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The exploitation of natural resources and sociocultural changes in Sumuri community, West-Papua, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines the exploitation of natural resources and sociocultural changes in Sumuri community in West Papua Indonesia. Applying the qualitative method and field study, the data were collected through participant observations, in-depth interviews, and document. The results show that the establishment of extractive multinational companies engenders problems for the Sumuri community. This is because the exploration and exploitation of natural resources carried out by these multi-national companies is on land belonging to local communities where this land has traditional significance for that community. Therefore, the exploration carried out has made the communal customary land lose its meaning for the community. Three changes caused by the waves of exploitation by the global corporates in Sumuri are: the fading communal life, the decreasing meaning of customary land, and the increasing tensions between clans. By this process, communal customary land becomes a medium of transaction between the global economic network and local authorities. The commodification of customary-land changes its meaning. Land that was the basis of community life now become a reason for conflict. The community realizes land commodification proceeded on their land.

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Introduction

The exploitation of natural resources does not exist in a vacuum (Adams et al., 2019; Hassan et al., 2019). It means that exploitation of natural resources occurs due to various factors, such as economic, social and political factors (Martinez-Saito et al., 2022). This is the case in the southern part of Bintuni Bay, West Papua, Indonesia. The exploitation of natural resources in the villages has always been economically and politically invested (Adams et al., 2019; Asif et al., 2020). It directly connects the tribal communities with the global economic forces (Asif et al., 2020; Hassan et al., 2019). The encounters with global capital investment have been going on for a long time, with milestones that reshape the identity of the Sumuri people and the tribal communities in the Bintuni Bay region. Changes in local communities begin with changes in concepts about life and ultimately have an impact on changes in their overall ideas, behavior and activities.

Studies on the political economy of natural resource extraction in Indonesia have gained growing attention. Many intersect with political ecology, which views environmental change as shaped by political, economic, and cultural forces (Robbins, 2019). This approach reveals how environmental degradation and socio-cultural shifts are tied to power over land, labor, and identity (Bryant & Bailey, 1997; Li, 2014). Literature in this field can be grouped into three strands. First, studies on community resistance, such as (Adam & Bagir, 2022; Kunz et al., 2024; Upe et al., 2020), show how local actors oppose corporate projects through everyday political agency. Second, research on land and food regimes highlights how state-corporate alliances use land for political ends (Berenschot et al., 2022; Berenschot & Dhiaulhaq, 2025; Hamilton-Hart, 2019). Third, studies on corporate-state entanglements in frontier zones like Papua illustrate how companies like Freeport function as quasi-sovereign powers (Dhosa, 2019; Tsaqif et al., 2024). More broadly, resource extraction is seen as a political process that reshapes regional identities Agnew (2000), media narratives (Prat & Strömberg, 2013), and commodity relations (Tsing, 2005).

Despite this growing scholarship, there remains a significant gap in the literature: very few studies have closely examined how indigenous communities in Papua, especially in lesser-known areas such as Sumuri in Teluk Bintuni, experience both the material and symbolic consequences of resource extraction. While extractive conflicts in Papua have been discussed in relation to Freeport and Grasberg, other multinational operations—such as those involved in oil and gas—are under-explored. More importantly, prior work has focused disproportionately on large-scale resistance or policy analysis, without sufficient attention to the everyday sociocultural transformations within affected communities. Theoretically, this research seeks to extend political ecology literature by foregrounding not just resistance and dispossession, but the gradual erosion of cultural values, land-based identities, and social structures in contexts where overt conflict may be absent but long-term transformation is profound (Bainton et al., 2022). This study not only fills an empirical gap in our understanding of Papua's extractive frontiers but also contributes to theoretical debates on recognition, power, and the socioecological consequences of resource capitalism.

