Review Essay

Resolving Land Conflicts in Indonesia

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Bachriadi and Lucas. *Merampas Tanah Rakyat: Kasus Tapos dan Cimacan*, Jakarta: KPG, 2001, xix + 360 pp. ISBN: 9799023440, price: IDR 100.000,00 (hardcover).

Colchester, Marcus, Chao Sophie (eds.), *Conflict of Consent. Oil Palm at the Cross road*, 2013, ii + 417 pp. ISBN: 9780954425272, price: free online (hardcover, paperback).

Hafid, Jos, *Perlawanan petani: kasus tanah Jenggawah*, Bogor: Pustaka Latin, 2001, xvii + 199 pp. ISBN: 97995675103, price: IDR 95.000,00 (hardcover).

Sirait, Martua, *Indigenous Peoples and Oil Palm Plantation Expansion in West Kalimantan, Indonesia*. The Hague: Cordaid, 2009, xii + 102 pp., no ISBN, price: free online (softcover).

Noveria, Mita, Gayatri H. Irine and Mashudi. *Berbagi Ruang dengan Masyarakat: Upaya Resolusi Konflik Sumberdaya Hutan di Kalimantan Tengah*. Jakarta: Puslit. Kemasyarakatan dan Kebudayaan-LIPI, 2004, vi + 156 pp. ISBN: 9793584335, price: free (hardcover).

Economic development is rapidly transforming the character of rural Indonesia. Due particularly to the expansion of the palm oil and mining sectors, large tracts of land are being converted into palm oil plantations and mines. These processes of land use change are sparking conflicts between rural communities and companies. As companies obtain concessions for land that rural communities claim as theirs, conflicts ensue. To defend their access to land or, failing that, to obtain adequate compensation, local communities engage in demonstrations, land occupations, road blockades, and extensive lobbying of local authorities. Affected rural communities turn to various conflict resolution mechanisms—ranging from bilateral negotiations and third-party mediation to appeals to international fora like the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). In the context of Indonesia's contradictory legal framework and widespread distrust of courts, such conflicts are not easily resolved. While exact numbers are unavailable, a current assessment counted 1,769 such conflicts in Indonesia for the period 2015–2018 (KPA 2019). As these conflicts all concern grievances generated by processes of land use change, we refer to such conflicts as 'land use change conflicts'.

What is being done to resolve these conflicts, and how effective are the available conflict resolution mechanisms to solve them? In this article we review five main book-length studies of the character and outcomes of these conflicts, with particular attention to mechanisms of conflict resolution. The motivation behind this review essay is that studies on land use change conflicts tend to focus on a small number of cases through in-depth qualitative analysis. This approach, while generating important insights, eschews generalization and avoids drawing broad conclusions about the character and outcomes of these conflicts. That is the aim of this review essay. We review five outstanding book-length studies—two English and three Indonesian language books—that, together, discuss 16 land use change conflicts in Indonesia. All these studies provide in-depth descriptions of the strategies that communities adopt to defend their interests vis-à-vis real estate, palm oil, and tobacco companies. Together, these studies span a period of about 15 years: our earliest studies stem from the early days of Indonesia's *Reformasi*, while the most recent book discusses conflicts in the early 2010s.

Our main aim in reviewing these books is to identify a number of general patterns in the character of these conflicts. These studies touch upon a range of issues, from the nature of Indonesia's legal system to rural development and the character of land tenure. Given this scope, we decided to restrict this review to three topics that, in our view, constitute the main shared conclusions of these studies: the prominence of informal dispute resolution, the troublesome nature of community representation, and the ineffectiveness of available

conflict resolution mechanisms. Before discussing these three issues we will provide a brief overview of the five studies under review.

