



## Local wisdom of *To Cerekang* customary law community in preservation of natural resources

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### ABSTRACT

One of the exciting and unique things about *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community is local wisdom in preserving natural resources. This research aims to analyze the form of local wisdom of *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community in preserving natural resources. The type of this research used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Determination of informants is done by the purposive sampling technique. The results of the study indicated that the knowledge system of *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community includes knowledge of the forest; division of territory according to adat, collective ownership of the forest; forest ecology; protection of biodiversity; and knowledge of rivers. *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community in preserving natural resources cannot be separated from the teachings of *Batara Guru*. The belief reinforces the conservation of natural resources in places that are considered sacred and customary rules that contain prohibitions, including the ban on entering the forest without Pua's permission, cutting down trees, polluting rivers, and killing crocodiles. Thus, the life of *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community has high respect for nature which is an inseparable part of their lives. Their respect for nature is interpreted as one of the tasks in life that comes from awareness and concern for preserving natural resources for the life of all creatures.

## 1. Introduction

The study of local wisdom of indigenous peoples in the preservation of natural resources is an important and interesting topic in connection with the issue of environmental damage in Indonesia. In line with the increasingly threatened environmental conditions, the existence of indigenous peoples in Indonesia has an important role because local wisdom is included in protecting the damage to the natural environment (Kassa, 2011). As the opinion of Edmun Woga (in Kaspullah and Suriadi, 2020: 4) states that, local wisdom is oriented to the balance and harmony of humans, nature, and culture;

sustainability and diversity of nature and culture; conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage; saving resources of economic value; morality and spirituality.

In connection with the issue of environmental damage, issues regarding the role of indigenous peoples in environmental conservation have also developed. According to Sardi Rasak (2013) about 5,000,000 hectares of forest in Indonesia are still well maintained, in fact, there are people who with their local wisdom are able to maintain a balance between need-based use and conservation. So it is not surprising that recently a lot of research has been carried out to examine the lives of indigenous peoples with various study focuses and different results.

Research conducted by Syarif (2017) for example, about the Karampuang indigenous people that manage the environment based on local wisdom in the form of knowledge, myths and ancestral messages containing prohibitions, invitations, and sanctions in environmental management. Local wisdom is important to be preserved with the aim of maintaining balance and sustainability environment.

Research conducted by Hijang, et al. (2019), about the environmental preservation system of the Kajang indigenous people shows that there are conservative and mystical social phenomena within the *Ammatoa* communities in the *Pasang ri Kajang*-based environmental conservation system. The *Ammatoa* people believe that *Pasang* is something that must be obeyed and implemented if it cannot result in the emergence of undesirable things, such as damage to the balance of the social and ecological system.

Research conducted by Prameswari, et al. (2019) there are 4 forms of local wisdom of the Gunam Village community in preserving the Teringkang Forest, namely prohibitions, beliefs, rituals and maintaining speech. Prohibition of cutting trees, prohibition of opening Teringkang Forest for cultivation, prohibition of burning goods such as shrimp paste and fish in Teringkang Forest, prohibition of taking and killing animals in Teringkang Forest, prohibition of defecating Small and large in the Teringkang Forest, the existence of this local wisdom causes the preservation of the Teringkang Forest. According to Azwir et al., (2017) Direct community involvement by linking the role of the community customs have good educational value in the prevailing culture and law legally. In this case it is necessary cultural, religious approach enable community involvement local in all activities.

Research conducted by Awaliah, et al (2020) about forest conservation efforts carried out in the Karampuang indigenous community using the local wisdom of *Paseng ri ade'*. *Paseng ri ade'* is a source of informal regulations for the Karampuang indigenous people in managing and utilizing forests based on their traditional knowledge such as limiting rights, how to take forest products and maintaining attitudes according to norms.

The research above is just a few of the many types of research that tries to examine the local wisdom of indigenous peoples in relation to environmental protection and management in Indonesia. The concept of preserving natural resources with local wisdom is also carried out by *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* in Manurung Village, Malili District, East Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi. *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* is a Bugis community that has amazing local wisdom. The noble values that have been maintained to date include preserving natural resources. For *To Cerekang*

Customary Law Community, nature has its own sacredness. Apart from being a source of life, it is also a symbol that is purified and respected. This is what makes *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community to this day continue to preserve the customary forest and the Cerekang river from the threat of damage.

