



## Indigenous Land Philosophy as a Foundation for Patriotic Character: Lessons from Indonesia's Cultural Heritage

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### Abstract

The land philosophy embraced by indigenous communities fundamentally represents a microcosm of patriotic character. When discussing ancestral land philosophy, indigenous communities demonstrate profound reverence for inherited land, perceiving it as a living entity or maternal figure that embodies values of loyalty and filial piety. This perspective fosters responsible attitudes toward environmental conservation, as land is viewed as a living being that requires protection. Indigenous land philosophy places strong emphasis on intergenerational responsibility to preserve land for future descendants. This aligns with efforts to maintain national cultural heritage through the preservation of ancestral land values. The concept of communal land ownership within indigenous communities also reflects values of unity and mutual cooperation that form the foundation of communal life. The profound connection to homeland represents a shared emphasis in both indigenous land philosophy and patriotic spirit. Indonesia's independence struggle history has demonstrated how threats to ancestral land sovereignty can ignite patriotic resistance. This study utilizes a qualitative literature review with systematic content analysis. Data was collected from academic sources, including books and journal articles relevant to the research topic. This reflects a holistic approach to national loyalty and identity, where connection to land transcends physical boundaries to include spiritual and cultural dimensions, forming a robust foundation for authentic and sustainable love of country. The indigenous perspective on land thus provides valuable insights into how traditional wisdom can inform and enrich contemporary understandings of patriotism and national identity.

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## INTRODUCTION

In September 2023, a conflict erupted between the residents of Rempang and law enforcement officials over an agrarian dispute related to the implementation of the Rempang Eco City Programme, which is part of the National Strategic Project (PSN). One of the primary reasons for the Rempang indigenous community's opposition was the threatened displacement of 16 traditional villages on Rempang Galang Island, Riau Islands (Saputra, 2023). A similar phenomenon occurred with the indigenous Pubabu Besipae community in South Central Timor Regency. The management of their indigenous forest, which was supposed to be returned to the indigenous community after the contract expired in 1987, following its use for the Cattle Breeding Pilot Programme (a collaboration between the Australian and Indonesian governments from 1982 to 1987), became a source of contention. The conclusion of this pilot breeding programme paradoxically gave rise to new problems when the East Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government, through the Provincial Forestry Service, unilaterally incorporated the Besipae ancestral forest area into the State Forest Zone. This effectively transferred management and utilization access entirely to the provincial government, resulting in a conflict that culminated in 2020 (Rachmawati, 2020). Subsequently, another agrarian conflict related to ancestral forests occurred between the Awyu and Moi tribes against PT Indo Asiana Lestari and PT Sorong Agro Sawitindo in 2024 (Tempo, 2024).

The conflicts experienced by Indonesian indigenous communities reflect a broader global phenomenon where traditional land concepts intersect with modern state sovereignty. Understanding this intersection requires examining how indigenous land functions not merely as physical territory but as what Benedict Anderson might term "imaginary sovereignty" as a spiritual and cultural realm that binds communities together beyond geographical boundaries. The concept of Indigenous Land (*Ulayat*) operates on multiple dimensions simultaneously: geographical (physical territory), economic (access to resources), and spiritual (sacred connections). This multidimensional nature creates particularly strong community bonds because land represents not just livelihood but cultural identity and spiritual foundation (Kennedy et al., 2023). To understand the intensity of Indonesian indigenous land conflicts, international comparative analysis provides valuable context. For instance, Chinese immigrant communities in the United States maintain profound emotional connections to their homeland that transcend physical presence, with China serving as a symbolic "home" that unites diaspora communities (Zhou & Liu, 2016). This parallel illustrates how territorial attachment can operate through spiritual and cultural dimensions rather than merely physical presence as a phenomenon crucial for understanding why Indonesian indigenous communities resist land displacement so intensely, even when offered economic compensation.

As seen in several examples of conflicts between indigenous communities in Rempang with the government, the Pubabu-Besipae customary forest conflict, and the land disputes of the Awyu and Moi tribes, these indirectly confirm the existence of disputes resulting from disturbances to the "sovereignty of imagination" formed from ancestral inherited lands (Mubarak & Adawiyah, 2021). Even in liberal countries such as the United States and Canada, this concept remains integral to communities from various Native American sub-tribes (Frideres, 2017). In recent research studies conducted among the Sámi people in the Scandinavian region, researchers have discovered a connection between the continuity or existence of ancestral lands and the formation of the desire to resist Nazi-German occupation in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and extending to Russia during World War II. People from the Sami tribe believed that by joining the

military forces of Scandinavian countries, they could protect the existence of their ancestral lands from Nazi colonization. To explain this phenomenon, the term "plurinationalism" is used, which affirms that patriotism and nationalism as understood by modern states or kingdoms are concepts rooted in the love for ancestral lands (Oksanen, 2020).