1 Studying Land Use Change Conflicts

The books reviewed in this essay concern a wide variety of conflicts. As Table 1 highlights, our selection involves conflicts of communities with palm oil, tobacco, and agricultural companies, and there is even one conflict over the establishment of a golf course. Although these studies involve different kinds of companies, they have important similarities, namely, all concern conflicts over access to, and control over, land. Some conflicts concern straightforward processes of land grabbing, such as companies obtaining land for palm oil plantations without consent from affected communities (Colchester and Chao 2013), or dispossessions by Soeharto cronies to build a golf course (Bahriadi and Lucas 2001) or a tobacco plantation (Hafid 2001). In some cases, communities aim to prevent companies from taking over their land, while in others they merely aim to be compensated fairly (Noveria et al. 2004). Some conflicts are only indirectly about land acquisition: for example, some of the conflicts discussed by Sirait (2009) and Colchester and Chao (2013) concern the implementation of profit-sharing schemes, caused by the refusal of companies to live up to the promises they had made to convince villagers to give up their land. These studies are written by people with different academic backgrounds, including law (Hafid 2001), agrarian studies (Bahriadi and Lucas 2001), and demography and political science (Noveria et al. 2004), while legal scholars as well as NGO activists wrote the case studies in Colchester and Chao's edited volume.

Despite their differences, these studies have in common that they all investigate conflicts generated by the large-scale processes of land use change currently engulfing much of rural Southeast Asia. For these reasons, we use the term 'land use change conflicts' (instead of other frequently used terms like 'agrarian conflicts' or 'tenurial conflicts') to refer to conflicts between rural communities and (particularly) agricultural and natural resource companies over the manner in which these companies acquire access to land. As this definition implies, these conflicts do not just concern ownership of land, but also grievances about the various kinds of conditions (i.e. compensation, profit-sharing schemes, the character of community consent) under which companies acquire control over land.

Another similarity between the conflicts discussed in these books is that they are all sparked by what, as a shorthand, might be referred to as Indonesia's 'concession system'. With this term we refer to an important characteristic

TABLE 1 Overview of land use change conflicts studied by reviewed books

Author	Number of cases and type of company involved	Duration of conflict (in years)	Outcomes
Bachriadi & Lucas 2001	2 (cattle ranch and golf course companies)	2	Mixed Results: 1. The first case: occupied the land without recognition of ownership right as demanded. 2. Second case: obtained use right as demanded.
Colchester & Chao 2013	7 (oil palm plantation companies)	four years or more	At the time of writing, for none of the cases an agreement or solution had been reached. (In February 2020, PT PHP1 finally reached an agreement with affected communities in West Sumatra, seven years after the book was published and twenty years after villagers first expressed their grievances.)
Hafid 2001	1 (tobacco company)	21	Successful resolution: 1. Formal Ownership right to land. 2. Plasma schemed
Sirait 2009	3 (oil palm plantation companies)	ten years or more	At the time of writing, no solution or agreement was reached. Sirait is not very explicit about the outcomes of the conflicts he studies.
Noveria, Gayatri & Mashudi 2004	3 (oil palm plantation companies)	3–4	At the time of writing, for none of the cases an agreement or solution had been reached.

of Indonesia’s land regime: the Indonesian state restricts private ownership of land, particularly the large parts of the country designated as forest, while at the same time providing access to such land by handing out temporary concessions to companies. This ‘concession system’ is sparking conflict because concessions are very regularly handed out for plots of land on which communities have been working and living—often for generations—and/or are claimed by these communities as their customary land. A common result is a form of legal

dispossession: as rural Indonesians often lack formal land titles—which the Indonesian state restricts in forest areas—companies that have obtained a concession rarely face legal obstacles in dispossessing communities from their land. The communities, however, rarely perceive this dispossession—and the paltry compensation that accompanies it—as fair and just. Heated and often protracted conflicts are the result.

Another noticeable commonality of these studies is that they are all interview-based, complemented with overviews of laws and applicable regulations. While also employing policy documents, newspaper reports, etc., the authors mostly use interview material to chronicle the background and evolution of the conflicts. The authors generally rely on a wide variety of community informants, from villagers affected by the conflicts to protest leaders, NGO representatives, and local (village) authorities. Interviews with company representatives are rare. The perspectives of authorities involved in mediating or adjudicating the conflict (see below) are also rarely recorded, although the chapters in Colchester and Chao succeed in reporting the viewpoints of such actors.

This interview-centered approach is understandable for many reasons. An alternative qualitative approach—long-term ethnographic fieldwork in affected villages—is time-consuming and not always feasible (but see De Vos 2019). Yet it is important to highlight that this interview-based approach has drawbacks that shape the findings of these studies. Lacking extensive fieldwork, they remain ‘outsider-accounts’ that focus largely on documenting important events in the trajectories of these conflicts. These studies do not, as ethnographic fieldwork might, attempt to provide ‘insider perspectives’ on, for example, the conceptions and perceptions of villagers of the injustices that they experienced, or the motivations and perspectives of company representatives (a topic deserving further study).