It has been recorded that since 2007 the Sumuri area has been entered by multi-national corporations. Starting with the entry of BP Tangguh Limited, a company oriented to exploring natural gas content in the Bintuni area, this was followed by the entry of Genting Oil Kasuri in 2007, whose orientation was also to explore and exploit oil deposits in the Bintuni area. These two multi-national corporations have different fields of exploration and exploitation. The third company to enter the Bintuni area is Eni Oil, which set up in the Bintuni area in 2011. This multinational corporation is carrying out the land exploration process searching for natural resources contained in Bintuni Bay, but the exploration is on land that is traditionally owned by local tribes and has certain cultural and social values that are difficult to separate from the local community.

The contact between the power of multi-national corporations and local communities has resulted in various changes. Therefore, the problem that will be explored in this study is what forms of exploration and exploitation are carried out by multi-national corporations in carrying out their work processes, and what impact this has on the Bintuni community. These questions are based on the assumption that exploration efforts carried out by multi-national corporations involve various heavy equipment, equipment which is used on community land. Therefore, it is important for every exploration effort to be studied so that we can understand the possible impacts on society. The next assumption is that the existence of natural exploration in Bintuni assumes that inevitable changes will occur in the lives of the Bintuni people. For this reason, changes in society resulting from the exploration process are important to reveal.

Methodology

This research was conducted in Bintuni Bay area Papua Indonesia with the consideration that this area is a very appropriate representation of an area undergoing a process of natural exploration in the context of traditional society

(Figure 1). Bintuni is interesting as an area for a case study because many multi-national corporations have entered the area, while the Bintuni community is a traditional society that still has strong ties to its traditional values. As stated by (Lune & Berg, 2017; Yin, 2018), a case study is a study of a specific reality.

Participants

There are two data sources in this study: primary data and secondary data sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The primary data sources in this study are multi-national corporations and the community. There were three informants from the multinational corporation and six informants who were representatives of the Bintuni community. The three people from the multi-national corporation are field managers, and from the community members are six community leaders and traditional leaders who are assumed to fully understand the processes occurring in their community with the presence of the multinational corporation to explore their territory. All the informants selected based on the representativeness of the both entities, the field managers of the multi-national corporations operated in the Bintuni area as well as the local communities.

Data Collection

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and document study. Observations focused on the exploration activities of multinational corporations and the conditions of affected communities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Semi-structured and free interviews were conducted with all informants, using an interview guide for the former (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Taherdoost, 2021) and an open-ended approach for the latter to ensure in-depth data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Document study included research reports, bulletins, and books, as well as local newspapers such as Suara Pesisir, published by the Bintuni Bay Regional Government, and Kadate, published by Tangguh LNG. Historical sources were obtained from the archives of the Bintuni Bay government, the national archives, and other governmental institutions.

Data Analysis

This study applied qualitative methods and case study approach. Qualitative methods are research methods that rely on natural data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and do not rely on statistical analysis. Meanwhile, case study is an approach in qualitative research that focuses on objects that have specifications (Yin, 2018). This research reveals specific data from the Bintuni community whose land is undergoing a massive exploration process. The inevitability of societal change is a socio-cultural process that is important to uncover. Data analyses are implemented manually.

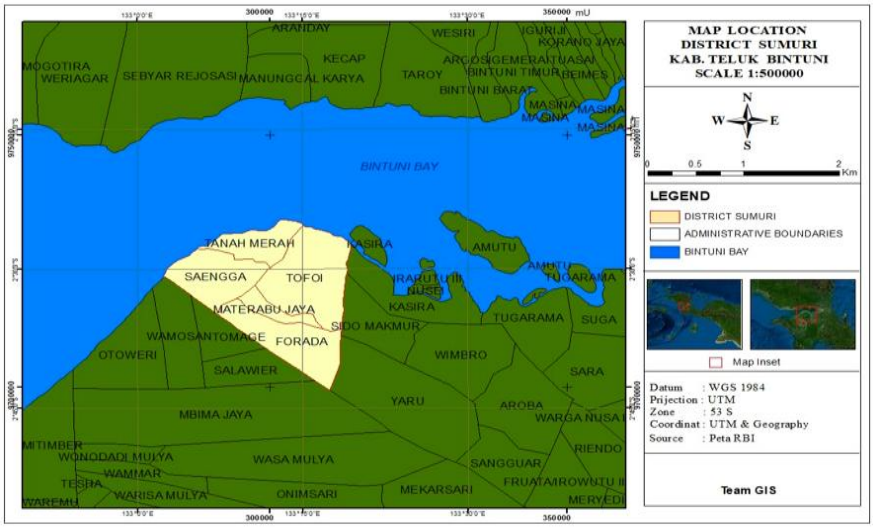


Figure 1 Research location

Results

The Actions Done by Multi-national Companies toward Sumuri Community

Exploration of project site

Related to the exploration of project site, M1, a representative of the multinational corporation said:

"This project is a natural exploration project. Long before the company has done sensing, the need is to find out where there are sources of LNG. The existence of this source is important because the company will place offices and factories there. Sensing carried out before exploration will reduce the inaccuracy of the exploration location."

And followed by M2 another representative of another corporation:

"Due to the accuracy of the location, we must apply the results of the sensing we carry out. There are cases where the exploration location is in a residential area. It's sensitive. Therefore, we have to approach the local residents so that they are willing to move to a place they agree with. Because of the interests of the project, that's what we can do."

M3, the other representative of the other corporation made the below statement:

"The sensing process carried out in this project is completely based on technical knowledge. Determining field points for mining must be done with precision. For this reason, we are also considering how to make this project work, but local residents who live in the prospective mining area need to be protected so that they are not disturbed, and the technical process can run well."

From the perspective of local residents, the traditional leaders (L1, L2, L3, L6) in Bintuni gave the following explanation:

"I understand this project is important for me and the people here, also for the country of Indonesia. We try to adapt to the conditions required by the company. For example, we are looking for a mining point, and we have to go somewhere else, so we follow the direction of the company."

Other informants (L1, L2, L4, L5))from the local population said the following regarding mining exploration in Bintuni:

"We have been acquainted with foreign companies for a long time. Therefore, our people are used to adapting to the needs of companies operating here. We have no reason to say "no". The company is also "good" to us, so we support the exploration carried out."

Presentations from both the project and the community reveal stark differences in perspective. Multinational companies assert their dominance in determining locations and implementing technical procedures in Bintuni's traditional areas. Meanwhile, the local community, recognizing the project as a state mandate, displays "kindness" and acceptance, despite their limited economic and social conditions. This pattern is common, as observed by (Andika, 2014) in Marind Anim, where locals perceive corporate activities, including on customary lands, as beneficial. They accept CSR programs, even ongoing ones, as unprecedented initiatives. This dynamic ultimately benefits companies, requiring minimal effort to execute projects—an illustration of how political economy operates (Suyanto, 2010).

Installation of mining exploration equipment

Installation of exploration machineries is a further process from the results of sensing regarding the locus where excavation will be carried out. The installation process takes a long time because heavy equipment is imported from outside the Bintuni area, accompanied by transportation and installation. The company does not give much consideration to where the exploration location is because its orientation is for searching. In some places, for example, exploration sites are right in people's residential areas. So for the project to progress, the company secured the excavation area from local residents. They were evacuated to another place. The further process of a natural resource exploration effort is the installation of exploration equipment, in the form of heavy equipment. In the context of installation work, the principles of security and safety must be a priority. On the other hand, local residents with local knowledge and regional concepts need to study how the dynamic processes occur.

Informant (M1) stated:

"There are three multi-national companies working in Bintuni Bay, but the principle in which they work is the same, namely, after exploration and finding a place for excavation, drilling is carried out. In this drilling stage, the safety aspect is very high because it is related to heavy equipment, so it must be ensured that the tool is used at the right point. Therefore, we have to ensure that the equipment is installed properly and can be drilled properly. On the other hand, the place where sensing determines its location is not always a place outside the residential area of the local community. If the point is in a residential area, we must make relocation efforts first so that the drilling process runs safely."

Informants (M2 and M3) explained:

"The company's orientation is that after conducting sensing and finding the excavation location, it will carry out the excavation program. In relation to local communities, our principle is to protect both the excavation program and the community. Therefore, we approached local community leaders

so that the project ran smoothly, and the community accepted the company's program. And so far, the company has not faced any problems related to the community."

