



## Story Beyond Conflict in Mesuji

Rudi Setiawan; Musta'in; Daniel Sparingga

Social and Political Science University of Airlangga Surabaya, Indonesia

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i12.4254>

---

### **Abstract**

Conflict in Lampung, is a conflict that is triggered by various things, including agrarian/land issues and differences in social class. The conflict that occurred in Mesuji Lampung has a historical background originating from the right to manage land specifically for customary land called "Register 45". From the conflict cases that occurred, it can be seen that there was a change in the conflict in Mesuji, especially "Register 45". In detail, the causes of the conflict are forced or secret land acquisition, land occupation, access to land processing, state policies, compensation, environmental damage, spatial planning of customary rights, unclear areas, changes in use rights allocation, marginalized communities and poverty, certification, abuse of transmigration programs, and not involving the community. This study aims to provide brief story beyond ethnical conflict that is happened in Mesuji, Lampung. Method that is used in this research is discourse analysis by describing numerous factors that stimulate the occurrence of conflict in Mesuji. It can be concluded that the ethnic conflict that occurred in Mesuji was triggered by the struggle for the right to use land at "Register 45". Furthermore, the conflict escalated due to the weak presence of the state in the conflict, including the absence of strict rules governing land issues in Mesuji which became the source of conflict problems.

**Keywords:** *Conflict; Register 45; Mesuji*

### **Introduction**

Mesuji is a unique area both in terms of administration, as well as in terms of culture and society. From an administrative point of view, Lampung has been a division of the province of South Sumatra since 1964. Differences in cultural identity between the people of Lampung and South Sumatra led to the impetus for this expansion. Mesuji himself previously entered North Lampung Regency, then broke into Tulang Bawang Regency, and then blossomed again into Mesuji Regency itself. All of this is driven by differences in ethnic and cultural identities. The Dutch government gave the name of the Mesuji Lampung clan in 1886 by giving Muhammad Ali the title as the person who first came to open the Mesuji river area with the title Kerio Amat or Prince Mat as the traditional king of the Mesuji Lampung clan with a Decree of the Governor General of the Netherlands dated 22 October 1886, with a characteristic white oversized umbrella. According to their confession, their ancestors came from Sirah Pulau Padang, which is an area in Ogan Komering Ilir. The language they use is Malay Ogan Komering Ilir, with an agricultural system

that is *ume* (shifting cultivation) or in Lampung language it is *Ngumo/ngehuma*, where this agricultural system is characteristic of most of the people of South Sumatra and Lampung (Bartoven Vivit Nurdin et al, 2012). In Mesuji, the Mesuji people (who come from Pulau Seri Padang, OKI are around 15%, Lampung Tulang Bawang are 10%, Javanese are 70%, and Others are around 5% (Bartoven Vivit dkk, 2012).

The migration of Javanese and Balinese people to Lampung since the colonization period in 1905 and then transmigration, generally does not trigger major conflicts, small frictions are considered normal, because conflict is something that is given, it is important for change. So, Lampung is said to be a Mini Indonesia, where transmigration is said to be very successful in Lampung, making the Javanese population more than 60%, even Lampung is often referred to as "North Java" and the Javanese are successful as farmers. Many Lampung people have sold their private lands. Most of the balancers (Lampung traditional leaders) have lost their customary lands, either because they were sold themselves, or because they were transferred to state-owned and private plantation companies. As a result, until now the ownership and customary rights are unclear, because they are controlled by the state and companies. The state's seizure of Lampung's *ulayat*/customary lands has been going on for a long time. This is because of the weakness of customary law when dealing with state law. In Mesuji there is a land named "Register 45" where the state gives concessions to companies to clear plantation land, then problems arise when farmers also occupy the area by clearing agricultural land and even building permanent houses. On the other hand, for the Mesuji ethnic "Register 45" is regarded as their *ulayat* right. These conflicts occur between local communities, the state and companies. Local Communities (Mesuji ethnic, Lampung ethnic, Javanese, Balinese, Komering and Semendo) Conflicts in general in Lampung, can be seen are agrarian conflicts, *ulayat*/customary lands with the state and plantation companies, seizure of natural resources, differences in social class, and triggering ethnic conflicts. One example which can be regarded as the biggest ethnic conflicts is the ethnic conflict between Bali vs Lampung in South Lampung (Balinuraga) in 2012, from a class difference conflict to an ethnic issue.