Another drawback of the case-study approach adopted in these studies is that they offer relatively little insight into the broader context shaping the trajectories and outcomes of these conflicts. These studies regularly hint at how Indonesia’s political and economic context complicates the resolution of these conflicts, but this context is nowhere explicitly discussed. To provide one particularly salient illustration: as readers, we are acquainted with a wide range of laws and policies, but not with the reasons why these seem to matter relatively little on the ground. None of the reviewed studies discuss (the reasons for) the weak implementation of government regulation and licensing procedures, and the apparently rather close connection between companies and government authorities, despite its obvious importance. We will return to this issue below.

Yet, while their research focus is thus somewhat restricted, these studies do provide us—particularly when read side-by-side—with a number of important and intriguing insights about the character of these conflicts, and how they unfold.

2 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: Informal, not Formal

The first important conclusion emerging from these studies is that the formal legal system is playing a remarkably minor role in addressing these conflicts. Instead, affected communities seem to prefer informal dispute resolution facilitated, mainly, by local state authorities. Of the 16 conflicts discussed in the reviewed books, none were brought to court—while the protests did spark the two court cases concerning the ensuing arrests of protesting villagers. The main reason for this ineffectiveness of Indonesia's formal legal system, it seems, is the restricted individual land ownership in forest areas under Indonesia's land regime. About 63 percent of Indonesia's land mass is designated as forest land and in these areas individual Indonesians are not allowed to own land (Bedner et al. 2016). The result of the restrictive land regime is that Indonesia's courts cannot help rural Indonesians faced with incoming palm oil or mining companies: generally speaking, their land claims to what is called *kawasan hutan* stand little chance in court.

The restrictiveness of Indonesia's land regime constitutes an important reason why, in the absence of legal avenues, affected communities turn to local civil servants and politicians for help. In trying to address these conflicts, the role of local authorities varies considerably, as they seem to follow no protocol or procedure: in some cases, authorities were seen to act as adjudicators of conflicts, while in other instances they operated more as neutral third-party mediators. One example of such informal mediation is provided by Hafid in his book *Perlawanan petani* ('Farmers Resistance'). In this book, Hafid admirably traces the long history of a particularly lengthy and complex conflict involving a state-owned tobacco plantation in Jember, East Java. This company, PTPN12, had begun operations in 1977 claiming that, as the land previously belonged to a colonial-era company, farmers had no legal claim to the land which they had cultivated during the last forty years. A lengthy history of farmer protests, supported by national NGOs, ensued. After first trying to negotiate directly with the company, the farmers started to ask the district government as well as local parliamentarians for help. The local government officials and DPRD separately facilitated negotiations between the two parties, but after a lengthy process involving numerous meetings, no agreement was reached. The farmers kept

insisting on obtaining individual ownership of the land in question, to which PTPN12 continually objected. In the late 1990s, local government officials even formed a team to help both parties end their dispute. While the team failed to get the parties to reach an agreement (something which Hafid does not really explain), the process did convince the local government to request the national land agency (BPN) to return the land to the community. This request was granted, and after considerable activism, the farmers were given formal ownership over the disputed land in 1999.

In Hafid's study, local authorities operated more or less like neutral conflict resolution facilitators—that is, during the period before awarding these land titles. This is not always the case. Noveria et al., in their book *Berbagi Ruang dengan Masyarakat* ('Sharing Space with People'), discuss two examples of state authorities taking up a different role, as conflict adjudicators. This book discusses three cases of how three communities in Central Kalimantan attempt to recover land taken by palm oil companies. After their attempts to negotiate directly with the company failed, the communities asked local government officials to step in. Remarkably, in this case these government officials did not actually facilitate and mediate the conflict, but rather played the role of judge: after engaging in some on the ground investigations, they decided that the community had no legal basis for their claims and subsequently endeavored to convince the community to accept the company's offer of (limited) monetary compensation. As the community refused, the conflict was left unresolved. This sparked another round of demonstrations and protests with as yet no tangible results for the community. People harbored suspicion that government officials accept bribes from the company in exchange for taking the latter's side.

