

Local Wisdom in the Land Distribution System of Manggarai Indigenous Communities of Indonesia

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Abstract

The traditional architecture of the *mbaru gendang* house and the land distribution system known as *lingko* have important values in representing the history, culture, and identity of the Manggarai indigenous peoples. This paper investigates the meaning of traditional architecture of the Manggarai community.

The research applies a cultural interpretation approach within a qualitative framework. It is based on the notion that culture is a symbolic system that creates an interpretive narrative.

Data collection involves observations, interviews, and document studies. The analysis engages the social, cultural and legal factors, as well as theories to interpret the data.

The findings indicate that traditional architecture of the Manggarai house and the distribution system of the *lingko* land have enormous significance in reflecting the history, culture, and identity of the community. Despite the lack of written sources, the concepts of "mbaru gendang" and "lingko" stand as tangible evidence of cultural values. This manifestation goes beyond the physical, embracing complex layers of social, cultural, religious, and artistic aspects. Indeed, the rapid population growth and shifts in livelihoods have led to the division of *lingko* land into smaller individual plots, and external influences such as inter-ethnic conflict, inter-ethnic marriages, and the involvement of third parties in conflict resolution have also affected the coherence of the *lingko* system.

The paper argues that while modernization poses threats to heritage and the environment, involving indigenous peoples in decision-making and protecting their rights is essential. The *lingko* system shows resilience and vulnerability due to internal factors such as individual land rights within the *lingko*, which have created divisions and disputes among the indigenous peoples.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Indigenous Peoples, *Lingko* Land, *Mbaru Gendang*, Traditional Architecture.

Introduction

One of the fundamental problems faced in relation to land issues in Indonesia is related to the customary lands of indigenous peoples, whose arrangements are regulated in a restrictive and limited manner. The Indonesian constitution (UUD 1945) recognizes and respects customary law community units and their traditional rights as long as they exist and are in accordance with the advancement of society and the guiding principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. However, they are subject to legal regulations and to be officially recognized, indigenous peoples must fulfill four constitutional requirements: being still alive, being in accordance with the development of society, following the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, and being regulated by law. These conditions for recognition make the position of indigenous peoples difficult because they have to prove their existence and traditional rights, which can be a heavy burden for them.

In the absence of a comprehensive set of rules providing clear guidelines or criteria for how indigenous peoples and their lands should be managed, this issue has to rely on local customary law. This results in a decrease in customary land and even the possibility that, in the future, this customary land may disappear or be destroyed.

Most studies on customary land have not examined these because the focus is only on the recognition of customary rights and their existence. They often ignore the socio-anthropological aspects of indigenous and tribal people (Ekowati, Saraswati & Sa'adah, 2023). In fact, it is not yet fully understood how to sort customary land based on the authority of customary law communities. It is often wrong to assume that customary land objects are only limited to land when in fact customary rights cover the living space of customary law communities, including everything on the land (Sumardjono, 2018).

In various regions, customary land has various designations depending on the environment of the community. For example, some refer to it as *druwe* land, which is customary land in Bali (Purnama and Dewi, 2019). Customary *nagari* land exist in Minangkabau (Putri, 2021), while lordship land exists in the Ambon area (Uktolseja & Radjawane, 2019) and *suku* land in East Nusa Tenggara. Each region has a different name to refer to its customary land. In relation to their existence, it is commonly known that the customary lands of indigenous peoples are inversely proportional to the level of modernity of the population in the region.

The more advanced and freer the population is in managing their land, the stronger their individual rights will be, so that customary rights will weaken. On the other hand, if individual rights are weakened, their customary rights will become stronger. Although in land law, customary rights cannot be revoked, they are also not regulated explicitly, which means that customary rights arrangements can affect the preservation of their existence. In a natural process, customary rights will be erased by themselves when individual rights in the customary law community become stronger.

Customary land is not just a physical field; it includes a meaning that goes beyond just physical land. Since centuries, customary land has been the root of the existence of indigenous peoples and represents the identity of ethnic or cultural groups. There, traditions, languages, and cultural values are passed down from one generation to the next. Along with that, traditional houses play an equally important role in connecting indigenous peoples with customary lands.

More than just a place to live, a traditional house is a symbol of a deep spiritual and emotional connection with the surrounding environment, reflected in the architecture, design, and materials contained within. The traditional house is also a place where various traditions, rituals, and traditional ceremonies are carried out, accompanying the course of the life cycle and changing seasons, all of which are at the center of the social and cultural life of the indigenous peoples. Harmony between customary land and traditional houses is vital in maintaining cultural heritage and spiritual dimensions of indigenous peoples. Fluctuations in customary land ownership or use have paths not only to their way of life but also to their traditions, including the way they design and maintain traditional houses.

In Indonesia, there are various terminologies and characteristics that describe traditional houses and customary land. For example, Kampung Naga can be cited, which characterizes traditional houses as storage containers, the availability of sustainable water

sources, as well as the existence of agricultural areas and ponds for fish farming (Sudarwani, Putri & Renatta, 2023). Architecture of the traditional house of the Batak *godang* tribe in North Sumatra and the *gadang* house in West Sumatra Province shows comfort in the spatial system, building orientation, and the use of materials and physical structures. There are features such as the use of a combined roof and a similar type of opening. Although there are differences in the types of columns and ornaments, this interaction illustrates cultural interactions that influence the design and characteristics of traditional houses in the two regions (Khamdevi, 2023). On the other hand, the *tongkonan* house, the traditional house of the Toraja tribe in South Sulawesi Province, has a different structural approach.

Tongkonan architecture is derived from design techniques, materials, and local knowledge. Through this method, a strong structure is formed with good interconnections between elements. The use of the bamboo pile technique on the roof produces a symmetrical pattern with horizontal and vertical lines. The rocking joint system is the main innovation that maintains the stability of the *tongkonan*. This tectonic architectural approach reflects the advantages of materials and structural relationships, creating an aesthetic out of structural complexity. In the context of traditional design, the emphasis on tectonics is reflected in the adaptation to the environment and the use of ornament (Hildayanti & Sahabuddin, 2023).

In this context, recognition of the various terms and characteristics used to describe traditional houses and customary land in various parts of Indonesia not only reflects the variety of cultural richness but also the diversity that characterizes this country. Existence of these various terms and characteristics reflects the richness of cultural identity that grows throughout the archipelago. Furthermore, in efforts to preserve customary lands and cultural heritage, the very central role of local wisdom and practices of indigenous peoples needs to be recognized.