### ***Method***

This study uses a discourse analysis method in which the researcher elaborates the texts or documents that are related to the ethnic conflicts that are happened in Mesuji. Analysis of text or document afore mentioned aims to provide an overview to the public coupled with Indonesian government regarding the brief story beyond ethnic conflicts in Mesuji. Ethnic conflicts that need to be solved immediately before it gets bigger and complex. The present study believes that ethnic conflicts in Mesuji can be solved by elaborating the main issues based on the history of the conflict itself.

### ***Discussion***

From the conflict cases that occurred, there was a change in the conflict in Mesuji, especially register 45. In Mesuji the local community resistance included wanting to show local identity and power relations in their own area against the apparatus in this case the "state". During the New Order era, Lampung was Java, there was no local community existence. The resistance or resistance of the Mesuji farmers at this time is a form of resistance as (James C Scott, 2008) tells the ethnographic narrative of the resistance of the peasants to the state in several Asian countries, where they show local identities that have power relations, even though they seem 'weak'. For the Mesuji people of Lampung, register 45 is the *Ulayat* land of indigenous peoples, and so far, customary law has been weak against state law . The reforms have brought about behavioural changes in the community, made the community aware of their rights and finally dared to demand a share of the benefits from the existence of the forest in their area (Isnaini & Wanda, 2017). Due to the lack of response to community demands and due to the

dissatisfaction of the farming community, legal uncertainty, the courage of local communities is finally expressed in the form of open resistance to forest managers (Yuliana dkk, 2004).

In detail, the causes of the conflict are forced or secret land acquisition, land occupation, access to land processing, state policies, compensation, environmental damage, spatial planning of customary rights, unclear areas, change of designation, marginalized communities and poverty, certification, misuse of transmigration programs, and not involving the community (Asnani, 2007). Register 45 area in Mesuji is one of the former Dutch plantation areas which was abandoned after the national liberation in August 1945, this area was then managed by the Indonesian government and recorded as a forest area under the Ministry of Forestry, then recorded in the form of register numbers. Register 45 is formally designated as a forest area with the concept of Industrial Plantation Forest Concession Rights with the Acacia tree plant. Register 45 has an area of 32,600 hectares based on the letter of the Minister of Forestry No. 668/Kpts-II/1991, then HPHTI was given to PT Silva Inhutani Lampung (SIL). Furthermore, the HPHTI Decree for the Register 45 area was issued in the Decree of the Minister of Forestry Number 93/Kpts-II/1997 which explained that this area has an area of 43,100 hectares. On the other hand, indigenous peoples claim that there is an enclave land that is included in register 45 covering an area of 2,600 hectares, which belongs to indigenous peoples. Based on the Belsuit Resident of Lampung district which is a decision made by the Forestry Service for the boundary of a forest number 249 that the forest registers an area of 33,500 hectares (Asnani, 2007).

Based on the results of a 2004 CIFOR study that examined forestry conflicts in Indonesia for the period 1997-2003 which was also reviewed by Asnani 2007, the difference in the area of the register 45 area has become one of the causes of the emergence of conflicts in this area, indigenous peoples feel that their lands have been annexed by PT Silva Inhutani Lampung. Another reason is the large amount of land that has not been planted by PT Silva Inhutani Lampung, which invites the presence of outside communities to work on the land and has also been mobilized by a customary forum called Megow Pak and the Patriot Non- Governmental Organization, which is a combination of indigenous people. This was the first time PT Silva Inhutani Lampung felt disturbed by the presence of the community, and then reported it to the police. This was the first time the police were involved in the Mesuji conflict, in 2005. This also involved the local government, assisted by the police, in evicting community settlements that were considered illegal encroachers until 2007 (Asnani, 2007).