In response to the limited accessibility and effectiveness of Indonesia's courts, quite a number of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms have been set up. The Round Table for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), for example, has set up a dispute settlement facility, while obliging its member companies to pro-actively find solutions for their conflicts with communities. Similarly, professional mediators of organizations, such as the Impartial Mediator Network (IMN), have started to mediate conflicts, while Indonesia's national and local governments are also setting up conflict resolution bodies (sometimes called TP3KS). Yet, the cases discussed in the reviewed studies suggest that such mechanisms as yet play a minor role in conflict resolution. Colchester and Chao find that communities rarely find their way to the RSPO while all their cases involve RSPO members. Instead, all these five books suggest that informal mediation provided by local politicians and bureaucrats is the most commonly used avenue for addressing land conflicts. As we will explore further below, the result of this reliance on local authorities is that these conflicts are not settled on the

basis of laws or formal procedures, but rather on the basis of relative bargaining power and informal connections—which is increasingly to the disadvantage of rural communities.

3 The Problem of Representation

A second key theme in these studies is the rather severe problem of community representation. A topic recurring depressingly often is weak interest representation and sometimes outright betrayal of communities by their leaders. Village heads and traditional leaders regularly make deals with companies without the knowledge or consent of their community. They often take money for providing companies with access to land against the wishes of their neighbors.

This weak community representation is generating conflicts because these community representatives are preventing communities from being consulted in a meaningful way about the entrance of a company in their area. This is one of the main themes of the book *Conflict or Consent*, edited by Colchester and Chao. This volume, a collaboration of an impressively large group of NGOs led by the Forest People's Program, discusses the character and legal background of palm oil expansion in Africa and Southeast Asia. The bulk of the report is made up of case studies of seven conflicts between rural communities and palm oil companies in Indonesia, which we examine here. This study is written with a particular focus on evaluating whether and how companies implement *Free, Prior, and Informed Consent* (FPIC). FPIC is a widely adopted procedure to ensure that companies obtain meaningful consent of community members before taking over their land. *Conflict or Consent* concludes that palm oil companies in Indonesia implement FPIC rather poorly. They often fail to inform communities prior to starting land conversion and, critically, their efforts to obtain consent are often limited to obtaining a signature from village heads. Companies wrongly assume that when village heads enter into an agreement, they do so with the knowledge and support of their community.

This failure of community leaders to represent their community is illustrated dramatically in the chapter concerning the plantation of PT Agrowiratama in West Kalimantan. In the village of Sabun, people were very resentful of the old village head because of his refusal to provide relevant information. As one informant asks, "Why did the chief not socialize this project more with us? Probably because he knew we would reject it" (Colchester and Chao 2013: 37). During an interview, the new village head accused the old one of having received money from the company in exchange for his support, something which indeed seems to occur depressingly often. While the book also provides

illustrations of effective community representation (such as in the case of the Kapa community in West Sumatra), village heads often seem to side with the company. The following quote, from the head of a village involved in a conflict with Wilmar in Central Kalimantan, is quite revealing of where his loyalties lie: “I used to be small person, but now I am a big person ... I am the government here ... there are no problem—as the government representative here, I would now ... I am not here to side with anyone or any group. I am neutral, in the middle. I just facilitate things for others” (p. 86). In areas where large-scale land use change takes place, it is not uncommon to see village elites getting rich from the bribes they receive from companies, while signing away the land of their neighbors.

This cooptation of community leaders is made easier by government procedures. To facilitate the process of obtaining land (and consent), local governments set up ‘land acquisition task forces’ at the district, sub-district, and village level (called, respectively, TP3K, *Satgas* and *Satlak*). Village heads, customary leaders, and other local elites are encouraged to become members of these official committees, which effectively tasks them (for a fee) with convincing their neighbors to give up their land. The result is that community leaders are incentivized to side against their community.