This illustrates how knowledge accumulated through generations and practices passed down through indigenous peoples' traditions play a key role in preserving the environment and cultural heritage. Research conducted within this framework, by focusing on two important elements, namely the traditional architecture of the house *mbaru gendang* and the *lingko* land division system that exists in Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, opens a deep view of the long history, cultural layers, and identities that attach to the Manggarai community. These two elements, in essence, become physical and conceptual manifestations of the cultural heritage and worldview adopted by the Manggarai people. Through a deeper understanding of these architecture and systems, we can gain a richer insight into how the people of Manggarai have developed and implemented cultural values in their daily routines and how these elements contribute to the sustainability of their cultural and environmental heritage.

This research intends to provide an academic analysis of the architectural profiles of the traditional houses known as "of *mbaru gendang*' and *lingko*." This research further seeks to examine the diverse causative mechanisms contributing to the differentiation of *mbaru gendang* and the individualization of *lingko*, both of which have implications for changes in their respective structures.

Its objectives are:

1. To recognize traditional home architecture and local wisdom in Meler Village, Ruteng District, and Tenda Village, Langke Rembong District.
2. To examine the Manggarai *lingko* land allocation scheme.

Background to the Issue

In customary law, the concept of 'soil' does not only cover the surface of the earth but also includes air, minerals, and even the spirits of former ancestors (Soesangobeng, 2004). In the National Land Law, the term 'land' only includes the surface of the earth'. Thus, there is a difference in the definition of 'land' between the two legal systems. Studies on customary lands focus more on communal tenure systems than individual or joint ownership by several individuals. This is based on the principle that in customary law, main thing is not the individual but the society as a whole. Therefore, individual lives are directed to serve the community. As a result of this conception, customary land is considered joint ownership in customary law communities (Sitorus, 2019).

Indigenous peoples have a deep relationship with their land and Nature, which is seen as a reciprocal relationship, not mere human exploitation (Redvers *et al.*, 2020; Arnold, Atchison and McKnight, 2021). Their knowledge and practice, known as local wisdom, are formed from living in harmony with Nature and are passed down from generation to generation (Corsiglia & Snively, 1997; Siregar, Lubis & Harahap, 2023). This policy plays an important role in efforts to preserve Indigenous people and their lands. Therefore, the active involvement of indigenous peoples in scientific assessments, policy planning, and discussions is crucial for sustainable development. However, they face serious threats due to infrastructure, agriculture, mining and logging activities that endanger biodiversity. In addition, the modernization process causes the younger generation to gradually lose contact with local wisdom, thus risking losing this valuable knowledge (Abas, Aziz & Awang, 2022).

Regulations governing the existence of customary law communities and their rights to natural resources have been listed in various laws and regulations, starting from the 1945 Constitution to village regulations (Ismi, 2012; Ekowati, Saraswati & Sa'adah, 2023). However, even though the number of regulations is still limited and spread across various laws and regulations, the real problems faced by indigenous peoples are still unresolved. One of the factors causing difficulties in the implementation of laws and regulations related to indigenous peoples is sectorization. Each government agency has its own policies and programs, which then create both hidden and real conflicts between government agencies. As a result, legal recognition of indigenous people cannot be carried out holistically. On the ground, this sectorization makes it difficult for indigenous people to advocate for legal recognition of their existence and rights because they have to negotiate their interests with many government agencies (Gayo & Ariani, 2016; Dahlan, 2019).

The issue of customary land as an effort to realize legal certainty includes several aspects: namely the subject of customary land rights, object rights related to their location, area, and boundaries, as well as the types of rights that form the basis of the legal relationship between the subject rights and the object (Simarmata, 2021). These categories are not yet clearly regulated in laws and regulations, particularly regarding the registration of customary land owned by indigenous people. Land law deliberately does not regulate customary rights and allows their arrangement to take place in accordance with local customary law. Regulating customary land has the potential to hinder the natural development of customary rights, which tend to weaken in reality. On the other hand, there are various terms and definitions that refer to customary law communities, such as indigenous people, customary law community units, isolated tribes, isolated indigenous communities, and traditional communities. This difference in terms reflects a disagreement about the definition of indigenous peoples. The 1945 constitution uses the official term "customary law community," but sectoral laws and related state institutions use different terms to refer to indigenous peoples.

Issues related to customary land and the existence of indigenous and tribal people demand a holistic approach. In customary law, the concept of land extends beyond the boundaries of the earth's surface and is different from national land law. Indigenous peoples have a deep relationship with the land and Nature, and their local wisdom plays a crucial role in cultural and environmental preservation. Unfortunately, they face threats from human activities that threaten biodiversity. Current regulations are limited and fragmented, and sectorization hinders universal legal recognition of indigenous peoples. To overcome this problem, concrete steps are needed, such as strengthening the legal recognition of indigenous peoples and local wisdom, as well as integrating policies that are more comprehensive and sustainable.

Review of Literature

Local Wisdom, Culture and Tradition

Multiple endeavors must be undertaken to confront difficulties and cultivate an understanding of cultural transformations. In the study conducted by Nguyen (2017), it is posited that culture is an inherited heritage that is transmitted without explicit intention, providing individuals with the necessary tools to navigate and adjust to their physiological

requirements, physical surroundings, and societal context. Culture is a complex system of norms, rules, and customs that has evolved over centuries through the observations and accumulated knowledge of cultural practitioners. It has been demonstrated to effectively sustain human existence over time. According to Nugroho (2017), culture is a multifaceted construct that emerges through human labor, preferences, and creative endeavors. It encompasses intricate patterns of existence that encompass many elements such as information, beliefs, artistic expressions, customary regulations, and societal practices, all of which are learned by individuals as they participate in communal life.

The observation of local wisdom, which arises from cultural contexts, is necessary in order to establish it as a fundamental framework for navigating the challenges posed by global hegemony. In the research conducted by Diab et al. (2022), the concept of local wisdom is defined as a diverse range of cultural assets that emerge and evolve within a given culture. These assets are widely acknowledged, trusted, and deemed significant in terms of fostering social unity and addressing societal challenges. Local wisdom refers to a comprehensive body of information, beliefs, customary rules, and practices that are specific to a particular locality. This unique knowledge system is shaped by the interactions between individuals and their surrounding environmental conditions, which naturally exhibit variations across different localities. Nevertheless, it cannot be discounted that these local knowledge values may be cultivated and employed by other groups, particularly those encountering similar events and circumstances as the communities that possess these local wisdom values.