In their lives, *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community people recognizes the existence of the upper world (sky; the place of the gods), the middle world (earth; the place of humans) and the underworld (water) (Iriani, 2019: 230). This is closely related to the cosmology of the creation of the first human, namely *To Manurung (Batara Guru)* in *Bulu Pensimoni* (one of the forest areas in Cerekang). It is this belief that has traditionally bound *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community closely with the land, forests, and rivers in the Cerekang. *To Cerekang* maintains the customary forest which is referred to as a "sacred forest" with its own management, the aim is none other than to preserve the forest and rivers and the natural resources therein. Based on these phenomena, this study aims to analyze the form of local wisdom of the *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community in the preservation of natural resources.

## 2. Method

This type of research used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The research was carried out for approximately four months, starting in December 2020 until March 2021. The research location was in Cerekang, Manurung Village, Malili District, East Luwu Regency. Determination of informants was carried out by purposive sampling technique consisting of traditional stakeholders, young *Wija To Cerekang* (WTC) fighters, and community leaders. There were *seven* informants who participated in this study consisting of *five* key informants and *two* supporting informants. General information of informants can be seen in Table 1 as follows.

Table 1. General Information of Informants

Informan List			
Name	Age in Years	Job	Description
Irwan Jafar	43	Village Head	Key Informant
Langkai	75	Traditional Elder	Key Informant
Usman Siabeng	58	Traditional Leader	Key Informant
Hasni	43	Housewife	Key Informant
Arlin	34	Member of the <i>Wija To Cerekang</i> (WTC)	Key Informant
Nurlia	76	Housewife	Supporting Informant
Yusuf	29	Member of the <i>Wija To Cerekang</i> (WTC)	Supporting Informant

Data was collected by using in-depth interviews, observation and documentation techniques. The data obtained from the informants were analyzed. Data analysis techniques in phenomenological research according to Creswell (1998: 147-150) are as follows: (1) converting the results of the interview into a transcription, (2) detailing the statements from the interviews (horizontalization of the data) and making a list of important statements from the interview. interview transcript. Next, the coding manual was developed from interview questions and transcripts (Coding Manual and Process Coding), (3) determining, selecting or selecting items of question coverage and deleting

repetitive or overlapping statements, (4) writing textural descriptions (whether experienced ) from the experience of the participants, (5) describing the structural description (how the experience occurred), (6) conducting an analysis of how multicultural meaning according to the informant, and (7) describing the meaning of the phenomenon. The data validity was done by credibility technique by extending observation, increasing persistence in research, triangulation, discussions with colleagues, analysis of negative cases, and member checks (Mamik, 2015:182).

### 3. Result and discussion

The story of *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* begins with the legend of *To Manurung* (the first human) who holds the title *Batara Guru* and *Sawerigading* in the book of *I Lagaligo*. When *La Togeq Langiq* was revealed, *Patotoe*'s son from *Boting Langiq* (upper world) namely *Batara Guru* and *We Nyiliq Timoq* a daughter of *Guru ri Selleng* in *Peretiwi* (underworld) to become rulers on earth. Their descendants would later become rulers of the central continent (alekawa; Luwu) (Idwar Anwar, 2012: 32-44). After *La Togeq Langi*' was lowered to *Ale* in a large ivory bamboo and arrived at Ussu accompanied by his caretakers and concubines and their followers, the Alekawa began to be arranged so that it created mountains, rivers and forests. This process of decline is like water being poured into the earth so that plants, animals, mountains, rivers, and lakes are created. Therefore, this area is called Cerekang. Cerekang itself comes from the word "cerre" which means poured (BRWA, 2019).

From the marriage of *Batara Guru* with *We Nyiliq Timoq*, their son, *Batara Lattu*, was born, who later succeeded his father as ruler of Luwu. After *Batara Lattu*' was old enough, he was married to *We Datu Sengeng*, the son of *La Urumpassi* with *We Padauleng* in *Tompatikka*. Then, from their second marriage, *Sawerigading* and *We Tenriyabeng* were born as golden twins, a boy and a girl (Idwar Anwar, 2012). *Batara Guru* as the forerunner of the first human in Cerekang is a leader who ensures worldly balance and devotion to nature and the Lord of Nature. *Batara Guru* started the long history of mankind by managing nature and governing the first country. The noble values of *Batara Guru* that are still maintained by *To Cerekang* are the principles of peace between fellow humans and nature to avoid chaos, such as how to cultivate crops without destroying nature, eating animal flesh and fish without destroying animals and without making the river water cloudy (Maria, et al. 2020: 4).

