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Reclaiming the Land: Conflict and Resistance in Contemporary Peasant Social Movement

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the dynamics of contemporary peasant social movements, especially related to conflict and resistance in reclaiming the land. The end of the New Order era in the late 1990s in Indonesia provided space for peasants to reclaim the land for their cultivated land. Reclaiming is an effort to act of resistance, carried out by oppressed people to regain their rights such as land, water, and other natural resources, as well as other means of production fairly, to create universal prosperity for the people. This study uses a qualitative method, which was carried out by exploring and understanding the meaning of research problems by collecting data that reflects the views of participants regarding the research problem being studied. Data collection techniques were carried out through literature study, observation, and in-depth interviews with peasant and social movement members and leaders in the three research villages in West Java. The results show that reclaiming is successful when there is a political opportunity and mobilization of political network resources during conflicts and peasant resistance. In addition, the importance of the political network of urban activists and university students is used in resisting the policy regime made by the power holders.

KEYWORDS: Conflict, Land, Resistance, Reclaiming, Social movement.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, rural agrarian conflicts have appeared sporadically in several parts of the world, especially in developing countries in South America, Africa, Asia, and specifically in Indonesia. Some describe that the contemporary agrarian conflicts are in or related to major changes in social, economic, and political conditions that occur in the countryside as a result of the neoliberal state program which has made the living conditions of peasants and Hodge getting worse. This is also related to the globalization agenda that is so massively echoed by neoliberalism thought groups.

Land conflicts during and after the New Order regime occurred a lot between the people and the owners of capital, between the people and the state, or between the people and the owners of capital in alliance with the state. In other words, the conflict or land dispute in the New Order mass was a conflict between the people on the one hand and the state and capital on the other which was a manifestation of the process of primitive accumulation. In this process, the New Order regime played a role as a provider of facilities to facilitate the process or create favorable conditions for the rapid accumulation of capital and which removed the obstacles that hindered the process, as well as acting as the owner of capital itself.

In general, the main cause of tenurial conflicts stems from the dominance of a control system that comes or comes from state law, which unilaterally provides so much service to the owners of capital to develop their business in managing land and other natural resources, including the proceeds. natural. Meanwhile, the rights of local communities who have lived and developed a separate system for managing land and other natural resources are ignored and simply violated (Wiradi, 2009).

At the micro level, Wiradi (2009) then explains that this conflict is manifested in competing claims over the same location, from different rights bases, and different institutions. On the one hand, communities have tenure claims based on local rules and/or customary laws that they mutually agree on. On the other hand, the concession holder has a claim to the same land or natural rights based on the stipulation of rights granted by the government based on several rules and regulations from the applicable formal law that plays on the "stage of agrarian conflict drama". Tenure conflicts like this are usually just the 'tip of the iceberg' that sticks out above the surface. But beneath the surface, what gives land conflicts the 'strength' or 'resilience' to continue to surface and stay afloat for a long time in the political and economic "exchange" are other types of conflict.

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According to research by Bachriadi (1997), there are six types of land conflicts that have occurred in Indonesia since the New Order era, all of which are related to the model of developmentalism. The six types are. (1) Land conflicts due to the determination of the function of the land and the content of agricultural products as well as various plants and products on them as sources that will be exploited on a massive scale. (2) land conflicts due to rice self-sufficiency which in practice resulted in land control concentrated on one hand and an increasing number of landless peasants, as well as conflicts stemming from the peasant's obligation to use superior seeds and non-organic inputs such as pesticides and other chemical fertilizers. (3) land conflicts in plantation areas, either because of the transfer and issuance of the Land Cultivation Rights Title or because of the development of the *Inti Rakyat* Company and similar programs such as the intensification of the People's Sugar Cane. (4) land conflicts due to evictions for the tourism industry, real estate, warehousing industrial areas, factory construction, and the like. (5) conflicts due to eviction and expropriation of people's lands for the construction of facilities declared in the public interest as well as security. And (6) conflicts due to the revocation of people's rights to land due to the construction of national parks or protected forests in the name of environmental sustainability.