According to the Regulation of the State Minister of Agrarian Affairs/Head of the National Land Agency Number 5 of 1999 concerning Guidelines for the Resolution of Ulayat Rights Issues of Indigenous Law Communities, ulayat land is defined as a plot of land over which an ulayat right of a particular indigenous law community exists (Kementerian Negara Agraria/Badan Pertanahan Nasional, 1999). Indigenous communities are granted authority to utilize natural resources within their ulayat territories for their livelihood sustainability. However, following an update through the Regulation of the Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/Head of the National Land Agency Number 9 of 2015 concerning Procedures for Establishing Communal Rights over Indigenous Peoples' Land and Communities in Certain Areas, the concept of ancestral or ulayat land emphasizes the fulfillment of rights to utilize ancestral land by indigenous communities. In the general concept of indigenous communities, land holds a crucial position in various aspects of communal life, serving as a place of residence, a source for seeking and developing community livelihoods, and as a symbolic bond among community members within the indigenous environment itself (Shebubakar & Raniah, 2019).

The connection between indigenous land philosophy and patriotic character becomes apparent when we examine the fundamental components of patriotism as defined by political theorists. According to Brezina & Šimko (2022) patriotism rests on four pillars: loyalty to homeland, self-identification as part of the nation, special interest in national welfare, and willingness to sacrifice for national interests. Indigenous land philosophy directly addresses each of these components through concrete practices and beliefs. First, loyalty to homeland manifests in indigenous communities through spiritual obligations to protect ancestral territory, demonstrated in their resistance to land appropriation. Second, self-identification occurs through genealogical connections to specific territories that define community membership and individual identity. Third, a special interest in collective welfare is evident in traditional resource management systems, which prioritize community sustainability over individual profit. Fourth, willingness to sacrifice emerges in documented cases where communities risk imprisonment, violence, and economic hardship to defend ancestral lands.

The urgency of developing patriotic character has become a primary priority in an era of globalization, where abstract nationalist symbols often fail to generate deep emotional commitment among citizens. Indigenous land philosophy offers a concrete foundation for patriotic sentiment because it connects abstract concepts like "love of country" to specific places, practices, and relationships that individuals can directly experience and understand. This study addresses a critical gap in Indonesia's approach to patriotic character development and territorial security. Current patriotic education relies heavily on abstract symbols and historical narratives that often fail to generate deep emotional commitment among citizens, particularly younger generations increasingly exposed to global cultural influences. Meanwhile, indigenous communities demonstrate remarkably strong territorial loyalty through concrete practices and beliefs that have sustained resistance against external threats for generations. The practical importance of this research becomes evident when considering Indonesia's

contemporary security challenges, including territorial disputes in border regions, separatist movements in certain provinces, and the need for civilian support in comprehensive defense strategies. Indigenous land philosophy offers proven methods for generating territorial loyalty that could strengthen national defense capabilities while respecting cultural diversity. Furthermore, ongoing conflicts between indigenous communities and development projects create security risks that could be transformed into security assets through a better understanding of how traditional territorial concepts can serve national interests. Rather than viewing indigenous land claims as obstacles to development, this study examines how they can serve as a foundation for more effective territorial defense and national integration strategies.

## **METHODS**

This research employs a qualitative literature review approach with systematic content analysis techniques. Data collection encompasses scientific sources, including books and academic journal articles published, that are relevant to the research topic (Zed, 2014). Literature was obtained from academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and SAGE using the keywords: 'customary land', 'patriotism', 'cultural identity', and 'indigenous peoples'. Secondary data sources, including government policy documents, non-governmental organization reports, and international agency publications, were also considered to enrich the analysis. Mass media sources were used only as supporting data and were limited to media with a good reputation for reporting on indigenous issues. The data analysis process was conducted through thematic content analysis with the following steps: (1) identification and categorization of key concepts from selected literature; (2) thematic coding based on relevance to the relationship between Indigenous land and patriotism; (3) comparison of findings across sources to identify patterns and contradictions; and (4) interpretation of data using established theoretical frameworks.

The theoretical framework of this research integrates Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities theory and Anthony D. Smith's Ethno-Symbolism theory. Imagined Communities theory is operationalized to analyze how customary land functions as a binding element in the construction of collective identity among indigenous peoples (Calhoun, 2016). Meanwhile, the Ethno-Symbolism theory is used to identify and analyze cultural symbols, historical narratives, and collective memories associated with customary land as foundations of patriotism (Smith, 2009). Anderson's Imagined Communities Framework theory addresses how communities create collective identity beyond face-to-face relationships through shared symbols, narratives, and territorial concepts. In this study, Anderson's framework explains how indigenous land functions as more than physical territory; it serves as an "imagined space" that creates emotional bonds among community members who may never directly interact. Indigenous ceremonies, oral traditions, and customary laws related to land create a shared understanding of territorial boundaries and collective responsibilities that parallel Anderson's analysis of how modern nations use maps, anthems, and symbols to create national identity. The theory is operationalized through analysis of how indigenous communities use land-related symbols (sacred sites, boundary markers, ancestral graves), narratives (origin stories, migration histories, land conflicts), and practices (territorial ceremonies, resource distribution, conflict resolution) to create a collective identity that extends beyond immediate kinship relationships. This analysis reveals how traditional territorial concepts could inform broader national identity formation.