Informants M1 and M2 added:

"To secure the project and maintain the safety of residents, we have operational standards, for example, regarding the distance between residents' residences and the excavation project being carried out. We also build safety fences to ensure that the local community will not be physically harmed, while we also maintain good relations with the community."

The informants from local community leaders (L1. L3, L5, and L6) said in a similar sense:

"We are used to coming into contact with foreigners because our land has long been used for large projects. What matters is that we can defend our lives, our communities, and the land on which we live. If foreign projects work well, then we won't have a problem."

Informants (L2 and L4) added to the former explanations from other informants:

"So far, the company and local communities have always had good relations because the company protects the lives of local communities and respects our traditional rights. So we get a lot of benefits from this project. Our digging was secured. For example, the excavation point is around where we live. We were not allowed to approach, and our residence was moved and we were given a certain amount of severance pay for our lives".

From the results of the interviews above, both from the company and the local community, real conditions can be seen from the perspective of the company and society. Companies with a development orientation strive to implement their programs in various ways that are considered. Meanwhile, communities try to accept development programs with the assumption that development is a government program that they must support with everything they have (Qin & Flint, 2016).

Implementation of mining exploration

Pertaining to the implementation of mining exploration in Bintuni Bay, one of informant from the side of company (M1) said:

"Mining companies working in the Bintuni Bay area have two orientations, namely, creating excavation sites and shelters. Excavation sites have different characteristics from shelters. The excavation site will provide a noisy working atmosphere due to the digging of the earth, so local residents will feel that. Our company has three excavation or drilling sites, namely, in Berau Block, Wiriagar Block, Muturi Block and one shelter and screening site, which is in Bintuni Bay. Primarily it is the three drilling sites that cause a lot of disturbance to the community."

M2 added the explanation:

"The BP Tangguh LNG company is a megaproject that aims to build an LNG plant in Bintuni Bay, West Papua. This refinery will be used to store natural gas originating from several blocks around Bintuni Bay, such as the Berau Block, Wiriagar Block and Muturi Block. This project is an initiative of British Petroleum (BP), which is a giant company in the energy industry."

Informant M2 and M3 also stated that:

"Our company has different exploration areas, both in area and scope. Because if we talk about coverage, there are companies whose exploration is only on land and there are those in the ocean too. However, in principle we work with a company orientation. If we come into contact with local residents who occupy the areas where we work, we strive to establish mutually beneficial and safe cooperation. Therefore, because our work is technical work, those involved in this work are those who have technical abilities. In implementation, because community land is affected by the project, there is compensation that the community should receive in the return of that project."

Related to the implementation of natural gas exploration, the general view of community leaders is that they are very flexible with regard to where they live and land which has been traditional land for generations. Informant (I1) stated:

"In the past, we lived together with our group and family only. Now, as the country is modernizing and a lot of mining is carried out, including in Bintuni Bay, Papua, many foreigners come here, so we accept such, and we are ready to adapt, including adapting to various conditions that arise due to the existence of industry in our region. Adaptation comes from behavior, daily life, and also adaptation to tradition. This is what I feel as a community leader is difficult because it seems as if traditional values no longer apply."

Informant I2, I3, and I4 voiced similar thinking:

"Because contact with foreigners lasts a long time, it doesn't feel like we have changed. With the factory setting up, the company's assistance to us varies. There are home improvement programs, economic empowerment, education for children, and women's empowerment."

Capital globalization introduces a new world order to the Sumuri community and, in a way, imposes it on them. This new order is based on market systems, money, commodities, managerialism, professionalism, and other measurable factors. As a result, they experienced transformational changes (Qin & Flint, 2016). The social way of life, such as solidarity and communal subsistence activities, e.g., hunting and gathering, is overpowered by the new values brought about by global capitalist investors. Likewise, their styles and preferences are also heavily influenced by the world market economy.

