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license**LAND CONTESTATION AND IDENTITY: AGRARIAN  
CONFLICT BETWEEN MALUKU INDIGENOUS  
COMMUNITIES AND STATE AUTHORITIES IN A  
SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE****Jeffry Ernest Marthen Leiwakabessy\***Universitas Pattimura, Jalan Ir. M. Putuhena, Ambon 97233,  
Indonesia\*Correspondence E-Mail: [jemleiwakabessy@gmail.com](mailto:jemleiwakabessy@gmail.com)DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30598/baileofisipvol1iss3pp317-331>**ABSTRACT**

*This article examines the agrarian conflict between indigenous communities in Maluku and state authorities, with a particular focus on the dispute between the indigenous community of Negeri Laha and the Indonesian Air Force. Utilizing a sociological perspective, the study aims to uncover the root causes, processes, and resolution mechanisms of agrarian conflict, while proposing preventative strategies that emphasize the role of indigenous communities in land governance. Through qualitative methods—including in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis of legal decisions and scholarly literature—the study reveals that contested land ownership, state-led strategic projects, and the marginalization of customary land rights are key triggers of conflict. The findings suggest that inclusive dialogue, recognition of indigenous land rights, and the use of customary conflict resolution mechanisms are vital in achieving sustainable peace. The case of Negeri Laha serves as a valuable reference for resolving similar conflicts in other regions of Indonesia. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of legal, sociocultural, and conflict resolution dimensions, providing a contextual model that links land contestation with identity politics and state power. This article contributes to the development of social sciences and humanities by offering policy-oriented insights into managing agrarian conflicts through participatory and non-violent approaches grounded in local wisdom.*

**Keywords:** Agrarian Conflict, Conflict Resolution, Indigenous Communities, Land Ownership, Supreme Court Ruling

**INTRODUCTION**

Agrarian conflict in Indonesia has increasingly become a significant issue over the years (Krismantoro, 2022, 2023; Ramadhan, 2023). This phenomenon results from the complexity of interactions among various factors, including changes in land policies, industrial and mining expansion, and inequality in access to natural resources. Data from the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA) revealed that in 2023, Indonesia experienced at least 241 cases of agrarian conflict (Izka et al., 2024). These conflicts spread across an area of 638.2 thousand hectares and affected approximately 135.6 thousand households. Despite a decrease in the area of conflict, the number of agrarian conflict cases increased compared to the previous year. The rise in the number of agrarian conflicts has wide and serious implications for Indonesian society (Earlene &

Djaja, 2023; Harold & Wirotto, 2023). These conflicts not only affect agricultural and land aspects but also have profound impacts on the security, welfare, and prosperity of communities. According to research by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Indonesia, agrarian conflicts have negatively impacted agricultural productivity, leading to a decrease in farmers' income, and increased uncertainty and social tension in various regions (Bingen et al., 2023; Jones et al., 2023). Additionally, agrarian conflicts pose a threat to food sovereignty and national food security (Sujito & Ghofur, 2022). The increasing conversion of agricultural land into industrial and urban settlement areas reduces the available land for food production, which can ultimately result in food supply instability and increased dependence on food imports (Schreer & Padmanabhan, 2020).

Shani et al. (2024) have provided deep insights into the root causes of agrarian conflict in Indonesia, particularly in the context of unclear land ownership status. Furthermore, Septiyanto et al. (2023) ) stated that this phenomenon has been identified as one of the main triggers of agrarian conflict in Indonesia. This is reinforced by De Jong et al., (2021) and Ginting (2020) who emphasized factors contributing to the ambiguity of land ownership status, such as weaknesses in the land registration system and legal conflicts related to land claims. Additionally, Dharmawan et al. (2021) revealed the significant impact of unclear land ownership status on the security and welfare of local communities. Communities often face vulnerability to forced evictions and conflicts with parties claiming ownership of the land, which substantially affects social and economic stability (Bakker, 2023; Wahanisa et al., 2021).