*To Cerekang* is a Bugis Luwu tribe who has long lived in Cerekang (Gunawan, 2004). Cerekang holds many cultural stories long before East Luwu Regency was formed, especially related to the origin of the Luwu Kingdom. Cerekang is believed to be the first place where *Batara Guru* descended, which later became the center of the first government of the Luwu kingdom (Pangerang in Maria, et al, 2020). The first settlement of the king of Luwu (*ware*) was in Ussu (Iriani, 2019). In 1930 *Cappa Kampong* was an old village on the edge of the Ussu river where *To Cerekang* lived before moving to the bank of the Cerekang river near the highway (now the Palopo-Malili axis road) (BRWA, 2019). The existence of a strong inner bond based on the mythology from which the *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* originated is a strong reason for *To Cerekang*'s obligation to maintain its sustainability, both the life cycle and the place believed to be

the origin of food sources and community needs, such as rivers and forests (Iriani, 2019). According to Haryati Sudiby in Rahayu Salam, (2017) said that local genius is a cultural identity, namely the identity and cultural personality of the nation that causes the nation to be able to absorb and cultivate foreign cultures according to their own character and abilities. Indigenous peoples are important guardians of nature. "Where there are forests, there are natives, and where there are natives, there are forests." Several countries, such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Ecuador, Canada, and Australia recognize customary rights over large areas of land (William and Marry, 2012: 28-29). The focus of this discussion is to understand deeply the form of local wisdom in the preservation of natural resources by the *To Cerekang Customary Law Community*.

- ***To Cerekang Knowledge System in Natural Resources Preservation***

- **Knowledge about customary forest**

*To Cerekang Customary Law Community* usually refers to the Cerekang customary forest as the Cerekang Sacred Forest (or Pangngale' Ada' Toma Hutan Karama' in the local language). It is called a sacred forest because it holds historical value for the presence of *To Manurung (Batara Guru)*. Forests are very central to the *To Cerekang* or commonly known as the "cultural core". Therefore, customary forest by the *To Cerekang* is understood as a sacred area that cannot be contested.

All forms of activity in customary forests are very strict (must be with a *Pua's* permit) and are more dominant in carrying out conservation efforts to maintain their protected functions. As for the activities that are allowed in the customary forest, namely only traditional ceremonies, even at the time of carrying out traditional ceremonies in the customary forest, strict prohibitions are still applied, such as being forbidden to say bad things or swear.

Various traditional ceremonies are carried out in the Cerekang customary forest, namely *Mappaenre ota*, *Mappasolongang buaya*, *Mappacokkong ri Baruga*, and *Mappacekke kampong*. *Mappaenre ota* is held when someone wants to release one's bowels (*mappaleppe satinja* (detachment), while *Mappasolongang buaya* is a ceremony held once a year to ask for safety for the Cerekang community, usually done by cutting a buffalo, while *Mappacokkong ri Baruga* is a procession entering Baruga by Datu Luwu and *Mappacekke kampong* were carried out to prevent the village from disaster.

However, knowledge about the forest for the *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* is not only something that is considered sacred from which their lives are centered. More than that, *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* people still maintains the principles of peace between fellow humans and nature which are the teachings of *Batara Guru*. *Batara Guru* becomes a leader who ensures worldly balance and devotion to nature and the Lord of Nature. The teachings of *Batara Guru* that are still maintained by *To Cerekang* are the principles of peace between humans and nature to avoid chaos, such as how to cultivate crops without destroying nature, eating animal flesh and fish without destroying animals and without making the river water cloudy. To maintain the

sustainability of the Cerekang customary forest, *To Cerekang* has some local knowledge that is used as a guide in preserving the Cerekang customary forest:

▪ **Knowledge about territory division according to custom**

The Cerekang customary forest area is divided into *ten* regional points and each area has different features or functions, and is full of historical and social values. The *ten* points of the customary forest area are:

1. Ujung Tanae, for example, is a hillside area that functions as a water barrier, when a flood occurs in the headwaters of the Cerekang river so as to prevent the overflow of water into the *To Cerekang* settlement.
2. Tomba is an area of rice fields that is used as a place for rituals when it comes to agriculture/plantation.
3. Pensimoni is a forest area that is very important and has the largest area which is believed by the community to be "*mula tana/bola tana*" (starting land). This place is used as a ritual place for *maggawe* (asking) for blessings and safety. Also as a place for taking holy water used in the process of traditional ceremonies carried out in the Luwu kingdom, for example *mapacokkong ri baruga*.
4. Kasosoe, is an old burial area that is used as a place for traditional rituals related to sharpening knowledge and intelligence.
5. Berue, an area that is still in the form of forest along the Cerekang river is used as a ritual place to ask for awaraniang or courage.
6. Bulu Mangkulili, is an area in the form of a hill surrounded by ponds and nearby is the Mangkulili Old Village, which is trusted by *To Cerekang*, as a place for the *Wallenrengnge* tree which is the material for making *Sawerigading* boats to China.
7. Lengkong, is an area or location for the implementation of rituals related to marine or marine products. This location is in the form of nipah and mangrove forests on the coast.
8. Padang Annungnge, is an area/location for the implementation of rituals in the form of fields and swamps related to agriculture.
9. Aggatungnge Ance'e, is an area consisting of mangroves and nipa palm which has the same function as Lengkong, namely as a location for carrying out rituals related to marine or marine products.
10. Turungeng Appancangengnge', is an area consisting of mangroves and nipa palm which has the same function as Lengkong, namely as a location for carrying out rituals related to marine or marine products.

In the past, *To Cerekang* was prohibited from using the Cerekang customary forest for activities other than traditional ceremonies. This understanding of the *ten* points in the Cerekang customary forest has been passed down from generation to generation. Until now, these *ten* areas are still preserved.

▪ **Knowledge on collective ownership of the Cerekang traditional forest**

The *To Cerekang* also has local knowledge about collective ownership of land that no one can own the Cerekang customary forest which means it is shared property. The principle of shared ownership that underlies the pattern of

ownership of the Cerekang customary forest gives birth to a sense of belonging which is manifested in the actions of maintaining, protecting, and protecting which are carried out together as a form of conserving natural resources in the form of forests, land, and the existing biodiversity inside it.

Meanwhile, for the people in Tabala Jaya Village, the forest is seen as a binder and marker of collectivism as well as a medium to continue to maintain kinship ties. Therefore, for the people in the area, the forest which is part of the ulayat is not seen and positioned as a mere factor of production, but also binds the social relations of the community. This collective control forms a kinship bond in its control between the community (Undri, 2016).

This is also done by the Morenene indigenous people, the nature of control and management Land in the customary territory of the Moronene Huka'ea La'ea indigenous community does not recognize individual ownership but is communal in nature which aims to protect various ecosystems and biodiversity (flora and fauna) all of which are regulated in customary regulations, including sanctions in framework to protect and manage natural resources wisely (Sinapoy, 2018).

- **Knowledge of forest ecology**

Preserving the forest for the indigenous people of *To Cerekang* is part of *Batara Guru's* teachings. The principles of peace between fellow humans and nature are used as guidelines in preserving the Cerekang customary forest, because the forest is their protector. Forests provide a place to live with all its carrying capacity for all living things. Forests are land reserves in the future which means that when they conserve forests, water sources are abundant. In addition, forests are guards and protectors from natural disasters such as erosion and flooding.

- **Knowledge of biodiversity protection**

Cerekang customary forest consists of several types of ecosystems, namely riverine forest, lowland forest, freshwater swamp, brackish swamp with mangrove vegetation such as nipa palm (*Nypha fruticans*) and mangroves. The mangrove formation in the Cerekang Indigenous Forest has 24 species, including *Rhizophora* spp., *Brugulera* spp., *Sonneratia* spp., *Avicennia* spp., *Xylocarpus* spp., and *Ceriops tagal* (CCID and PSL Unhas in Gunawan, 2005). The *To Cerekang* customary law community believes that protecting the forest also means protecting the flora and fauna in the forest. The list of genetic resources in the Cerekang customary forest, namely biological wealth which includes protected types of flora and fauna can be seen in the following table:

Table 2 List of Genetic Resources (Protected Flora Biological Wealth)

No.	Protected types of flora
1	Kayu Eboni ( <i>Diospyroscelebica</i> )
2	Kayu Bitti ( <i>VitexGofassa</i> )
3	Kayu Nato ( <i>Palaquiumsp</i> )
4	Kayu Kalapi ( <i>KalapiaCelebica</i> )
5	Kayu Angin ( <i>Casuarinasp</i> )
6	Kayu Meranti ( <i>Shoreasp</i> )

