

Traditional Leadership in Negeri Tulehu: Transformation and Dynamics in the Modern Context

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Abstract: This study aims to examine issues related to the existence of traditional leadership in Tulehu, Central Maluku Regency, particularly in the context of conflicts that occurred during the election of the king or village head. The main focus of this study is on the delay in the ratification of the King by the Regent of Central Maluku, the protests by the community against the decision to appoint a King who did not follow the lineage of the *matarumah Ohorella*, and the decision of the Saniri Negeri that did not base the selection of the King on the royal lineage. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive analytical approach and was conducted over a period of five months. Data collection techniques include interviews, direct observation, and documentation of various primary and secondary sources. The results of this study indicate that local government officials need to strengthen their role as traditional leaders who have strong legitimacy among the community. The Saniri Negeri plays an important role in maintaining the traditional selection process based on royal lineage (*matarumah perintah*), which contributes to social stability and harmonious relations among citizens. The implications of these findings indicate the importance of collaboration between the government and traditional institutions in resolving leadership conflicts in order to create a government that is accepted by all elements of society. However, the limitations of this study lie in its scope, which is restricted to one region, as well as the limited time available to capture dynamics that may arise after the study period ends. Further studies are recommended to cover a broader geographical area and timeframe to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

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INTRODUCTION

In the indigenous society of Maluku, the determination of the traditional head of government (Raja) has unique characteristics, where the position is inherited hereditarily from certain lineages. This process is not only a tradition but also a deep belief system, combining elements of spirituality, ancestral wisdom, and social stability. This ensures that traditional leadership is maintained within a lineage that has historical and spiritual rights to lead. This practice also reflects the importance of cultural sustainability and social justice in Indigenous communities, where the selection of traditional leaders takes place in a broader context than merely choosing a leader, but rather as a reaffirmation of communal identity and the continuity of traditions. This concept shows how indigenous communities in Maluku value continuity and social cohesion through a hereditary leadership system.

In the practice of selecting a King in Maluku, cultural and spiritual aspects are very prominent, and this process is not only limited to determining leadership but also includes an effort to preserve cultural and spiritual heritage. This process underscores the importance of maintaining the purity and integrity of the lineage, which is considered a crucial pillar in maintaining balance and harmony within the community. Furthermore, the appointment of traditional government heads through specific lineages reaffirms the customs and traditions that have existed for centuries, ensuring that the chosen leaders hold not only political authority but also spiritual authority. In Indigenous societies, the appointment of the head of the customary government, often referred to as the King is a process that involves a deliberative forum consisting of the heads of soa or prominent Indigenous community groups. This process emphasizes the importance of collective decision-making and communal participation in determining leadership. The King, after being elected, does not operate independently; he is assisted by a number of traditional governance devices that function to support the execution of governmental duties. This structure ensures that the decisions and actions of traditional leadership always reflect the will and needs of the community as a whole, while also maintaining balance and harmony within society.

To support the leadership of the King, there are formal and informal mechanisms that regulate the workings of the customary government. This governance structure often includes various roles and responsibilities, ranging from customary legal advisors, communal financial managers, to traditional ceremony leaders. Each member of the government apparatus has a specific role that assists in decision-making, the implementation of customary activities, and the maintenance of social order. Their appointment process also involves customary deliberation, ensuring that each government apparatus member has the trust and support of the community. According to Dokulamo (2022), obedience and adherence to customs are very important in maintaining harmony and integrity among fellow villagers. The people of Maluku must recognize the importance of the customary governance passed down by their ancestors to the current generation to be adhered to and implemented correctly. Customs, as a means of conflict resolution and tension control within the community, must serve as a reference and guide for the residents of the region. (Dokolamo, 2002).

Community involvement in the decision-making process through deliberative forums reinforces the principle of participatory democracy in customary governance. This allows voices from various layers of society to be heard and considered, ensuring that the decisions made reflect the collective needs and aspirations. This deliberative process not only strengthens the legitimacy of the King's leadership and his apparatus but also reinforces social cohesion and harmony within the community. The pattern and mechanism of appointing the head of the customary government underscore the importance of traditional values and local wisdom in maintaining good governance. This shows how tradition and modernity can go hand in hand, where the traditional leadership system adapts to the changing times while maintaining the core values and principles that form the foundation of the indigenous community. Through this inclusive and

participatory approach, traditional governance can remain relevant and effective in facing various contemporary challenges.