Martua Sirait describes the nefarious consequences of this kind of cooptation in his study *Indigenous Peoples and Oil Palm Plantation Expansion in West Kalimantan, Indonesia*. Commissioned by Cordaid (a Dutch development organization) and written on the basis of extensive interviews, this study discusses three different conflicts between ethnic groups and palm oil companies concerning both access to land and implementation of joint venture schemes. A recurring theme of Sirait’s study is, again, the problem of community representation. He describes the effects of the cooptation of community leaders in the following terms: “The village head and sub-village head and IPs [Indigenous Peoples] chief, as well as some prominent persons from the village, actively encourage each household to release their land for the plantation of the palm oil company. All operational costs, including a monthly salary for the land acquisition team members, are paid by the palm oil company. As a result, the village head and the IPs chiefs do not represent the community but effectively represent the company against their own community. This process ruins the representativeness of village institutions as well as well as ruining the IPs self-reliant institutions” (Sirait 2009: 69). This ‘ruining’ of community representation should not only be attributed to the selfishness of local leaders, but also to company strategies. Not only do companies tempt community leaders with large bribes, but sometimes companies even set up alternative customary leaders in an attempt to divide the community (see Sirait 2009: 42–43) and con-

vince the local police to arrest customary leaders who oppose them (see also Afrizal and Anderson 2015).

These studies lay bare a fundamental flaw in the way in which companies implement FPIC: to obtain community consent, companies deal almost exclusively with community leaders who, due to a mixture of company machinations and selfishness, represent their communities rather poorly. Instead of requesting the consent of all affected community members, companies generally invite only community leaders for talks taking place in faraway, posh hotel rooms. After convincing (or bribing) such leaders, companies misleadingly claim to have obtained community consent. Instead, as both Sirait and Colchester and Chao make clear, the consent of a community leader does not constitute the free, prior, and informed consent of the community. From reading these studies, it seems that, particularly in Kalimantan, village-level institutions are too weak to facilitate FPIC procedures, as villagers lack the means to hold their leadership accountable.

In light of this problem of representation, it may seem surprising that Indonesian activists as well as, it seems, the authors of some of the reviewed studies, have proposed the strengthening of communal land rights as a solution to conflicts around land use change. Since the early 2000s, Indonesian NGOs like AMAN have been campaigning for greater recognition of communal land rights in order to strengthen the position of rural communities vis-à-vis incoming palm oil companies. Emphasizing the indigenous identities and traditions of affected communities, they have sought to strengthen the rights of *communities* rather than *individuals*. For example, Sophie Chao et al. argue in their chapter in *Conflict or Consent* regarding a conflict in East Kalimantan that “a village community, in the context of FPIC as a collective right, should be viewed as a single subject, an ‘artificial man’ or a socio-political unit, just as a company is an entity, i.e. a legal entity and person. A community is not merely the sum of its individuals but a separate unit that is more than the sum of its members” (Colchester and Chao 2013: 152). This seems somewhat contradictory: while the authors conclude that community leadership is problematic, they also recommend that—at least in the case of *ulayat* land (communally owned land)—companies deal with communities rather than individuals. In other words, community institutions are seen as part the problem *as well as* the solution. This emphasis of activists and scholars on communities and their communal land rights has recently come under scrutiny. While AMAN has won notable victories in court, this strategy is criticized for excluding non-indigenous inhabitants and for not yielding much effect on the ground. Indeed, effective official recognition for *adat* communities has so far been limited to a very small group of communities (see van der Muur 2018).

Furthermore, this emphasis on community rights has precluded attention for another, alternative avenue to solve land use change conflicts: the strengthening of individual land rights. This 'citizenship approach' to land rights involves strengthening individual rights, such as legal guarantees of individual land tenure and ensuring that companies obtain consent from individuals rather than community leaders. The citizenship approach has so far received much less attention from activists, as it is considered less suitable for Indonesian (communal) traditions. Yet when read together, the studies reviewed here provide a strong argument for such an approach: given the documented weaknesses of community representation, the cases suggest rural Indonesians might be better off dealing with companies (and the state) without their community leaders.

4 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms Are Largely Ineffective

A third common finding of these studies is that conflict resolution mechanisms are generally quite ineffective. As Table 1 (above) illustrates, some of these conflicts can drag on for decades. While not all of the reviewed studies discuss the outcomes of the (often still ongoing) conflicts in detail, the emerging pattern is not particularly hopeful: of the 16 conflicts that were discussed in the reviewed books, only three conflicts (the cases discussed in Hafid 2001 and Bachriadi and Lucas 2001) have been resolved in more or less favorable terms for the community. The other conflicts are either ongoing, ended in stalemates, or reaped only very partial successes.