In addition to the ambiguity of land ownership status, Grasse (2022) highlights the significant role of industrial expansion in exacerbating agrarian conflicts in Indonesia. In this context, the Omnibus Law on Job Creation (UU Cipta Kerja) provides ease for investors to invest in Indonesia, yet often without seriously considering potential agrarian conflicts arising from the development of industrial infrastructure (Abdulgani et al., 2023). Dharmawan et al. (2020) added that factors driving industrial expansion, as well as its impacts on agrarian conflicts in sectors such as palm oil plantations, mining, and other industries. Additionally, Pasaribu et al. (2023) explored conflict mitigation strategies applicable in the context of industrial expansion, including the development of compensation mechanisms for affected communities and increased stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes. Equally important, Kerebungu et al. (2020) also highlight inequality in access to natural resources as a root cause of agrarian conflicts in Indonesia. This inequality provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to agrarian conflicts and their impacts (Hendra et al., 2023). Furthermore, Priyatno et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of developing strategies to enhance the justice of natural resource distribution, including the development of land redistribution policies and empowering local communities in natural resource management.

In addition, there are studies analyzing the dynamics of agrarian conflicts occurring in various regions of Indonesia, including Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua (Al-Fadhat, 2022; Diprose & Azca, 2020; Habibi, 2022; Halomoan et al., 2023; Hellmundt et al., 2024; Kenny

et al., 2020; Leasiwal et al., 2022; Santika et al., 2020). These conflict dynamics reflect the complexity of interactions among various social, economic, and political factors influencing agrarian conflicts (Santika et al., 2020). In this context Leasiwal et al., (2022) identify the crucial role of actors involved in the conflicts, including the government, companies, local communities, and NGOs. The government's role in agrarian conflict dynamics includes land policy formulation, investment regulation, and law enforcement. Hellmundt et al. (2024) highlight how specific policies, both at the central and regional levels, can influence the dynamics of agrarian conflicts. Additionally, the role of companies, especially in sectors like mining and plantations, is also a focus of study. Company expansion into resource-rich areas often triggers agrarian conflicts with local communities regarding land claims and traditional rights (Habibi, 2022; Kenny et al., 2020). Furthermore, Halomoan et al. (2023) emphasize the role of local communities in agrarian conflict dynamics. Local communities often act as key actors in advocating for their land rights and face challenges in defending their territories from encroachment by others. In this regard, Diprose & Azca (2020) state that NGOs also play a crucial role in advocating for and supporting local communities in addressing agrarian conflicts, as well as monitoring policy implementation and dispute resolution processes.

Furthermore, there are studies identifying various efforts in resolving agrarian conflicts in Indonesia (Arsyad et al., 2020; Dhiaulhaq & McCarthy, 2020; Fisher & van der Muur, 2020; Maring, 2022; Nurrochmat et al., 2020; Rustiadi & Veriasa, 2022). One of the main efforts is through land policy reform to improve clarity on land ownership status and legal protection for local communities (Nurrochmat et al., 2020). This reform includes improving the land registration system, simplifying land registration procedures, and enhancing transparency in land ownership (Arsyad et al., 2020; Maring, 2022). With better clarity on land ownership status, it will reduce uncertainty and conflicts related to land claims (Rustiadi & Veriasa, 2022).

In addition to policy reform, increasing community participation and consultation in decision-making regarding land use and management are also considered crucial steps in minimizing agrarian conflicts in Indonesia (Dhiaulhaq & McCarthy, 2020). Active participation of communities in decision-making processes will allow them to have a voice in setting policies that affect their daily lives and minimize the risk of conflicts arising from dissatisfaction or injustice in land management (Maring, 2022; Rustiadi & Veriasa, 2022).

Furthermore, Nindyatmoko et al. (2022) add that strengthening the capacity of law enforcement and security institutions to effectively and fairly handle agrarian conflicts is crucial in conflict resolution efforts. This involves training and mentoring for legal and security personnel in handling agrarian conflict cases, as well as ensuring independence and fairness in the legal process (Hellmundt et al., 2024; Kenny et al., 2020). With enhanced capacity, law enforcement and security institutions can provide prompt and appropriate responses to agrarian conflicts and prevent escalation of violence (Schreer & Padmanabhan, 2020).

Maluku, as one of the regions in Indonesia, exhibits a significant level of severity in agrarian conflicts. Data released by the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA) notes that Maluku is

one of the main focuses of agrarian conflicts, especially related to national strategic projects (PSN), such as nickel mining. For example, the Maluku region and other PSN projects such as the Rempang Industrial Area, Wadas, Mandalika, Kertajati, and several nickel mining projects in Sulawesi have recorded 105 cases of agrarian conflicts during the period 2020-2023. Additionally, in Maluku, there are many potential latent agrarian conflicts caused by unclear land ownership, as well as land owned by individuals post-Maluku conflict. Furthermore, there have been agrarian conflicts between the indigenous community of Laha and the Indonesian Air Force in 2010. This conflict was ultimately resolved with a decision from the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia Number: 18/G/2012/PTUN.ABN.