Furthermore, this hereditary system helps maintain a stable social and political structure, as the community has a clear understanding of who is entitled to lead. This creates an environment where trust and respect for traditional leadership are maintained, strengthening the foundation for effective and fair governance. This practice of determining leadership also clarifies the roles and responsibilities expected of a King, who is not only a ruler but also a protector and guardian of traditional culture. Moreover, according to the research findings of Karapesina, Susilo, Indrayani (2013), the existence of customary law consists of (1) In the sasiter, several customary law regulations are starting from management, maintenance, and up to the harvesting period. (2) The effectiveness of the community in maintaining customary law has been extreme from thousands of years ago until 2003 to 2007, when the customary law and the tradition of sasi on the Lompa fish were still preserved. However, since 2008, the tradition of customary law sasi has started to decline, as evidenced by the absence of lompa fish for 4 years. (3) The existence of sasi customary law contains regulations that always bind its community to preserve the natural environment, especially the sea, which has been practiced for thousands of years and is also present in Indonesia's national law (Karepesina et al., 2013).

The hereditary system of determining the head of customary governance is deeply rooted in the philosophy that leadership is not only about power but also about legacy, wisdom, and the role of maintaining the survival and welfare of the community. This shows the importance of history, tradition, and cultural values in shaping communal identity and leadership in Maluku, ensuring that sustainable leadership based on customary principles will continue to be the core of societal governance. Meanwhile, the research findings by Tuanaya, Wance (2022), indicate that the conflict over the head or King in Hila village between the Lating and Olong clans is about filling the King's position, which is still awaiting a decision from the State Administrative Court. (PTUN). Besides Hila, the process of selecting a king in Mamala proceeds typically, meaning there are no conflicts in the selection. In the selection process, the King of Hila must come from two matas rumah, namely Lating and Ollong, whereas in Mamala, the King must come from one mata rumah, namely Latu (the biggest SOA)(Tunaya et al., 2014).

The history of the State of Tulehu is inseparable from the broader narrative of the Maluku archipelago, which is rich in historical events and cultural interactions. Tulehu is known as one of the oldest customary lands in Maluku, with a history that can be traced back to the era of local kingdoms and the spice trade. Since then, Tulehu has become a meeting point for various powers and cultures, from local traders to European colonizers such as the Portuguese and Dutch, who came in search of valuable spices. During the colonial period, Tulehu underwent significant social and economic transformations, but its people managed to preserve their customary structures and culture. Oral stories and historical documents record the role of the State of Tulehu in the resistance against colonialism and efforts to protect local wisdom. This historical wealth is not only etched in the collective memory of the people of Tulehu. However, it is also reflected in the

governance system, customs, and values that are still practiced to this day, shaping the unique characteristics of this land in the historical and cultural landscape of Maluku.

The land of Tulehu is known for its rich culture and strong traditions, which reflect its long history and social interactions among the community. The culture in Tulehu is manifested in various aspects of life, ranging from language, art, and traditional rituals to the daily activities of its people. Performing arts such as traditional dances and music, for example, play an important role in celebrations and customary ceremonies, reflecting stories and philosophies passed down through generations. In addition, Tulehu is also famous for its local handicrafts, such as traditional boat making, which not only have functional value but also symbolic significance, reflecting the community's closeness to the sea. The culinary tradition of Tulehu, with its signature dishes that combine local spices and traditional cooking techniques, also showcases the cultural richness that influences the tastes and culinary identity of the community. Through the preservation and development of these cultures and traditions, the State of Tulehu demonstrates its commitment to preserving cultural heritage as an essential part of its community's identity and social sustainability. The Negeri Tulehu occupies a strategic position in the local society and culture of Maluku, where its customary governance system serves as an essential pillar in maintaining community stability and harmony. The traditional leaders in Tulehu are not only responsible for managing political and administrative affairs but also for preserving and passing on cultural values, traditions, and local knowledge to the next generation. Traditional leadership in Tulehu plays a vital role in religious ceremonies, weddings, funerals, and other essential rituals, reflecting the close interconnection between governance, social life, and the spiritual aspects of the community. This emphasizes that the customary government in Tulehu is not only a political entity but also central to maintaining the identity and cultural continuity of the Maluku community.

The customary government in the Negeri Tulehu also plays a key role in environmental preservation and local resource management, reflecting a deep appreciation for nature and its ecosystems. Traditional practices such as 'sasi', a system of natural resource management that prohibits the use of specific resources for a specified period, are a concrete example of indigenous-based environmental governance. This system helps maintain ecological balance, ensuring the continuity of natural resources for future generations. Thus, customary governance in Tulehu is not only important in social and cultural aspects but also essential in environmental preservation and ecological sustainability efforts, demonstrating its crucial role in maintaining harmony between humans and nature. Meanwhile, the findings of Muhtar et al. (2022) indicate that the problems with the existence of traditional government leadership in Maluku are influenced by several factors, including first, matarumah Parentah as a symbiosis of traditional heritage. Second, conflicts of interest in the election and appointment of the Definitive Head of Government (King). Conflicts among interest groups: the matarumah Parentah group, Saniri Negeri, Pejabat Negeri, and the District and City Government are traditional nodes that have a long historical value in the administration of conventional government in the kingdoms of Maluku Province,

especially in Ambon City, Central Maluku, West Seram, etc., while preserving culture, customs, and the lineage of traditional leadership according to the *matarumah Parentah* line. This mechanism often leads to problems regarding the existence of conventional leadership in Maluku (Muhtar et al., 2022).