At the micro-scale of West Java, where this research was conducted, the phenomenon of the small area of land tenure has been established since before the colonial period. This occurs both in areas with individual land ownership patterns such as in the Priangan area, as well as in areas with communal land tenure patterns in the Cirebon and surrounding areas. The entry of the Dutch colonialists changed the structure of land tenure. The policy of compulsory coffee cultivation in the Priangan area, the policy of granting private land, the emergence of a village rental system by the Chinese, and other policies have harmed the people's rights to land. Residents who own or control the land become objects of extortion through the collection of plant taxes or are deployed as compulsory labor. (Suhendar 1997).

On the other hand, regarding the inequality of land tenure between peasant in private companies, Shohibudin and Bahri (2019) describes it as follows:

"Most of the land allocation is given to private companies. However, what many people don't know is that the total land area of the forest area controlled by large-scale private business actors, including through other permits outside the three permits, is 40,463,103 hectares. This area covers 95.76% of the total land allocation in the forest area for all forms of permits and designations. Compare this with the allocation for the community which is only 1,748,931 hectares (4.14%) or the allocation for public interests which is only 41,200 hectares (0.10%)" (Shohibudin and Bahri 2019).

Then the results of research by Bachriadi (2011) and Sohibudin (2016) before, explain that in the last decade the number of Peasant Households without land and of Peasant Households with land tenure under 0.5 ha has increased significantly. Comparative data on land tenure between classes for more than six decades (1963-2003) also shows the same thing, namely the number of smallholders increased by more than 50% with the area of control only 12.8% of the total agricultural land. Meanwhile, peasants with large lands with small populations control a larger percentage of land (Bachriadi 2011).

Today inequality is reintroduced with the existence of a landless peasant class. In neoliberal systems, commodity relations have been left free, and simple reproductive extortion results in victims which are of course predictable (Bernstein, 2019). The emergence of cases of reclaiming can be motivated by the existence of first, the expropriation of lands previously controlled by the people by the owners of capital as an effort to expand plantations. Second, the expropriation/eviction of land by the government in the name of a "development program" (Rahman, 2017). Conceptually, reclaiming is an act of resistance, carried out by oppressed people to regain their rights such as land, water, and other natural resources, as well as other means of production fairly, for the sake of creating universal prosperity for the people (Wijardjo and Perdana, 2001). This reclaiming was not just taking over land and other natural resources, but is also related to people's rights that have been deprived since the colonial period of the Dutch East Indies.

Contemporary peasant social movements use and reflect societal methods and strategies to renew and regenerate themselves through collective action. These social movements generally provide protection that enables people to escape the pressures and burdens of interests, and from the inertia caused by the status quo, inequality, oppression, and subjugation of one another. Contemporary peasant social movements are shaped by processes of consciously questioning and demanding, risking, and challenging the inertia of the privileges of society and privileged groups, states, and systems of authority, and this leads to a process of community development and renewal. So this research is intended to analyze the dynamics of contemporary peasant social movements, especially related to conflict and resistance in reclaiming the land.

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RESEARCH METHOD

The research uses a qualitative approach which was carried out by exploring and understanding the meaning of research problems by collecting data that reflects the views of participants regarding the research problem being studied (Creswell, 2014). The data analysis of the results of this study is stated in the form of a description. The descriptive study was carried out by analyzing the data obtained and then describing it (Babbie and Roberts, 2018).

Data was collected through literature study, observation, and interviews. A literature study is done by building a theory or concept to serve as a guide for research. Observations were made by conducting field observations in three villages in West Java. Interviews were conducted with peasants and leaders of the peasant movement in three villages in West Java as the subjects of this study.

Data analysis was carried out through three steps, namely data condensation, data display, and data verification (or drawing conclusions). Data condensation is the process of selecting or simplifying the data obtained. Data presentation refers to data that has been condensed to draw a conclusion or data verification which is the last process of data analysis (Miles et al., 2013).

FINDINGS AND ARGUMENTS

I Political Opportunity for Reclaiming The Land

The late 1990s can be described as one of the axes of time symmetry in modern Indonesian history. What was rife before the fall of President Suharto's power was the massive looting of people's property and rights by the rulers and their very elitist inner circle of supporters described by the term "collusion, corruption, and nepotism". Then what happened afterward was mass looting which was carried out by the people against the looted assets of the ruler during the new order era. The phenomenon of looting coincided with the economic crisis, which mainly hit small people who live with very limited incomes. The main targets of the loot were plantations and ponds. Not only forcibly taking the plots, but also destroying and even burning the facilities at the location of reclaiming the land (Simanungkalit, 2002).

