

Adat Recognition and Land Grabbing Politics
In Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate, Papua, Indonesia

Year: 2015

Location of fieldwork: Jayapura City and Merauke District

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Keywords : Recognition, Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE), Papua, Special Autonomy, customary (*Adat*), Papuan customary council (DAP), Customary Community Council (LMA).

I. Research Background

The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) is the first national project in Papua developed by the Indonesian government after Papua was assigned a wider autonomy by special law. The central government considers Merauke an ideal space for agricultural expansion since its vast arable areas contain much potential. Based on MIFEE Grand Design (2010), the central government allocated 1.283 million hectares for the MIFEE project that was established in Merauke District in August 2010. The project aims to accelerate development in Papua and also contribute to national food and energy security (GoI 2010). However, this policy implementation faces a land conflict problem with the *adat* (traditional) community and causes land grabbing (Yando 2011; Lamonge 2012; PANAP 2012; Ito et al. 2014).

II. Research Purpose and Aim

This research aims to analyze the relationship between the existence of the customary community council (LMA) as *adat* community representative, which believed by means of recognition toward *adat*, and the land grabbing process in the MIFEE project.

III. Fieldwork Results and Achievements

After conducting fieldwork in Merauke for one month in Papua Province (Merauke and Jayapura) and interviewing the *adat* community in several villages in Merauke, I discovered the existence of the Customary Community Council (LMA), an organization that believes that it can become the representative of the *adat* community, but is not widely accepted by the *adat* community. Even worse, the *adat* community in the village thinks that this council has harmed the *adat* community and destructed the *adat* values in their village. The *adat* community has observed that the LMA supports the company and government in the *adat* land leasing process to facilitate the implementation of land grabbing. Therefore, the *adat* communities do not feel that they have been fairly represented by the LMA.

Why the position of the LMA is considered relatively consistent with the government policies can be explained in the initiative on LMA formation. The Papua customary community council was established in 2010 under the leadership of Lenis Kogoya. It was formed by a central government initiative in order to balance the power of the Papuan customary council (DAP), which was formed as an *adat* community initiative.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the reason for the existence of the LMA is to streamline the implementation of government policy. I also observed this situation in the implementation of MIFEE.

However, the *adat* communities in the village have also used participatory mapping to create an *adat* land map as a strategy to protect their *adat* lands. To pursue land formalization and titling, Indonesian NGOs have promoted participatory mapping of *adat* lands in Merauke.

IV. Implications and Impacts on Future Research

This research is very important to disseminate the information about the implementation of MIFEE in Papua because not many research studies have been conducted on this issue. Furthermore, it is still difficult for foreign scholars to conduct research in Papua provinces and few works have been undertaken there. On the other hand, I have easier access to the area because I am a researcher from the state-owned research institute.

V. References

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VII. Fieldwork pictures



Picture 1. The *adat* community in one village is fishing together in the swamp, following which they gather and eat together. However, they fear that after the company opened the plantation in a neighboring village, the river will be used for the disposal of plantation waste. (Rosita)



Picture 2. The *adat* community usually gathers in the afternoon after going to their garden (*kebun*), sago fields, fishing, or hunting. However, after the implementation of MIFEE, they say that they will lose their hunting and food-gathering habitats, because their *adat* lands were changed into plantations. (Rosita)



Picture 3. This photo shows the process of participatory mapping that was conducted by a local NGO (Yasanto). The *adat* community members, usually men who are *adat* landowners, participate in the process of mapping to decide the *adat* lands that are possessed by the *adat* community in this village (photo by Yasanto).



Picture 4. Interview with a Papua peace network (*Jaringan Damai Papua, JDP*) member about the current situation in Papua (photo by Amorisa).