Smith's Ethno-Symbolism Framework theory examines how ethnic symbols, myths, memories, and traditions provide foundations for modern national identity. Smith argues that successful nationalism builds on pre-existing ethnic foundations rather than creating entirely new identities. In this study, ethno-symbolism is explored as a means by which indigenous land symbols and traditions can serve as a cultural foundation for Indonesian patriotism. The theory is operationalized through the identification of land-related symbols (sacred mountains, ancestral forests, traditional boundaries), historical memories (land conflicts, colonial resistance, territorial victories), and cultural practices (land ceremonies, traditional governance, resource management) that foster an emotional attachment to the territory. The analysis examines how these traditional elements could be integrated into national symbols and narratives without losing their cultural authenticity.

The combination of these frameworks addresses how territorial attachment operates at both practical (Anderson's imagined communities) and emotional (Smith's ethno-symbolism) levels. Anderson's theory explains the cognitive mechanisms through which land concepts create collective identity, while Smith's theory explains the emotional foundations that make such identity sustainable over time. Together, they provide analytical tools for understanding how indigenous land philosophy could inform patriotic character development that is both intellectually coherent and emotionally compelling. This theoretical framework directly addresses the research problem by providing conceptual tools for analyzing how traditional territorial concepts could serve contemporary national integration objectives. The framework guides analysis of how indigenous land values create the cognitive and emotional foundations necessary for patriotic commitment while maintaining cultural authenticity that abstract nationalist symbols often lack.

Research validity is maintained through triangulation of data sources and peer review of analytical results. This research acknowledges the inherent limitations in literature review methodology, including potential source selection bias and limitations in accessing direct perspectives from indigenous communities.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Indigenous Land from the Perspective of Indonesian Cultural Heritage

The concept of indigenous land is held by various ethnic groups spread across Indonesia from Sabang to Merauke. For the Balinese indigenous community, ancestral land is never individually owned but is communal property, termed *Druwe Desa*. The Palemahan philosophy, adhered to by the Balinese indigenous community, views land as one of the elements of life balance directly related to the environment or nature (Suwitra, 2020). The first concept, *Druwe Desa*, represents a collective ownership system where ancestral lands are held in common by the community rather than being subject to individual private ownership. This communal property arrangement reflects a social organization that prioritizes collective stewardship over individual land rights, establishing the community as the primary custodian of ancestral territories. The second concept, *Palemahan philosophy*, provides the underlying worldview that informs this communal approach to land ownership. This philosophical framework conceptualizes land not merely as a resource or commodity, but as an integral component within a larger system of life balance. According to this perspective, land functions as one of several essential elements that must remain in harmonious relationship with the natural environment to maintain overall equilibrium.

The Yawa Unat tribe of Papua articulates a sophisticated land philosophy that transcends conventional property concepts through maternal metaphorization of ancestral territory. In this worldview, land functions as "*Ibu*" (Mother), creating spiritual and biological relationships between community and territory that generate profound territorial loyalty and protective instincts. The maternal metaphor operates on multiple conceptual levels: land as womb represents the generative source of community life, providing not merely physical resources but the fundamental conditions for cultural reproduction and spiritual existence. Land, as a nurturing mother, encompasses ongoing sustenance relationships where territory provides food, medicine, materials, and sacred spaces necessary for community welfare across generations. Land as a protective mother establishes defensive obligations where community members must shield ancestral territory from harm, exploitation, or appropriation by external forces (Limbu, 2019). This maternal conceptualization creates existential dependency relationships that extend beyond economic calculations to encompass identity formation and spiritual continuity. Community members without access to ancestral territory are understood as "orphaned children," a metaphor that implies not merely material deprivation but fundamental disruption of identity, belonging, and spiritual connection that defines human existence within Yawa Unat cosmology. The orphaning concept reveals how territorial displacement threatens not just livelihood but the basic conditions of cultural and spiritual life, explaining the intensity of Papuan resistance to land appropriation.

The maternal land philosophy generates practical territorial defense capabilities through emotional bonds that motivate sacrifice for territorial protection. When community members understand land as mother requiring protection, territorial defense becomes a filial obligation rather than merely an economic or political calculation. This emotional foundation creates sustainable territorial loyalty that persists across generations and withstands external pressures for land conversion or commodification. The Yawa Unat maternal land concept thus demonstrates how spiritual territorial relationships can generate practical defense capabilities essential for both local community survival and broader territorial sovereignty objectives.

