

### **The Interconnectedness of Indigenous Religion and Indigenous Territory: A Case Study of Talang Mamak, Riau**

Muntaza

Program Studi Pascasarjana Antropologi, FISIP, Universitas Indonesia  
muntaza@ui.ac.id

#### **Abstract**

The Constitutional Court Decision 97/2016 emphasizes *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* which is the diversity of Indonesia and observed to be another path to rebuild the relationship between the state and the indigenous people, especially concerning the citizenship framework. However, that decision is not enough to guarantee the sustainable reproduction of indigenous people's religion. This research aimed to showed an interconnection between Indigenous religion and indigenous territory among Talang Mamak people in Riau Province. This research was conducted using qualitative method. There is possibility of tracing the interaction to nature and this implies it is not only a means of subsistence but also has both horizontal and vertical meanings embedded in their indigenous religion narrative. This relationship represents their strong emotional and spiritual connection to nature as well as the foundation to build their identity and form their worldview.

Keywords: indigenous people, indigenous religion, indigenous territory, Talang Mamak

#### **Abstrak**

Putusan Mahkamah Konstitusi No. 97/2016 menyatakan bahwa konsep *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (yang merujuk pada keragaman Indonesia sebagai wadah untuk membangun kembali relasi negara dengan masyarakat adat, terutama di dalam kerangka kewarganegaraan, Namun, putusan tersebut tidak menjamin keberlanjutan agama nenek moyang masyarakat adat. Penelitian ini bertujuan menemukan relasi antara agama asli dengan teritori masyarakat adat pada Suku Talang Mamak, di Provinsi Riau. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa bagi masyarakat adat Talang Mamak, relasi dengan alam bukan sekedar bagian dari subsistensi mereka. Namun, relasi itu memiliki makna secara horizontal dan vertikal dan terikat di dalam narasi agama mereka. Relasi itu mencerminkan keterhubungan mereka yang sangat kuat secara emosional dan spiritual dengan alam; sekaligus menjadi dasar untuk membangun identitas dan pandangan hidup mereka.

Kata kunci: masyarakat adat, agama nenek moyang, wilayah adat, Talang Mamak

## Introduction

Indonesia has two fairly strict categorizations of religion and belief embedded in the memory of its citizens, but some of the criteria of religion taught in basic education include 1) believing in God the Almighty, 2) existence of a religious book, 3) those charged with the responsibility of spreading the religion known as the prophets and apostles. Moreover, Indonesians were taught about only five religions in the New Order regime and these include Islam, Protestantism, Christianity, Catholic Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The other gospels apart from these are classified as beliefs and further examination showed there has never been a policy that mentioned the protection of these beliefs or any official record recognized by the state in relation to this concept.

The categorization of official and non-official religions discriminates against groups of believers (Viri and Febrianty 2020; Sabandiah and Wijaya 2018) as indicated by the prohibition of another religion column on ID cards other than the official religions by the state. This makes a lot of believers adhere to an official religion on their ID cards for the sake of matters relating to administrative and public services. The struggle for the rights of these groups to be recognized by the state is a long process and an example is the judicial review of the unconstitutional rules (Jufri 2020). This is observed in the increase in the number of believers in the country due to the issuance of the Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/2016 (Rofiq 2014).

This decision emphasizes *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* which is the diverse nature of Indonesia and has been seen as another path to rebuild the relationship between the state and indigenous people, especially in relation to the citizenship framework. However, this study argues that this decision is not enough to guarantee their ability to ensure the sustainable reproduction of their religion. This is because the indigenous territory is being threatened by natural resources policy directed towards enhancing large-scale land business with further effects on the sustenance of their indigenous religion.

The spectrum of available knowledge on believers mostly focuses on citizenship framework, especially with a legal-formal normative approach (Budijanto 2016; Dahlan and Liemanto 2017; Sopyan 2015), or based on nation-state values (Salim 2017). Moreover, the increase in the discourse related to the recognition of the rights of these believers was followed by the development of studies on both the administrative arrangements and legal aspects (Gardanita and Widodo 2020), the dynamics of bureaucratic and cultural practices (Syamsurijal, 2017), and polemics on the recognition of the believers' rights (Mustolehudin and Muawah 2017; Pransefi 2021).