Numerous writers have effectively taught and spread the principles of local wisdom to the inhabitants and ethnic communities of Indonesia, taking into account their unique circumstances and surroundings. The research by Im et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2016 explores the indigenous knowledge and cultural practices of the Simeulue community residing in the Nangroe Aceh Darussalam Province. During the occurrence of the 2004 tsunami tragedy in Aceh, the peoples of Simeulue exhibited a higher rate of survival compared to other regions within Aceh. This may be attributed to their strong adherence to the local wisdom and knowledge that had been accumulated by the local communities in preparation for such calamitous events. In addition, the Simeulue community's local wisdom encompasses other elements, such as local aspects, social organizations, arts, and livelihood systems. The administration and maintenance of diverse local knowledge systems are facilitated by the utilization of traditional institutions.

The writings of Manuaba et al. (2012) examine the conservation initiatives targeting tiny forests in the provinces of West Java, East Java, and Bali. Sendratari & Margi (2019) work classifies these woods as either holy forests or sacred natural areas. The preservation of these natural forests is ensured by the local villagers residing in the vicinity of the forest, who enforce a range of stringent customary restrictions and fines to deter any violations. The preservation of forests has long been guided by local knowledge rooted in indigenous myths and beliefs that ascribe holiness to these natural ecosystems.

Sutisna et al. (2021) and Gunara et al. (2019) scholarly work delves into the exploration of indigenous knowledge systems rooted in the presence of customary settlements within the region of West Java. The cultural practices observed in traditional village communities in West Java consistently uphold ritualistic acts that are regularly performed. The advancement of tourism initiatives serves as a catalyst for traditional villages to adapt and cater to the influx of tourists.

Local Wisdom in Land Systems and Traditional Architecture

The local wisdom of the Minangkabau peoples in West Sumatra, Indonesia, was studied by Warman & Fatimah (2023) in relation to forest area management. The study found the impact of regulatory inconsistencies on agrarian reform, the role of government institutions in determining the objects of agrarian reform, and the importance of coordination between institutions for the successful implementation of agrarian reform. Furthermore, according to Dwijendra (2020), Bali Indonesia's local wisdom is able to shape the growth of Denpasar City. The existence of cultural values, community unity, and religion in Bali are significant factors

in shaping urban patterns and structures and providing limits to the use of urban space. Likewise, according to Puri (2019), whose discussion shows that Javanese traditional communities have local wisdom through a mechanism for equal distribution of welfare, The principle of equal distribution of welfare is at the core of land reform, or agrarian reform, through the communalization of land and the allocation of its use to village customary land on a cyclical basis.

Local wisdom in land systems abroad also shows the urgency of maintaining a balance between community life and land (space). According to research Kamei (2018), indigenous communities in Manipur continue to manage land in their villages based on customary law based on the principles of justice. Furthermore, Lakau (1997) stated that customary land in Papua New Guinea quantitatively covers 97% of the total land. The research shows that there are important elements in customary land ownership systems that cannot be easily achieved or replicated by modern nation-states.

The fundamental inspiration for this research comes from Clifford Geertz's in-depth analysis of culture as a symbolic system with profound meaning. This view emerges from the belief that peoples are essentially creatures that operate in the symbolic realm, having the capacity to identify, design, and use symbols as a means of building a framework for communication. Based on these basic principles, Geertz argues that culture is not merely a collection of practices and physical objects but rather a symbolic system that forms narratives that are rich in various interpretations (Geertz, 1973).

Theoretical Basis

The fundamental inspiration for this research comes from Clifford Geertz's in-depth analysis of culture as a symbolic system with profound meaning. This view emerges from the belief that peoples are essentially creatures that operate in the symbolic realm, having the capacity to identify, design, and use symbols as a means of building a framework for communication. Based on these basic principles, Geertz argues that culture is not merely a collection of practices and physical objects but rather a symbolic system that forms narratives that are rich in various interpretations (Geertz, 1973).

Culture is a manifestation that has a contextual character and contains meanings that have a public nature. For example, in the context of the *mbaru gendang* traditional house and *lingko* land in Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, interpretation is not merely a traditional house and traditional land but also involves a complexity of interpretation that is intertwined in relationships among the local community, especially in the Manggarai region. Within this framework, *mbaru gendang* and *lingko* land hold a deeper range of meanings, not only as cultural symbols but also as identity symbols and cultural centers for the Manggarai peoples, which radiate the essence of their identity as social groups that value rationality and deep relationships with others, nature, and the creator entity. These sacred values and the depth of the relationship are reflected in the structure, function, and detailed symbols in *mbaru gendang* and *lingko* land.

Cultural analysis involves interpreting meanings, making predictions about these meanings, and drawing explanatory conclusions based on more detailed predictions.

Research Methods

This research employs a cultural interpretation approach within a qualitative framework. According to Tomaszewski et al. (2020), it examines a case study. This research examines case studies in East Nusa Tenggara Province, specifically in Manggarai Regency. We chose two sub-districts from a total of eight sub-districts in Manggarai because of the existence of traditional *mbaru gendang* houses and the *Lingko* land system. Meler Village is one of the 22 villages in Ruteng District, while

Tenda Village is one of the 11 villages in Langke Rembong District. We used these two villages as observation destinations and places to take respondents because they are easy to access and are 20 km from the capital of Manggarai Regency. Illustrations of research locations are presented in the Fig. 1.

