

## Implications of Uncertainty in the Status of Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter Holders in the Baluwarti Area

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Received: 26/01/2026

Revised: 14/02/2026

Accepted: 02/03/2026

### Abstract

This study analyzes the legal status of Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter in the Baluwarti area of Surakarta within Indonesia's national agrarian law framework. Surat Palilah, issued by the Surakarta Palace as an authorization to occupy and use palace land, has no clear position under the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA), creating legal uncertainty, particularly in land registration and certification. This research applies normative legal methods, drawing on statutory, historical, and conceptual approaches, and is supported by empirical interviews as complementary data. The study examines the legal standing of Palilah land, available forms of legal protection, and obstacles in the registration process. The findings show that Palilah land cannot be certified as ownership or building use rights and may only be recognized as a Right of Use with Palace approval. The study contributes to agrarian law scholarship by clarifying the normative gap between traditional palace land governance and the national land law system and by providing a conceptual basis for strengthening legal protection within a pluralistic agrarian framework.

### Keywords

A letter from the Hospital; Agrarian Law; Customary Land Surakarta Palace; Legal Certainty

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Land as an agrarian resource plays a fundamental role in the lives of the Indonesian people, serving as an economic asset, a living space, and part of their socio-cultural identity (Adi Rahmanto et al., 2025). Therefore, national agrarian law cannot be separated from the historical dynamics of land control and utilization that developed from the pre-independence period until the formation of the national agrarian law system through the Basic Agrarian Law Number 5 of 1960 (UUPA) (Zahra & Priyono, 2025). Historically, Indonesia's land system has developed in three main periods, namely the pre-independence period, the post-independence period, and the Constitution of the United States of Indonesia (RIS). (Rafie, 1960a)



Historically, Indonesia's land system developed in several important periods, one of which was marked by the application of a dualistic land law system during the colonial period (Darmayanti, 2020). During this period, customary law remained applicable to indigenous peoples with a communalistic-religious character, while the Dutch colonial government introduced the Western legal regime through *the Agricultural Law and the Agricultural Decree of 1870*, which opened land control to Europeans through Western rights. This dualism gave rise to land tenure inequality. It weakened the position of indigenous peoples and traditional territories, including government lands in Java, which were then influenced by the foundations of the *Domain Statement*. (Putra & Mahendra, 2022)

At that time, the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace was granted the status of a *swapraja* due to close political relations with the Dutch East Indies government (Styawan, 2024). However, in the agreement between the Netherlands and the Surakarta Palace, the Palace was still recognized as a *self-governing landscape* or self-ruled area, so that part of the territory, including Baluwarti, remains under the Palace's customary law order (Satria Hanas et al., 2024). The status of *swapraja* grants the Palace certain authority to regulate its own lands (Maheswari, 2021). Thus, the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* was born as a form of Palace approval or permission for courtiers or certain parties to occupy a piece of land and erect a building on it. The term "*Please*" is etymologically derived from the Javanese language, which means "permission" or "blessing." At the same time, "*Griya Pasiten*" refers to the residence or house given to courtiers as a form of appreciation for their devotion to the Palace. Thus, *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*, in essence, serves as proof of the community's residence permit and use of the Palace land, which has a historical and functional relationship with the Palace institution.

At the beginning of independence, the country faced an urgent need to carry out agrarian reform and unify the land law into a fairer, more uniform, and legally certain framework (Suci Rahmadani & Muhammad Imanuddin Kandias Saraan, 2022). However, during the period 1945-1960, Indonesia still relied on many colonial-era regulations because there was no National Agrarian Law. This situation creates legal uncertainty regarding land rights, particularly regarding traditional territories that are not subject to any formal administration (Pamungkas, 2021a). In line with Boedi Harsono's view, the right to land in the UUPA system is a right that comes from the authority of the state and must be determined and registered according to the national legal mechanism, so that not every form of land tenure in social practice can be automatically equated as material rights. (Harsono, 2008)

This situation served as the basis for drafting the UUPA, which aimed not only to achieve legal certainty but also to restructure land management and ownership structures inherited from the feudal and colonial systems to achieve a fair land structure and improve the welfare of the Indonesian people. (Sitanggang et al., 2024). Article 3 of the UUPA clearly affirms the recognition of customary and similar rights, which is the legal basis for the protection of customary lands in Indonesia (Saidah & Handayani,