The status of indigenous land is also reflected in Minangkabau indigenous culture as a high heirloom property, communally owned and thus not for sale. The Minangkabau indigenous community regards the system of indigenous land owned by individuals through certificate ownership as a Dutch colonial method to exploit Minangkabau ancestral lands in the pre-independence era. The existence of indigenous land is still maintained by the Minangkabau indigenous community today, although in some cases there has been unilateral appropriation by certain parties (Putri, 2021). Relationship between traditional Minangkabau land tenure systems and colonial-imposed property regimes, revealing how indigenous communities conceptualize land ownership in fundamentally different terms than Western legal frameworks. The designation of indigenous land as "high heirloom property" establishes a hierarchical classification system within Minangkabau culture where certain lands hold elevated spiritual, cultural, and economic significance that transcends ordinary property categories. This classification inherently designates such lands as inalienable, meaning they cannot be transferred outside the community through sale or other commercial transactions. The communal ownership structure described here represents a collective stewardship model where land rights are vested in the community as a whole rather than in individual proprietors. This system creates multiple layers of protection against land alienation, as decisions regarding land use must be made collectively, and any transfer would require

community consensus. The prohibition against sale reflects not merely an economic preference but a fundamental ontological understanding of land as integral to community identity and continuity across generations.

The historical critique embedded in this passage reveals how the Minangkabau community interprets the introduction of individual certificate ownership as a colonial strategy of dispossession. From this perspective, the Dutch colonial administration's implementation of individual land titling systems represented a deliberate attempt to undermine traditional communal ownership structures, thereby facilitating the extraction and appropriation of indigenous territories. This interpretation frames individual land certification not as a neutral administrative process but as a form of structural violence designed to enable colonial exploitation. The contemporary persistence of indigenous land systems alongside ongoing threats of appropriation demonstrates the resilience of traditional tenure arrangements while acknowledging the continued vulnerability of these systems. The reference to "unilateral appropriation by certain parties" suggests that, despite the maintenance of traditional ownership concepts, indigenous lands remain subject to external pressures and unauthorized seizure. This situation reflects the broader tension between indigenous property systems and dominant legal frameworks that may not recognize or protect communal land rights, creating spaces where traditional lands can be subject to appropriation through legal mechanisms that the indigenous community does not acknowledge as legitimate.

In another study, land in indigenous communities on Timor Island, particularly the Atoni Pah Meto (Dawan tribe) community, is viewed as a mandate from the ancestors and thus holds high religious value. This religious value is inseparable from the function and role of nature or land in maintaining the continuity of indigenous communities. The position of land is also translated into their beliefs in the form of personification of *Uis Pah* (Earth God), so in treating nature or land, the Atoni Pah Meto community always passes down sacred values from generation to generation to ensure that respect for nature is not interrupted, despite facing many challenges of changing times (Manafe, 2016).

The integration of religious value with territorial function demonstrates how the Atoni Pah Meto community understands land not as separate from spiritual practice but as the material foundation upon which religious life depends. This perspective dissolves conventional Western distinctions between sacred and secular space, instead establishing territory as inherently sacred and requiring continuous ritual attention to maintain its spiritual efficacy. The inseparability of religious value from ecological function suggests that environmental degradation constitutes not merely material loss but spiritual desecration that threatens the community's relationship with ancestral authority and divine forces. The intergenerational transmission of sacred values represents a deliberate cultural strategy for maintaining environmental relationships across temporal and social change. This transmission system creates redundant pathways for ecological knowledge preservation while ensuring that each generation receives direct instruction in proper land treatment protocols. The emphasis on uninterrupted respect despite contemporary challenges reveals community awareness of external pressures threatening traditional ecological relationships while demonstrating commitment to maintaining ancestral obligations regardless of changing circumstances.

These indigenous land concepts provide crucial insights into alternative models of territorial relationship that prioritize collective welfare, environmental sustainability,

and cultural continuity over individual accumulation and resource extraction. The communal stewardship systems described across these diverse communities offer practical demonstrations of property arrangements that maintain ecological balance while sustaining community cohesion across generations. Their persistence despite sustained external pressures suggests the ongoing relevance of these traditional frameworks for contemporary discussions of land governance, environmental protection, and community rights.

The profound territorial attachments demonstrated by these indigenous communities and their sustained resistance to land appropriation provide an essential foundation for understanding broader patterns of patriotic sentiment within Indonesian society. The emotional bonds between community and territory, the willingness to sacrifice for territorial protection, and the understanding of land as integral to identity formation, evident in indigenous tenure systems, offer valuable insights into the psychological and cultural mechanisms that generate national loyalty and territorial defense capabilities. As Indonesia continues to navigate complex processes of nation-building and territorial sovereignty, the indigenous experience of territorial attachment and defense provides important precedents for understanding how local territorial relationships can contribute to broader patterns of national patriotism and territorial loyalty that transcend ethnic and regional boundaries.