In the case of West Java, plantation agrarian conflicts occurred due to the expiration of the Land Cultivation Rights Title Title period. The initial stage of the conflict that occurred in the three research locations was reclaiming. In this phase, the social movement is known as the important determinant of collective behavior/action (Arthur, 2009), or as Berbeloglu (2019) is called relative deprivation, where social inequality is the reason for collective action. Eisinger (1973) in his writings explains various phenomena of the emergence of social movements, revolutions, and nationalism movements by relating them to the theory of political opportunity. According to Eisinger, revolution does not occur when certain groups of people are under pressure. However, collective action in the form of a revolution emerges when a political and economic system that is in a closed condition opens up and is used by challengers to fight.

In addition, Tarrow (2001) includes conditions for regime change as opportunities where the regime consists of ordinary relations between the government, established political actors, challengers, and outside political actors, including other governments. Regime change is a change that includes new actors in these relationships, reduces the power of regime members, or imposes new relationships between them.

According to the community, the reclaiming was carried out based on their belief that the Land Cultivation Rights Title Title in their claim had expired. For example, the narrative of one resident in Sindangasih explained:

"Land Cultivation Rights Title is over, the community is being taken over. cannot be extended any longer. because there is a dispute within the community. According to the Basic Agrarian Law, if there is a dispute with the community, the Land Cultivation Rights Title cannot be extended. So there must be a permit from a local leader, and a village permit if bade extends the Land Cultivation Rights Title. It's because the people here are stuck....." (Interview Document, 2018)

In addition to Land Cultivation Rights Title having expired, the social welfare factor is the reason people do reclaim. According to the community, the existing land is no longer cultivated by the company and on the other hand, the community also needs to continue their life. Then in an interview with one of the charismatic leader (*Kiai*) who later established a boarding school in the conflict location, he said that there was hatred from the community towards the attitudes and social policies made by the plantation party that was not by the norms and expectations of the farming community around the plantation and the hatred of peasant towards the other party (Interview Document, 2018). In addition, plantation employees also pay less attention to local community development.

Related the choice of reclaiming, can also be traced from various information obtained by the community, for example in community leaders there is a social discourse that the best way to solve agrarian problems with plantations is by way of reclaiming. The thoughts

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that exist in such societies are influenced by collective actions elsewhere that reach them. In addition, the community also believes that the plantations are no longer able to carry out cultivation activities because of the monetary crisis that is hitting Indonesia. Meanwhile, the only parties that hindered were some of the employees (labor) of the plantation itself (Tarmidi, 1999). According to the group who wanted to do reclaiming, some of the plantation employees were afraid of losing their jobs which had provided a good economic life and social status in the community.

In addition, the community believes that the act of reclaiming is not against the law as long as it takes back their land rights and the land acquired is used for the common interest of the peasant. For example, in Garut Regency, peasants were afraid when the Indonesian Ulema Council of the Garut Regency explained that reclaiming was illegal. One of the *Kiai* in Sindangasih explained: "Any instructions from the Indonesian Ulema Council are planted on reclaimed land, the proceeds are forbidden to be used for daily needs" (Interview Document, 2018). However, as a result of community consultations, they decided that what they claimed was their ancestral land, so they were not worried about the impact of using the land

From Bachriadi's statement in the 'Agrarian Heritage Seminar' in 2017 held at the Pajdajdaran University, it was also explained that reclaiming was the best way, and the community is well aware that with this reclaiming action, the government will have no other choice but to issue land certificates. which he had occupied. The thinking in this research location departs from their knowledge of a conflict case that is considered successful in Sagara, Garut district, in which in the end the community officially received land certificates that were distributed to peasants.

II Conflict Process and Resistance

In the history of peasant social movements in Indonesia, land occupations were rife in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the New Order regime. The fall of the New Order regime seems to have provided the right momentum for the land occupation movements. As is also the case in many areas in Indonesia, the basic reason for the occupation of peasants is the lack of agrarian resources that they can access, or if they have previously owned them then there has been an expropriation process carried out by both the State and private companies just because they do not have access to land, have a valid proof of ownership (Safitri, 2010).