Another related discussion emphasizes the focus of the believers on the religious aspect such as the divine or spirituality of their beliefs (Hakiki, 2011; Indrawardana, 2014; Miharja, 2013; Mutaqin, 2013) while another study attempted to trace the history of religion and assuming it as a culture (Miharja, 2015). The studies on the formal legal framework, citizenship, and religion have been unable to show that the continuation of the belief or religion of the indigenous people requires a material dimension as indicated by previous agrarian and environmental studies (Adnan and Solihin, 2018; Sufia and Amirudin, 2016). However, the study determined the relationship between humans and their environment as singular or one-way without assessing the two-way aspect which involves their influence on each other.

This present study, therefore, focuses on showing the interrelationships between religion and the territory of the indigenous people because these two elements are inseparable. A change to one automatically affects the other and this is the reason this study aims to show that the recognition of the religion of the indigenous people or followers is not enough without the recognition of their territories.

This study was conducted with a focus on the Talang Mamak people, as considered one of the indigenous people living mostly in Indragiri Hulu (Inhu) Regency of Riau Province. The

qualitative analysis conducted showed that *Islam Langkah Lama* which is the religion of the people has some material aspects in the indigenous territory which are manifested in the plants, river, *kampong*, and island.

The breath and memories of the Talang Mamak people are beyond fulfilling the needs of their children, family, and communities when they are farming. One life-fulfillment activity is perceived by these people to be connected to the history of their origins, land, family, village or communities, ancestral, and the bonds between the visible and the invisible. It is also related to those bounded by adat which goes beyond the political, social, or economic aspect and reaches the religious-spiritual aspect. It was discovered that all their experiences, practices, and stories are layered imaginations both horizontally and vertically.

Anthropology categorized Talang Mamak as Proto-Malay (Singleton, 1998) and this implies it is the oldest ethnic group living on Sumatra Island or Malay. AMAN (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara* or Indigenous People Alliance of Archipelago) in 2015 estimated the population of the community to be almost 18,000 people. The Talang Mamak people call their religion Islam Old Way (*Islam Langkah Lama*) even though the name is refused by most indigenous people all around the world. This study used the term indigenous religion which is a form of de-monopolization and decolonization of the word “religion”. This is in line with the opinion of Mikhailovic and Pavli (2011) that it is the time for the term “religion” to become more open with broader meaning to ensure the inclusion of diversity.

AMAN, one of the indigenous people movement in Indonesia, use the term “religion” for their advocacy works on indigenous people. Meanwhile, the indigenous people of Talang Mamak are not allergic to the use of the term “indigenous religion” despite their strong preference for “religion”. One of the Talang Mamak elders stated that “Talang Mamak people are religious and have different religion compared to the others”.

*Islam Langkah Lama* is the result of long interaction between Islam and Talang

Mamak’s tradition. Islam can be seen as great tradition, while Talang Mamak’s tradition as small tradition. Those two traditions are interdependent and have long affected each other and continue to do so (Redfield, 1963). The picture of its relations can be seen from memory or thought of Talang Mamak people.

This research argues that *Islam Langkah Lama* not only as religion but also as civilization. I refer to Redfield’s definition of civilization is “a content of thought with its expression in action and symbol”. By conceiving it as civilization, we can see the interconnected between Talang Mamak’s religion and territory through their thought that’s expressed in action and symbol.

## Literature Review

Talang Mamak was identified as an isolated ethnic group by the state in 1980 and this is defined as a “group of people living in a remote area, isolated, wandering around the sea with low social welfare, rustic, and a backward lifestyle marked by a simple social, ideological, and technological system, and observed not to be affected by development services” (Hamidy, 1991). This implies the category has several problems and the aforementioned indicators are not in line with the experiences of the ethnic groups in Riau, especially Talang Mamak. Therefore, some scholars showed that the isolation is due to the lack of development in the community while some others and indigenous activists have provided a counterargument against the discussion on isolated ethnic groups but silently attach the term to identify the Talang Mamak people socially and politically.