### **The Concept of Patriotism in Indonesia**

In simple terms, patriotism is a feeling or form of expression of love for one's birthland. Rousseau viewed patriotism as the foundation of the relationship between citizens and their state, based on virtuous values that the state instills in its citizens. From his perspective, there is a social contract binding citizens, where the state offers a concept of virtue to citizens who voluntarily demonstrate loyalty (Samidi & Kusuma, 2020). A patriot, according to Rousseau, has a commitment and belief that their country deserves their devotion, and strives to align their personal aspirations with the ideals of the nation and state, regardless of the political status of that state (Rousseau, 2006). Emile Durkheim, using a classical social theory approach, emphasized the role of patriotism in building citizen solidarity. Durkheim argued that patriotism is a crucial element in developing organic solidarity that allows citizens to maintain internal cohesion and group identity. This, he posited, serves as a guardian of the social order stability characteristic of a state, preventing social disintegration (Jones et al., 2016). These two thinkers provide complementary perspectives on patriotism. Rousseau emphasized the individual and voluntary aspect of patriotism, while Durkheim focused on its social function in maintaining societal structure. Their views provide important insights into the role of patriotism in building and maintaining national identity and social cohesion within a state (Durkheim, 2019).

Patriotism is an intrinsic aspect inherent in human identity. Patriotism is embedded in individuals as loyalty inherent to their country of birth or residence. Rooted in sentiments of empathy and solidarity towards the homeland, a patriotic character is always firmly committed to protecting the state and upholding its values. Thus, patriotism is a manifestation of a noble, courageous, and tireless personal or group spirit dedicated to the welfare of the state and its people. Patriotism in Indonesia must include appreciation for diversity as a national strength (Hu et al., 2024). This aligns with the national motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" which emphasizes unity in diversity. Patriotism in Indonesia's multicultural context requires a complex and multidimensional approach.



Collective efforts from various elements of society are necessary to foster an inclusive understanding of patriotism that values diversity. Strategies for strengthening patriotism must consider educational, economic, cultural, and political aspects to create a strong sense of belonging to the nation amidst diversity (Fitriyah et al., 2022).

### **The Role of Indigenous Land in Fostering Civic Nationalism**

The indigenous land philosophy in Indonesia offers valuable insights for developing a form of civic nationalism that transcends ethnic boundaries while respecting cultural diversity. The communal ownership patterns in various indigenous communities, such as the Balinese *Druwe Desa* or the Minangkabau high heirloom property, demonstrate principles of collective responsibility that parallel civic duties in modern nation-states. *Druwe Desa* system, for example, establishes land as village property rather than individual possession, with rights allocated for use rather than ownership. This system comes with specific responsibilities toward both the land and the community, including participation in collective maintenance activities and ceremonial obligations. These indigenous systems emphasize responsibilities toward land and community that extend beyond immediate self-interest, reflecting what Rousseau identified as the social contract binding citizens to their state (Samidi & Kusuma, 2020).

Indigenous land systems promote values essential for civic nationalism: intergenerational responsibility, sustainable resource management, and communal welfare prioritization. The concept of intergenerational responsibility is particularly evident in indigenous prohibitions against selling ancestral land, ensuring that territorial resources remain available for future community members (Singh et al., 2023). Sustainable resource management manifests in traditional ecological knowledge systems that maintain biodiversity and ecosystem health while meeting community needs. Communal welfare prioritization appears in resource distribution mechanisms that ensure access based on need rather than purchasing power (United Nations Publication, 2021).

This institutional conflict creates a complex dilemma where expressions of patriotism toward the Indonesian state may inadvertently undermine the very ancestral values and territorial relationships that originally generated patriotic sentiment within indigenous communities. When the state promotes individual land ownership through certification processes that enable buying and selling of ancestral territories, it directly challenges indigenous concepts of land as communal property, sacred inheritance, and inalienable cultural foundation (Mujiburrahman & Effendi, 2022). The patriotic dilemma emerges when indigenous communities must choose between loyalty to ancestral territorial values and compliance with state property systems (Inupiaq et al., 2023). Supporting state land management policies through participation in certification programs and market-based land transactions may constitute acts of patriotic citizenship from the state's perspective. However, these same actions represent betrayal of ancestral mandates and cultural obligations from indigenous perspectives. Conversely, maintaining traditional land concepts through resistance to state property systems may preserve ancestral values. However, it could be interpreted as a lack of patriotic cooperation with national development objectives and legal frameworks.

This conflict reveals how patriotism can become a contested concept when state policies contradict the cultural foundations that originally generated patriotic attachment. Indigenous communities developed profound territorial loyalty through spiritual relationships, communal stewardship systems, and intergenerational responsibility

frameworks that the Indonesian state's property laws actively undermine (Siki et al., 2024). When patriotism is defined as support for state policies rather than preservation of the cultural values that create territorial attachment, it transforms from a protective force for ancestral heritage into a destructive mechanism that erodes the very foundations of community identity and territorial relationship (Oksanen, 2020).

