villages

Village

Kampong (Usually same clan)

Extended Family

Nuclear Family

Individual
C. Organisation for sustainable use of natural resources

Natural Resources owned by Marapu

Understanding of limitation and responsibility for natural resources

Sustainable and orderly use and Reciprocity

Sustainability of resources guaranteed

Social justice and equal access

The lives of ordinary people continue with limited resources
In the Future?

- Wunga villages survive because of their Marapu values - these include equity of access and sustainable use.
- Future development programs will need to respect the Marapu belief system.
- If not, the development programs will probably fail.