Although there are studies on traditional leadership in the State of Tulehu, the research often needs more depth in analyzing how the dynamics of conventional leadership are influenced by external factors such as local, national politics, and globalization. Studies focusing on the interaction between traditional governance and formal and non-traditional government institutions, as well as their impact on the authority and sustainability of conventional leadership, still need to be completed. Meanwhile, the findings of Maruapey et al. (2018) indicate that, under the pretext of not interfering with customary affairs and the authority of the Negeri, the Central Maluku Regency Government seems to allow the conflicts among the King's Heirs to remain unresolved, even becoming a political issue for the interests of specific individuals, including the Saniri Negeri, to disregard the existing regulations and rules (Maruapey et al., 2018). From various regulations regarding the procedures for electing and being elected as Village Head or Head of the State Government in the Salahutu District of Central Maluku Regency, the researcher found procedural gaps and issues related to the implementation of Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2006.

1. The postponement of the stages of the election of the King of Tulehu and all activities in Central Maluku was the reason Abdul Kadir Ohorella and his friends filed a lawsuit at the Ambon District Court. The parties being sued are the Regent of Central Maluku as the defendant, the Salahutu Subdistrict Head as the defendant, the Tulehu Village Officer as the defendant, and the Election Committee as the defendant (Tvdesanews.id, 2021).
2. Following the Ambon District Court Decision No: 39/Pdt.G/2021/PN Ambon, which states that Tulehu is a Traditional Village, the Traditional Law Community of Tulehu Village at this moment expresses its stance. First, the attempt to coerce the election of the village head of Tulehu through the Village Head Election Committee is an arbitrary action. This is deliberately done to negate the rights of the customary law community that has appointed Upu Latu Urian Ohorella as the Traditional King of Tulehu. Second, the implementation of the Tulehu Village Head election in any form is an act of harassment and insult to the dignity and honor of the customary law community of Tulehu. Third, if the coercion of the Village Head election continues by the Election Committee, the customary law community of Tulehu will not be responsible for any risks that may arise if the election is conducted (ameks.fajar.co.id, 2022).
3. The appointment of the Traditional King of Tulehu has been carried out by designating Urian Ohorella as the traditional King. It has been formally recognized by Aman Upui Adat Tulehu on February 14, 2019, but until now the Regent has not conducted the inauguration or the village head election (Siwalimanews.com, 2022).

4. Consistency within the body of the *saniri negeri* does not uphold the legacy of traditional governance, which has been outlined since ancient times. Referring to the course of democracy, I think it's perfectly fine. However, the commitment to being a traditional state should not be erased. Moreover, the lineage of the rulers of Tulehu should build a deep structure of trust within their community so that the public space does not experience a crisis of faith. The chaotic implementation of misguided policies and the lack of respect for ancestral heritage will significantly impact the loss of historical history. This is dangerous for the customary land, not only in Tulehu but in other lands as well (kompasiana.com, 2020).

From several issues presented, the researcher observes that the Problematic Existence of Traditional Government Leadership in Tulehu Village, Central Maluku Regency, highlights problems in the selection of traditional leadership. Therefore, it is interesting for the researcher to study why the Problematic Existence of Traditional Government Leadership in Tulehu Village, Central Maluku Regency, has not yet undergone the process of selecting traditional leadership in Tulehu Village.

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research used is qualitative, which produces descriptive data in the form of illustrations sourced from various informants and community behaviors that may occur in the field. The approach used in this research is descriptive research, which aims to present an illustration of the details of the problems in a situation or social relationships and the approaches taken by the government in resolving boundary disputes. Through this qualitative research, the data described in this study elucidates the Issues of the Existence of Traditional Leadership in Tulehu Village, Central Maluku Regency, which can be analyzed as the determining factors of the Issues of the Existence of Traditional Leadership in Tulehu Village, Central Maluku Regency.

This research uses two types of data sources, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained and collected directly by the researcher from the field through interviews with several informants. The informants in this study consist of: (1) the Government of Tulehu, (2) the Secretary of Tulehu, (3) the *Saniri* of Tulehu, and (4) Community Leaders. The secondary data used in this research were collected from other sources to support the primary data obtained through books, references, or documents related to this research. The secondary data include documents in the form of archives from boundary determinations, results of community meetings with local government, results of village government meetings, and financial reports of Tulehu Village.