The Sumuri people were in a crisis to maintain their traditional economic resources. This situation differs from how the Konawe people in South East Sulawesi responded to a similar threat. The study by Upe et al. (2020) shows that, amid a wave of ecological decline caused by logging, resettlement, and other state-sponsored projects, the people managed to maintain sovereignty and defend their land claims in the form of people demonstration. They also loudly and bravely proclaimed to the world about the ecological destruction of their homeland. In responding to the massive waves of exploitation by multinational and regional mining companies, the Sumuri people are relatively accommodating. Nonetheless, they are not submissive altogether. They use tactics, perform negotiations, and show resistance in defending their customary land rights (Eriksson & Tollefsen, 2018).

Even though they are experiencing an identity crisis, they adopt a new identity to deal with the grip of the new world economy and exploitation. Historically, the formation of economic forces in the Bintuni Bay region today can be traced back to the political and economic domination during the colonial era, which continued to the post-colonial era under the Republic of Indonesia's government. Throughout history, local communities in Papua have had to deal with instability arising from the interactions with outsiders relocating to their homeland and continuously develop new strategies by optimizing their inventive locality (Eriksson & Tollefsen, 2018).

Impacts of the Existence of Multi-national Companies toward Socio-culture Life of Sumuri Community

The fading communal life

The presence of multinational companies in the Sumuri people's traditional territory and the extensive exploitation of the Sumuri people's natural resources in the last three to four decades has resulted in the loss of traditional economic basis, i.e., the natural resources, such as seas, forests, and customary land. Communal life is gradually decreasing because it relies on the existence of natural resources. Social ties start to disintegrate as the outsiders increasingly dominate the area, diluting the historical, kinship, and linguistic links among the Sumuri people.

Global economic forces have seized a sizable portion of the customary land in Sumuri. An oil palm company acquired 6,600 hectares. BP Tangguh LNG acquired 3,266 hectares and carried out offshore and onshore drilling. The Malaysian company, Genting Oil, conducts seismic surveys called Kasuri Block to explore oil in most parts of the village. The last company to enter and have received approval from the local and central government is the Canada-based Eni Oil Arguni. This company was later criticized for using the name Arguni Bay, even though its exploration area included the customary land area of the Sumuri people. The natural resources of the Sumuri customary land are abundant, allowing the exploitative multinational companies to earn much profit and grow exponentially. The exploitation creates a dilemma because it becomes a source of foreign exchange but degrades the traditional sources of livelihood for the Sumuri people.

The growth of multinational companies has unquestionably marginalized the livelihoods of the Sumuri people. For example, Manggosa was a sago hamlet, a food barn for the people of Kampung Tanah Merah when they lived in the old village, which has now been converted into an LNG site. When the community was relocated to the new Kampung Tanah Merah, their access to Manggosa was closed entirely. After the relocation to Tanah Merah Baru, the company supplied the villagers with food necessities—a form of 'corporate moral responsibility' for relocating and closing the sago hamlet. However, the loss is not only in terms of food sources but also in the form of sociocultural values upheld from generation to generation.

This closure became a concern of many parties, one of which came from the Tangguh Independent Advisory Panel, which required the company to provide access to Manggosa immediately. The panel is chaired by former US senator George Mitchell, Lord Hannay of Cheswick, the United Kingdom, Ambassador Sabam Siagian from Jakarta, and Pastor Herman Saud from Jayapura. The panel's recommendations are as follows:

"To prevent violations of the safety exclusive zone, BP must continue to disseminate information about the risks of such violations and work with the marine police to safeguard the implementation. If this effort is unsuccessful, BP should look into the possibility of physical modifications that will deter violations or even provide transport on the Manggosa trail to promote the use of the road. BP should also seek to identify violators and work with the Resettlement Affected Villages (RAV) leaders to prevent such violations" (LNG, 2010).

Responding to this proposal, the company showed its moral responsibility by building four kilometers of trail that connects Kampung Tanah Merah Baru with Dusun Sagu Manggosa in 2009. This construction was known as the Manggosa Pathway Project, opening access for the Sumuri people outside Tanah Merah and Saengga villages to Tofoi Village, Metrabu Jaya, and Forada, which previously could only be reached by sea.