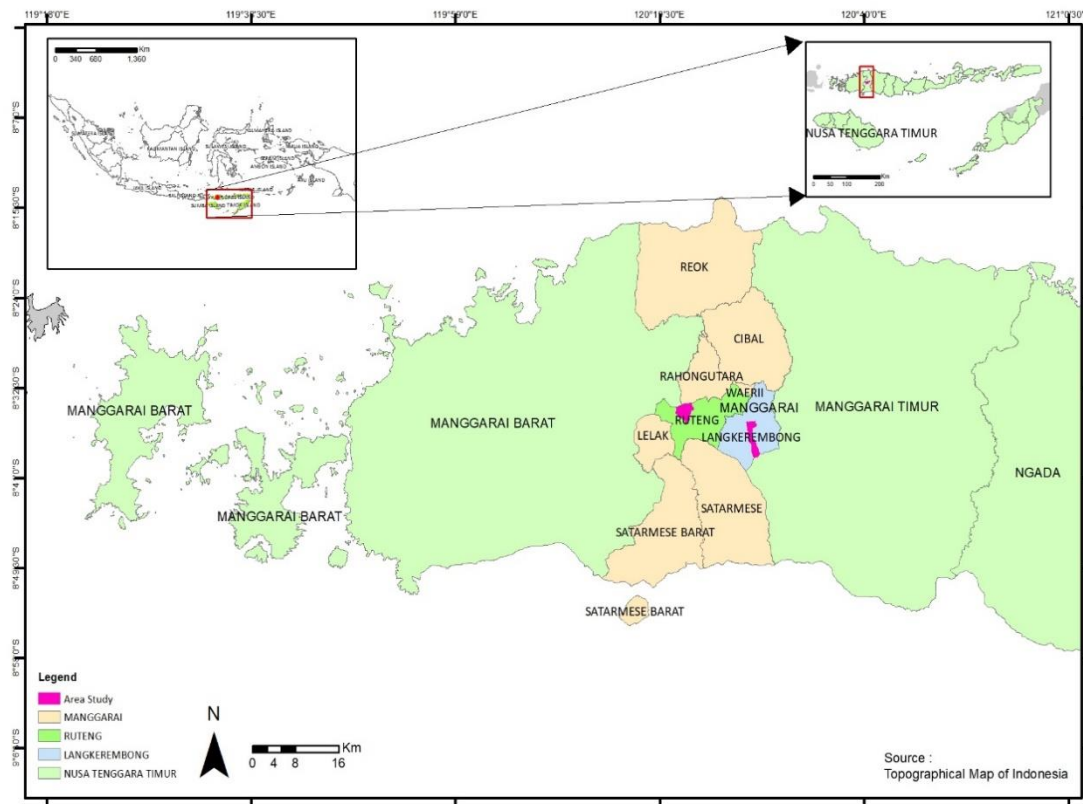


Fig. 1: The case study area in Ruteng, Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province.

The Case study

According to Yin (2015), data collected for case study purposes can come from observations, interviews, and documents related to the research theme. The documents or secondary data we collect include scientific journal articles from websites. We filtered the scientific articles using the keywords local wisdom, customary land, culture, and indigenous peoples. Table 1 shows details of the data depicted in each document.

Table 1: The data depicted in each document

Source: a combination of many sources.

No.	The subject of the probe	Source
1.	Local wisdom, cultural	Diab et al., 2022; Dwijendra, 2020; Im et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2016; Syakhrani & Kamil, 2022
2.	Customary land	Kamei, 2018; Lakau, 1997; Nguyen, 2017; Nugroho, 2017; Puri, 2019
3.	Indigenous people	Arizona et al., 2019; Jelincic, 2003; Patittingi, 2020; Tamma & Duile, 2020; UNDPI, 2020

We also collected primary data by interviewing in the form of questions aimed at getting broader answers (open-ended) by asking key respondents. We used snowball sampling techniques to obtain a sample of eight respondents. The list of respondents is presented in the Table 2.

Table 2: The data depicted in each document
Source: authors

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Job
1.	Bonefasius Ara	Male	50	Official at the Manggarai Tourism and Culture Department
2.	Yudha Arafat	Male	40	Official at the Manggarai Regency Land Office
3.	Marselinus Tonggo	Male	48	Ruteng religious figure
4.	Siprianus Gaut	Male	47	Meler Village Office Official
5.	Hubertus Frumentus Jemadu	Male	48	Tenda Village Office Official
6.	Fransiskus Xaverius Contardo Nangkur	Male	37	Traditional Leader
7.	Agustinus Palu Barut	Male	48	Traditional Leader
8.	Maria Mediatrix Mpeo	Female	29	Public figure

We interviewed each of the selected respondents for approximately 30-45 minutes per person to reveal the history, culture, and local wisdom of the Manggarai peoples. They get this knowledge from their parents from generation to generation, the world of education, and the world of work when they hold office or work. All respondents worked as high-ranking officials at the Tourism and Culture Department, the Land Office, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community leaders. The technique of conducting an interview begins with asking questions, listening to answers by assimilating new information without bias, adapting and being flexible with the style of delivering answers, and holding firmly to the issue that is the research objective. Some key questions include:

1. How many villages have local wisdom related to *lingko* land and the *mbaru gendang* traditional house in Manggarai?
2. Examples of local wisdom and traditions (traditional ceremonies and life cycle (from birth to death), seasonal changes on *lingko* agricultural land (during planting season to harvest), regional languages, and procedures for passing on cultural values from one generation to the next)
3. How are local wisdom and traditions maintained and enriched by the Manggarai peoples?
4. What causes the differentiation of local wisdom regarding the *mbaru gendang* traditional house and the individualization of *lingko* land?

Furthermore, when we made observations on the land using the *lingko* system and the *mbaru gendang* traditional house, we used physical devices such as cellphones and cameras to record and immortalize these objects. Finally, after the primary and secondary data were completely collected, we analyzed them using a three-step process described as follows:

1. Identify local wisdom and traditional house architecture and land in Meler Village, Ruteng District, and Tenda Village, Langke Rembong District.
2. Analyze the *lingko* land distribution system in Manggarai.

Findings

Within this area, there is a local term for customary land: 'tribal land'. Tribal land are identified with different names as follows.

1. 'leo' in Rote,
2. 'udu' in Sabu,
3. 'kanaf' in East Dawan,
4. 'fukun' in Belu,
5. 'wungu' in East Flores,
6. 'woe' in Ngada,
7. 'kabisu' in Sumba,
8. 'lingko' in Manggarai,
9. 'bapang' in Alor, and
10. 'ngeng ngerang' in Sikka.

Lingko land is a traditional system of customary land distribution unique to Manggarai. This system regulates the division of land in the form of a spider-web, a circle centered on the center line called "wau." Each circle has sectors that are regulated according to the boundaries determined by the agreement of the indigenous peoples. Every family or household in this area has access and usage rights in certain sectors of the *lingko*. This system enables fair and sustainable use of land because it is carried out based on local wisdom that has been passed down from generation to generation.

Identity Local Wisdom and Architecture of Traditional Houses and Land

Manggarai peoples are known to have a rich culture and way of life that is still tied to local traditions. Manggarai culture includes belief systems, knowledge, language, arts, and morals, all of which exist and live in Manggarai Regency. According to a study by Raho et al. (2023), Manggarai peoples believe in Muri Krain/Mori Krueng (ruler of kings) and Murijauh (ruler of the distant) as the highest beings. In their beliefs, Mori Krueng is very powerful and holy, and humans are not worthy of dealing directly with him but must go through the spirits of their ancestors. In every prayer, dream, or with the help of a paranormal when holding a ritual, they first say the name empo (a greeting for the ancestors) and then ask for help as an intermediary with Mori Kraeng. The Manggarai peoples firmly believe that the blessings and sustenance of life are very dependent on compliance with ancestral customs. If they do not follow it, the community will experience disaster or torment (itang agu nangki).

