

Cosmological Legitimacy and Civic Obedience: Toward a Conceptual Framework of Communal-Religious Citizenship in Kampung Pitu, Nglanggeran, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta

R. Bariq Maulana^{1*}, Triyanto², Widya Noventari², Abd Razak Bin Zakaria³, Siska Fitri Anggraheni²

¹MTs Negeri 1 Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

²Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia;

³Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*) Corresponding author: bariqmaul@gmail.com

Abstract

The study of citizenship remains strongly shaped by liberal-individual assumptions and by the idea that rights are the primary basis of citizenship. This orientation often reduces the citizenship practices of indigenous communities to matters of state recognition, legal status, or administrative inclusion. This article offers a conceptual alternative, proposing citizenship as a form of civic obedience grounded in communal, religious, and cosmological legitimacy. The discussion is anchored in the case of Kampung Pitu in Nglanggeran, Gunungkidul, Special Region of Yogyakarta, a community widely associated with the norm of maintaining only seven households (7 KK). Rather than presenting primary fieldwork findings, this article develops a conceptual framework through a critical synthesis of literature on contemporary citizenship studies, legitimacy and authority, communitarian approaches, Javanese cosmology, customary law, and legal pluralism in Indonesia. The article proposes a three-layer analytical model: (1) cosmological legitimacy as the foundation of norms; (2) communal obligation as the moral orientation of citizenship; and (3) civic obedience mechanisms based on moral authority, reputation, and social-symbolic sanctions. These three layers are synthesized into the concept of “communal-religious citizenship,” a mode of citizenship that maintains social order without relying primarily on state legal-rational instruments. The article’s contribution is theoretical: it positions indigenous communities not merely as objects of recognition policy but as important sources for developing citizenship theory from the Global South. The proposed framework requires further validation through future ethnographic research, interviews, observation, and documentation in Kampung Pitu.

Keywords: Indigenous Citizenship; Civic Obedience; Customary Community; Cosmological Legitimacy; Kampung Pitu; Legal Pluralism.

Introduction

The classical framework of modern citizenship places citizenship as a legal status along with a set of civil, political, and social rights institutionalized by the state (Marshall, 1950). This framework has had a significant influence in mapping the consolidation of the welfare state, but it has limitations when used to understand indigenous communities that

link their social order to communal relations, moral obligations, and cosmological legitimacy. In such communities, what stands out is not always the demand for individual rights, but the maintenance of order through compliance that is considered morally, communally, and religiously legitimate.

In the past two decades, citizenship studies have shifted from viewing citizenship merely as status to viewing it as practice and

action. Isin (2008) emphasizes that the subject of citizenship is shaped through acts of citizenship, which create claims, positions, and membership within the political community. Isin and Nyers (2014) expand this reading by positioning citizenship as an arena of contestation that is not always identical to formal citizen status. This shift opens space for interpreting citizenship from the bottom. However, many of these approaches still assume an individual subject who negotiates with the state. As a result, forms of citizenship based on communal obligation, moral obedience, and collective compliance have not yet received adequate analytical attention.

In Indonesia, the relationship between indigenous communities and the state has a long history marked by conditional recognition: adat is recognized as long as it is alive and does not conflict with national interests. In practice, this recognition often functions more as an administrative instrument than as a normative acknowledgment of community autonomy (Bedner & van Huis, 2008). The resurgence of adat discourse after Reformasi shows that adat is no longer merely a legacy of the past, but an active source of political and social legitimacy that continues to be negotiated (Davidson & Henley, 2007; Arizona, 2022). Contemporary customary law studies also show that adat, the state, and religion may operate simultaneously within a single social space (Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann, 2013).

The discourse on indigenous citizenship at the international level often emphasizes the relationship between indigenous communities and the state, recognition of collective rights, and political representation (Levi & Durham, 2015; Lightfoot, 2016). Although recognition is important, an analysis that stops at recognition risks positioning indigenous communities merely as objects of regulation. Some recent studies highlight the importance of viewing indigenous communities as owners of knowledge regimes, governance practices, and normative institutions that are relatively autonomous (Corntassel, 2012; Watene, 2016).