Nonetheless, in-silo fixes like the Manggosa Pathway do not address the more significant problem caused by the rampant exploitation, which does not stop on land but extends to the sea. The gas mining companies annex the sea, where locals usually look for fish, shrimps, and crabs. The Sumuri people in Tanah

Merah Baru and Saengga cannot go fishing anymore because the gas mining companies, such as Bapak Tangguh, apply the 'exclusive zone' regulation. Villagers are prohibited from approaching the coast from a radius of 500 meters around the platform. To protect the exclusive zone, the company issued a leaflet urging villagers not to approach the coastal area.

Meanwhile, the Sumuri people believe that the zones claimed by the company as the exclusive sea zone are strategic locations for fishing. In coastal and sea zones like this, the Sumuri people apply the open-access customary rights, meaning no clan can claim ownership of the sea. It is a communal property instead, and everybody can access it. Ironically, those implementing the exclusive zone are business entities with no historical claims to the sea.

To address the loss of livelihoods, the company introduced an alternative economic program aimed at increasing community income. This program brought physical, social, and economic changes, marking significant improvement over the past decade. Some community members established businesses supplying food to the company, while others engaged in small-scale enterprises like shrimp cracker and meatball production, sewing, and farming through company agents. Market access was also facilitated via a production service center purchasing local produce from directly affected villages (DAVs). Additionally, cooperatives for catering, oil sales, mini markets, and agricultural supply emerged in resettlement-affected villages (RAVs). A survey by British Petroleum found that household incomes in RAVs were primarily supported by Tangguh LNG employees, civil servants, and the private sector.

However, the impacts are not all positive, like the success stories described above. There are also resentment and jealousy, which disrupt the dynamics and create friction within the Sumuri community (Lempert & Nguyen, 2011). It suggests that the economic development program delivered by the company did not generate the same impacts for everyone across the villages in the DAVs and RAV areas. A local community leader believes the program is analogous to moving fish to land. The Sumuri people are accustomed to living from the sea but are forced to move and make a living on land. The social reality resulting from the global capital networks is that local communities become alienated from their fundamental cultural bases.

The decreasing meaning of customary land

In facing the modernity that came along with the wave of exploitation of natural resources, the Sumuri people used cultural attributes. Even the autonomic rationale came out as another form of bargaining and taking hostages in the name of customs and local people. They discussed cultural resistance (counter-culture), applying the concept of "communal property rights". Apart from that, they also perform rituals of worship of customary land as a cultural permit before multinational companies take the products from the earth.

Some of the local informants said related to their way to protest:

*"*As Papuan in general, we recognize two kinds of customary land ownership and all its contents: communal and clan ownership rights. Communal rights entail ownership, control, utilization, enjoyment, and management by the customary community residing in a certain area. The ownership with the limitations of authority over the land resources originates from the consensus among their ancestors, formalized through inheritance regulations that follow patrilineal kinship lines. This means that the son inherits the rights."

As one of the informants (L6) added:

"Problems rarely occur in using customary land among the Sumuri people, be it for settlements or economic purposes, as long as permission is sought from the clan that owns it. The customary land rights in the Bintuni Bay area seem to expand, so no part of the land is unclaimed. Essentially, recognizing land ownership through customary rights is a form of control over natural resources, especially those that produce food for communal survival."

The most important aspect of the system is the sale prohibition and the allowance for letting only (Lumintang, 2012; Frank, 2009). All land will be used for the common good based on this ownership. Therefore, both internal and external parties need to seek agreement from the customary law community. Using clan land requires approval from clan elders and members of the customary law community. This recognition of communal customary rights related to the use of natural resources is not only confirmed through social institutions but also through agreements with the surrounding communities. In sum, customary land ownership is permanent and eternal.

Some informants (L1, L4, and L6) explained:

"Formerly, Sumuri people did not have the clans' customary rights, no clear boundaries because they always moved around. Gradually, ancestors claimed the territory for hunting and gathering, later called customary land. At that time no man's land was marked. Boundaries were drawn using plants, rocks, trees, and turbid and clear water boundaries. These have now become the lines that mark the boundaries of the customary land that was passed down from generation to generation."