The observation from Talang Mamak led to the argument that there is an interconnection between indigenous religion and indigenous territory. Pramono (2014) provided a trail of clues to observe this spatial and spiritual **connectedness by showing that the indigenous territorial tenure system has established a strong emotional and spiritual relationship with the land which serves as the identity for the indigenous people.**

There are several debates on the term and

concept of indigenous religion at both the international and national level as well as among scholars and activists. Some scholars prefer to use the term “indigenous tradition” to “indigenous religion” due to the fact that the indigenous people in Latin America normally avoid the word “religion” because it is believed to be a colonial product. Moreover, the indigenous people in Australia prefer to use the term “indigenous spiritual” because being spiritual is perceived to be broader, more diffuse, and less institutionalized than religion (Mikhailovic and Pavli, 2011).

Several previous studies have placed indigenous religion as a basis to ensure the rate of deforestation is limited as well as to restore and conserve the environment. Meanwhile, Snodgrass and Tiedje (2008) argued that the ability of the indigenous religion to protect the environment cannot be confirmed due to the diversity of indigenous people and the differences in their outcomes based on the variations in the history of their modernization. Therefore, this study attempts to determine the interconnectedness of indigenous territory and indigenous religion through the experience of Talang Mamak as one of the ways to promote the state to protect and fulfill the right of the indigenous people in Indonesia.

## Methods

Data were collected through different qualitative instruments such as literature research, in-depth interviews, observations, and participant observations through two field visits in 2014 and 2015 to three villages including Durian Cacar, Talang Parit, and Sei Limau in Indragiri Hulu Regency, Riau. The Talang Mamak people inhabiting the two villages are customary and territorially four different indigenous communities which include Durian Cacar, Talang Parit, Sei Limau, and Ampang Delapan.

## Result and Discussion

### Talang Mamak and “Islam Langkah Lama”

Talang Mamak people recognize themselves as Muslim and call their religion “Islam old

path (*Islam Langkah Lama*)”. They worship differently compared to most Muslims in the world but believe in the fundamental thing in Islam which is the confession of faith in God and Muhammad as a prophet.

The people also believe that *Islam Langkah Lama* was separated from Islam in Mecca which is the holy land of Muslims, hence Datuk Mandarajati considered to be the youngest daughter of Adam-Eve continued the *Islam Langkah Lama* while the other eight children changed to Islam. It was stated Datuk Mandarajati had a son, Patih Nan Sebatang, and the descendants of this son later built a village (*balai*) in Talang Mamak. They are Patih Nan Bertiga which includes Patih Besi, Patih Kelopak, and Patih Bunga.

There is generally a clear difference between *Islam Langkah Lama* and Islam as obviously indicated in qibla which implies facing the west or sunrise for Islam adherents but east or sunset for the Talang Mamak. This difference also manifests in the house building, consequently the front of the Talang Mamak house is always facing the east and the people are also not obliged to pray five times, fast, or go on pilgrimage to Mecca as most Muslims do. Moreover, their creed is called “*tujuh simpai sembilan kalimah Allah seadanya, lima ucap*” with the sentence “*Surang hamba Surang Tuhan, Surang Allah Surang Muhammad Cucu Cicit Rasulullah. Tiada Tuhan Silain Allah, Muhammad Pesuruh Allah. Dinama Patiha dalam Patiha, Patiha dalam Patih Pasak Tujuh Simpai Sembilan Samat Kata Allah Sah Kata Menjadikan. Baru turun kata lima patih. Taguh di hadat taat ke agama, hamper ke Malikat, Lisa kepada Tuhan*”.

It is also important to note that *Islam Langkah Lama* requires *Patih*, the Highest Indigenous Leaders of Talang Mamak, to live in the Talang Mamak territory because the adat and religion are believed to be inseparable by the people. It was estimated in 2018 that approximately 3,000 Talang Mamak people embrace *Islam Langkah Lama*, especially those living around the Ekok river basin while those around the Tenaku river basin embrace Islam.



The *Islam Langkah Lama* adherents normally fill the religion column on their identity card with Islam before the Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/PUU-XVI/2016 with the indigenous leaders observed not to be satisfied and generally explain to people that the Talang Mamak religion is not Islam but *Islam Langkah Lama*. The people normally hold their wedding ceremony which is known as *Gawai* according to their customs under the leadership of the indigenous leader which is the *Patih*, *Batin*, or *Manti/Monti*. Interestingly, this does not usually stop the government from providing marriage certificates as indicated by the experiences of *Batin Ampang Delapan*.