7	Bintagur ( <i>Calophyllumsoulatri</i> )
8	Kayu ponto ( <i>litsea firma</i> )
9	Tapi-tapi ( <i>Santirialaevigata</i> )
10	Kayu kenari ( <i>Canariumasperum</i> )
11	Kayu Bakau ( <i>Rhizophorasp</i> )
12	Kayu Api-api ( <i>Avicenna sp</i> )
13	Kayu Mata Kucing
14	Kayu Polo Nangka
15	Kayu ampanga/sipate
16	Kayu bulling
17	Kayu Uru atau Perahu Tambun ( <i>Elmerrillia Ovalis/Miq</i> )
18	Kayu Mara Coppo
19	Kayu anyurung
20	Kayu pui-pui
21	Kayu bunga-bunga atau Kayu Kenanga ( <i>Cananga odorata</i> )
22	Kayu Sandru
23	Kayu Bakata
24	Kayu Jampu-jampu atau Kayu Jambu Hutan ( <i>Syzigium cumini L.</i> )
25	Kayu Padada
26	Kayu Dengeng atau Asam Malabar ( <i>Garcinia cambogia</i> )
27	Kayu Cempedak ( <i>Artocapus integer</i> )
28	Anggrek hutan atau Alemi ( <i>Dendrobium Utile</i> )
29	Akar kuning ( <i>Arcangelisia flava L.</i> )
30	Sukun atau breadfruit ( <i>Artocapus altilis</i> )
31	Pangi atau Kaloa atau Keluek/Kepayang ( <i>Pangium edule Reinw</i> )
32	Bajo
33	Enau atau Aren ( <i>Arenga pinnata</i> )
34	Lappio atau Pakis Besar ( <i>Dicranopteris linearis syn. Gleichenia linearis</i> )
35	Rotan atau Rotan Sigisi ( <i>Calamus orthostachyus Warburg</i> )

Source: Modified from Appendix to Decree on Recognition and Protection of Local Wisdom to Cerekang Indigenous Peoples

From table 2 there are 35 types of protected flora in the Cerekang customary forest. The protection of forest ecosystems carried out by the To Cerekang Customary Law Community helps to maintain and protect the existing communities, habitats, and flora species from extinction.

Table 3. List of Genetic Resources (Protected Fauna Biological Wealth)

No.	Protected types of flora
1	Burung Alo atau Rangkong or Hornbill ( <i>Buceros</i> )
2	Burung picing/cicing or Sparrows ( <i>Lonchura punctulata</i> )
3	Burung langkang atau Elang or Eagle ( <i>Nisaetus nanus</i> )
4	Burung Cakuridi atau Burung Gereja ( <i>Passer domesticus</i> )
5	Burung Balingtoto
6	Manu Lapping atau Ayam Hutan or Wild Chicken ( <i>Gallus varius</i> )
7	Babi hutan or Wild Boar
8	Ular piton or Phyton ( <i>Pythoniadae</i> )
9	Ular Daun ( <i>Ahaetulla</i> )
10	Ular Hitam ( <i>Bungarus candidus</i> )
11	Lebah hutan madu or Honey Bee ( <i>Apis dorsata</i> )
12	Buaya muara or Crocodile ( <i>Crocodylus porosus</i> )
13	Kokoci atau Burung Hantu or Owl ( <i>Ninox squampila</i> )
14	Dangnga atau Burung Kakatua or Parrot ( <i>Cacatua</i> )

Source: Modified from Appendix to Decree on Recognition and Protection of Local Wisdom to Cerekang Indigenous Peoples

Table 3 shows that there are 14 types of fauna genetic resources that are protected in the Cerekang customary forest. Efforts to maintain and protect the forest carried out by the *To Cerekang* are considered to be able to provide protection to the original habitat and genetic resources which are the biological wealth of the Cerekang customary forest, as the teachings of *Batara Guru* which are still maintained by *To Cerekang* are the principles of peace between fellow human beings. and nature.