The data collection techniques in this research use several methods, including (1) The interview method, which is used to gather data from various informants. Interviews can be conducted either face-to-face or indirectly. (menggunakan handphone untuk menghubungi informan). (2). The observation method is used to directly see and observe at the research location regarding the social symptoms of the community and the local government during the boundary dispute resolution process. (3). The documentation method in the form of photographs and archives is used as supporting data during the

analysis. Data that has been collected and analyzed to obtain accurate and valid data. The data analysis techniques used in this research are: (1). Data reduction is defined as the process of selection, focusing on simplification, abstraction, and transformation of raw data that emerges from written field notes. (2). Data presentation in the form of words, sentences, paragraphs, tables, or matrices, is presented in a narrative form. (3). Drawing conclusions after the data has been continuously analyzed with interpretations given, both during data collection in the field, in the process, and after in the field, conclusions are drawn.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The history and development of traditional governance leadership in the State of Tulehu

The leadership of the customary government in the State of Tulehu, located in Central Maluku Regency, has a long and rich historical root, deeply embedded in the local community's value system and traditions. The traditional governance system in Tulehu was initially built on a leader known as the King or Head of the State, who served as the highest leader in various aspects of community life, ranging from territorial management and upholding traditional values to facilitating religious and cultural rituals. The King or Head of the State is usually chosen based on lineage or with the approval of other conventional leaders who hold authority in the community. This customary government is also supported by traditional elders who act as advisors, overseeing the implementation of customary laws and regulating the distribution of resources, such as land and natural products, that are managed collectively. David's research findings (2017) indicate that these leaders naturally emerge during periods of crisis or great need, bringing significant and often positive changes (David Stanley, 2017). People are born with various characteristics that make them natural leaders (Harrison, 2018). The interaction between different historical forces (Nico Mouton, 2017) and the presence of core traits are key factors that distinguish natural leaders from others (Bertocci, 2009).

As time goes by, traditional leadership in the State of Tulehu faces challenges from various changes, both from the influence of colonialism and modernization accompanied by the introduction of formal governance systems. During the Dutch colonial period, the customary governance system was integrated into the colonial government structure through what was called self-governing landscape. (daerah otonom yang diatur sendiri). Post-independence, the intervention of the central government and the introduction of a more formal national legal system also exerted pressure on the continuity of this customary system. Nevertheless, the traditional leadership in Tulehu continues to adapt to maintain its existence. Currently, although many formal decisions are in the hands of the local government, the role of the customary head or King in Tulehu remains respected as the guardian of traditions and cultural values that strengthen the identity of the local community. Meanwhile, Lussier et al. (2016) explain leadership through a diverse approach to leaders, as well as new coverage on crisis leadership, servant leadership, social impact, and high-performance organizations (Anwaruddin, 1969), (Lussier, R. N.,

& Achua, 2016), characteristics possessed by leaders (Lumban Gaol, 2020), effective leadership practices in various environments (Bass, B. M., & Bass, 2008), stability across situations in leadership performance (Zaccaro, 2007), effective and ineffective leaders (Lumban Gaol, 2020), and social skills contributing to leadership ability. (Zaccaro, 2007).

Since 2013, Negeri Tulehu in Central Maluku has restored its governance status to "Status Negeri" to preserve and manage the traditional governance system within the community. This step reflects the strong desire of the Tulehu community to revive the unique customary values and structures that have become an integral part of their identity. In this system, the customary government is given an essential role in implementing rules and governance based on customs, so it is expected to become the primary support in local decision-making. Through the restoration of the state status, Tulehu also reinforces customary authority in various aspects of life, including community governance, dispute resolution, and the implementation of traditions. The return of the customary governance structure can also be seen as an effort to strengthen the sense of solidarity and togetherness within the community. Moreover, this is a reflection of the resistance against the influence of modern governance systems that often do not align with the local values upheld by the Tulehu community, making this return an essential symbol in preserving the continuity of cultural heritage.

However, although the effort to revitalize the traditional governance structure brings hope to the people of Tulehu, its implementation faces several obstacles. One of them is the process of selecting the village chief conducted by a special selection team, namely "Team 7," which is tasked with identifying candidates for the village chief to be proposed to the Saniri Negeri or the customary representative institution. However, this process sparked controversy when certain "mata rumah" or clans did not get the opportunity to be proposed as candidates for the head of the state. Inequality in this selection process can cause tensions between clans, which may worsen trust in the screening system. The clans that feel neglected may perceive that this selection process is unfair and less inclusive, which ultimately threatens social stability in the Tulehu community. If this situation continues, it will not only diminish public trust in the customary institution but also potentially trigger disharmony in a society where strong customary values and traditions should unite.