Some other informants (L2, L3, L5, and L6) added the explanation:

Customary rights do not only apply to land but also to the coastal area and even the sea. In this case, communal rights regulate the access to and utilization of marine and coastal resources for the benefit of the community members owning

the land and other community members. In Bintuni Bay, the rights are open access for local community members, which means that community members in a customary law alliance can take the resources freely, including fish and shrimps. No customary institutions govern the use of marine resources, such as the fish species that may and may not be caught, the timing of the fishing, and the fishing gear used.

Nowadays, the Sumuri people liken their customary land and *ulayat* rights to a 'daughter,' the company is perceived as a young man asking for her hand with a certain dowry. Using the analogy of land as a daughter, the Sumuri people imagine their customary land as something they love but can let go of to other people as long as they fulfill the requirements (Frame, 2022). Viewing land as a 'daughter' also implies that, even though ownership or functions have changed, a 'daughter' will remain part of the community. In other words, sold and leased land to outsiders can be reclaimed and demanded to be compensated. The analogy of land as a 'daughter' seems to be the Sumuri people's way of perpetually reinventing their customary traditions (Harvey, 2020). Although the ownership has been transferred and the functions changed, the land is still part of their lives. The only difference is that they no longer have the freedom to control it fully. This social reality shows that the Papuan customary legal system is perpetually flexible, dynamic, manipulatable, and creative in constructing customary rules to manage land resources (Frank, 2009).

The Sumuri people continue to negotiate their cultural identity with various strategies and maneuvers. They maintain their cultural roots and demand recognition of their customary land rights in the face of changes when dealing with global capital investors. Ultimately, the land becomes a medium that links the global economic networks and the local power in a transactional form. In a sense, they believe that their customary land can be turned into a commodity (Suyanto, 2010; Eriksson & Tollefsen, 2018). The process of releasing customary land also required creativity and mentality change. In the context of the invasion of consumer culture and the global market to a traditional economic society, the meaning of land changes. At first, the land was considered too sacred to be traded. Then, the perspective shifted, and the Sumuri people began considering land a commodity (Eriksson & Tollefsen, 2018). The land symbolizes wealth and a bargaining tool to fight global capital power. It is a natural commodity blessed to the people and cannot be produced but used to achieve goals. The trade is unfair and detrimental to the local community, an exploitative exchange that results in people losing legitimacy over the customary land (Scott, 1993).

The traditional meaning of land as a social and cultural asset has been redefined and diminished by its commodification (Eriksson & Tollefsen, 2018). This process enables significant financial gain but also blurs contractual relations between customary landowners and investors. Money becomes both a necessity and a symbol of luxury, driving the Sumuri people to justify commodification as they adapt to sociocultural changes (Joslin et al., 2010). However, commodification fosters rational, transactional relationships that erode communal life, leading to friction and conflicts. For indigenous communities facing industrialization, these tensions stem from global capitalist dominance, technological advancements, and market economy expansion (Eriksson & Tollefsen, 2018).

The clashes between clans

All informants explained in their own words that in the case of Bintuni Bay, the situation is somewhat different. The tensions and conflicts between the company and the Sumuri people gradually shifted into tensions and conflicts between clans, groups, and tribes within the Sumuri community. The company's promises to provide luxury and improve well-being backfired because the Sumuri people experienced the opposite, i.e., an alienation rooted in money. Tensions between clans continue to rise. Each clan demanded the promises be fulfilled and tried to justify itself by constructing subjective arguments. Some informants (I1,I3, I4 and I6) stated that:

"Previously we lived in homogeneous, harmonious, peaceful relation in our communities. We lived together, help each other as brothers, care for each other. The brotherhood and close relationship between us changed after the arrival of foreign companies in our region because they promised money and materials, which we did not know before. Everything is measured in money. Money and materials become very important."