This article aims to analyze sociologically the agrarian conflict between the indigenous community of Laha and the Indonesian Air Force (TNI AU) in Maluku. The article presents arguments that the conflict resolution method between the indigenous community of Laha and the TNI AU in Maluku could serve as a model for resolving agrarian conflicts in the region. It will discuss the status of customary land ownership and management in Maluku, as well as the triggering factors, conflict process, and resolution process of agrarian conflicts. However, the article emphasizes that preventing agrarian conflicts is prioritized over resolution, as prevention can prevent losses in terms of both lives and property. Proposed prevention efforts include involving indigenous communities in every stage of strategic project development and resolving issues through customary processes and consultations. Violence and threats against indigenous communities should be avoided, as they can trigger resistance or potential exacerbation of conflicts.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative research approach to analyze the agrarian conflict between the indigenous community of Negeri Laha and the Indonesian Air Force (TNI AU) in Maluku. This approach is suitable for understanding holistically the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of individuals and groups involved in the conflict (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Data collection is conducted through two main methods, namely in-depth interviews and field observations. In-depth interviews are conducted with representatives from the indigenous community of Negeri Laha and the TNI AU, allowing researchers to gain deep insights into their perspectives and experiences regarding the agrarian conflict (Fontana & Frey, 2019). Additionally, field observations provide an opportunity to directly observe the dynamics of the conflict, interactions between parties, and the social and cultural contexts influencing the conflict (Ridder, 2018).

Data analysis is conducted using a qualitative approach, involving thematic analysis of interview and observation data. The collected data are analyzed inductively to identify patterns, themes, and relationships emerging in the context of agrarian conflicts in Maluku. Furthermore, literature analysis is conducted to enrich the understanding of agrarian conflicts, considering the

views of experts and relevant decisions from the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia related to the conflict cases. The results of data analysis from various sources are used to develop a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of agrarian conflicts in Maluku and to formulate recommendations for their resolution. Interpretation of the results is done by considering various perspectives involved in the agrarian conflict, allowing researchers to present comprehensive and detailed findings (Creswell, 2017). The research methods used can significantly contribute to understanding and addressing agrarian conflicts in Maluku, and provide a basis for further research in this field.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### ***Dati* Land: Ownership Status and Management of Customary Land in Maluku**

The customary land for indigenous communities serves as a central entity in their social, economic, and cultural life. Customary land encompasses residential areas, agricultural fields, and burial grounds. Moreover, customary land forms the existential basis for the identity and sustainability of indigenous communities. The utilization of customary land by indigenous communities is not limited to practical daily needs but also includes spiritual and traditional dimensions that bind them to their ancestral land. In the Ambon Lease region (Ambon Island, Haruku Island, Saparua Island, and Nusalaut Island), customary land generally falls under a ownership system known as “*petuanan*” (*beschikkingsrecht*), acquired from the local village or community. Also known as “ulayat land,” ownership rights over customary land in the Ambon context fall under the category of “non-free state land” (*niet vrijlandsdomein*), indicating administrative control by the colonial government or local authorities.

The *petuanan* rights held by a community not only encompass land on the mainland but also extend to forests, rivers, and all natural resources. In the Ambon Lease region, consisting of islands, *petuanan* rights also extend to coastal waters up to the whitewater boundary where the seabed is still visible. However, over time, some of the land that is part of these *petuanan* rights has slipped from the direct control of the related communities due to the emergence of individual ownership rights or other rights stronger than *petuanan* rights. During the early colonial period, indigenous communities did not fully feel the negative impacts of detrimental land policies because the primary focus of Western powers at that time was on the spice trade. However, over time, Western traders began to interfere in political affairs. As a result, the Dutch East Indies Government was formed. Under Dutch colonial rule, land owned by Indonesian communities was seized and utilized for government interests. Land law policies at that time were highly unfair, with all legal regulations aimed at the benefit and interests of the government. This led to a land acquisition process following the capitalist land model in the archipelago. Similar conditions occurred during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, as both governments, whether Dutch East Indies or Japanese occupation, relied on imperialistic ideas.