The obstacle in selecting a definitive King in the State of Tulehu is rooted in the lack of leadership figures from the Mata Rumah Perintah, the lineage group or clan entitled to propose a king candidate. This issue indicates that the lack of competent human resources in leadership within the Mata Rumah Perintah is one of the main factors causing stagnation in the proposal of a king. The limitation of leadership figures not only affects the sustainability of traditional customs but also causes internal tensions within Mata Rumah Perintah, triggering prolonged conflicts that negatively impact the social stability of the State of Tulehu. Without the presence of strong and integrity-driven leaders within this clan, efforts to establish robust customary governance in Tulehu become difficult to realize. This situation indicates an urgent need to enhance leadership capacity among the descendants of Mata Rumah Perintah, whether through education, training, or a planned regeneration process so that traditional leadership can continue.

This condition also poses a challenge for Saniri Negeri as an Indigenous representative institution, which plays a role in accommodating the proposed candidates for the King. So far, Saniri Negeri has actually been open to the submission of names from Mata Rumah Perintah. However, in recent years, no candidates have been proposed, limiting the role of the Saniri in performing its function of screening and endorsing the King's leadership. The absence of candidates prolongs the vacancy of definitive leadership, which has the potential to disrupt the continuity of customary governance in Tulehu. Saniri Negeri needs to identify steps to encourage the emergence of new leaders from the Mata Rumah Perintah, either through direct approaches to the clans or through collaboration to enhance leadership competencies. Thus, Saniri Negeri can play a more proactive role in maintaining a stable and sustainable traditional leadership for the Tulehu community, which has long upheld cultural values and traditional norms in community governance.

Internal and external factors that influence the existence of traditional government leadership in the State of Tulehu are

The internal factors that influence the existence of traditional governance leadership in Negeri Tulehu primarily stem from the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the traditional structure itself. One of the important strengths is the existence of the Status Negeri and Saniri Negeri, which provide high legitimacy to the customary leadership in the eyes of the Tulehu community. This legitimacy strengthens the role of traditional leadership in preserving traditional values and customary-based community governance. In addition, the role of the mata rumah perintah, as a lineage with the privilege of proposing a candidate for King, also becomes an essential aspect in maintaining the sustainability of the customary structure. However, on the other hand, this internal strength is balanced by a number of weaknesses that hinder the regeneration of traditional leadership. The lack of leadership figures and the limited number of competent human resources in the traditional governance system have become the main challenges. Internal conflicts within certain clans or lineages trigger prolonged polarization, leading to stagnation in the process of nominating a king candidate. As a result, the definitive leadership vacuum creates uncertainty in customary governance, negatively impacting social stability and public trust in traditional governance.

Besides internal factors, there are external factors that influence the continuity of traditional leadership in Tulehu, including the limited role of Saniri Negeri and pressure from the modern governance system. Although the Saniri Negeri is ready to accommodate the nomination of candidates from the mata rumah perintah, the role of this institution is hindered when no candidates are proposed, causing the selection process not to proceed as it should. This situation creates stagnation in the customary structure, which should be dynamic and sustainable. In addition, the existence of modern governance systems exerts significant pressure on customary governance. With the regulations and formal systems implemented by the central and local governments, traditional structures are often considered less relevant or even ignored in decision-

making. This pressure creates a significant challenge for traditional leaders in maintaining their roles and authority amidst the changes faced by the community. The leadership regeneration crisis is further exacerbated by this external factor due to the lack of initiatives to nurture new leaders who can address the challenges of modernization while also preserving the traditional values that are the primary identity of the Tulehu community.

Table 1. The Existence of Traditional Leadership

No	Aspect	Strength	Weakness
1	Customary Structure and Legitimacy	The status of Negeri and Saniri Negeri provides strong legitimacy for the traditional leadership recognized by the community, thereby ensuring respect for local values and traditions.	The lack of leadership figures from the Mata Rumah Perintah hinders the sustainability of traditional leadership and creates vacancies in important positions within the traditional structure.
2	The Role of the House of Command Eye	Having the traditional right to propose a candidate for king and preserve customary values in leadership.	The limitation of competent human resources (HR) and internal conflicts within the Mata Rumah Perintah hinder the regeneration and continuity of traditional leadership.
3	Saniri Negeri	Saniri Negeri, as an adat institution, is ready to accommodate proposals from Mata Rumah Perintah and conduct the selection process transparently.	The role of Saniri Negeri is limited if there are no candidates proposed by Mata Rumah Perintah, resulting in the selection of the head of the negeri not proceeding and creating a leadership stagnation.
4	Community Support	The community has a strong bond with tradition and tends to support the customary structure as the guardian of local cultural values.	Dependence on certain clans leads to less inclusive representation, which can weaken community support for leadership due to the potential for inter-clan conflicts.
5	Adaptation to Modernization	The customary structure continues to strive to maintain its role amidst the changes in the modern governance system, as an effort to preserve cultural identity.	Pressure from the modern governance system threatens the existence of traditional leadership, especially if traditional structures are considered less relevant or not in line with formal regulations.