This is confirmed by research by Iswandono et al. (2016), who stated that the Manggarai peoples have been practicing conservation values, norms, and traditions for generations to avoid disasters. Furthermore, Manggarai peoples also believe in life after death. Marcelanus Tonggo, a religious figure in the Ruteng District, conveyed this spiritual nature.

"Peoples who die will continue to live in the other world (ata pa'ang ble), so the graves are usually around the village gate (pa'ang). When someone dies, they hold various ceremonies for the deceased. The series of events are a) the ela baeng nai event (a pig as a sign of presence when the deceased releases his last breath), b) the tokong bako event (vigil guarding the corpse), c) the boak event (burial), d) the lonto walu/lami loce event (mourning event), e) the saung ta'a event (the closing event of the mourning period), and f) the class event (the event of giving final provisions to the deceased (pedeng penyetturung cemol) for their life in the other world)".

Marcelanus Tonggo, 2022: personal communication, 23th September.

According to research by Semiun & Jeladu (2016), from a linguistic aspect, the Manggarai peoples have their own language, namely the Manggarai language, which is part of the Austonesian language, which is similar to the MonKhmer language in Cambodia. The main characteristic of the Manggarai language is the placement of the subject at the end of the sentence. In addition, there is a lot of parallelism and vowel rhyme, called go'et. There is also a difference in pronouncing the letters e and e. For example, mela (dog flea) and mela (sulk) are two words that are homographs but have different meanings. Another example is a word that is pronounced with special emphasis and marked by an apostroph ('), such as pau (mango) in contrast to pa'u (fall).

In Manggarai, various types of distinctive arts grow and develop, such as literature, music, dance, painting, and crafts. As explained by Agustinus Palu Barut who stated that:

"In the art of music, Manggarai peoples have equipment such as the *nggong*, *drum*, *sunding*, *mbetung*, or *tinding*. *Nggong* and *drums* are usually used during *penti* events, weddings, and so on; *sunding* is blown at night or during rest; *mbetung*, or *tinding*, is a means of entertainment in the garden when looking after the garden. Apart

from that, the types of songs that are very popular are *sanda* or *mbata* songs, and the types of dances are *saé*, *kélong*, and *caci*. "In terms of crafts, the skill of weaving mats and weaving songket (songké) with *wéla ngkawèng*, *sui*, or *punca* motifs is known".

F.X. Contardo Nangkur, 2022: personal communication, 21st September

From the leadership aspect, Manggarai culture can be characterized by the role of customs or habits, where the role of men and parents is very dominant. Manggarai society is a community that has communal and patriarchal characteristics with a well-organized local government structure. In each village, leadership is carried out collegially between *tu'a gendang*, *tu'a golo* (village head), *tu'a teno* (landlord), and *tu'a panga* (clan and/or tribal head). Every decision is discussed and decided together at the village meeting. Traditional leader Agustinus Palu Barut said that:

As a society based on tribe (wa'u), of course the Manggarai peoples have a tribal chief called *tu'a*. In a village, there are always many tribal heads called *tu'a golo*, one of whom is recognized as a leader called *tu'a gendang*. There is also a *tu'a teno* whose job it is to divide tribal land. Next there is the *tu'a panga*, namely the person who heads a tribe or clan in the village. Each *tu'a panga* represents several *tu'a kilos* (the head of the family of each house). In each village, there are several *pangas* (tribes or clans). Each *tu'a panga* has independent power over other pangas".

Ag. Palu Barut, 2022: personal communication, 22nd September

Tu'a golo are generally peoples or descendants of peoples who founded a village. *Tu'a golo* also has a drum, so it can also be called *tu'a gendang*. In several villages, the roles and functions of the *tu'a golo* and *tu'a gendang* are shared by different peoples for their own reasons. In principle, the *tu'a gendang* plays the role of having authority over the use of the *drums* in the traditional house, while the *tu'a golo* plays the role of leading the communal life. Based on history (Bonefasius Ara, 2022: personal communication, 22nd September).

The *Dalu* and *Gelarang* function as leaders who control several villages (*béo* and *golo*) at once. The *dalu* and *alatang* have a special function in dealing with external parties (Bima or Gowa). Meanwhile, internally, the leader in a village (*béo/golo*) continues to function and is the real center of government for the residents, and the *mbaru gendang* is an important symbol for everyone. The *kedaluan* and rank system persisted until the early 20th century, when *Todo* became the center of power. However, *Todo* was then considered a less strategic area. So in 1909, the Dutch moved power from *Todo* to Ruteng. Since this year, Ruteng has become an important area for the entire Manggarai region. At the time of Indonesia's independence, the structure of king, *dalu*, and *alatang* slowly disappeared with the formation of a new style of village that followed the government system in Java, starting from province, district, sub-district, and village/*kelurahan*.

In terms of traditional rituals, the Manggarai peoples have many cultural rites. One of the rites that exist in all villages and tribes is *pentí*. *Pentí* is a Thanksgiving ceremony where they express gratitude to *Mori Jari Agu Dedek* (Creator God) and to their ancestors, who always protect them so that they are safe and successful in their business (*Pentí weki pèso bèo*). *Pentí* is also a festival of the transition of seasons (*célung cekeng wali ntaung*) and is usually done after harvest, namely June to September. In the past, this ceremony was carried out every year and was often celebrated in every village. They believe that if they don't do this, God and their ancestors will become angry. Apart from *pentí*, Manggarai peoples also

celebrate the *congko lokap* ceremony, which is a celebration of thanksgiving for the success of building the *mbaru gendang*; it is a party to clean a traditional house from all dirt so that it becomes a safe place for humans.