### ***Islam Langkah Lama* and Territory**

Indigenous people and indigenous territory are inseparable (Pramono, 2014) and this interconnectedness is the center of their worldview, cultures, livelihoods, spirituality, identity, and continued existence as distinct people. The interconnectedness of *Islam Langkah Lama* and territory (*lohak*) of the Talang Mamak is reflected in the proverb linked to the formation of the islands, naming of *lohak*, relations with other parties represented in the history of *rakit kulim*, shifting cultivation, wedding ceremony or *gawai*, and sacred trees of the people.

### **Proverb of The Formation of Islands**

*“Kandal tanah Mekah, takilat Ujung Pandang, tarantang Pulau Jawa, marabana Tiongkok, maapung-apung Benua Kaling, kandal langkah antara gahap jengan tarang, berdiri Gunung Merapi ganti tubuh, kandal Kuala Sungai Limau, manjaram Kuala Sungai Tunu, kandal Benua Hawan, marabana tarikan tiang raya, malampu-lampu nagari Aceh, barulah kandal pulau nang lain-lain manjadi 25 kepulauan ditunggu 25 Nabi, barulah disebut samik basir alam takalimun, ke bawah ke salaman tujuh, ke atas ke pintu lawang langit, sampai ke ubun-ubun langit, kemudian diatur oleh Allah (rasul).”*

This quote is a round of history or knowledge

of the Talang Mamak people with a specific focus on the historical formation of islands on earth. It is understood as a form of testimony of the exploration of the world by their ancestors when the islands on earth were formed and the proverb is referred to as “not history in the world, but the world in history” by Batin Parit.

In the context of the present landscape, there are four islands considered to be part of Talang Mamak territory and these include the Kuala Limau River covering *lohak* of Talang Sei Limau, Kuala Tunu River involving *lohak* of Talang Durian Cacar, Benua Hawan which is presently known as *lohak* of Talang Parit, and Tarikan Tiang Raya, presently known as *lohak* of Talang Gedabu. It is important to note that the proverb shows that these four islands are separated by a stretch of water which can be a river, strait, sea, or ocean. Moreover, Sumatra Island which is known as Perca Island by the Talang Mamak people has not been formed at the time and this indicates the change in their indigenous territory over time.

This proverb does not only show a testimony to the creation of the twenty-five islands but reflects more on the close relationship between the history of their formation and human history and this was further associated with the origin of the Talang Mamak people and their attachment to the *Islam Langkah Lama*.

### **Naming of *Lohak***

The *lohak* name or Talang Mamak territory area is inseparable from the history of Talang Mamak which is also closely related to *Islam Langkah Lama*. It was observed from the proverb associated with the people that the names of *lohak* are related to the sailing history of Patih Nan Sebatang and the three children including Patih Nan Bertiga along the Kuantan Tiga Laras Rivers such as Kuantan, Batanghari, and Kampar, and especially Sei Limau.

The proverb shows that the history of Kuala Sei Limau has a close relation to the history of Talang Mamak such that the milestone of the adat for the community is believed to be developed based on the meeting between Patih Nan Bertiga and the guardian of Kua-

la Sei Limau, Datuk Gigi Tunggal. Moreover, Patih Nan Bertiga was reported to have visited Kuala Sungai Limau to found the village and arrange the adat (*nak mengatur adat, nak mengarang pusaka*) but did not have land and forest (*tanah pangambangan*) which were later requested from his uncle.

The four brief historical names of *lohak* are explained in this section.

*Talang Sei Limau Lohak*: The name Sei Limau was provided by Datuk Gigi Tunggal and its history is part of the great historical narrative of the Talang Mamak people. This is because it is the point for the meeting between Datuk Gigi Tunggal, Patih Nan Bertiga, and the three children which served as the starting point for the formation of the village and Talang Mamak territory. Moreover, *Lohak* Sei Limau was given because Datuk self-purified in the river with limes, and this lime bathing (*mandi belimau*) is believed to be holy cleansing with God and Muhammad. According to Cik Tumpuk, bathing is a practice to “examine and rectify within oneself”.

*Talang Durian Cacar Lohak*: The encounter between Datuk Gigi Tunggal and Patih Nan Bertiga led to the gifting of land to each of the Patih. Moreover, Patih Bunga that brought the durian seeds was gifted land in the upper part of the Ekok River by Datuk and the seeds grew into a line of durian trees known as the *lohak* name Talang Durian Jajar which is presently commonly pronounced as Talang Durian Cacar.