As explained above, there has been resistance and hidden conflict since the decade of 1997-1998, but then it became an open conflict in the following years. The conflict then became protracted until recently. National Commission of Human Rights has released the three biggest conflict cases in Mesuji. The first occurred on April 21, 2011. There was a conflict between the community and PT Sumber Wangi Alam (SWA). This conflict has been going on since the early 2000s. In that case, there was an act of beheading an employee of PT Sumber Wangi Alam. This action was triggered by the killing of two residents. As a result, conflict broke out. 7 people were reported dead. Two from residents, five from PT Sumber Wangi Alam. This case had become news at the national level because the report was submitted to Commission III of the DPR. The second incident occurred between the community and PT Silva Inhutani Lampung (SIL).

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that the conflicts that often occur in Mesuji are triggered by the struggle for rights over land management known as "Register 45". The right to manage the "Register 45" area is being contested by three parties, namely: Mesuji natives, immigrants or transmigrants who have lived in Mesuji for a long time, and the company. The indigenous people of the Mesuji area feel that "Register 45" is land whose management rights are obtained by the local community based on customary laws/rules that have been passed down from generation to generation. Migrant communities or transmigrants who have

become part of the Mesuji area also feel they have the right to land management in the Mesuji area including "Register 45". The transmigrants stated that they were also part of Mesuji because most of them were born in Mesuji even though they were not native to the Mesuji area. Meanwhile, the company manages the land in the "Register 45" area because it feels that it already has a management permit obtained from the local government or the authorized party. Conflicts that occur are increasingly widespread so that they require special attention from the central or national government. The participation of the central or national government is expected not only to reduce conflicts that often occur but also to provide the best solution for all parties involved in the problems triggered by the management rights over "Register 45" in Mesuji.

## **References**

- Asnani, (2017). Strategi Bertahan Hidup Petani Penggarap (studi Pada Petani Penggarap Kawasan Hutan Register 45 Sungai Buaya Tulang Bawang). Skripsi Jurusan Sosiologi FISIP UNILA.
- Bartoven Vivit Nurdin (2011). Ritual-Ritual dalam Tradisi Ngumo. Prosiding dalam Dies Natalis Universitas Lampung. Bandar Lampung: Lembaga Penelitian UNILA.
- Bartoven Vivit Nurdin (2017). Marga Legun Way Urang: sebuah catatan etnografi. Bandar Lampung: Aura Press.
- Bartoven Vivit Nurdin dkk (2012). Marga Mesuji. Bandar Lampung: LP2M UNILA
- Bartoven Vivit Nurdin dkk (2020) Mesir Ilir Marga Buay Bahuga Lampung. Bandar Lampung: Aura Press.
- Cahyaningrum D. (2012). Permasalahan Hukum Konflik Lahan. [26 maret 2017]; 4 (1): 1-4. Tersedia pada: [http://berkas.dpr.go.id/puslit/files/info\\_singkat/Info%20Singkat-IV-1-I-P3DI-Januari-2012-24.pdf](http://berkas.dpr.go.id/puslit/files/info_singkat/Info%20Singkat-IV-1-I-P3DI-Januari-2012-24.pdf). diakses 23 September 2017.
- Ferdian, Komang Jaka. (2017). Model Resolusi Konflik Kawasan Register 45 Mesuji Lampung Berbasis Hutan Tanaman Rakyat. *Politika*. Vol. 8. No. 1. <https://doi.org/10.14710/politika.8.1.2017.92-102>. Diakses 23 September 2020.
- Isnaini, Hatta, Hendry Dwicahyo Wanda. (2017). 'Prinsip Kehati-Hatian Pejabat Pembuat Akta Tanah Dalam Peralihan Tanah Yang Belum Bersertifikat', *Jurnal Hukum IUS QUIA IUSTUM*, 24.3 (2017), 467–87 <https://doi.org/10.20885/iustum.vol24.iss3.art7>.
- Yuliana Cahya Wulan, Yurdi Yasmi, Cristian Purba, & Eva wollenberg. (2004). Konflik sektor kehutanan di Indonesia 1997-2003. Bogor: CIFOR.

## **Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).