During the colonial era in Maluku, the Dutch government applied unequal control over customary (*petuanan*) lands, reflecting broader disparities in land ownership. Indonesia's agrarian legal history is divided into pre- and post-independence periods. The pre-independence phase includes two stages: before and after the Agrarische Wet of 1870. Before this law, land regulations were governed by the Regerings-Reglement (RR) of 1855, which was later revised and expanded with the Agrarische Wet, leading to the transformation of Article 62 RR into Article 51 of the Indische Staatsregeling (IS). At that time, a dual legal system applied—customary law for indigenous people and Dutch civil law for colonial citizens. After independence in 1945, the agrarian system entered a new phase, culminating in the enactment of Law No. 5 of 1960 on Basic Agrarian Principles, which became a key milestone in unifying and reforming Indonesia's land laws to reflect national interests and end colonial legal dualism.

The emergence of land ownership rights, eventually leading to individual ownership, is the result of a lengthy process. Arbitrary actions often occur in the process of acquiring and using land rights, including the right to benefit from the land. When the benefits or profits from long-standing land can be transferred to others without significant obstacles, and the community does not disrupt those rights, the initial process of forming land ownership rights begins. Land ownership rights are restricted by communal rights, where community members have the right to fully control the land. However, these rights are still constrained by several factors, including indigenous customary rights, other land-owning interests, and customary regulations such as the obligation to obtain permission to use the land. Individuals in legal communities have the right to gather forest products, hunt wild animals, harvest wild tree products, cultivate and process land sustainably, and manage land.

In the customary society system of Maluku, in addition to individual rights to land ownership, there is the concept of *Dati* land, which plays a significant role. *Dati* land can be considered as land owned or claimed by certain lineages within the indigenous community. The concept of *Dati* land also includes rights and obligations to regulate the use and utilization of land and its transfer to others. The authority over *petuanan* rights to *Dati* lands is still evident in the process of appointing *Dati* heads, *Tulung Dati*, and in all legal actions related to land and crops, which require approval from the Saniri Negeri to be valid.

*Dati* land, as one form of customary land ownership in Maluku, has unique and complex characteristics. *Petuanan* rights are an important aspect of this land ownership system, where control over customary land is not only limited to individuals but also involves the *Negeri*, *Soa*, and *Mata Rumah*. These *petuanan* rights govern the relationship between individuals and the community with the customary land, making ownership of *Dati* land not only an individual right but also a collective responsibility to preserve and manage the land.

In addition to *petuanan* rights, hereditary inheritance also influences the way *Dati* land ownership is structured in Maluku. The ownership of *Dati*/Customary land is passed down through generations within the *Dati* family, meaning that land ownership cannot be transferred to others or bought and sold. This indicates a strong attachment between *Dati* land and lineage



and family traditions, which have been intertwined for years within the Maluku indigenous community.

In its management, the customary law community in Maluku has the freedom to determine the use of customary lands for their needs. However, this collective use of land must be regulated collectively and with the approval of the rightful authorities, such as the Raja or *petuanan* holders. Such management principles emphasize that *Dati* land ownership in Maluku is not limited to individuals but involves the entire related customary law community. Despite its uniqueness and distinctiveness, the status of *Dati* land ownership in Maluku still faces several challenges. One of them is the lack of payment of land taxes (Dati/native land taxes) by landowners in some areas of Maluku, such as West Seram Regency, especially Taniwel and Taniwel Timur. This indicates that the management of *Dati* land in some regions of Maluku still requires serious attention in terms of legal certainty and fair utilization for all involved communities. By deeply understanding the aspects influencing *Dati* land ownership, efforts can be made to improve the management of customary lands in Maluku.