This article uses Kampung Pitu in Nglanggeran, Patuk, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta, as an illustrative case for conceptual reflection. The community is widely known for the norm of seven households, which limits the number of family

units maintained across generations and is associated with origin stories, sacred space, and the moral authority of elders. Because this article does not present fieldwork data, Kampung Pitu is not treated here as a fully documented empirical site, but as a conceptual anchor for developing an analytical model. The central question addressed is: how can communal compliance rooted in cosmological and religious legitimacy be conceptualized as a form of citizenship beyond liberal-individual and state-centered frameworks?

The article has three main objectives. First, it develops a conceptual framework for understanding communal obedience as an aspect of citizenship. Second, it proposes a three-layer analytical model that can guide future ethnographic research. Third, it emphasizes the role of indigenous communities as potential sources of citizenship theory from the perspective of the Global South.

Literature Review

From Status to Practice: Expansion of Citizenship Studies

Marshall (1950) placed citizenship as part of the evolution of rights institutionalized by the state. Recent developments have shifted the emphasis to practice: citizenship is understood as something performed, negotiated, and enacted, not merely possessed (Isin, 2008; Isin & Nyers, 2014). This shift has raised attention to everyday citizenship, which is formed through daily relations and social spaces outside formal state institutions. However, as critiqued in decolonial citizenship studies, the practices commonly analyzed often remain claims to rights, protest, or formal participation in forms aligned with liberal political imagination (Corntassel, 2012). The category of community compliance is rarely considered a legitimate citizenship practice.

Communitarianism and Moral Commitment

The communitarian perspective emphasizes that society cannot rely solely on the logic of rights. Etzioni (1996) argues that a

responsive community requires a balance between rights and responsibilities. In Etzioni's (2011) view, the common good and moral obligations form the basis of social solidarity. In indigenous communities, these obligations are often reinforced through symbolic structures such as origin narratives, rituals, sacred spaces, and traditional authority. Compliance is therefore not merely the result of coercion but the internalization of values. Violations of norms are understood as the destruction of relationships and disturbances to balance, rather than only as rule-breaking.

Legitimacy, Authority, and Javanese Cosmology

Social compliance is closely related to legitimacy. Weber (1978) argues that authority can persist because it is considered legitimate by those who are governed, whether through traditional, charismatic, or legal-rational bases. In Java, social authority and order often rely on cosmological concepts of harmony and sacred power rather than on legal procedures alone (Anderson, 1990; Koentjaraningrat, 1984; Magnis-Suseno, 1984). Compliance is also produced through subtle social control mechanisms such as reputation, respect, moral judgment, and symbolic sanctions. Scott (1976) shows that moral economy and community judgment can generate compliance without the need for formal coercive devices.

Customary Law, Legal Pluralism, and Indigenous Citizenship in Indonesia

The study of Indonesian customary law has long emphasized that adat is a living normative system with its own logic (Ter Haar, 1960; Soepomo, 1967). Contemporary studies show that customary order is not merely enduring but continues to transform through interactions with the state and the market (Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann, 2013; Arizona, 2022). The framework of legal pluralism is important because it enables an understanding of multiple normative orders operating simultaneously within a community (Bavinck & Gupta, 2014; Bedner & van Huis, 2008).

Method

This article employs a conceptual research design using Theory Synthesis (Jaakkola, 2020). Rather than presenting primary empirical data, it critically synthesizes literature on citizenship studies, communitarian theory, legitimacy and authority, Javanese cosmology, customary law, and legal pluralism. The analysis identifies recurring concepts—legitimacy, obligation, authority, compliance, reputation, and symbolic sanction—and integrates them into a three-layer framework of communal-religious citizenship. Thus, the article aims to provide a conceptual contribution by integrating dispersed theoretical perspectives rather than merely summarizing existing literature (MacInnis, 2011; Gilson & Goldberg, 2015).

Kampung Pitu is used as an illustrative case and conceptual entry point, not as a source of empirical findings. The proposed framework is therefore provisional and requires future ethnographic validation through interviews, observation, and documentation of local narratives, customary rules, and symbolic practices. This positioning distinguishes the present study from empirical ethnography and frames the proposed communal-religious citizenship model as a theoretical proposition for further empirical examination (Jaakkola, 2020).