6	Regeneration Crisis	Awareness of the importance of regeneration has emerged as an effort to maintain the sustainability of traditional leadership.	The lack of clear initiatives in the regeneration process for prospective traditional leaders has caused a prolonged leadership crisis.
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Source: Field Analysis Results, 2024

This table provides an overview of the strengths that can support the existence of customary leadership as well as the weaknesses that can pose major challenges in maintaining the sustainability and stability of customary governance in the State of Tulehu.

The role of traditional leadership in the social, cultural, and political life of the Tulehu community

Traditional leadership in the State of Tulehu plays a vital role in the social life of the community, serving as a glue of values and norms that maintain harmony among residents. The traditional leader or King in Tulehu not only holds authority in managing and resolving various social conflicts but also acts as a guardian of traditions and ethics passed down from generation to generation. His presence ensures that important decisions, whether related to daily life practices or inter-clan relationships, remain grounded in strong customary principles. For example, in traditional rituals that embody the value of togetherness, such as customary ceremonies and religious celebrations, the role of the traditional leader is very prominent in uniting the residents and ensuring the smooth progression of each stage of the event. This creates a deep sense of togetherness and solidarity among the people of Tulehu, thereby strengthening their identity as a community that preserves and values their ancestral heritage. In this social life, traditional leadership plays the role of a guardian of balance, ensuring that every member of the community behaves according to the values and ethics that have been mutually agreed upon.

In the cultural and political context, traditional leadership in Tulehu also holds an essential position as a bridge between the community and the government. As a representation of tradition, the customary leader or King often serves as an intermediary in communication between the community and the government, especially when dealing with policies or programs that have the potential to affect the community's life. In this process, the traditional leader not only voices the interests of the community but also ensures that the cultural identity is recognized and respected by the government. In addition, the traditional leaders play a crucial role in preserving local cultural heritage, including organizing the implementation of conventional ceremonies and maintaining various cultural sites and traditions that form the identity of the Tulehu community. In the context of local politics, the role of traditional leadership is also reflected in the decision-making processes concerning the distribution of natural resources or land management, where the conventional leaders act as the primary regulators in ensuring fair distribution according to customs. Thus, traditional leadership in Tulehu not only

serves as a symbol of culture but also as a political force that maintains the community's identity while navigating the challenges brought by the changing times.

The structure of task division in the Tulehu Customary State government is divided into two main groups: the first customary group and the second customary group. The first customary group, which consists of five Rumatau, holds the highest authority in the customary governance structure, with Upu Latu Nusa Huhuin (Umarella clan) as the highest leader or Latu. Other members of this group are Upu Latu Aman Husar (Umbrella), Upu Latu Harua (Tehuhatela), Sabenar Latu (Tehupelasury), and Ama Latu Ey (Nahumahury), all of whom serve as guardians of customary values and traditions. The duties of this group include regulating customs and maintaining the values inherited from generation to generation, thereby guiding the social life of the community. On the other hand, the second customary group, which consists of Pandita Wakan (Ohorella), Pandita Louw (Hunusalella), Pandita Laen (Tuasalamony), and Modim Lating (Lestaluhu), is responsible for religious and ceremonial matters. This role reflects a harmonious balance between customs and religion within the traditional governance structure of Tulehu. This second group functions as imams or religious leaders (Imam Uzur) who lead rituals and worship according to customary rules. This division shows that the traditional governance system of Tulehu not only prioritizes political leadership aspects but also integrates the critical religious roles of the community. This dual structure, which combines indigenous groups and religious groups, creates a balance between aspects of tradition and spirituality, thereby maintaining harmony and cultural preservation in the life of the Tulehu community.

The government of the Tulehu State is facing serious challenges in maintaining the continuity and effectiveness of its customary leadership due to prolonged conflicts in the process of selecting a king. This conflict resulted in a leadership vacuum for approximately ten years, forcing the local government, in this case, the Central Maluku Regency Government, to appoint temporary officials to carry out administrative tasks. However, the appointment of these officials cannot replace the central role of the traditional King in maintaining identity, harmony, and socio-cultural stability in the State of Tulehu. This has resulted in a decline in various social and cultural activities that rely on the guidance and legitimacy of the traditional King, who is usually respected by the community as a guardian of tradition and customary values.