### **Land Contestation and Identity: Agrarian Conflict between the Indigenous Community of Negeri Laha and the Indonesian Air Force in Maluku**

The conflict between the indigenous community of Negeri Laha and the Indonesian Air Force (TNI AU) stems from deep-rooted differences in how each party perceives land ownership. For the people of Negeri Laha, the land is sacred customary territory inherited from their ancestors, protected under Law No. 39 of 1999 on human rights and Law No. 19 of 2014 on customary land. Their customary system, led by a king and the Saniri Negeri, is central to their identity and symbolized through traditional markers like the Baileo, sacred stones, and Soa. In contrast, the Indonesian Air Force claims the land as war spoils seized from Japanese forces, positioning themselves as guardians of national assets in line with state interests. These opposing views create both visible and underlying tensions, as each side firmly believes in the legitimacy of their claims. For the Laha community, the land represents identity, authority, and livelihood, prompting them to defend and reclaim it by various means. Although mediation efforts have been made by government officials including the Governor, Mayor, and legislative representatives, no resolution has yet been reached, as the fundamental ideological divide remains unresolved.

The differing interpretations of land ownership rights and the history of customary land have sparked resistance from both sides. The Indonesian Air Force (TNI AU), as a representative of the state, feels a responsibility towards the land because, as state officials, they are considered to have full legitimacy to control and safeguard the area. The Supreme Court Decision Number 18/G/2012/PTUN.ABN strengthened the TNI AU's view of their sovereignty over the land, triggering a strong reaction from the indigenous community of Negeri Laha. They feel that the decision reaffirms an injustice that is not in their favor, thus creating a peak of resistance against the social reality they face.

The dissatisfaction felt by the indigenous community of Negeri Laha has led to resistance in various forms. A series of protests were carried out as a form of expression of disagreement with actions deemed to violate their rights. The climax occurred in 2010 when a violent incident took place at the Negeri Laha office, where a resident was assaulted by members of the TNI AU. This incident was followed by a series of retaliatory actions from the indigenous community of Negeri Laha when the National Land Agency (BPN) team, along with the TNI AU, attempted to verify the boundaries of land claimed by the TNI AU based on the Supreme Court decision. BPN officials conducting the verification were pelted with stones, resulting in a victim's death a few days later.

Although the indigenous community of Negeri Laha tends to favor non-violent means in their struggle, threats still arise from both sides. These threats are expressed through various forms of communication indicating tension between the community and the Indonesian Air Force (TNI AU). From the perspective of the indigenous community of Negeri Laha, threats are seen in the form of financial demands, such as when the community demanded compensation of 75 million rupiahs as a form of appreciation for a TNI AU officer. On the other hand, the TNI AU also feels threatened, especially when crossing Negeri Laha territory and conducting area control with fully armed personnel. This action, according to the local community, is interpreted as an attempt by the TNI AU to assert its strength and authority as a state apparatus.

The resistance displayed by the indigenous community of Negeri Laha against social injustice continues to strengthen through a series of protest actions. The indigenous community of Negeri Laha organizes mass mobilization and demonstrations as a way to assert their rights, demanding recognition for actions they consider as harassment from the TNI AU, which holds strong military authority. The response to these actions comes in the form of the construction of a separating wall by the TNI AU as a security measure, claiming that the area is a military zone that needs protection. However, this action triggers a strong reaction from the indigenous community of Negeri Laha, who respond by tearing down the two-kilometer-long wall, the cost of which was covered by the TNI AU Headquarters.

The rejection voiced by the indigenous community of Negeri Laha is a manifestation of their dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Supreme Court's decision that favored the TNI AU. The community feels that the decision is unfair and tends to be based on the interests of the TNI AU or the state. This rejection is further reinforced by the fact that previously, two trials at the Administrative Court (TUN) and the District Court of Ambon were won by the indigenous community of Negeri Laha. However, when the case was brought to the Supreme Court, the decision favored the TNI AU, which sparked deep distrust and dissatisfaction among the indigenous community of Negeri Laha. Based on the victory of the TNI AU, the indigenous community of Negeri Laha made resistance efforts by filing an appeal against the decision. However, in 2018, the Supreme Court rejected the exception filed by the indigenous community of Negeri Laha. The conflict that ensued is the result of widespread distrust among the indigenous community of Negeri Laha towards the TNI AU, which is perceived to have taken over their



ancestral land under the pretext of gaining profit from various economic activities at Pattimura Airport.

The indigenous land serves as the primary trigger for the conflict between the TNI AU and the indigenous community of Negeri Laha. According to Dahrendorf (2019), this conflict is related to industrial development and how new capital powers exploit conflicts to achieve their interests. There are two main dimensions to this conflict, reflected in the social facts of the community, especially in Negeri Laha. Firstly, for major investors or the bourgeoisie, such as the TNI AU (state), they will exploit the conflict to exert pressure on the proletarian class (lower-middle class) to be exploited for the benefit of the new capital power. Meanwhile, the lower-middle class will feel social injustice and resist this exploitation because they are involved in the industry but have no role in decision-making. As a result, they are trapped in a situation where they are merely exploited workers by capital owners or new capital powers.