- **Knowledge about Cerekang river**

The existence of the Cerekang river is the same as the Cerekang customary forest which is considered sacred and sacred. In the cosmology of human creation by the *To Cerekang* indigineous people, the river is a representation of the underworld, because it is considered the starting place for *We Nyili Timo*, the wife of *Batara Guru* who is inhabited by *nene'* (crocodile) who should not be disturbed (Iriani, 2019). The function of the river for the *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* is (1) a source of water for households (bathing, washing, cooking and drinking water) (3) transportation routes for fishermen to the sea, ponds for *Pangempang* and traditional boat transportation routes during traditional rituals and funerals. (4) source of protein, in the Cerekang river there are various types of fish (*belanak*, *oco-oco*, *susumpi*, *anai*, grouper, black snapper, and various other types of fish), crabs, shrimp, and other river animals.

The management of river resources carried out by *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* is currently a teaching of *Batara Guru* which is still firmly held. The teachings of *Batara Guru* that are still maintained by *To Cerekang* are the principles of peace between fellow humans and nature to avoid chaos, such as "*Eating meat and fish without destroying and without making the river water cloudy*". This expression underlies the local wisdom of the *To Cerekang* in the management of the Cerekang river. The message has the meaning of being allowed to take, catch or eat fish as needed. The equipment used to catch fish is still very simple. In addition to using hands, fishing activities are also carried out using equipment such as fishing rods, nets, or fish traps.

*Marracung bale* is prohibited, this act is considered to make the fish perish or run out. *Marracung bale* or poisoning fish is the same as disturbing the lives of other creatures. Small fish will also die, as a result the number of their catches in the future will decrease. Recognizing the importance of water for their lives, *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* not only protect their forest as a water catchment area, but also maintain the cleanliness of their waterways. In the rainy season, the water of the Cerekang river becomes cloudy but when the rain stops the river water is clear again. This condition is due to farmers using tractors to plow the fields, at the same time it rains, the water flowing from the fields to the river makes the river cloudy when it rains. However, this condition did not last long, because the Cerekang river border was well maintained. The border vegetation along the river functions as a very effective filter to capture sediment and pollutants from the rice fields so that the quality of river water is maintained from turbidity and pollution, and can withstand erosion. In addition, dense

foliage provides shelter for animals such as birds, while fallen leaves are a source of food for various types of aquatic animal species and other wildlife. With the functioning of the river border, the number of fauna species in the river will increase.

Awareness of the importance of the Cerekang river is not only seen from their interest in the river as a water source, protein source, transportation route and ritual function, but they also see the interests of other creatures in the river and the surrounding ecosystem. In the view of the *To Cerekang*, humans are only one of God's creatures and it is proper to synergize with other creatures.

- **Attitudes and Behavior of *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community in Preserving Natural Resources**

Knowledge in a broad sense is one of the sources of customs that have been institutionalized in indigenous people, both in the form of traditional ceremonies or customary sanctions for violations of customary norms, all of which become a reference for the attitudes and behavior of indigenous peoples. Local wisdom in the management of natural resources (forest, land, and water) are values that are taught from generation to generation in a society, the older generation teaches the younger generation and so on from generation to generation (Nuari, 2016).

The attitude and behavior of *To Cerekang* who obey customary rules as laws governing ethics in forest and river conservation are based on thoughts, views and attitudes that have been passed down from generation to generation that humans are tasked with maintaining harmony and balance with nature through caring and responsibility for natural resources. The attitude and behavior of *To Cerekang* in preserving natural resources is manifested in the form of beliefs and customary rules that apply to everyone, be it people who live in the Cerekang area and those who live outside the Cerekang area.

- **Belief in places that are considered sacred**

Cosmology-mythology is part of the belief system of *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community. *To Cerekang*'s belief system certainly has an effect on attitudes and behaviors that lead to ways of conserving natural resources in their ulayat lands. The belief in the sacred place which is believed to be the first ground of *Batara Guru*'s foothold keeps the place awake and sustainable because it is far from human reach. The Customary Law of *To Cerekang* have the view that forests and rivers are part of their belief structure. This belief has been passed down from generation to generation, so that until now the customary forest and the Cerekang river are considered sacred and their sustainability is maintained.