The Manggarai *Lingko* land allocation scheme

Earlier, it was impossible to know with certainty the history and whereabouts of the Manggarai region due to limited written sources. The Manggarai peoples do not have a written tradition, causing information about local knowledge and history in the past not to be documented in written form. The transmission of knowledge to the younger generation was carried out through oral narratives, which, although they have advantages in maintaining the authenticity of tradition, also have weaknesses in the recording and accuracy of the information conveyed. As a result, much historical information is lost, limited, or even distorted (Lon & Widyawati, 2018). Although there are limitations in written sources, physical evidences that still exist, such as the building of traditional houses called "mbaru gendang," customs, and a land distribution system called "linko". They are silent witnesses of the past. One of the interesting aspects is the similarity in shape between *mbaru gendang* and *lingko*, which resembles a giant spider's web where each element is connected through a tight bond, reflecting the philosophy of life of the Manggarai peoples, who prioritize the value of unity and oneness.



Fig. 2: Mbaru gendang traditional house architecture
Source: Author, 2023



Fig. 3: Lingko land architecture
Source: Rosary, 2017

Mbaru gendang architecture has a distinctive shape as a result of the evolution of earlier customs that reflect the characteristics and identities of the local population. *Mbaru* (house) is a shelter from hot and rainy weather, while *lingko* (customary gardens) serves as a source of livelihood. *Mbaru gendang* is the cultural center of the Manggarai peoples and is located in the center of the village. It acts as a central point in Manggarai. In the *mbaru gendang*, all aspects of the culture and local wisdom of the Manggarai peoples are reflected. This involves arts such as dance, performance and games, as well as values in shared life such as collaboration, gotong royong, and deliberation. In addition, various aspects of religious life are also expressed through rituals, traditional ceremonies, and religious practices, with the aim of caring for and preserving harmonious relationships with others, Nature and the Creator (Adon, 2022).

Mbaru gendang is not just an ordinary physical or architectural building, but reflects the complexity of their mindset and values. More than that, *mbaru gendang* reveals social, cultural, religious, artistic and other aspects. As a symbol of culture and identity, it is the center of the life of the Manggarai community, combining the functions of village government, cultural forum, and places of worship. It is a social,

sacred, and cultural space that also acts as a court of law for resolving citizen disputes (Lon, 2020). For *lingko* land, its cobweb-like shape is full of religious meaning, depicting the relationship between human beings, Nature, and the Creator. For the Manggarai peoples, life and reality are complex networks in which every creation, visible or invisible, alive or not, is interconnected to form an orderly system with *mori kraeng* (God) as the center. Manggarai peoples consider themselves interdependent but have unique roles and values, in line with the view that describes Manggarai society as a cobweb paradigm. They feel they are a small part of the wider world, with the belief that life is a network of relationships connecting every aspect of the circle of life with Nature, animals, plants, spirits, and God as the core.

In the history of the development of the life of the Manggarai peoples, changes and transformations have always happened. The *mbaru gendang* and *lingko* lands are no exception, which also work according to the strains of change over time. This change encapsulates various dimensions, including physical transformations, architectural metamorphosis from the outside to the inside of the house, the role played by the house in community life, and the community's interpretation of the values contained in every detail of the house.

It is undeniable that the factors that play a role in this change come from within the community, the evolution of peoples's lifestyles, and also from external influences such as national policies, the boom in the tourism sector, vibrations from the effects of globalization, and various other dynamics that are no less interesting.



Fig. 4: Contemporary Adaptations to Traditional Houses
Source: Author, 2023



Fig. 5: Modernization of Lingko land in Tenda Village, Manggarai Regency
Source: Google earth, 2023

In line with the passage of time, the form of the *mbaru* drum has undergone an evolution that cannot be ignored. Changes in the appearance of a house are caused by two fundamental factors, namely socio-cultural factors, which are the main factors, and other supporting factors, including climate, land topography, technology, construction, and the development process (Lon and Widyawati, 2018). The social dimension includes varieties such as belief systems, religion, the social structure of the society, organizational structure, and the fabric of social relations that influence cultural construction. However, in the context of changing the appearance of the *mbaru gendang*, the argument is not really valid because the initial transformation of the form of the *mbaru* drum stems from the coercive intervention of the colonialists (Lon, 2015).

Many *mbaru gendang* are currently no longer occupied by the customary heads; most *mbaru gendang* are even designed without rooms because there was no

plan for family settlements in them from the start. This makes it just an empty building. Traditional leader Agustinus Palu Barut said that:

".... due to the evolution of activities and changes in an increasingly heterogeneous society, *mbaru drums* now function for various purposes, such as places of worship or Catholic churches, places to practice art, places for social gatherings, and entertainment. I sometimes lock the *mbaru drum* to protect against unwanted activity".

Ag. Palu Barut, 2022: personal communication, 22nd September

Due to the evolution of activities and changes in society that are increasingly heterogeneous, *mbaru gendang* now functions for various purposes. Some of these include a choir practice place, a place of worship for the Catholic Church, a place for the government to convey information, a place for children or youth to study, certain group art exercises, a place for voting in general elections, a social gathering place, and a place for entertainment for children. The use of *mbaru gendang* is often temporary, and many are now guarded with locks to protect against unwanted activities. This reflects the various roles and changes in functions experienced by *mbaru gendang* in the context of today's society (interview with Yudha Arafat on September 22, 2022).

Mbaru gendang, which was once very large, is experiencing a scarcity of occupants because most of the residents have built private houses. The bulk of tribe members now want to build their own private residences and live near public facilities with entertainment and peoples. This condition has resulted in the destruction of the existing *mbaru gendang*, and in response to this situation, the community has preferred to build smaller *mbaru*. Thus, if previously it could be occupied by many families, the next generation of drums is inhabited only by a few families. In fact, only the living room is still large enough to be used as a meeting place for the residents (interview with Yudha Arafat on September 22, 2022).

As a consequence, the number of occupants of the *mbaru gendang* continued to decline, and in the end, it is inhabited only by the customary chiefs (tu'a golo and tu'a teno). Interestingly, apart from privacy and education factors in small families, the move away from *mbaru gendang* is also caused by the tendency to live closer to public facilities such as roads, places of worship (churches), government centers, schools, markets, hospitals, and other public facilities. The reasons for moving to a private house were often driven by feelings of loneliness or a desire to be closer to crowds. Most residents have built houses along the main roads. This reason shows how changes in the functions of the house can be affected by changes in socio-economic status such as the type of work, income level, and accessibility to development facilities (F.X. Contardo and Agustinus P, 2022: personal communication, 21st September).