The resolution of this paradox requires reconceptualizing Indonesian patriotism to encompass respect for indigenous land concepts rather than their displacement. Authentic patriotism in Indonesia's multicultural context must acknowledge that the profound territorial attachments demonstrated by indigenous communities represent valuable models of national loyalty rather than obstacles to overcome. The emotional bonds, willingness to sacrifice, and territorial defense capabilities evident in indigenous land concepts offer essential resources for building national unity, but only if state policies recognize and protect traditional tenure systems rather than seeking to replace them with market-based alternatives (Schertzer & Woods, 2022).

The challenge for Indonesian patriotism lies in developing approaches that honor both national unity objectives and indigenous territorial values without forcing communities to choose between ancestral obligations and state loyalty. This requires acknowledging that indigenous land concepts represent sophisticated frameworks for territorial stewardship that can contribute to national strength rather than undermine it. When state land management systems recognize and protect communal ownership, spiritual territorial relationships, and intergenerational responsibility principles, they can harness indigenous patriotic sentiment for national objectives while preserving the cultural foundations that generate such profound territorial loyalty.

The ultimate test of Indonesian patriotism may be whether it can evolve to protect and celebrate the diverse territorial relationships that constitute the nation's cultural heritage rather than demanding their abandonment in favor of uniform property systems inherited from colonial administration. True patriotic commitment to Indonesia requires preserving the ancestral values that create deep territorial attachment rather than sacrificing them to administrative convenience or economic development models that treat land as a mere commodity. Only by recognizing indigenous land concepts as patriotic expressions of territorial loyalty can Indonesia build a nationalism that strengthens rather than undermines its cultural foundations.

These values align with Indonesia's constitutional principles of social justice and shared prosperity, suggesting that indigenous land philosophies can strengthen civic nationalism by grounding it in cultural traditions that predate the modern nation-state. As Lawrence (2012) observed in Native American contexts, Indigenous relationships with land prioritize responsibility toward nature and future generations, principles that could inform a more ecological and sustainable form of Indonesian patriotism. The incorporation of indigenous land values into civic education could help develop citizens who understand that patriotism involves not only rights but also responsibilities toward the nation's territory and resources. This approach could bridge the gap between traditional communal values and modern citizenship concepts, creating a distinctive Indonesian model of civic nationalism that draws strength from cultural diversity rather than attempting to homogenize it.

### **Indigenous Land Rights as an Expression of Constitutional Patriotism**

The legal recognition of indigenous land rights in Indonesia's constitutional framework provides a foundation for what political theorists term "constitutional

patriotism," attachment to the nation based on shared commitment to constitutional principles rather than ethnic homogeneity. The acknowledgment of Customary Rights (*Hak Ulayat*) in Law No. 5 of 1960 represents a constitutional recognition of indigenous relationships with land that predates the modern Indonesian state (Pinuji & Dewi, 2019). This constitutional recognition has been further strengthened through Constitutional Court Decision Number 35/PUU-X/2012, which affirmed that customary forests are not state forests but belong to indigenous communities. These legal frameworks establish a constitutional foundation for indigenous communities to articulate their territorial claims within, rather than against, the national legal system. The struggle for indigenous land rights thus becomes not a separatist movement but an effort to realize constitutional promises. The constitutional recognition creates a bridge between traditional loyalty to ancestral land and modern loyalty to the nation-state. Indigenous communities' struggles to protect their land rights can be understood not as opposition to the state but as expressions of constitutional patriotism, efforts to hold the state accountable to its foundational principles of justice and cultural recognition.

The indigenous philosophy that land is a communal heritage to be preserved for future generations parallels the constitutional commitment to protect national resources for public welfare. The integration of indigenous land rights into Indonesia's legal framework demonstrates how traditional and modern forms of territorial attachment can be mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory. This integration offers a model for what Habermas termed "post-national identity," a form of political attachment based on universal principles contextualized within particular cultural traditions (Matustik, 1993). When indigenous communities advocate for their land rights through constitutional means, they demonstrate a sophisticated form of patriotism that combines a deep cultural attachment to their territory with a commitment to national legal frameworks. This form of constitutional patriotism could serve as a model for resolving tensions between cultural diversity and national unity in Indonesia's multicultural context, demonstrating how cultural distinctiveness can strengthen rather than threaten national cohesion when integrated into constitutional frameworks.

### **Indigenous Land and Decolonial Patriotism**

Indigenous land philosophies in Indonesia provide resources for developing what might be termed "decolonial patriotism," a form of national attachment that actively confronts colonial legacies. The resistance to individual land certification systems among the Minangkabau, who view such systems as colonial impositions designed to exploit their ancestral lands, reflects a decolonial consciousness that challenges Western property regimes (Putri, 2021). This resistance represents not an anti-state position but a patriotic commitment to preserving indigenous sovereignty within the national framework.