In addition to the vacancy of the King's position, this interview also revealed that weaknesses in leadership abilities further exacerbated the situation. The lack of strong leadership figures who can unite the community, both socially and culturally, has become one of the factors hindering the progress of Tulehu. Effective leadership is greatly needed to drive cultural and social activities in accordance with the traditional principles that have been respected for generations. Without leaders who can facilitate differences and resolve conflicts, the indigenous community of Tulehu struggles to achieve stable collective progress. As a result, this stagnation diminishes the ability of the Tulehu community to maintain its position as a center of indigenous culture in the Central Maluku region.

Table 2. Traditional Leadership

Aspect	Strength	Weakness	Contribution to Research
Social	Traditional leadership serves as the guardian of social harmony and the unifier of the Tulehu community. The traditional leader or king acts as the regulator of values, helping to resolve conflicts between families or clans, strengthening social solidarity and a sense of belonging.	The vacancy in the king's leadership has caused the social role of the customary chief to not function optimally. With the presence of a temporary official who lacks traditional ties, the community feels the loss of a figure who can be a role model in daily social life.	Providing insights on the importance of traditional figures in maintaining social stability. This research can demonstrate that the presence of a definitive king or traditional leader is crucial for maintaining social order, especially in indigenous communities that prioritize the values of togetherness and family.
Culture	The customary chief is the key figure in the implementation of traditional ceremonies and the guardian of cultural heritage, including traditions, values, and norms passed down to the younger generation. He plays a central role in ensuring that customary values remain relevant in the era of modernization.	The vacancy in leadership causes cultural activities such as traditional rituals to not run optimally. The lack of leadership figures also results in stagnation in cultural regeneration, making it difficult to effectively pass on cultural heritage to the next generation.	Explaining how traditional leadership impacts cultural preservation. This research contributes to the understanding of the challenges faced in preserving culture in Tulehu, especially when the central role of the customary leader is not functioning effectively. It can be used as a recommendation for the development of cultural leadership capable of addressing the challenges of modernization without losing the essence of tradition.
Politics	Traditional leadership in Tulehu functions as a bridge between the community and the government. The traditional leader or king often voices the	Without a definitive leader, the role of traditional politics is hindered, and the community loses strong representation in the political process. The interim officials appointed by the government do not have	Providing insights into the connection between customary leadership and local political structures and how the loss of customary leaders can weaken the political position of indigenous communities. The results of this research can

	community's aspirations in political decision-making, especially regarding communal interests.	the same customary authority to bring the community's aspirations to the political level.	support further studies on how to strengthen the political role of indigenous communities, while also advocating for the importance of customary leadership within governance structures that are relevant to the needs of local communities. This research also contributes to the study of inclusive politics that takes into account the voices of indigenous communities.
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Source: Field Analysis Results, 2024

This data presents a historical narrative about traditional leadership in the State of Tulehu, focusing on the right of leadership (Latu) and the process of structuring the social system that has been established since the arrival of various nations in the region. Here is the analysis of the data:

1. Leadership Rights According to Customary History are based on historical records, the right to become Latu or the highest leader in Tulehu is linked to the lineage of a particular clan, namely Umarella. History reveals that before the arrival of the Portuguese and Dutch, the customary leadership in the State of Tulehu was already organized within a social structure based on clans (Rumatau), where the first four Rumatau, including Upu Latu Nusa Huhuin (Umbrella), were considered nobles holding the highest leadership positions. This leadership structure was then continued with the arrival of the second four Rumatau, who were assigned to fill positions within religious groups, such as the roles of Imam and Modim. This created a unique division of positions in Tulehu: the customary group led by Umarella and the religious group led by several other clans. The decision regarding this division is known as Matawaru or the eight Rumatau as representatives of the indigenous and religious groups, affirming Umarella's position as the highest leader and guardian of traditional customs in Tulehu.
2. The Influence of Colonialism on Leadership Structure, namely, when colonialism arrived in Maluku, particularly in Tulehu, traditional leadership began to experience disruptions due to the intervention of the colonizers. Colonizers often replaced traditional leaders with figures deemed more supportive of their interests. In this case, the Ohorella clan is depicted as a leader considered to be a "puppet king of the colonizers." This narrative highlights the significant impact of colonialism on the customary structure, where the position of Latu is no longer considered purely the property of Umarella according to the Matawaru agreement. This colonial intervention created dissatisfaction within the community, sparking debates about who truly had the right to lead Tulehu. This process of colonization caused conflicts over the legitimacy of leadership, which has affected the identity of the indigenous community in Tulehu and its

surroundings to this day. Thus, this historical record aims to restore the customary leadership rights to Umarella as part of the effort to correct the history and provide a foundation for customary leadership in accordance with the ancestral heritage in Tulehu.