- **Customary rules in preserving natural resources**

The customary rules that must be obeyed by everyone related to the management of the area and the preservation of natural resources in the Cerekang area are as follows:

1. It is not allowed to enter the customary forest without *Pua*'s permission (customary leader).

As a sacred forest that is sacred by *To Cerekang*, the Customary Forest or *Pangngale' Ada' Toma Forest Karama'* cannot be entered without *Pua's* permission. *To Cerekang* believes in supernatural sanctions which will then be followed by social sanctions from the local community that apply to those who violate these provisions. According to them, supernatural sanctions are usually in the form of closed vision, getting lost, and not finding a way to go home. If this happens, then social sanctions in the form of *ipalumpangi capere* will also apply (issued from *To Cerekang* customary area for *Cerekang* people who violate it) and the traditional rituals are not accepted or recognized by the traditional stakeholders.

The existence and sustainability of the *Cerekang* customary forest until now is in fact not only based on the view that the *Cerekang* customary forest is a sacred forest that must be preserved, but there is awareness from *To Cerekang* about the important role of customary forest in their lives and other creatures. Then it is fitting for them to synergize with nature to ensure the balance and sustainability of life. In the end, respect for maintaining what is the ancestral heritage of the *To Cerekang* Customary Law Community encourages harmony in human relations with the natural surroundings. In this case, indigenous people are more inclined to view themselves as part of nature itself (Nababan in Suhartini, 2009: 9).

2. It is forbidden to take or destroy anything from the customary forest.

This rule includes the prohibition of cutting down trees in the *Cerekang* Indigenous Forest, the *To Cerekang* believes that if anyone violates it will get a curse from the spirits of the ancestors in the form of disease and such as being chased by spirits or disturbed by spirits can even bring natural disasters.

Such a ban is ultimately meant to maintain the balance of the forest ecosystem. Cutting down trees in the forest is considered an act of forest destruction, because the forest is thought to be a soil lock, meaning that it becomes a means to avoid natural disasters such as erosion and landslides can be avoided if the forest has many trees that grow tall. In addition, forest ecosystems are considered to be a hydrological means because they are effective in storing water reserves derived from rainfall. This rainwater will wet the ground and become dew, then it will flow into the river.

In addition, the forest is considered a natural habitat for flora and fauna to live and breed. Forest ecosystems can produce oxygen from the photosynthetic process of plants. Furthermore, forests are able to convert carbon dioxide into oxygen by means of natural trees. No wonder local cars are often found stopping for shelter near the *Cerekang* customary forest which is directly adjacent to the *Palopo-Malili* axis road, because it provides beauty and comfort (shady, fresh and cool). So it can be concluded that their efforts to preserve the forest stem from their view that maintaining and preserving the *Cerekang* customary forest is not only for their benefit, but

also for the benefit of all living things including flora and fauna in the Cerekang customary forest.

3. It is not permissible to pollute the river because this action can make the river water cloudy, which is feared to reduce its benefits and disrupt the ecosystem and resources in the Cerekang river. In addition, for the *To Cerekang Customary Law Community*, the river is a source of household water needs such as cooking, washing, and bathing. So, the cleanliness of river water must be maintained by not polluting the river such as it is forbidden to throw garbage in the Cerekang river.
4. It is forbidden to catch, kill or disturb crocodiles. Efforts to preserve the Cerekang river are also colored by their efforts to establish good relations with the spirits of the water rulers. Where, the indigenous people of *To Cerekang* believe that there is a *nene'* or crocodile that inhabits the Cerekang river. "In a river inhabited by crocodiles, it is considered a representation of the underworld that should not be disturbed." Therefore, it is forbidden to catch, kill or disturb crocodiles. They believe that by preserving the habitation of the spirits of the river rulers, these spirits will not disturb them, in fact these spirits will tend to help them in fulfilling their needs. Like providing them with abundant fish.

#### **4. Conclusion**

*To Cerekang Customary Law Community* has a high respect for nature which is an inseparable part of their lives. In conserving natural resources, the knowledge system and attitudes and behavior of the *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* always pay attention to the conditions of the natural environment. This approach is sourced from the values of *Batara Guru's* teachings which are full of local wisdom which includes responsible behavior, full of respect and care for the condition of the surrounding natural environment. Preserving natural resources (forest and river resources) for *To Cerekang* is part of the teachings of *Batara Guru* who hold the view that preserving natural resources for the survival of all creatures has become their duty as their ancestors had done long ago. Thus, the life of *To Cerekang Customary Law Community* is interpreted as one of the tasks in life that comes from awareness and concern for the preservation of natural resources for the life of all creatures.

#### **Conflicts of Interest:**

Author declares no conflict of interest.

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