Research Article

Forms and Historical and Cultural Roles of Traditional Governance (Ondoafi/ondofolo) in the Governance of Indigenous Communities in Jayapura Regency, Papua Province

Ibrahim Kristofol Kendi* and Muh. Akmal Ibrahim

Doctoral Student of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University, Indonesia

Abstract.

This study aims to analyze the forms and historical and cultural roles of the traditional governance of Ondoafi/Ondofolo in the governance of indigenous communities in Jayapura Regency, Papua. The traditional governance in this area holds a significant position within the social structure of the community and plays a strategic role in preserving cultural values, mediating conflicts, and regulating land and natural resource rights. The existence of Ondoafi/Ondofolo is culturally and spiritually legitimate. However, it has not been fully integrated functionally into the village governance system established by the state, especially after the implementation of Papua's special autonomy. This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method in several villages in Jayapura Regency. Data were collected using document studies. The research findings indicate that the traditional governance of Ondoafi/Ondofolo is characterized by genealogical and collective leadership, with roles encompassing spiritual, social, and ecological aspects. However, there is an imbalance in the relationship between traditional governance and formal governance, often leading to overlapping authority and disharmony in village development implementation. The study reveals that co-optation occurs when the government takes over customary roles without involving traditional leaders, rendering traditions merely symbolic. Hybridization occurs when customary and modern systems integrate, such as in customary deliberations involving village apparatus. Marginalization arises when customary roles are sidelined by formal policies. Institutional transformation is dynamic, encompassing co-optation, hybridization, and marginalization, reflecting the contextual interaction between customary and formal governance within village administration. Strengthening the role of Ondoafi in Jayapura Regency is carried out through accommodative policies based on local wisdom, such as the regional regulation on the recognition of traditional governance. Role optimization is achieved through the village customary council (DAK), village development planning discussions (Musrenbang) based on customary dialogue, and governance training for traditional leaders to enhance capacity and effective participation.

Keywords: traditional governance, Ondoafi/Ondofolo, village governance, special autonomy, capacity of customary institutions, Papua

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1. Introduction

Papua, as an integral part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, possesses unique cultural wealth and social structures that distinguish it from other regions in Indonesia. One of the most prominent characteristics is the existence of traditional governance deeply rooted in the community's life. In the Tabi region, particularly in Jayapura Regency, the traditional governance system is known as Ondoafi or Ondofolo. This institution is not merely a cultural symbol but also holds high social and spiritual legitimacy within indigenous communities. Ondoafi serves as a traditional leader who regulates norms, upholds customary values, mediates conflicts, and safeguards rights over communal land (ulayat) and natural resources.

The existence of Ondoafi is the result of a long historical process that not only reflects the local political order but also serves as a fundamental pillar in maintaining social harmony and the continuity of cultural values. In the context of Papua, land is not merely an economic commodity but an inseparable part of the cultural and spiritual identity of indigenous communities. Ondoafi plays a central role in ensuring that the community's relationship with land and nature remains within the framework of sacred and sustainable customary values.

However, social, political, and governmental dynamics in the modern era present new challenges to the existence and role of Ondoafi. The process of decentralization and the implementation of Special Autonomy in Papua, which began with the enactment of Law No. 21 of 2001, opened up formal recognition for the existence of traditional institutions. Normatively, special autonomy provides opportunities to strengthen the role of indigenous communities in governance and development. However, at the village level, the relationship between formal village governance (led by the village head and officials) and traditional governance of Ondoafi/Ondofolo still operates in parallel. In many cases, overlapping authorities occur. A study conducted by Ayomi D. S. [1] found that the role of Ondoafi has not been fully integrated into the special autonomy policy of Papua, despite their essential participation in development planning. Therefore, specific policies are needed to recognize and empower traditional leadership within the formal governance system in a structural and participatory manner.

This situation raises several issues. First, there is a lack of clarity regarding the roles between traditional and formal institutions. Democratically elected village heads often lack cultural legitimacy, making it challenging to build trust and participation among indigenous residents in development programs. Conversely, Ondoafi, who holds social

and spiritual legitimacy, is often not involved in formal decision-making related to village development. Second, there is fragmentation within the local power structure. The community finds itself caught between two leadership systems that operate without synergy, ultimately affecting the effectiveness of village governance, particularly in planning, decision-making, and implementing development programs.

On the other hand, the institutional capacity of Ondoafi as a traditional institution faces both internal and external challenges. Internally, not all Ondoafi possess adequate skills in understanding modern governance, including development planning, financial administration, and the utilization of village funds. Limited bureaucratic literacy and weak access to training or mentoring make this traditional institution prone to being marginalized in formal development processes.