Result and Discussion

Cosmological Legitimacy: Norm as Trust

In rational-legal thought, norms are formal rules that can be changed through certain procedures. In customary communities, however, norms are often understood as entrusted traditions that carry moral and spiritual consequences if violated. In the context of Kampung Pitu, the norm of seven households can be conceptually read not only as a rule of residence or demography, but as a symbolic mechanism for maintaining balance. According to Weber (1978), this approaches traditional legitimacy, where norms are considered valid because they are inherited and supported by trusted authority.

The interpretive approach emphasizes that cosmology is not merely a cultural ornament but a framework of public meaning that

organizes collective action (Geertz, 1973). When norms are treated as part of symbolic order, compliance becomes a rational act within the community's horizon of meaning, even though it may be difficult to understand in modern legal language. This pattern aligns with concepts of power and harmony in Javanese culture, which view the violation of taboos as a disturbance to cosmic order rather than simply as an administrative mistake (Anderson, 1990; Magnis-Suseno, 1984).

Communal Obligation: Citizenship as a Relationship

Liberal citizenship often views the individual as the basic unit of analysis, while communal-religious citizenship treats relationships as the basic unit. According to Etzioni (1996, 2011), moral obligation is the foundation of social order, and in customary communities this obligation may be more tangible than claims of rights. The norm of seven households can be conceptually interpreted as a mechanism for managing social reproduction: rather than encouraging the addition of new household units, the community maintains stability within accepted symbolic and social boundaries.

Communal obligations shape subjects in which citizens are understood as members of a community responsible for maintaining harmony, respecting moral authority, and preserving traditions. In line with the idea that citizenship is formed through practice (Isin, 2008), the emphasis here differs from liberal citizenship. In Kampung Pitu, the relevant practice is not primarily an act of claiming rights, but an obligation to maintain order. Community membership is therefore not merely an administrative status but a moral achievement that must be continuously maintained.

Mechanism of Civic Obedience: Moral Authority, Reputation, and Symbolic Sanctions

If compliance is not driven primarily by state officials, how might it work? In communities with close social networks and repeated relationships, social control may occur through reputation, shame, moral

judgment, and symbolic sanctions (Scott, 1976). The legal pluralism framework adds that communities can operate their own normative regimes alongside state law (Bavinck & Gupta, 2014; Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann, 2013).

Three mechanisms can be proposed conceptually. First, the moral authority of elders may function as a guardian of ancestral trust and as an evaluator of the legitimacy of deviation. Second, social sanctions such as stigma, negative judgment, and relational tension may prevent deviation without the need for formal instruments. Third, symbolic-ritual sanctions may link violations to moral and religious consequences, making the perceived cost of violation heavier than material loss. The combination of these mechanisms explains how compliance can be imagined as stable without relying primarily on coercive state apparatus. This compliance is civic because it governs communal life, and communal-religious because the sources of its legitimacy and sanctions are rooted in shared morality and local cosmology.

Proposed Model of Communal-Religious Citizenship

Based on the conceptual discussion above, this article proposes communal-religious citizenship as a mode of citizenship in which membership, obligation, and obedience are formed through communal relations and cosmological-religious legitimacy rather than primarily through state law. This model consists of three interrelated components, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Proposed Model of Communal-Religious Citizenship

Component	Main Focus	Analytical Function
Cosmological legitimacy	Norms are understood as sacred, inherited, and morally binding.	Explains why norms are considered valid.

Communal obligation	Citizenship is oriented toward maintaining relationships, harmony, and collective continuity.	Explains what kind of subject is formed.
Civic obedience mechanisms	Compliance is maintained through elders, reputation, shame, and symbolic sanctions.	Explains how order is reproduced without relying mainly on state coercion.

This model does not claim to exhaust the complexity of Kampung Pitu. Rather, it offers an analytical vocabulary for future research. Its value lies in shifting the discussion of indigenous citizenship from recognition by the state toward the internal normative resources through which communities produce order, obligation, and membership.