Determinants of the Existence of Traditional Leadership in Tulehu Village, Central Maluku Regency

Traditional leadership in Tulehu Village, Central Maluku Regency, plays a vital role in preserving cultural identity and the continuity of traditional values within the community. The existence of this customary leadership is determined by several main factors, including the kinship system and the inheritance of leadership positions within certain families, such as the matarumah parentah family or the ruling family. In the context of Tulehu, this kinship system provides a clear structure for the selection of customary leaders, where the position of head of customary leaders is often inherited within the same family. This creates a strong bond between the traditional leaders and the community, as well as maintaining the continuity of values that are respected through generations. In addition, customary institutions such as the Saniri Negeri play an essential role in strengthening the position of customary leadership because they function as a legislative body that oversees and establishes customary regulations as well as accommodates the aspirations of the community. (Layn, 2012).

On the other hand, the existence of traditional leadership in the State of Tulehu also faces challenges due to social changes and the influence of increasingly modern government policies. Regional regulations, such as the Central Maluku Regency Regional Regulation No. 3 of 2006, have introduced new procedures in the selection process of traditional leaders, which often conflict with local customary values and create potential conflicts. Modernization and other external influences, including economic and educational developments, also affect community values and the structure of traditional leadership. This creates a challenge for traditional leaders to remain relevant amidst the changing times while also maintaining their authority in an increasingly dynamic society. The existence of internal and external conflicts demands that traditional leadership adapts to the needs of modern society while also preserving the traditional roots that form the basis of their existence. (Fakultas Hukum Universitas Pattimura).

The existence of traditional leadership in Tulehu Village, Central Maluku Regency, is greatly influenced by the role of community leaders and traditional institutions such as the Saniri Negeri, as well as by the intervention of the local government. Community leaders have a significant influence in strengthening and maintaining the existence of traditional leadership by ensuring that local values and traditions are respected and implemented in the daily lives of the community. Their direct involvement in the customary leadership process serves as the primary support that maintains the relationship between the community and the customary leaders. Thus, the role of community leaders can be seen as a positive determining factor in maintaining traditional leadership, considering their influence can help minimize conflicts and ensure the continuity of conventional leadership. The existence of traditional leadership in the Tulehu region of Central Maluku Regency is greatly influenced by the role of community

leaders and traditional institutions such as the Saniri Negeri, as well as by the intervention of the local government. Community leaders have a significant influence in strengthening and maintaining the existence of traditional leadership by ensuring that local values and traditions are respected and implemented in the daily lives of the community. Their direct involvement in the customary leadership process serves as the primary support that maintains the relationship between the community and the customary leaders. Thus, the role of community leaders can be seen as a positive determining factor in maintaining traditional leadership, considering their influence can help minimize conflicts and ensure the continuity of conventional leadership.

However, government intervention in the form of appointing officials from outside the customary structure creates leadership conflicts, which become a hindrance to the existence of traditional leadership. The policy of the Central Maluku Regency government in appointing officials without going through the Saniri Negeri selection process has triggered tensions between the government and the indigenous community, especially since the Saniri Negeri is traditionally responsible for the leader selection process. The four-year conflict reflects the misunderstanding between the traditional leadership structure and government intervention, resulting in instability in traditional leadership in Tulehu. This intervention shows that external interference can disrupt social stability and damage the existing customary leadership system, so maintaining the existence of customary leadership will require efforts to balance the influence of community leaders and customary institutions with existing government policies.

CONCLUSION

Traditional leadership in the State of Tulehu plays an essential role in the social, cultural, and political aspects, which directly influence the stability and harmony of the local community. As the regulator of customary values, the traditional leader functions to maintain social harmony and serves as a symbol of unity that preserves relationships between clans and families. The vacancy of the King's position in recent years has caused delays in the implementation of these social functions, which has impacted the optimal execution of customary and cultural activities. The presence of temporary officials cannot fully replace the figure of the traditional leader who has legitimacy and emotional ties with the community. As a result, there is stagnation in the regeneration of cultural values that should be passed down to future generations, potentially weakening the cultural identity of the Tulehu community.

From a political perspective, traditional leadership also serves as a bridge between the community and the government, where the traditional leader represents the community's aspirations in political decisions related to communal interests. When this leadership is vacant, the community loses strong and rooted representation in the political process, which makes their aspirations less optimally accommodated. Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that the existence of strong and sustainable customary leadership is essential for the State of Tulehu, both in preserving cultural identity, stabilizing social life, and strengthening the political position of Indigenous communities. Therefore, measures are needed to improve the position of

traditional leadership, ensure social and cultural stability, and support the preservation of customs in the face of changing times.

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