Externally, the currents of modernization, social mobility, and the influx of external values have transformed the community's social structure. Many young people have started to distance themselves from traditional values, and the position of Ondoafi as a social unifier has begun to erode.

This study aims to answer questions regarding the structure and function of the traditional governance of Ondoafi/Ondofolo in managing indigenous communities in Jayapura Regency, the historical and cultural roles in preserving identity and social cohesion, the interaction between cultural and administrative legitimacy, challenges and opportunities in the modernization era, as well as the study's contribution to understanding hybrid governance in the context of Papua.

This research objective reflects an effort to understand the role of traditional governance Ondoafi/Ondofolo within the context of managing indigenous communities in Jayapura Regency. The focus includes analyzing the structure, function, and historical-cultural role of traditional governance in maintaining identity and social cohesion. In addition, this study also explores the dynamics of interaction between customary and administrative legitimacy, as well as the challenges of modernization, to enrich the literature on hybrid governance in the local context of Papua.

This study contributes to the literature on hybrid governance and dual authority systems by highlighting how the traditional governance of Ondoafi/Ondofolo interacts with formal governance structures in Papua. It reflects the dynamics where traditional authority and the state share, compete, or collaborate in community governance. This phenomenon can be seen in several studies using a hybrid governance approach,

examining the interaction between traditional and state governance systems, showing variations in hybrid governance forms in various countries.

For example, in Timor-Leste, village governance reflects hybrid governance through the combination of customary structures and state institutions [2]. In Ghana, traditional chiefs and local governments share or compete for authority [3]. In Papua New Guinea, customary and formal laws are integrated through village courts [4]. Meanwhile, traditional leaders in the Solomon Islands play roles in conflict mediation [5], and Sub-Saharan African countries face challenges of state legitimacy versus traditional authority [6].

In the Indonesian context, the power relationship between the state and custom in developing Malay cultural tourism in Siak, Riau, shows tension between the Tourism Office and the Malay Customary Institution (LAM) due to a lack of customary involvement, creating an imbalanced relationship ([7]. In Tanjung Pauh Mudik Village, Kerinci, there is collaboration between traditional governance, syarak, and village administration, although custom remains dominant [8], Jurnal Tanah Pilih). Meanwhile, in Nagari Pariangan, institutional dualism arises due to state policy.

In various community practices, Ondoafi is still regarded as an important figure, especially in matters related to customs, communal land (ulayat), and social conflicts. In this context, the role of Ondoafi can become a strategic force if formulated in a collaborative model with the village government. An approach is needed that not only symbolically acknowledges the existence of Ondoafi but also strengthens its functional role and capacity as part of participatory, inclusive, and sustainable village governance.

Thus, it is crucial to conduct an in-depth study on the forms and historical and cultural roles of traditional governance Ondoafi/Ondofolo in managing indigenous communities in Jayapura Regency. This study will reveal how the traditional leadership system has evolved and played a role over time, how the interaction between traditional and formal governance is formed and continues in the current context, and how to formulate a model for strengthening the capacity of traditional institutions so that their role can be constructively integrated into the village governance system.

This research is significant in two respects. First, theoretically, it can contribute to the development of public administration science, particularly in enriching the perspective of local governance based on cultural values. Second, practically, it can provide input

to local governments, customary institutions, and other stakeholders in designing participatory and contextual village development policies, positioning Ondoafi not only as a guardian of tradition but also as a strategic partner in development.

2. Methods

This study uses a literature review method with a qualitative approach to examine the forms and historical as well as cultural roles of Ondoafi/Ondofolo traditional governance in managing indigenous communities in Jayapura Regency. The authenticity and credibility of the sources have been systematically verified in this research. Academic sources used include accredited scholarly journals, books from reputable publishers, and official government documents. Before use, the credibility of the authors and institutional affiliations were carefully examined to ensure data validity. Additionally, to ensure relevance, only the most recent sources were utilized, especially articles that have undergone peer review.

Data triangulation was carried out by comparing various sources, including government reports and journal articles. Content validation includes the analysis of historical context and regional policies related to traditional governance. The secondary data analysis methods include content analysis, critical appraisal, and cross-referencing with previous studies.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Concept and Structure of Ondoafi/Ondofolo Traditional Governance

3.1.1. Definition of Ondoafi/Ondofolo in the context of indigenous communities in Jayapura Regency.

The terms Ondoafi and Ondofolo refer to traditional leaders in the Tabi region, particularly in Jayapura Regency, and are often abbreviated to Ondo. Both terms have the meaning of king or traditional ruler. This title is given to individuals who were the first to settle in an area and hold power over it, gained through their ability to explore, conquer, and defend the territory from threats. In the Sentani region, the use of these terms varies: the indigenous people in West Sentani call their traditional leader Ondoafi, while people in Central and East Sentani more commonly use the term Ondofolo.