Other informants (I2, I4, I5) added:

"Everyone wanted money, and in the end because we didn't have it, and the company needed a location to expand its exploration, then what we had, even though it was land on which we depended on farming for our living, we let it go to the company. You can imagine how fierce the conflict between the communities was, because most of the land was communal property, and not all community members immediately agreed if it was sold to the company. From this problem, friction and conflict emerged between the communities in Bintuni. The conflict is getting bigger with the process of time."

Based on the interview above, it can be understood that there has been a change in the orientation among the Bintuni community which was caused by the arrival of multi-national companies which introduced money into the lives of local people. The presence of money in local communities has a big impact because of changes in relations between groups which were previously based on brotherhood, and which became more competitive with each other on the parameters of money. Some

reports in Tempo Magazine Issue as early as 2−8 April 2012, underlined conflicts between customary rights owners and multinational/regional companies. And since then conflicts erupted one after another until the number reached thousands. Some research (Suyanto, 2010) also found that beside conflicts between local communities and the multinational corporation, local communities also protested against the rapid industrialization that was supported and backed by the government.

The report of the Tangguh Independent Advisory Panel (2002−2009) explains that the source of tension between the Kembaran people on the north coast and the Sumuri people in the south of bintuni bay due to unfair treatment from the company was resolved after customary leaders of the communities on the north coast requested payment from BP Tangguh and the Indonesian government. It can be seen here that there is a new relationship among the traditional Sumuri community in Bintuni Bay, namely, a transaction-based relationship (Gazzano et al., 2018; Sahlins, 2017). There is a monetary value that is taken into account in the context of this transaction, including compensation, and calculation of profit and loss (Harvey, 2020).

The arrival of the capitalist entities gave rise to conflict and clashes among people. The development of global capital investment in the area has made the Sumuri people reinvent and utilize the historical claims that were previously absent (Raicevich et al., 2018). Claims arose over customary land, marked and claimed to belong to a certain tribe. The owners of customary land rights invite land users to close a deal directly with the land owners. This strategy is effective (Kitano, 2019). The above are a small part of the cultural identity changes among the Sumuri people. The crisis started with the transfer of land ownership to global capitalist investors and others (Lempert & Nguyen, 2011). Economically, the Sumuri people are marginalized. They stutter in responding to the new world-order brought by investors with the world market economic models. The Sumuri people are alien among the skilled and educated workers who are needed in the new world-order, strangers on their own land.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The entry of multi-national corporations into regions within a country cannot be separated from the conditions of the local community. The outward appearance of the process of regional exploration followed by the exploitation of regional resources has resulted in changes in the behavior and even values of the local community. This is because the exploration and exploitation process takes place over a long period of time, in specific areas, and involves groups of workers who come from other regions and countries. The process of exploitation of natural resources and interactions with outsiders has resulted in changes in local values relating to life and relationships between community members. Above that, the interaction also impacted in the rise of conflict potentials.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge examining localities and communities on which modernization and capitalist expansion intersect with traditional life. By foregrounding local narratives, this research offer a new insight on how indigeneous communities navigate, resist, and reinterpret external pressure. It highlight the tensions between economic development and cultural continuity. The findings underscore the importance of integrating cultural perspectives into political-economic and environmental discourse, rather than viewing local communities as passive recipient of change. So, this study adds the analyses of frontier zones shaped by global forces and ceitiques development paradigm that neglect local worldview. This research provides the perspectives through which to rethink resource governance and cultural resilience.

As a case study in a specific location, having community specifications with traditional values, although the results can be replicated in other regions with almost the same communities and traditional values, they cannot be replicated widely. With those limitations, this study can be used as a base line for other studies that have almost the same context. There are still opportunities for studies with almost the same social processes but in different socio-cultural locations ,with different multi-national corporations and different fields of exploration. Diversity of studies like this will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the process of industrialization interaction with local communities.

Research Ethics and Fieldwork Challenges

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards, including informants agreement and anonymity. Fieldwork among Sumiri community required negotiating access in politically sensitive areas, protecting vulnerable informants, navigating asymmetrical power relations. A reflexive stance was maintained throughout the research to ensure respectful and representative representation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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