Lingko land also faces similar challenges due to modernization and social change. The influence of urbanization, changes in lifestyle, and the expansion of development threaten the continuity of this system. Moreover, more and more community members are shifting from traditional livelihoods, which have strong ties to agriculture, and towards modern economic alternatives. The implications of modernization on *lingko* land have a pervasive impact on various social, economic, and environmental aspects. According to Dahurandi (2018) and Nggoro, (2013), the development and modernization have had a significant impact on customary lands in Manggarai, which are an integral part of people's cultural identity and spirituality. Although development can bring progress and prosperity, this transformation also has the potential to threaten the existence and integrity of customary lands and the sustainability of traditional practices that develop therein.

In dealing with the complexity of this dynamic, the author believes that a holistic approach is needed that can ensure a balance between economic development, the preservation of cultural values, and ecosystem sustainability. This is in line with the Nocca (2017) study that Although modernization brings new opportunities in the economic sector, it is also necessary to recognize the risk of changes that have the potential to damage cultural roots and the natural environment, which have been carefully guarded for a long time.

Land Division System

According to the explanation of the traditional leaders in the villages of Meler and Tenda:

"Traditionally, the indigenous peoples of Manggarai divide the natural environment into five categories as follows: *lingko*, which refers to gardens or agricultural land; *oka*, which is a cattle grazing area; *puar*, referring to the forest; *satar napat*, the hunting grounds; and *boa*, which serve as burial grounds. Of these five categories, *lingko* is considered a center of control that has a private dimension. While *oka*, *puar*, *satar napat*, and *boa* have a public dimension, The division of the *lingko* that forms a circle is called the *lodok* system, which has a center point on the *lingko*. The size of the land parcels in this system is known as *moso*, which is measured by the fingers, with the smallest size using the little finger and the largest using the thumb or several fingers".

F.X. Contardo and Agustinus P, 2022: personal communication, 21st September

The indigenous peoples of Manggarai typically have well-organized and structured customary structures. In Tenda village and Meler Village, leadership was carried out collegially, involving important figures such as *tu'a gendang* (head of the drum), *tu'a golo* (village head), *tu'a teno* (landlord), and *tu'a panga* (head of the clan or ethnic group). The decision-making process is carried out through village meetings, where every step is considered and decided together. Within the framework of a society structured based on tribes (*wa'u*), tribal chiefs called *tu'a* play an important role. In Meler Village, the *tu'a golo* (village head) is always present, often a descendant of the founder of the village. They also often have a dual role as *tu'a gendang* because they have authority over the use of drums in traditional houses. Although in some cases, the roles of *tu'a golo* and *tu'a gendang* can be different for different individuals for specific reasons, Basically, *tu'a gendang* has a role in dealing with aspects of the use of *drums* in traditional ceremonies, while *tu'a golo* focuses more on leadership in everyday life. Generally, there are several *tu'a golo* in a village, but among them, one will be recognized as the main leader, who is also known as *a tu'a gendang*

Siprianus Gaut and Hubertus Frumentus Jemadu, 2022: personal communication, 22nd September

In addition, the Manggarai peoples also recognize the role of the *tu'a teno*, who is responsible for distributing land in *lingko*, a system that has a strong connection with their customary structure. The position of *tu'a teno* can be carried by a *tu'a gendang* or an individual authorized by a *tu'a gendang*. In some villages, there is only one *tu'a teno*, while in other places, there are several *tu'a teno*

according to the number of *lingko* (communal gardens). Each *tu'a teno* has the responsibility to divide the land into one *lingko* or even several *lingko*. When land-related problems arise between residents, the parties involved must be able to refer to the *tu'a teno* who divided the land, identify the residents who receive the land allocation, and understand the order in the *lingko*. The inability to convey these three pieces of information can result in a disadvantageous position for the individual. In this context, *tu'a panga* is also an important aspect of social structure, representing a particular tribe or clan in village leadership. Each *tu'a panga* represents several *tu'a kilo*, and in each village, there are several *panga* (tribes or clans). Each *tu'a panga* has independent authority over other *panga*, illustrating the wealth of hierarchical layers found in Manggarai society (Lon, 2020).

According to Jannah et al., (2022) and Nggoro (2013), the *lingko* land distribution system uses a spider web pattern led by *Tua Teno*, a pattern that not only has a functional aspect in maintaining the balance of the local ecosystem but also contains deep values in maintaining traditions and ways that have been carried out since ancient times. first by the community. This spider web pattern is a symbol of cultural sustainability, illustrating how knowledge and environmental management have been passed down with wisdom from one generation to the next. In addition, this system underscores the importance of hierarchy and social structure in indigenous peoples, in which land distribution in a spider web pattern is based on a person's social status in the community. In this arrangement, the role of traditional leaders is reflected in a larger portion of land, reflecting their central responsibility in guiding and making decisions relating to community life. Meanwhile, other members of indigenous peoples also get land allocations according to their status and contribution to maintaining social harmony and a rich cultural heritage.

This circle-shaped *lingko* division system is known as the *lodok* system, where the *lodok* is the center of each *lingko*. From that center, lines (radius) are drawn until they reach the outer boundary of the circle, which is known as the *langang*, which is the boundary for each piece of land. Meanwhile, *cicing* is a term that refers to the outermost circle of the *lingko*. The uniqueness of this system lies in the distance between the two plots of land, which forms a parcel of land called *moso*. *Moso* himself takes a reference from the size of the finger, with the smallest circumference corresponding to the little finger and the largest being the thumb, or even several fingers, giving a wide variety of dimensions in the distribution of the land area.

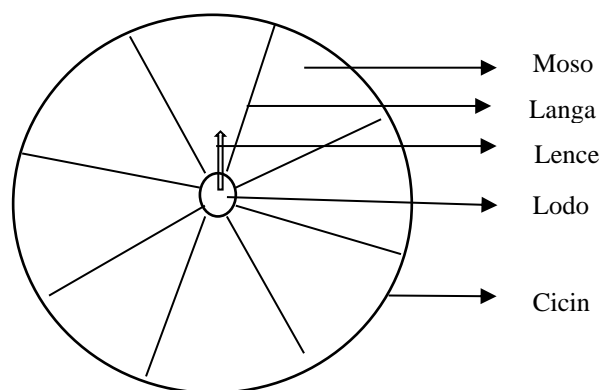


Fig. 6: Illustration of the shape of the *lingko* land

Source: Author, 2023

One of the elements of traditional cultural governance is *lingko*. Socio-cultural activities centered on the *mbaru drum* will receive social reinforcement through the existence of *lingko*. This is expressed in the term traditional house as the center and land area of authority. According to Nggoro (2013), *tu'a golo* is the general and main person responsible for land

ownership and determines that the distribution (lodik lingko) is declared fair and legal. In this way, *tu'a golo* is the general person responsible and the key witness to the legality of land ownership if there is a dispute over land ownership boundaries. Two traditional elders in Tenda and Meler Villages stated the following,

"which supports this: In each village, there can be more than one gendang house (mbaru gendang), or in one village, there is no mbaru gendang at all because it joins the mbaru gendang in other villages. The mbaru gendang is the center and a sign of authority over the land of the lingko. Subdistrict or Reo Village, District Reok, Manggarai Regency do not contain lingko land and do not adhere to the lingko land distribution system. Currently, there is no longer any new land clearing in these two villages, so the distribution of new land using the lingko system no longer occurs. We only continue the lodok inherited from our previous ancestors.