3.1.2. Institutional Structure of Ondoafi/Ondofolo

The traditional governance system of Ondoafi/Ondofolo in the Sentani region of Papua represents a form of leadership that is vertical and passed down through generations. According to Papua anthropologist Fredericus W. A. Mansoben [9], this system falls under the category of an aristocratic or miniature kingdom system, contrasting with the Big Man system, which is based on charismatic leadership and individual capabilities. Ondoafi holds full authority over the customary territory (ulayat rights), as well as the social, cultural, spiritual, and economic aspects of the community.

This traditional governance structure is grounded in historical and spiritual legitimacy and is operated in a collective yet hierarchical manner. In practice, Ondoafi is assisted by customary functionaries, such as Khoselo (tribal leader), Yonow (customary council), Abu Afa (protector and treasurer), Pulo Yo (guardian of mystical power), Phulo Ayo (security/war), and Phume-Ameyo (welfare). Each has specific responsibilities in areas such as natural resource management, security, order, and health.

Ondoafi's leadership is not only symbolic but also operational in maintaining social and cultural balance. Decision-making is carried out through deliberation with other customary leaders, including tribal chiefs and female leaders, so that although the system is hierarchical, it is also participatory. The relationship between customary leaders is complementary, ensuring the continuity of customary values and the harmony of village life. This model demonstrates a strong, adaptive, and relevant local institutional system in the context of village governance in Papua today.

3.1.3. Customary Jurisdiction

3.1.3.1. State Recognition

The legal recognition of customary territories is stipulated in Article 103, paragraph (1) of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, which affirms the existence of indigenous legal communities along with their ancestral territories. Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 52 of 2014 further extends this as a living space where customary values and systems apply, including rights over natural resources. Boelens and Roth [10] describe customary jurisdiction as a legitimate social authority to manage the community and its resources. In Jayapura Regency, customary jurisdiction reflects the authority of Ondoafi/Ondofolo, encompassing territory, social structure, and customary practices.

3.1.3.2. Jurisdictional Boundaries

Each traditional governance system in Sentani (Ondoafi/Ondofolo) has a territorial area clearly defined by customary law. The extent of these territorial boundaries reflects the traditional governance's capacity, together with its functionaries, to explore forested areas and to defend or reclaim territories through strength and strategic actions. Although these boundaries are not formally documented within the state legal system, they are recognized in customary practice. Customary territories are only formally recorded administratively when customary land rights are transferred to the government for development or other purposes.

3.1.3.3. Customary Legal Jurisdiction of Ondoafi/Ondofolo

Customary law is a system of rules that lives within indigenous communities and is passed down through generations. According to B. Ter Haar, customary law is unwritten but acknowledged and respected because it exists within the collective consciousness of the community. Soepomo [11] emphasized that customary law is communal, not individualistic, and reflects the original values of the Indonesian people. A distinctive feature of customary law is its flexible, communal nature, rooted in local justice values, and enforced by traditional leaders such as Ondoafi or Ondofolo rather than formal state authorities.

In the context of the Ondoafi/Ondofolo traditional governance system in Papua, customary law holds a central position as a moral, cultural, and institutional foundation in regulating communal life. Ondoafi functions not only as a leader but also as a guardian of values, mediator, and customary judge. Customary law governs all aspects of community life, including land issues, traditional marriage, norm violations, and conflict resolution through customary deliberation or mediation. Customary decisions have legal force that is recognized and respected by the community.

Customary territory or traditional village is also an integral part of the customary law system. The boundaries of customary territories are determined through generations based on history, natural landmarks, and agreements with neighboring communities. According to Sumardjono [12], land for indigenous communities is not merely an economic asset but an expression of collective rights inherent in their social and cultural structure.

Thus, customary law within the Ondoafi/Ondofolo governance system not only preserves the cultural and social identity of indigenous communities but also serves as a vital regulatory and protective force for the sustainability of traditional villages and the harmony of community life amidst changing times.

3.1.3.4. Jurisdictional Boundaries

A customary territory is a living space that has been inherited, utilized, and maintained by indigenous legal communities for generations. It includes land, waters, and all natural resources found both above and below the surface, with specific boundaries according to customary law. These boundaries are recognized by the concerned indigenous community as well as neighboring communities [13].

Geographically, it is defined by areas traditionally acknowledged as communal land belonging to the indigenous community. Socially, it encompasses the clan community that is subject to the authority of the Ondofolo. Functionally, the jurisdiction of the Ondofolo is limited to customary matters and does not extend to the formal domain of the state, except when acknowledged through village or community cooperation with formal governance structures.