The historical imposition of Western property concepts through colonial land registration systems fundamentally disrupted indigenous relationships with land throughout Indonesia. The *Domein Verklaring* (Domain Declaration) of 1870 declared all "unclaimed" land as state property, disregarding complex indigenous land tenure systems that did not conform to Western concepts of individual property ownership. This colonial legacy continues to influence contemporary land governance in Indonesia, creating ongoing tensions between indigenous land systems and state development priorities. The Diponegoro War, triggered partly by Dutch colonial intervention in ancestral land sovereignty, demonstrates how a loyalty to indigenous land has

historically been intertwined with anti-colonial resistance and proto-nationalist sentiment (Meideri & Prakoso, 2021). This historical connection between land defense and national liberation suggests that indigenous land philosophies can contribute to a decolonial patriotism that critically engages with Indonesia's colonial past while affirming its sovereignty and cultural distinctiveness. Prince Diponegoro's resistance against Dutch colonial expansion, particularly the construction of a road through sacred land in Tegalrejo, exemplifies how the defense of indigenous territorial integrity catalyzed broader anti-colonial resistance.

The indigenous perspective that sees land as a living entity requiring protection rather than a commodity for exploitation offers an alternative to colonial resource extraction models that continue to influence modern development paradigms. By integrating this perspective into national development strategies, Indonesia can foster a decolonial patriotism that affirms sovereignty not merely through territorial control but through culturally appropriate relationships with the land. Decolonial patriotism would involve critical examination of how colonial legacies continue to shape land governance and development policies, seeking alternatives that better align with indigenous values and constitutional principles. This approach could help transform resource conflicts from confrontations between "traditional" and "modern" systems into collaborative efforts to develop distinctively Indonesian models of development that draw on both indigenous wisdom and contemporary scientific knowledge.

### **Indigenous Land Philosophy as Foundation for Patriotic Character**

Indigenous land philosophy across Indonesia demonstrates how traditional territorial relationships form the foundation for patriotic character development. Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities theory and Anthony D. Smith's Ethno-Symbolism theory provide complementary frameworks for understanding how these concepts create national solidarity while preserving cultural diversity. Anderson argues that nations are socially constructed communities imagined by people who perceive themselves as part of a group through shared symbols, narratives, and temporal consciousness (Calhoun, 2016). Smith's ethno-symbolism contends that nations build upon pre-existing ethnic foundations, including myths, symbols, memories, and traditions that provide cultural resources for national identity formation (Smith, 2009). These theoretical perspectives illuminate how indigenous land concepts function as both mechanisms for creating an imagined national community and sources of ethnic symbolic resources essential for sustainable patriotism.

The Balinese community practices *Druwe Desa*, where land belongs collectively to the village rather than individuals, reflecting the Palemahan philosophy that sees land as part of a balanced life system harmonious with nature. This system creates what Anderson identifies as "deep horizontal comradeship" through collective stewardship obligations that unite village members in common territorial responsibility, generating solidarity extending beyond direct personal relationships. Simultaneously, the Palemahan concept functions as what Smith terms a constitutive myth, providing a foundational narrative for community identity through the sacred relationship between people and the environment.

The Yawa Unat tribe of Papua conceptualizes land as "*Ibu*" (Mother), establishing spiritual and biological connections between the community and its territory. This maternal metaphor operates on three levels: land as womb provides the source of community life, land as nurturing mother offers ongoing sustenance, and land as

protective mother creates obligations to defend territory from external threats. Anderson's theory explains how this shared metaphor creates imagined community bonds among all who understand themselves as children of the same territorial mother, while Smith's framework identifies this as ethnic election through a special territorial relationship that generates sacred communion transcending rational calculation.

The Minangkabau culture designates indigenous land as high heirloom property that cannot be sold, rejecting individual land certificates as colonial impositions designed to exploit ancestral territories. This resistance preserves what Anderson describes as temporal consciousness, connecting present community members with past and future generations, establishing a simultaneous time that unites the living, dead, and unborn within a single community. From Smith's perspective, this resistance maintains a collective memory of ancestral territorial sovereignty, creating chosen trauma that strengthens group boundaries against external threats while preserving the golden age mythology of pre-colonial territorial wisdom.

The Atoni Pah Meto community of Timor views land as a mandate from ancestors with profound religious value, personifying territory as Uis Pah (Earth God), requiring continuous ritual attention. Their practice of transmitting sacred values across generations creates what Anderson identifies as shared territorial consciousness comparable to print media in generating collective awareness of common identity. Smith's theory reveals how Uis Pah functions as a sacred symbol that anchors collective identity, while ritual transmission preserves ethnic memory essential for community continuity. These indigenous systems demonstrate how traditional territorial attachments can serve both Anderson's imagined community formation and Smith's ethnic foundation preservation. The collective ownership, intergenerational responsibility, and spiritual connections evident in these systems create horizontal solidarity across diverse communities while maintaining deep cultural roots that anchor national identity in pre-existing ethnic foundations.