F.X. Contardo and Agustinus P, 2022: personal communication, 21st September

Based on the research results, *tu'a golo* delegation to *tu'a teno* to divide land no longer occurs in the context of the lives of the gendang community in the Meler Village area, Ruteng District, and Tenda Village, Langke Rembong District. This is caused by the absence of empty land that can be used as a *lingko* to be distributed to community members. Therefore, the main role of *tu'a golo* and *tu'a teno* is that of key witnesses to land ownership. Informant numbers two and eight said that. If there is a dispute regarding customary land boundaries or land ownership, the resolution is carried out through positive legal institutions (state law), and *tu'a golo* testimony is the main factor considered by the judge in making a decision (Interview with Maria Mediatrix Mpeo, 2022).

According to Dahurandi (2018) dan Jannah et al. (2022), *lingko* land has a tendency to weaken due to a number of factors that influence it, both internal and external. One of the internal factors that plays a role is the strengthening of individual rights over *lingko* land controlled by community members. Based on an interview with Manggarai Regency Land Office Official Yudha Arafat: "*in Ruteng City (the capital of Manggarai Regency) and the surrounding area, almost all land is owned with individual ownership rights.*" (Yudha Arafat, 2022: personal communication, 22nd September). Nonetheless, although indigenous structures still play a role at the village level, at the sub-district and district levels, they tend to stagnate. According to the author, limitations in the development of customary structures at a higher level may be triggered by a process of decline due to modernization. In this context, indigenous peoples are also open to the inclusion of individuals from outside the community as members of the community. This is reflected in interethnic marriages and transfers of land rights to foreigners through sale and purchase transactions.

Lingko land has a tendency to weaken due to a number of factors that influence it, both internal and external. One of the internal factors that plays a role is the strengthening of individual rights over *lingko* land controlled by community members. This development is related to divisions within the indigenous community, where disputes arose in an attempt to seize the rights to the *lingko* land. The causes of this dispute involve considerations of increasing the economic value of land as well as the dimming of social ties that previously united indigenous peoples in a legal alliance with customary land rights. In addition, significant population growth has also contributed to changes in land use, with the division of *lingko* into land units controlled by individuals. This phenomenon has resulted in a reduction in the area of land subject to customary rights from time to time. For example, in Ruteng City (the capital of Manggarai Regency) and the surrounding area, almost all land is owned with individual ownership rights (interview with Yudha Arafat on September 22, 2022). Nonetheless, although indigenous structures still play a role at the village level, at the sub-district and district levels, they tend to stagnate. Limitations in the development of customary structures at a higher level

may be triggered by a process of decline due to modernization. In this context, indigenous peoples are also open to the inclusion of individuals from outside the community as members of the community. This is reflected in interethnic marriages and transfers of land rights to foreigners through sale and purchase transactions.

External factors also contributed to the dimming of traditional institutions in Manggarai Regency. First, external influences such as inter-ethnic conflict have a significant impact. An increase in the economic value of land, related to the development of capital in society in line with rapid population growth, has the potential to trigger inter-ethnic conflict (Jehamat & Keha Si, 2018). In 2017, Manggarai Regency recorded 371 drums (traditional houses), each of which had several *lingko* (land units) (Siprianus Gaut and Hubertus Frumentus Jemadu, 2022: personal communication, 22nd September).

It is important to remember that indigenous peoples and the *lingko* land system can still be found, but their definitions and characteristics no longer retain their pristine or original character as they did in the past. This phenomenon was revealed through various changes that occurred, including: 1) The *lingko* Center, which was previously the core of the system and was heavily guarded, is now often in the possession of certain individuals; 2) The gendang house, which used to be a center for community meetings and deliberations, has undergone a transformation in its form, including the use of a tin roof and the absence of the buffalo head symbol which symbolizes the prestige of the Manggarai peoples; 3) Traditional institutions, which were once symbols of power and authority, have experienced a decline in power and are often unable to carry out their roles optimally in terms of customary governance and the regulation of aspects such as land use, maintenance and distribution. The strengthening of individual rights—which have undergone a process of individualization—is what is driving this change. As a result, personal rights are increasingly dominant, causing a weakening of collective rights and even having the potential to lead to the loss of these rights.

Conclusions

This article offers significant perspectives on the multifaceted nature of local knowledge and community elements within the customary land system in Manggarai. The *Lingko* land system observed in Manggarai serves as an illustrative instance of how indigenous groups may proficiently administer land resources in a manner that is both sustainable and equitable, hence offering valuable insights for land administration and conservation endeavors.

This article elucidates the many obstacles and adaptations encountered by the Manggarai community in their efforts to save their cultural heritage and customary land utilization practices amidst the process of modernization. This highlights the necessity of implementing a holistic strategy that acknowledges and values the cultural heritage of indigenous communities, while also capitalizing on economic prospects for progress, all the while safeguarding their environment and conserving their traditional practices. In summary, this article offers significant perspectives on the multifaceted nature of local knowledge and community elements within the customary land system in Manggarai. The *Lingko* land system in Manggarai serves as an illustrative case study showcasing the successful management of land resources by indigenous groups in a manner that is both sustainable and equitable. This example offers valuable insights for the fields of land governance and conservation, highlighting crucial lessons that may be applied to similar endeavors.

In summary, this work provides insights into the complex customary land distribution system employed by the Manggarai peoples. It emphasizes the significance of traditional leaders and the difficulties they have in safeguarding their cultural legacy and promoting sustainable land management approaches. The transformation in the roles of *tu'a golo* and *tu'a teno*, the evolving patterns of land ownership, and the possible decrease in customary frameworks at higher levels of administration highlight the necessity for an equitable strategy that acknowledges tradition while accommodating the shifting dynamics of contemporary society.

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