Conclusion

This article advances three conceptual claims. First, citizenship may be understood not only as legal status or rights-bearing membership, but also as a practice of compliance rooted in communal and cosmological legitimacy. Second, the stability of such compliance can be conceptually explained through the interaction of traditional authority, communal obligation, reputation, and symbolic sanctions. Third, the case of Kampung Pitu provides a useful conceptual entry point for developing a Global South perspective on indigenous citizenship, although further ethnographic research is required to validate and refine this framework.

The concept of communal-religious citizenship contributes to citizenship studies by broadening the analytical focus from individual claims against the state to moral obligations within the community. It also contributes to indigenous studies by positioning customary communities not merely as objects of recognition policy, but as sources of theory-making. In this sense, Kampung Pitu offers not only a local case, but a conceptual invitation to rethink citizenship from the

standpoint of communal order, religious meaning, and cosmological legitimacy.

Acknowledgment

This research was funded by Universitas Sebelas Maret with Fundamental Research (PF-B) 2026, with contract number 460/UN27.22/PT.01.03/2026

References

- Anderson, B. R. O'G. (1990). The idea of power in Javanese culture. In *Language and power: Exploring political cultures in Indonesia* (pp. 17–77). Cornell University Press.
- Arizona, Y. (2022). Perkembangan pengakuan hukum terhadap masyarakat hukum adat di Indonesia. Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- Bavinck, M., & Gupta, J. (2014). Legal pluralism in aquatic regimes: A challenge for governance. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 11, 78–85.
- Bedner, A., & van Huis, S. (2008). The return of the native in Indonesian law: Indigenous communities in Indonesian legal development. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 164(2–3), 165–193.
- Benda-Beckmann, F. von, & Benda-Beckmann, K. von. (2013). *Political and legal transformations of an Indonesian polity: The Nagari from colonisation to decentralisation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Corntassel, J. (2012). Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 86–101.
- Davidson, J. S., & Henley, D. (Eds.). (2007). *The revival of tradition in Indonesian politics: The deployment of adat from colonialism to indigenism*. Routledge.
- Etzioni, A. (1996). The responsive community: A communitarian perspective. *American Sociological Review*, 61(1), 1–11.
- Etzioni, A. (2011). *The communitarian reader: Beyond the essentials*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. Basic Books.
- Gilson, L. L., & Goldberg, C. B. (2015). Editors' comment: So, what is a conceptual paper? *Group & Organization Management*, 40(2), 127–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601115576425>
- Isin, E. F. (2008). *Acts of citizenship*. Zed Books.

- Isin, E. F., & Nyers, P. (Eds.). (2014). Routledge handbook of global citizenship studies. Routledge.
- Jaakkola, E. (2020). Designing conceptual articles: Four approaches. *AMS Review*, 10(1–2), 18–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-020-00161-0>
- Koentjaraningrat. (1984). Kebudayaan Jawa. Balai Pustaka.
- Levi, J. M., & Durham, D. (Eds.). (2015). Indigenous citizenships: Local selves and native nations. Duke University Press.
- Lightfoot, S. R. (2016). Global indigenous politics: A subtle revolution. Routledge.
- MacInnis, D. J. (2011). A framework for conceptual contributions in marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(4), 136–154. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.75.4.136>
- Magnis-Suseno, F. (1984). Etika Jawa: Sebuah analisa falsafi tentang kebijaksanaan hidup Jawa. Gramedia.
- Marshall, T. H. (1950). Citizenship and social class and other essays. Cambridge University Press.
- Scott, J. C. (1976). The moral economy of the peasant: Rebellion and subsistence in Southeast Asia. Yale University Press.
- Soepomo, R. (1967). Bab-bab tentang hukum adat. Pradnya Paramita.
- Ter Haar, B. (1960). Asas-asas dan susunan hukum adat (K. Ng. Soebakti Poesponoto, Trans.). Pradnya Paramita.
- Watene, K. (2016). Valuing nature: Māori philosophy and the capability approach. *Oxford Development Studies*, 44(3), 287–296.
- Weber, M. (1978). Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology (G. Roth & C. Wittich, Eds.). University of California Press.