The challenge emerges when indigenous territorial consciousness encounters state-sponsored national identity. Anderson's framework reveals that these different scales of imagined community can either reinforce or contradict each other, depending on whether state narratives incorporate or marginalize traditional territorial consciousness. Smith's perspective shows how state policies that contradict indigenous land concepts through imposed property systems risk destroying the very ethnic symbolic resources that could strengthen national identity. The Diponegoro War exemplifies this dynamic. Prince Diponegoro's resistance against the Dutch construction of roads through sacred land demonstrates how indigenous territorial attachments provided foundations for anti-colonial resistance that later contributed to national liberation movements. This historical connection illustrates what Smith identifies as ethnic regeneration, where traditional territorial wisdom informs contemporary nationalism through the celebration of pre-colonial sovereignty.

Contemporary constitutional recognition of customary rights (Hak Ulayat) represents attempts to resolve this tension by integrating indigenous land concepts within national legal frameworks (Pinuji & Dewi, 2019). This creates what theorists term constitutional patriotism, where traditional loyalty to ancestral land becomes compatible with modern loyalty to the nation-state through shared commitment to constitutional principles recognizing cultural diversity. The synthesis reveals that sustainable Indonesian patriotism requires acknowledging both the imagined community dimension of national solidarity and the ethnic symbolic foundations that provide cultural resources

for national identity. When Indonesian nationalism acknowledges indigenous land concepts as expressions of territorial loyalty, it can harness what Anderson describes as deep horizontal comradeship generated by traditional systems while preserving what Smith identifies as constitutive myths, sacred symbols, and collective memories essential for ethnic foundation. However, when state policies contradict indigenous concepts through market-based property systems inherited from colonial administration, they create a patriotic paradox where expressions of loyalty to the state may undermine ancestral values that originally generated territorial attachment (Putri, 2021). This paradox can only be resolved by developing national narratives that celebrate indigenous territorial wisdom as a foundational expression of Indonesian identity rather than obstacles to modern development.

The ultimate test of Indonesian patriotism lies in whether it can evolve to protect and celebrate diverse territorial relationships that constitute the nation's cultural heritage. True patriotic commitment requires preserving ancestral values that create deep territorial attachment rather than sacrificing them to administrative convenience or economic models treating land as a mere commodity. Only by recognizing indigenous land philosophy as a patriotic expression of territorial loyalty, Indonesia can build nationalism that strengthens rather than undermines its cultural foundations, creating what both Anderson and Smith would recognize as an authentic national community rooted in both shared imagination and ethnic symbolic resources.

## **CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

Indigenous land philosophy embodies core elements of patriotic character through its reverence for ancestral territory as a living, maternal entity deserving loyalty and protection. This perspective fosters environmental stewardship, intergenerational responsibility, and communal values that align with national cultural preservation. The profound connection to homeland serves as common ground between indigenous land concepts and patriotic spirit, as evidenced by Indonesia's history of resistance against threats to land sovereignty. By incorporating diverse indigenous land philosophies into national consciousness, Indonesia can develop an inclusive patriotism that honors its multicultural heritage while strengthening shared identity. This approach recognizes Indigenous land not merely as physical territory but as the foundation of cultural continuity and national cohesion, ultimately transforming traditional wisdom into a resource for authentic and sustainable patriotism suitable for Indonesia's diverse society.

### **Recommendations**

These characteristics illustrate how the indigenous philosophy of land encompasses various aspects of patriotism, from environmental stewardship to cultural preservation and national sovereignty, reflecting a holistic approach to national loyalty and identity. This character is evident in the community's sense of responsibility to protect and preserve their native land. The willingness to engage in struggle when their ancestral lands are violated and exploited without regard for environmental sustainability exemplifies a fighting spirit that can inspire patriotic character. A critical perspective from Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua serves as an important consideration for development in Indonesia. If development plans intersect with indigenous communities, it is crucial to understand how to accommodate development objectives alongside indigenous values, ensuring that the promised economic benefits do not

supersede the fundamental values of the community. The land philosophy adhered to by indigenous communities must be preserved to maintain a love for the homeland. If the bond between indigenous communities and their 'homeland' is severed, there are no values that remain for us to exemplify love for one's country.

### Limitations

In this research, the examination of the philosophy of indigenous land is elucidated in accordance with the criteria of patriotism. However, numerous aspects can be explored within the customary values of tribes across Indonesia. These values may inspire or shape the character of Indonesian nationalism, not solely through patriotism. This study is also constrained by the review of previous literature, underscoring the necessity for future research to investigate customary values pertinent to contemporary challenges in efforts to sustain the spirit of patriotism and nationalism.

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