*Talang Perigi Lohak*: The formation of the Talang Perigi *lohak* is also inseparable from the meeting between Patih Nan Bertiga and Datuk Gigi Tunggal. Patih Kelopak was given a forest in the middle of the Ekok River by Datuk because he was carrying a shovel and hoe. These tools have become one of the symbols of adat, hence the shovel was intended for *menyekop adat dan pusaka* and *karang dan kabungan* while the hoe was an heirloom used *ditambang ndak loak, dicangkul ndak habis*. They were used by Patih Kelopak to dig wells in the area which are known as *perigi* in the Talang Mamak language, thereby, leading to the formulation of the term “Talang Perigi lo-

hak”.

*Talang Parit Lohak*: This term is associated with the history of Patih Besi, the eldest child of Patih Nan Sebatang, that was given a land in Talang Mamak by Datuk Gigi Tunggal in the lower reaches of the Ekok River. Patih Besi was carrying two stems known as *batang sipulih batang sitawar* which are symbols earth and sky, day and night, and restoration of custom and heritage (*menawari bumi dan langit, siang dan malam, serta memulihkan adat dan pusaka, karang dan kabungan*). They were used to make a trench and the works of Patih at the time is now known as the Parit River while the ditch was used to form the name Talang Parit *lohak*.

### History of Kulim Rafts

There is a tradition known as *menyemah* in the adat of the Talang Mamak people which is a ritual associated with visiting and worshipping the king of the Kingdom of Indragiri in Rengat usually twice a year, during the Eid al-Fitr and Muslim pilgrimage. The leaders of Talang normally carry a handful of natural products such as chicken, rice, and others during the visit, and this tradition is believed to have a close connection with the history of picking up the king in Johor or kulim rafts (*Rakit Kulim*).

The history of the *rakit kulim* symbolically represents the relationship between *Islam Langkah Lama* and Islam which is manifested in the link between the Talang Mamak and the Indragiri Kingdom. Subsequently, the Talang Mamak people did not recognize the control of the Indragiri King over their territory even though they acknowledge the existence of the kingdom.

This is observed in the history of *rakit kulim* which involves picking up the king in Johor after a meeting with the ancestors of the Talang Mamak. It is important to note that the meeting was necessary to decide on the leadership to establish the rule, adat, at the time because the society was still based on natural law ‘*Siapa Mencancang Dicanang, Siapa Membunuh Dibunuh*’ even though the village had been built which made the situation of the

community to be critical.

The ancestors had to cross the ocean through the rafts constructed using *kulim* wood to carry the king. This type of wood was not obtained from their territory but from West Sumatra and was used due to its ability to float when made in the form of a raft compared to its natural state. The continuous use of the wood led to its extinction in Minang land. Meanwhile, Patih Durian Cacar appointed and sworn in the Indragiri King with an oath that the Patih is the only person allowed to appoint the king and that the king needs to be just in discharging the responsibility of the office and also to be respected and worshipped by the people. It is, however, important to note that worshipping is different from deifying for the Talang Mamak people but only to serve as the symbolic intermediary in their relationship with God as observed by Batin Parits. This relationship also indicates the link between *adat-syarak* or *Islam Langkah Lama* and Islam. Subsequently, the oath during the appointment of the king also showed that the Indragiri royal territory is the same as the Patih Durian Cacar territory but with different forms of authority, hence the Patih has the authority to control and manage the Talang Mamak territory while the king focuses on the implementation of the law in the same area.

### **Gawai or Wedding Ceremony**

All the kinds of rituals or celebrations related to birth, circumcision ceremony, and wedding ceremony are called *gawai* in the Talang Mamak adat. This section focuses on only the marriage ceremony which is referred to as the *begawai*. The Talang Mamak people, especially the *Islam Langkah Lama* Adherents, usually conduct big *begawai* according to adat and it is normally led by a customary leader such as the *Patih*, *Batin*, or *Manti/Monti*. The celebration is for three days and nights and sometimes up to seven days and nights depending on the financial ability of the person.