It is worth highlighting the reasons that Hafid's and Bachriadi and Lucas' studies offer for these community victories. The success cases seem somewhat atypical: they stem from the early years after the fall of Soeharto and their resolution seems to have relied on a combination of community activism and effectively lobbying the (central) government. Hafid's study of a conflict involving a state-owned tobacco company in Jember discusses how, after failed attempts at bilateral negotiation, the community successfully lobbied the local government and the national land registration (BPN) office, convincing these authorities to provide them with land certificates. The victories described by Bachriadi and Lucas are similar: in these conflicts (over a cattle range and a golf course), mediation also failed and communities resorted instead to direct action by taking control over the land (in Tapos) and by successfully lobbying the national land registration for use rights.

These successful cases are actually similar to the unsolved conflicts in one crucial aspect: none of the conflicts are settled on the basis of a straightfor-

ward application of formal procedures or laws. Instead, their outcomes were shaped by the usage of informal connections and the relatively strong bargaining position of the communities. The communities did not achieve these successes because they had a stronger legal claim, or because of a victory in court. Rather, their success depended on their superior connections to both local and national authorities. By marshalling these relationships, in the context of an unsettled power balance in the years after the fall of Soeharto, communities could convince authorities to grant them a favor. In that sense, the 'success cases' in Jember, Tapos, and Cimačan actually give little cause for celebration, because they show the incapacity of formal mechanisms—such as the courts—to address these conflicts. Communities do not win (or lose) because they are 'right', but because they developed a stronger bargaining position.

In the unsuccessful cases, communities similarly tried to lobby local authorities and politicians. They used similar protest strategies, engaging in demonstrations in front of the local parliament and blocking access to the plantation. They similarly tried to get the district head on their side and revoke the license of the plantation. In these cases, however, it seemed that local authorities were much less responsive to such requests, while being more willing to tolerate the various license violations of the companies, studied in admirable detail by Colchester and Chao. Instead of addressing company violations, authorities arrested protesting villagers for seemingly minor infringements. The reviewed studies do not discuss why local authorities were so unresponsive and unsupportive, or so unwilling to punish companies for their transgressions.

Here we bump up against the limitations of the case-study approach: as these studies focus on particular conflicts, they do not pay much attention to how the broader context of Indonesia's political economy shapes their outcomes. We would highlight, for example, that the unresponsiveness of local authorities needs to be interpreted in light of the dependency of politicians on campaign contributions from companies. The high-cost nature of election campaigns has engendered a worrisome exchange of favors: entrepreneurs are providing campaign funding to politicians on the condition that, once elected, politicians help facilitate with licenses and, if needed, suppress community protests (see Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). In that light, it might not be a coincidence that the success cases all stem from the early days after the fall of Soeharto. It seems that, after the institution of direct elections in 2005, the rising costs of election campaigns have tightened the collusion between power holders and companies, thereby further complicating the efforts of rural communities to address their grievances.

5 Conclusion

In this article we reviewed five studies of sixteen conflicts caused by processes of land use change currently engulfing rural Indonesia. In reviewing these studies, we narrowed our focus to highlight three conclusions shared by all these studies: the reliance on informal, local authority-led mediation, the problematic nature of community leadership, and the ineffectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms. In doing so, we also highlighted some drawbacks of the tendency of this literature to focus on just one or a few conflict cases, as this approach risks missing the broader context of how Indonesia's political and economic conditions shape the outcomes of these conflicts.

In fact, these studies suggest that rural communities themselves also need to deal more forcefully with this broader context. The studied communities are all engaged in fighting their own conflict with their own company. The reports provide little indication that affected communities are joining hands to pressure the Indonesian government into changing the broader legal, political, and institutional conditions under which these conflicts emerge. The partial exception is Sirait's description of SPSK (a palm oil farmer's union) in West Kalimantan, which did manage to mobilize people to force the government to set up a new conflict resolution mechanism. But even this initiative seemed short-lived; generally, people rarely seem to mobilize for broader policy goals beyond their own particular conflict. In other words, it seems that these communities are fighting symptoms rather than the underlying causes. A prime target of more policy-oriented mass mobilization would be to support efforts by organizations like KPA and AMAN to reform Indonesia's land tenure system: at the root of the conflicts discussed here remains the restricted nature of both private and communal land ownership, a legacy from colonial times. By restricting (the legal basis for) land ownership in much of Indonesia, the Indonesian state is serving the interests of economic and political elites at the expense of its citizens. The studies reviewed here provide the reader with plenty of reasons to hope that Indonesia's land tenure regime will one day be overhauled.

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