In the political process model developed by McAdam, the internal process of the recruitment system is carried out in a way, first, individuals can be recruited into the ranks of movement activists based on their involvement in organizations that function as network associations from which new movements emerge. Curtis and Zurcher (1973) in their study, the authors provide convincing data to support their assertion that recruits are largely drawn from the broad "multi-organizational field" in which all groups emerge. Second, local community organizations can serve as the main source of movement participants through what Oberschall has called the "recruitment bloc". In this pattern, fewer movements emerge from established organizations because they represent an amalgamation of the group. Oberschall (1973) concluded: "mobilization does not occur through recruitment of large numbers of isolated and solitary individuals. It occurs as a result of recruiting blocs of people who are already highly organized and participants".

Based on in-depth interviews conducted with various community leaders who were directly involved in the three districts, it can be explained that the peasant has communicated to do reclaiming based on rumors of the expiration of the Land Cultivation Rights Title period. For example, for the location in Sindangasih Village, it can be explained that the Land Cultivation Rights Title of the State-owned Plantation Company (PTPN-VIII) Bagjanegara Block Gedebong had expired in 1997, along with the occurrence of the monetary crisis which also affected the community in villages in East Priangan West Jawa, especially in Garut, Tasikmalaya, and Ciamis Regencies besides which makes people who work in the city return to the village. Communities in the two sub-districts under pressure from economic needs and limited land for smallholders make use of the land of the former State-owned Plantation Company (PTPN-VIII) Bagjanegara Block Gedebong the Land Cultivation Rights Title whose the Land Cultivation Rights Title expired in 1997 and to meet the daily needs of sharecroppers planting on the former the Land Cultivation Rights Title by short term crop. From the data that the author got from the documentation study, it shows that up to now, the people who are working on the former the Land Cultivation Rights Title of the State-owned Plantation Company (PTPN-VIII) Bagjanegara Block Gedebong in the two sub-districts are worried about the issue of the extension of the Land Cultivation Rights Title, because the former the Land Cultivation Rights Title land has been used since in 1997 it has become the source of their lives and settlements.

In another location, namely in Pasawahan, the process of reclaiming by a peasant in the hamlet has a lot to do with political escalation at the national level, with the collapse of the New Order regime. This shift has an impact on the political nuances that were previously repressive and authoritarian to become more open. It is in this phase that peasants get space to declare themselves, do reclaiming. The initial phase is reclaiming the PT. Mulya Asli by peasants in the Pasawahan location began to occur in 2000. Peasant carried out land

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parcels for PT. Mulya Asli formed a land acquisition committee for peasants as the party determining the occupation to redistribution. Initially, the reclaiming process was carried out without a clear regulatory system regarding tenure at the peasant level. Every peasant household is free to make plots on the Land Cultivation Rights Title of PT. Mulya Asli according to their respective abilities.

Likewise, the situation in Sidamukti village at that time was not without problems, the residents who were finally forced to return home because of the 1998 riots had to think hard about how to survive because at that time they did not have land. The crisis situation and the encouragement of low socio-economic conditions at that time finally affected the courage of small peasant and farm laborers to reopen the case for the State-owned Plantation Company (PTPN-VIII), Dayeuh Manggung's plantation land. Many private employees and laborers in urban areas were laid off because their companies were hit by the crisis. The situation is exacerbated by the prices of necessities that soar and do not match the income earned. As a result, many small people who live in big cities choose to return home. The same thing happened to the people in the village of Sidamukti who traded with the city. During the crisis at that time, most of the residents chose to return home.

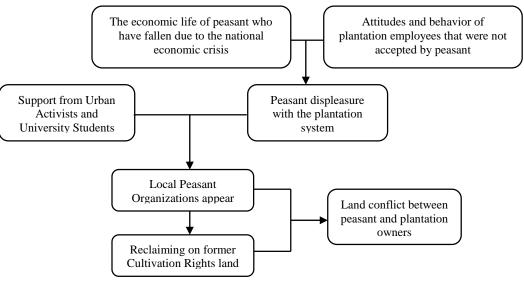


Figure 1. Conflict Process and Resistance **Source:** Field Study Findings, 2019

The role of supporting organizations for urban activists, especially the Sundanese Peasant Union (SPU), can also be seen from several arguments put forward as reasons for the cultivators to take the occupation. Previously, the resistance carried out by the cultivators was based more on anxiety and offense over many plantation actions which were considered to be harassing community leaders and limiting the access of cultivators to the plantation area. Thus, the introduction of urban activists from the Sundanese Peasant Union (SPU) organization made the arguments put forward to change. Poverty and inequality in land tenure are the main reasons for cultivators to control plantation land. It was the organization that then systematically redistributed the occupied lands. The success of occupying arable land is followed by efforts to exercise local political control (Sujiwo, 2012).