2025). The UUPA also converts colonial rights (Orchid & Saleh, 2026). Through the conversion mechanism, the UUPA stipulated that colonial rights, such as *Property* converted into property; *ground lease* converted into business use rights; *the Castle* being the right to establish and own a building on another person's land or the right to use the building; and *usufruct* converted into the right to use the result. (Mahmuddin et al., 2023)

However, the lands in the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace Area do not follow the conversion mechanism as stipulated in the UUPA. The land tenure system in the Baluwarti area still maintains the traditional mechanism through the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*, which closely resembles the character of rights *Castle* in the colonial period, namely the right to establish or own land on land owned by others (Malik, 2025). The character shows that the rights granted through *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* are not absolute and do not include full authority over land. These rights are only personal; they cannot be freely transferred, used as collateral, or confer status as holders of land use rights in the agricultural system on the holder. (Wulandari & Handayani, 2025)

This legal status poses a serious problem in the modern context, as it does not fall under the category of land rights as defined in Article 16 of the UUPA. *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* cannot be converted into Property Rights, Building Use Rights, Business Use Rights, or Use Rights (Aina et al., 2024). As a result, the holder of a *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* does not obtain adequate legal protection from the state, especially regarding the certainty of rights, protection against disputes, and access to land administration services. Factually, the society of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* has occupied the building on the land for generations.

Thus, there is a disharmony between the Palace's customary law system, which is oriented towards occupancy permits, and the national agrarian law system, which is formalistic and requires the registration of rights. This inconsistency raises fundamental questions about the form of legal protection the state should provide to holders of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* in the Baluwarti Area. The uncertainty of the legal position and the weak state protection are the main reasons for the importance of this research, especially to examine the legal position of holders of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* from a national agrarian perspective and to formulate an ideal legal protection model for them.

Based on this background, this research focuses on the legal position of *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* within the national agrarian legal system and on the form of legal protection that the state should provide to the holder of *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*. The purpose of this research is to analyze the legal position of *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* from the perspective of the UUPA and formulate a legal protection model that is ideal for its holders in order to realize legal certainty and agrarian justice.

## 2. METHOD

This research is a legal study with a normative approach. Normative legal research presents law as a system of norms or binding rules in social life. It focuses primarily on legal principles, legal systematics, harmonization of laws and regulations, historical developments in law, and comparative law. (Sukmawan & Damayanti, 2025). In line with Peter Mahmud Marzuki's view, Normative legal research aims to examine the law as it should be (*Das Sollen*), namely by analyzing applicable legal principles, norms, and concepts (Ladiesya et al., 2025). This approach was chosen because the problems studied concerned the legal position of Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter within the national agrarian legal system, as defined by the UUPA and its implementing regulations.

In this study, empirical data are not used as the main basis of analysis, but as supporting data to enrich and confirm the results of normative studies. Empirical data provide a factual picture of land tenure and utilization practices through the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter, as well as the administrative obstacles the holder faces in the context of land registration. Thus, the use of empirical data remains within the framework of normative legal research and does not shift the research's character to empirical (Wisconsin, 2024). The technique of collecting legal materials is applied through literature research, as explained by Soejorno Soekanto, who argues that normative legal research is based on secondary data analysis, including primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. (Zen et al., 2024). Primary legal materials include the official documents of the Surakarta Palace, including the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter. Secondary legal materials are obtained from literature, indexed scientific journals, expert opinions, and the results of previous research. Tertiary legal materials include legal dictionaries, legal encyclopedias, and bibliographic indexes.

As a complement, empirical data were collected through semi-structured, purposive interviews with several relevant parties, namely holders of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*, officials of the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace, and officials or parties involved in local land administration. Interviews were conducted with several informants considered representative to obtain information on the practice of granting *Palilah* Letters, land tenure patterns, and the obstacles encountered in efforts to achieve legal certainty. The data from these interviews are used to support normative analysis, particularly to identify gaps between legal arrangements and the realities of practice in the field.

Qualitative analysis of legal content is carried out using content *analysis*. Moleong explained that qualitative analysis involves interpreting legal materials to reveal the meaning, mindset, and legal principles relevant to the issues under study. In the context of this study, a qualitative analysis was carried out by interpreting the relationship between the customary law of the Palace as a local normative system and the national agrarian legal system, then identifying the form of legal protection that should be possessed by the holder of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* from the perspective of legal certainty and

recognition of customary rights. Thus, this method allows researchers to draw prescriptive conclusions about the ideal legal protection for the use of customary land in the Baluwarti Area.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. History and Status of Baluwarti Land Tenure