The first process is to raise the pole (*menaikan tiang gelanggang*) which traditionally represents the pillar that stands in the sky and this activity is usually conducted carefully due to

the belief that any error in the process attracts severe punishment and karma. This is normally followed by cockfighting and the martial art of *pencak silat* which are types of the race (*sabung*) and one of the conditions required to be fulfilled in the *begawai*. Cockfighting is based on the belief of the people that the pillars of the Ka'bah are upright because of cockfighting or gambling. This tradition is also believed to have the ability to restrict the king of jinn from interfering with the procession of the *begawai*. It is important to note that the chickens that lose or win at the pool are normally slaughtered, cooked, and served to the guests. Another important requirement to be fulfilled is the five pillars which include betel nut, areca nut, gambier, tobacco, and lime.

### **Sacred Trees**

There are at least three sacred trees for the Talang Mamak people which are the *simpayang*, durian, and *kedondong* trees believed to be old and closely related to the indigenous religion, *Islam Langkah Lama*. The *simpayang* tree is considered the oldest and believed to have been created during the formation of the world, the durian tree is related to the history of the Patih or the Talang Mamak people, especially the Talang Durian Cacar *lohak*, while the *kedondong* tree is associated with the history of the prophet and their religion.

The people believe the *kedondong* tree grew on the grave of a deceased prophet's child and this is the reason the cutting down is equivalent to the crime of murder in the adat with severe sanctions. Moreover, the tree is tens or hundreds of years old, large, towering up to the sky, and the trunks are never crooked. It was also found to have two or three branches filled with leaves and the fruits have a shape similar to the human heart, thick, and edible. However, its seeds cannot be bred and usually fail to grow when planted. It is also important to note that any plant grew close to the tree normally withers and dies, the tree is not concentrated on one land field such as durian or coconut trees with one usually found in one large landscape, and it is believed by the people to have been planted by their ancestors.



## Shifting Cultivation

Shifting cultivation used to be based on a twenty-year rotation for the Talang Mamak people before 1963 and this normally allowed the field to be overgrown with trees to become forests. This period was reduced in 1999 to between five and ten years (Simon, 2001; Angelsend, 1999) due to the expansion of oil palm plantations. This practice is continuous in the community, especially close to the Ekok River, even though the land available for farming is getting narrower.

The shifting cultivation practice is not just for food fulfillment but also associated with the development of a harmonious relationship between nature, other living creatures, invisible creatures, and the Talang Mamak people. This is indicated by the inseparable relationship between spatial planning as well as process and stages of cultivation with rituals. Moreover, the people believe that cultivation should be square with a path usually created to divide the field into four parts based on the belief that a door needs to be created at the end of each road for an invisible creature. It is also important to note that farming activities are normally conducted in September because people believe planting in November or December usually produces a small yield because the period is too late for farming activities.

The people usually conduct a ritual called *melambas* before opening the land and this involves asking for permission from all creatures living on the land before clearing to avoid any disturbance from these creatures. The clearing used to be mainly through pickaxe or *beliung* before the discovery of chainsaws currently used by the men to cut down trees while the women cut grass and collect woods. The clearing is usually followed by the burning of the foliage and this requires conducting the *mahimbau petala guru* ritual, to be led by a shaman, to ask all the creatures to step out of the cleared land before it is burned.

The next stage after burning is the *menjulung tanah* ritual which is normally used to treat the creatures that are unable to leave the land when the land was burned and the process involves planting *sitawar*, *sidingin*, and *pu-*

*lih-pulih bangun* trees in the field. The next activity is planting which is also known as *menugal* and sowing seeds and it is generally conducted by the indigenous women in groups using wood with pointed ends to punch the ground and plant rice seeds. This seed sowing process is usually followed by the *menghimbau petala guru* to ensure animals do not disturb the plants and *menhah boneh* ritual is to be conducted by a shaman that is an expert on herbals.

The rice requires five months to reach the harvest period but the people need to guard the fields every day by sleeping in the hut and driving away animals such as birds and monkeys that can attack the plant. This activity is usually conducted by indigenous women. Moreover, the Talang Mamak people normally conduct *pitaruh* one day before the harvest by placing offerings and burning incense at each door and the midpoint of the field. The aim is to allow other creatures, both animals and invisible creatures, to take sufficient rice from the field in order to have a lot of paddy harvest. It is important to note that no one is allowed to enter the field during the process of this ritual.