III Resource Mobilization Political Networks

Study of the agrarian movement in West Java, Affif et al (2006) cited this area as an example of the success of the occupation movement at the local level based on the size of the land and the number of cultivators involved in the occupation. At the micro level, analysis develops primarily about issues of identity and personal behavior tied to social movements. According to Pichardo (1997), the convergence of macro and micro levels offers a specific historical vision of social movements as related to new forms of middle-class radicalism. It presents a distinctive view of social movements and the larger sociopolitical environment, of how individuals enter, respond to, and change systems. While Pichardo (1997) uses the terms micro and macro, Sztompka (2007) uses the terms internal and external dynamics of movement. In looking at the internal dynamics among these agents, many experts explain the distinctive role of this social movement. They saw social movements as one of the main ways to reorganize modern society (Blumer, 1951); as creators of social change (Killian, 1984); as historical actors (Touraine 1985); as agents of change in political life or carriers

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of historical projects (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991). Others have stated: "mass movements and the conflicts they cause are the main agents of social change" (Adamson and Borgos, 1984).

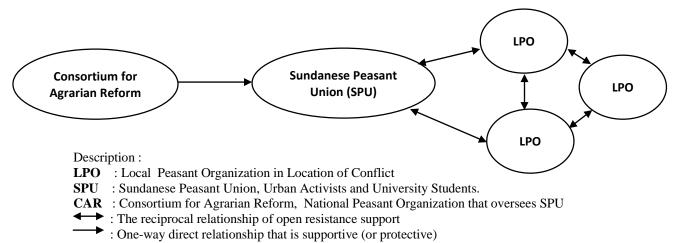


Figure 2. Resource Mobilization Political Networks

One of the indirect effects of the occupation movements in the eastern Priangan region of West Java which later became the mass base of the Sundanese Peasant Union (SPU) was to exercise political control at the village level. During the occupation actions, SPU, which was supported by a wider network of movements, continued to develop analyses and strategies to deal with plantations supported by stronger capital interests and legality. One of the strategies that were then developed was an effort to place a cadre of peasants into village heads. This strategy is considered to be able to secure the occupied land, especially through the making of several village policies that include plantation land in the village area. That way, the organization through cadres in the village government structure can participate and continue to push the organization's agenda to a higher level. Related to the existence of large plantations that have greater political control at the local level, the strategy of controlling formal politics at the local level has indeed become an unavoidable effort in the fight to secure and protect the occupied areas (Paige, 2004).

Moreover, placing peasant cadres in strategic positions at the village level is also one way for the organization to be further involved in policy formulation processes at higher levels, namely sub-districts and districts. It is also an effort to gain recognition from political elites at higher levels and of course to gain access to some government programs at the sub-district and district levels. This success also makes the organization become. it is easier to consolidate because it is done through village administration channels (Bachriadi 2009).

CONCLUSION

As an alternative to building theory of framing these forms of conflict and resistance in contemporary peasant social movement, shows that social identity and actor construction are generated from the political process through mass-oriented activities and access points to the government. Political opportunities and resource mobilization political networks are the keys to the success of the land reclaiming process in contemporary peasant social movements. Furthermore, the role of urban activists in decisive movements towards certain goals, including the establishment of different policy regimes, has been well developed. At the national level urban activists used social movements to articulate social blocks of peasant resistance that were different from the political regimes supported by these policies.

Although the holders of state power can mobilize all their potential, the cases of land conflicts that arise show the fact that conflict or resistance from peasants continues to occur. Judging from the form of resistance, there are several forms of peasant resistance that arise when they want to defend their lands on a local scale. The role of the urban activists of the Sundanese Peasants Union (SPU) in land disputes is divided into two models, namely functioning as mediators and being people's companions. The role of the mediator is taken by the SPU as well as certain individuals by trying to become a liaison between the people and their opponents (the state and or the capitalists) which is automatically carried out by placing themselves one level higher than the people. While the role of a

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companion to the people is carried out by being an equal partner (ideally) for the people in their efforts to defend their land rights. One thing that must also be stated here is the political interests that are unique to the middle class which strongly characterize the dynamics of the involvement of the Sundanese Peasant Union (SPU) activists, students, and intellectual activists.

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