From the perspective of the Indonesian constitutional law, land management and land status are closely related to Article 33 Paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that the earth, water, and natural resources contained therein are under state control and must be used as best as possible for the benefit of the people (Bahari, 2025a). This norm makes it clear that state control over land is a public and constitutional matter; therefore, all regulations and guidelines related to land must aim at social justice and the realization of the community's interests (Bahari, 2025b). Before the birth of the UUPA, Indonesia's land law system underwent a long and complex historical development, which can be divided into 3 three main periods, including the period before independence, the period after independence, and the period of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (RIS). (Rafie, 1960b)

During the pre-independence period, Indonesia's land law system was strongly influenced by the Dutch colonial government. The Dutch colonial government applied the legal politics of dualism, in which legal dualism prevailed simultaneously (Juwono & Horn, 2025). Western law (as set out in the *Agricultural Decree 1870* and *the Agricultural Law*) for European citizens, as well as lands considered to be the domain of the state, and customary law for indigenous peoples (Final, 2021b). Through the *Agricultural Decree*, the Dutch colonial government introduced the principle of *Domain Statement*, which states that certain lands belong to the colonial state and are then allocated to private parties, corporations, or local nobles through Western rights, such as the right of *Property*, right of *ground lease*, opstal rights, and rights of *usufruct*. (Putra & Mahendra, 2022)

*Property* rights are the most powerful and fundamental rights according to Western law. The right grants the holder full authority to use and enjoy the land, as well as to transfer the rights to the land in question to other parties, without limitation on a specific period of time (Mujiburohman, 2021). In the colonial context, the right to *Property* and its ownership were limited to Europeans and certain legal entities, not to indigenous people, except with the permission of the Dutch East Indies government (Gandawati, t.t.). A *rights-ground lease* is one of the property rights that originated in the Dutch civil law system and was enforced in Indonesia during the colonial period through *the Civil Code (BW)* and *the Agricultural Law* of 1870. Juridically, the position of *rights-grounded lease* is strong because it provides a direct link between the right-holder and his land (*Right in rem*), rather than merely obligatory relationships. (Fazari & Rizkianti, 2023)

Rights *Castle*, namely, material rights that share authority with a person to own buildings, plants, or structures on land owned by others (Wardoyo, 2024). The Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA) is the embodiment of Article 33, Paragraph (3) of the 1960 UUPA. According to Article 2, paragraph (1) of the UUPA, the earth, water, and natural resources in it are under the control of the state and are used to achieve the greatest prosperity for the people (Fauzi, 2022). In such conversion schemes, the right to *Castle* is no longer functionally converted into Hak Pause, considering that its substance is in the form of the authority to use land owned by other parties to erect buildings.

Furthermore, during the period of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (RIS) in 1949-1950, the position of *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* It is even clearer when traced in the context of changes in the Indonesian constitution which is divided into the Republic of Indonesia, the State of Pasundan, the State of East Java, the State of Madura, the State of East Sumatra, and the State of South Sumatra (Fauziah, 2023). The federal structure still recognizes the existence of kingdoms and swatara areas scattered throughout the archipelago, with certain powers inherited from the colonial period (Darmawan & Ratnawati, 2024). After the dissolution of the Republic of Indonesia (RIS), and Indonesia returned to the form of a unitary state, all swara rights, including palace lands, were constitutionally converted to state land through the principle of the Right to Control the State (HMN) as affirmed in the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA).

The Baluwarti area in Surakarta is a historical area that has an important position in the social, cultural, and political structure of the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace. In the pre-independence period, land in the area was designated as swapraja land, land controlled by the kingdom or palace as a traditional political entity. The land tenure system at that time did not analyze the concept of property rights as understood in modern agrarian law. On the other hand, land tenure is practiced through feudal relationships between the king and courtiers, as well as through schemes granting residence permits, management permits, or hereditary uses. One form of this traditional instrument is *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*. This document grants families or courtiers the right to occupy and use a specific house or piece of land within the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace area.

### **3.2. The Position of *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* in the National Agrarian System**

With the enactment of Law No. 5 of 1960 concerning the Basic Regulations on Agrarian Principles (UUPA), all land rights systems in Indonesia are directed at unification and modernization through the adjustment of traditional rights to nationally standardized western rights (Suartining & Djaja, 2023). However, the UUPA still allows traditional rights, provided they are valid and do not contradict the national interest, as stipulated in Article 3 of the Basic Agrarian Law. However, the position of Baluwarti land cannot necessarily be characterized as a customary right, because the Palace is not constructed as

a subject of customary law, but rather as a royal cultural entity that no longer has formal political authority.