The struggle of the indigenous community of Negeri Laha to reclaim their land is sustained by a strong sense of solidarity, which is evident in various acts of resistance involving all segments of the community against the Indonesian Air Force (TNI AU). This ongoing conflict has not only heightened tensions but also reinforced unity and cohesion within the community, as they collectively perceive the TNI AU as a common adversary. While the conflict may appear purely negative, it also serves a positive function by strengthening internal solidarity. When the people of Negeri Laha feel they are being treated unfairly, their collective identity and cohesion become even more pronounced. Internally, the perception of a shared enemy becomes a unifying force that motivates their pursuit of justice and helps manage internal disputes. Externally, however, the TNI AU is seen to have contributed to inter-village tensions, such as the conflict between Negeri Laha and Negeri Hatu, which escalated into the burning of clove trees owned by the Laha community and was later resolved through compensation. These dynamics have led to a segmentation of society shaped by conflict lines, yet paradoxically, the same conflict has strengthened the internal unity of the Laha community amid these external divisions.

As social beings, humans face the reality of life that requires interaction with their surrounding environment. In their efforts to socialize, humans tend to form groups as a means to achieve their life goals. Interaction serves as the main bridge in building relationships with the environment, occurring not only between individuals but also between individuals and groups, as well as between groups. According to Herimanto, in sociological terminology, the relationships between individuals or groups are referred to as social relations or social connections, which result from social interaction. Social interaction, in turn, is a reciprocal process between individuals or between individuals and groups, where those engaging in social relations are expected to receive responses from others to achieve common goals. These relations are formed in a context that is not always predictable.

In the context of the land dispute conflict between the indigenous community of Negeri Laha and the TNI AU, there is a typology of social relations based on existing social facts, namely associative relations (cooperation) and dissociative relations. Associative cooperation occurs

between the TNI AU and the indigenous community of Negeri Laha in the form of communication that persists even in “conditional prerequisite” situations. Although the number of participants in joint social work is not always large, communication between both parties continues. Landowners, in this case, the families of the indigenous community of Negeri Laha, are willing to relinquish some of their land for the construction of TNI AU barracks, especially because the TNI AU does not display antagonistic attitudes towards them.

Dissociative cooperation between the two parties, namely the indigenous community of Negeri Laha and the TNI AU, indicates antagonistic roles with competitive and conflictive attitudes, both manifested overtly and latently. The competitive attitude is reflected in the efforts of each party to assert their existence over land ownership, as if the indigenous community of Negeri Laha is dominated by the interests of the community group in fighting for the land. They assert ownership of the land with the principle that the land belongs to them, supported by valid evidence of their land tenure, with some even stating that they will defend the land until the end of their lives, considering it a legacy from their ancestors (Rahim, 2023). Besides competition, there are also aspects of dissociation that play a role in bringing about conflict. Each party states that as long as the community does not resort to violence, they will think positively. Additionally, the indigenous community of Negeri Laha also upholds what they believe to be right based on their understanding.

In the “conditional prerequisite” situation, cooperation between the indigenous community of Negeri Laha and the TNI AU continues, as evidenced by visits and assistance provided to each other. Visits between both parties occur at various events, such as the inauguration of the king, TNI AU commanders, or religious holidays, both formally and informally. Meanwhile, assistance is provided when the TNI AU conducts activities such as health check-ups, mass circumcisions, or prayers at mosques, indicating that the mosques located on TNI AU premises are frequently visited by the indigenous community of Negeri Laha. Even when the city of Ambon was hit by an earthquake in 2019, the TNI AU participated in evacuations to save the indigenous community of Negeri Laha. The TNI AU also provides assistance to children from Negeri Laha who apply and become TNI AU candidates, provided they demonstrate physical and intellectual competence.