The harvesting is normally conducted in groups by indigenous women and the period is usually influenced by the technology used which is only in the form of *anai-anai* considered not to be as effective as a sickle but normally used to respect the rice and ensure it is available up to the next farming season.

## Agrarian Policy in Talang Mamak Territory

The life of the Talang Mamak people depends on shifting cultivation and forest products such as *jernang*, rattan, and others from the outset. This is observed from the fact that rubber commodities entered the Indragiri region during the Dutch colonial period in Sumatra and the rubbers which were initially rejected by the Talang Mamak elders slowly became the commodity planted by the people in the 1920s.

The economic policies implemented in Indonesia to make Riau province the log provide of the country led to deforestation in the Inhu



region with the number of timber companies operating in 1999 recorded to be 16 out of which eight were operating with expired permits (Badcock and Potter, 2001). It is important to note that the Talang Mamak area was made a concession for the logging business in the 1970s and one of the companies with HPH permits in Inhu District was PT Industries et Forest Asiatiques (IFA) with a concession area of 70,664 hectares. The indigenous people initially refused the presence of the company because they feared it would damage the forest but the people were unable to claim the customary rights due to the fact that the Soeharto regime was strong and the investment was made in the name of development (Simon, 2001).

The operations of the logging company were observed to be based on selective logging but some of the trees considered to be sacred by the Talang Mamak indigenous people such as *jernang* and *sialang* were cut down. Moreover, the arrival of migrants in the late 1990s and early 2000 due to the emergence of oil palm plantations also sacrificed indigenous territories and peoples. An example of this was observed in Talang Parit where approximately 300 hectares of the customary forest have been used up according to Batin Irasan. More ironically, the tomb of the first Talang Parit traditional leader is surrounded by rubber gardens instead of the forests required to be used as a symbol of its sacredness.

One customary forest in Talang Durian Cacar known as the Penyabungan and Penguan covering an area of 1,800 hectares has also been turned into an oil palm plantation belonging to the migrant communities. Meanwhile, the Talang Mamak customary forest was recognized by the Inhu government with the issuance of SKB Number 31/SKB/II/2007 and Number 180/HK/II/2007 (Rivilino, 2014) which is included in the Inderagiri Hulu Regency Spatial and Regional Plan for 2001-2015.

One of the palm oil companies known as PT Selantai Agro Lestari (PT SAL) has been operating in Talang Durian Cacar Village since 2005 but observed not to have been licensed since 2014, thereby, indicating it is an illegal

company. A report was made to the Central Government through the National Inquiry into the National Human Rights inquiry process but the company is still operating in the Talang Mamak customary territory.

The release of the land in Talang Mamak was due to debt snares and this later led to the exclusion of the indigenous women from their land with the men mostly observed to have been involved in the intimate exclusion. This process which is associated with the market or intimate aspect has become a rigging activity which is making the Talang Mamak people face the threat of constantly losing their customary territory.

## Conclusion

Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/PUU-XVI 2016 recognizes both the administration and social position of the Talang Mamak people's religion among the non-indigenous people but this decision is not enough to guarantee the protection and fulfillment of their rights as indigenous people in order to sustain their religion and beliefs.

The people believe *Islam Langkah Lama* is present in their daily life, origin, cultivation system, *kedondong* trees, and *lohak* history, all of which are manifested in the Talang Mamak's territory. Unfortunately, they have faced and witnessed their indigenous territories being hit repeatedly through agrarian policies since 1970 such as those implemented to eliminate their life space and spirituality with further implications on their history and sustainability of *Islam Langkah Lama*.

Constitutional Court Decision No. 35/PUU-XV 2012 recognizes indigenous territory in Indonesia but the actualization depends on the dynamics of local politics. Moreover, it was discovered from the origins of the Talang Mamak people that their customary territory extends to two provinces which include Riau and Jambi and this implies the recognition of their rights cannot be decided at the local level but rather at the national level.

This means the rights of indigenous people set out in the United Nations Declaration on the

Rights of Indigenous People need to be ratified at the national level in Indonesia. The Indonesian government needs to push back the discussion and legalize the Indigenous People Bill to protect and fulfill the rights of the indigenous people wholly and holistically.

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