Consequently, land in Baluwarti in the modern agrarian regime is categorized as customary land that still exists historically but requires rearrangement through positive legal instruments. When the land is still managed through the traditional mechanism of the Palace, including through *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*, there is a juridical gap between customary control practices and the modern land registration system. This then raises legal protection problems for the holders of the *Griya Pasiten Palilah Letter*.

Under the law, *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* is not evidence of land rights under national law. This document serves only as an *occupancy permit* issued by the Palace to certain individuals or families. It does not provide ownership authority, cannot be transferred without the approval of the Palace authority, and does not have the character of a material right attached to the land object. Under the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA), only rights with material characteristics, such as *andarbe*, *yasan*, and *anggaduh*, can be converted into property rights or building-use rights.

In substance, the authority granted through *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* has characteristics parallel to *opstal rights*, namely the right to erect and own a building without owning the land on which it is built. Genealogically, these similarities do not appear suddenly, but are rooted in the historical development of the land law regime in Indonesia during the colonial period. Meanwhile, *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* does not meet the elements of material rights because it does not give *beschikkingsbevoegdheid* (full control authority) to the holder.

Therefore, in terms of legal structure, *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* cannot be converted into a right to modern land, including property rights and building-use rights. At an empirical level, the submission of an application for registration or certification of land with Palilah status, if carried out, can in principle only be considered for conversion into right of use, with the prerequisite that there is clarity about the subject of the original landowner, namely the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace, as well as the obtaining of firm and written approval from the Palace.

However, because the land in the Baluwarti Area lacks definitive determination or mapping as state land or under the authority of certain agencies, the certification process often stalls due to administrative delays. The absence of a normative basis for the mechanism of converting land rights leaves the holder of *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* without adequate evidentiary power in the land registration system, making it impossible for them to obtain a land rights certificate.

The absence of a land certificate does not mean that the holder of *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* loses all forms of legal protection. The protection can be analyzed through 3 (three) perspectives: (1) protection based on customary law; (2) protection within the framework of national law; (3) territorial

administrative protection. First, in the customary law of the Surakarta Palace, *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* has high legitimacy because it is a form of official recognition from the traditional authority of Baluwarti. The control based on *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* is considered valid according to custom because its issuance follows the Palace's internal procedures. Thus, the holder obtains customary law protection, which remains relevant as long as the indigenous community continues to recognize its existence.

### **3.3. Physical Mastery and Juridical Protection**

The protection of physical control is rooted in the principles of protection against real control (*feitelijke macht*) and good faith in civil law and agrarian law (Roy & Adiwiranto, 2025). In the context of national land, long-lasting physical control that authorities have never questioned can be seen as having social legitimacy (Nugroho & Djajaputra, 2021). This is in line with the social function of land rights as affirmed in Article 6 of the UUPA, which places the use of land not solely in a legal-formal framework, but also in the dimension of social utility and sustainability.

In the practice of judicial decisions, physical control of land carried out hereditarily or with the permission of the previous ruler is considered a form of control that can be protected, provided it does not conflict with the law (Fadilla & Handayani, 2025). The Supreme Court, in several land dispute rulings, emphasized that well-established and long-lasting physical possession can serve as a basis for protection against arbitrary eviction, for example, in Supreme Court Decision No. 1794 K/Pdt/2004 and Supreme Court Decision No. 255 K/Sip/1963 regarding the protection of real tenure.

This means that the holder of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* cannot be considered an illegal occupant, as it occupies land under a valid permit within the traditional legal framework (Thunder, 2023). This proves the basis of protection against arbitrary evictions or unconstitutional seizures. From an administrative perspective, Baluwarti's designation as a cultural heritage area underscores the state's obligation to maintain the social continuity of the people who live there. Law Number 11 of 2010 concerning Cultural Heritage emphasizes the protection of indigenous communities or historical communities as part of cultural preservation (Ramadan & Salioso, 2025). Therefore, local governments have the authority to provide administrative protection, for example, by collecting resident data, issuing residence permits, or implementing equitable relocation policies (Armeta et al., 2025). Thus, holder protection in *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* does not depend solely on the law of the land, but also on the regime of cultural heritage protection.

### **3.4. Normative Recognition and Administrative Reconstruction**

Furthermore, strengthening legal protection for *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* holders can be achieved through 2 (two) major mechanisms: normative recognition and administrative reconstruction. Normative recognition can be achieved through regional regulations that expressly recognize the

validity of the traditional rights of the Surakarta Palace and establish a protection model for the holders of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*. The regulation can recognize that the holder of the *Griya Pasiten Palilah Letter* has the right to permanently occupy the land, thereby providing at least legal certainty in the form of a long-term use permit. This is important to fill the legal void due to the non-conversion of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* into modern agrarian rights.