The tolerance shown by the TNI AU is reflected when the indigenous community of Negeri Laha is allowed to cross roads in military areas, and even their livestock that enters military yards and damages some infrastructure is not prohibited by the TNI AU. This attitude demonstrates efforts to bridge the differences between both parties through social stimuli (Geerlings et al., 2020). The conflict between the indigenous community of Negeri Laha and the TNI AU can be seen from two perspectives: realistic and non-realistic conflicts. Realistic conflicts occur because the indigenous community of Negeri Laha feels unfairly pressured by the TNI AU. This social fact is reflected in the social relations between both parties, filled with competition and conflict manifested in various actions, words, and behaviors of individuals and groups. On the other hand, non-realistic conflicts occur when both parties strive to cooperate to minimize conflicts to

achieve harmony. Cosser's analysis of social relations, especially in the function of social conflict, shows that conflict can be seen as an alternative to radical conflict views inspired by Marxism (Dijkstra et al., 2020). Conflict is a construct of individuals' or groups' thoughts that affect the functional values of the social system. The conflict between the TNI AU and the indigenous community of Negeri Laha is not only dysfunctional but also has positive consequences. Cosser describes conflict as disputes over values, power, status, and limited resources. Therefore, this conflict can play a role in strengthening social structures and advancing society.

### **The Involvement of Indigenous Communities in Preventing Agrarian Conflicts in Maluku**

The involvement of indigenous communities in preventing agrarian conflicts in Maluku is a crucial step to ensure peace and justice in the management of natural resources in the region. The first step in this involvement is the unequivocal recognition of the customary land rights of local indigenous communities. Customary land must be officially recognized and respected, in accordance with applicable international and national laws. Therefore, indigenous communities will have fair and equal access to land and other natural resources that are part of their traditional territory. Furthermore, indigenous communities must actively participate in the decision-making process related to the management of natural resources in their area. Their active participation in planning, policy-making, and the implementation of development programs will ensure environmental sustainability and create a greater sense of ownership over the land and natural resources they manage. In this context, it is important to facilitate effective and inclusive dispute resolution mechanisms. Indigenous communities should have easy and fair access to neutral and authorized dispute resolution institutions to peacefully resolve conflicts.

Moreover, capacity building and legal education for indigenous communities are needed. Through legal education programs and training, they will have a better understanding of their rights and the legal processes related to land and natural resource management. This will help them effectively advocate for their rights and avoid abuse or violations of their rights by other parties. Equally important is protection against threats and violence. Protection and security measures must be implemented to protect indigenous communities from threats, intimidation, or violence that may occur in the context of agrarian conflicts.

In the context of involving indigenous communities in preventing agrarian conflicts in Maluku, it is also important to promote dialogue and cooperation between indigenous communities, the government, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Cross-sector collaboration can strengthen conflict prevention efforts by building mutual understanding, facilitating open dialogue, and creating mutually beneficial cooperation mechanisms. Additionally, a restorative approach can be an effective strategy in resolving agrarian conflicts.

Capacity building for indigenous communities in negotiation, advocacy, and conflict resolution is also a crucial part of conflict prevention efforts. By enhancing the capacity of indigenous communities in these areas, they will be better able to play an active role in advocating for their rights and resolving conflicts peacefully and sustainably. Furthermore, it is

important to promote transparency and accountability in the management of natural resources in Maluku. Greater transparency in decision-making processes and natural resource management will create a more open and inclusive environment, reducing the risk of agrarian conflicts. Lastly, efforts to prevent agrarian conflicts must also be supported by strong policy support from the government. Policies that support the rights of indigenous communities, environmental protection, and fair and just law enforcement will be crucial foundations for effective and sustainable conflict prevention efforts in Maluku.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article depicts the role of indigenous communities in addressing agrarian conflicts in Maluku. The involvement of indigenous communities is not only necessary but also strategic in maintaining peace and justice in the management of natural resources in the region. It discusses conflicting land claims and the adverse effects of agrarian conflicts on environmental preservation and community welfare. The conclusion emphasizes the urgency of cross-sectoral cooperation and inter-party dialogue through concrete actions, such as building the capacity of indigenous communities in legal understanding and environmental sustainability, as well as enhancing the role of traditional institutions in decision-making regarding natural resources. These steps are believed to enhance the effectiveness of indigenous communities in advocating for their rights, preventing conflicts, and creating a more harmonious environment in Maluku. Additionally, strong policy support from the government and other stakeholders is also needed to create a conducive environment for cooperation. This includes transparency in natural resource management and efforts for fair and sustainable agrarian conflict resolution.

## **ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE**

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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