Administrative reconstruction includes an inventory of the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace's assets, mapping the object of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*, and aligning authority between the Palace, the Surakarta City Government, and the National Land Agency. Through this mechanism, holders of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* can obtain long-term use rights or be determined as permanent residents of cultural heritage areas. This reconstruction is important because, as long as the land's status is unclear, the entire legal protection mechanism remains in doubt.

In the end, harmonization between *Living Law* and the national agrarian legal system is the key to creating agrarian justice (Erdika & Permadi, 2024). The state is obliged to provide space for the sustainability of tradition without ignoring the principle of legal certainty. Therefore, strengthening legal protection for Griya Pasiten landowners is not only a matter of land management but also part of the constitutional recognition of their traditional rights under Article 18 B, paragraph (2), of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. This article emphasizes that the state recognizes and respects communities based on customary law, and that their traditional rights, as long as they exist, are in accordance with societal development and do not conflict with the principles of the Indonesian unitary state, whose norms are also enshrined in law.

In addition, it should be emphasized that strengthening legal protection should not stop at the normative and administrative level alone, but must be integrated into sustainable regional development policies. The local government can prepare a spatial plan that explicitly accommodates lands with traditional status, such as those designated under the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*, to avoid overlap among investment interests, cultural preservation, and residents' rights. This integration is important to prevent the emergence of new agrarian conflicts rooted in the unclear legal status and weak coordination between agencies.

Legal certainty for holders of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* is also related to the protection of the constitutional right to a decent residence and a sense of security as guaranteed in the 1945 Constitution. Therefore, every policy of structuring the Baluwarti Area must prioritize the principles of proportionality and justice, including if relocation is the last option. Relocation, if carried out, must be accompanied by a guarantee of fair compensation and the full participation of the affected communities. Thus, harmonization between the Palace's customary law and national agrarian law is not only a

theoretical discourse but is realized through concrete policies that ensure a balance among legal certainty, the preservation of culture, and the protection of human rights.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on juridical and historical analysis, the holder of *the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* in the Baluwarti Area, Surakarta, is in a distinctive legal position, because his land ownership comes from the customary law system of the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace and is not included in the category of land rights according to national agrarian law. Historically and juridically, the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* is an instrument for traditional, personal, and hereditary occupancy permits that do not confer material authority, such as property rights or building-use rights.

The absence of clear arrangements in the national agrarian legal system has led to weak certainty and legal protection for holders of *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letters*, even though they have long occupied and utilized the land. The absence of clear regulations in the national agrarian legal system has led to weak legal certainty and protection for holders of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*, even though they have long occupied and utilized the land.

The legal protection of *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* is part of the constitutional recognition of traditional rights, as guaranteed in Article 18B, paragraph (2), of the 1945 Constitution, and is in line with the principles of agrarian justice and cultural preservation. (Burhanudin, 2021)

Strengthening legal protection for *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* holders can be achieved through two major mechanisms: normative recognition and administrative reconstruction. Normative recognition includes the issuance of regional regulations that explicitly recognize the traditional rights of the Palace and establish a model of protection for *holders of the Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter*. This can be in the form of a long-term use permit or recognition of permanent resident status. Administrative reconstruction includes inventorying the Palace's assets, mapping *the Palilah* object, and aligning authority among the Palace, the Surakarta City Government, and the National Land Agency. Through this mechanism, *holders of Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* can obtain legal certainty and long-term use rights, while ensuring the continuity of the Palace's cultural traditions.

The Surakarta City Regional Government needs to prepare and establish a regional plan that explicitly recognizes the existence of the *Palilah Griya Pasiten Letter* and establishes a legal protection framework for its holders, for example, by determining resident status or issuing long-term use permits. The National Land Agency (BPN) needs to conduct a special inventory and mapping of *Palilah* land objects in the Baluwarti Area as a basis for a more orderly and integrated land administration arrangement. In addition, a clear institutional coordination mechanism is needed between the Regional Government, BPN, and the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace to harmonize authority and prevent

overlapping policies in the management of the Palace's land. In the long term, BPN can develop technical guidelines or special administrative policies for the registration of use rights or forms of limited control over the customary land of the Palace, thereby achieving legal certainty without eroding the land's traditional character and historical value.

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