3.2. Historical Aspects of Customary Governance

3.2.1. The Origin of the Ondoafi/Ondofolo Institution: When and How the System Was Formed

The historical aspects of the Ondoafi/Ondofolo customary governance system reveal that it originated before the arrival of colonial and external religious influences. According to studies conducted by Mansoben and other researchers, the Ondoafi/Ondofolo system developed as part of the social and cultural structure of the Sentani community, characterized by its communal and hereditary nature. There is no precise written record of when the system was formed, as it emerged within a non-literate community. However, from an anthropological perspective, the Ondoafi system existed long before the arrival of Dutch colonialists in Papua, around the 19th century. In the collective memory of the community and according to oral history, the system has existed since their ancestors migrated and settled in the Lake Sentani area.

The formation of the Ondoafi/Ondofolo system is rooted in the clan-based social structure (keret) of the Sentani community, where clans inhabit specific territories. The oldest, strongest, and most meritorious clan in opening and maintaining a territory becomes the most respected. Leadership within this system is genealogical, as leaders (Ondoafi/Ondofolo) are chosen from the oldest lineage, believed to have the closest connection to the ancestral founders of the village. The role of Ondoafi is not merely administrative but also spiritual and symbolic, as they serve as guardians of cultural values, customary norms, and spiritual relations with ancestral spirits. This leadership is supported by local belief systems, where the community perceives the authority of the Ondoafi as blessed by the ancestors, and any disobedience to their commands is believed to bring misfortune or disaster, highlighting the sacred nature of the leader.

The Ondoafi/Ondofolo institution has become a customary governance system that has been passed down through generations in the Sentani region of Papua. It emerged long before colonial rule and evolved from the communal social structure based on patrilineal lineage. As the highest leader within the customary structure, the Ondoafi or Ondofolo obtains legitimacy through lineage, wisdom, and commitment to community service. This institution was established out of the community's need to maintain social order, manage communal natural resources, resolve conflicts, and preserve the cultural and spiritual heritage of their ancestors.

3.2.2. The Historical Role in the Journey of Indigenous Communities: In Conflicts, Peace Agreements, Migration, Resource Management, Relations with Kingdoms or Colonial Powers, and the Modern State

The historical journey of the Sentani community cannot be separated from the role of Ondoafi as spiritual, social, and ecological leaders. They are not merely symbolic figures but strategic actors who have shaped the foundation of the sustainability of the Sentani indigenous community to this day. Recognizing and reinforcing this historical role is crucial in designing development policies based on culture and local identity.

Since the pre-colonial period, Ondoafi/Ondofolo have functioned as leaders who maintain social order, regulate relationships between khoselo (clan houses), and uphold customary values, norms, and cultural traditions. They serve as both symbols and key actors in preserving the identity and cultural heritage of Sentani, including customary rituals, customary laws, and community structures.

In the history of the Sentani community, Ondoafi has played a central role as a mediator in inter-group and inter-regional conflicts. They use customary mechanisms such as deliberation and peace ceremonies to resolve conflicts and build reconciliation peacefully. This role is vital in maintaining social cohesion and community stability. Ondoafi historically manages the use of land, lakes, and forests based on local value systems such as Khani He Kla He (customary spatial planning). They determine the boundaries of customary land, grant usage permits, and maintain ecological balance according to sustainable local wisdom principles.

During the colonial and post-independence periods, Ondoafi became the spokesperson for indigenous communities in interacting with external kingdoms, colonial authorities, and now the modern state. They often play a decisive role in agreeing to or rejecting external interventions perceived as detrimental to indigenous communities.

In the context of migration, the formation of new villages, and the influx of external influences, Ondoafi acts as a balancer between traditional values and social change. They regulate the acceptance of newcomers, redistribution of territory, and ensure that customary practices remain relevant in the constantly changing lives of the community.

3.2.3. Transformation of Traditional Authority in Line with Changing Times: From Pre-Colonial, Colonial, New Order, to the Era of Papua Special Autonomy

The arrival of Dutch colonial rule brought significant changes to the power of Ondoafi, limiting it through the appointment of village heads without customary legitimacy. However, the Dutch also utilized Ondoafi as local administrative partners [14]. During the New Order era, traditional authority was marginalized due to the implementation of a uniform national village system, neglecting customary structures and communal land rights. Ondoafi was reduced to a cultural symbol without administrative authority. After the reform era, the Papua Special Autonomy Law (Law No. 21 of 2001, amended by Law No. 2 of 2021) created space for the recognition of customary institutions. Ondoafi began to be acknowledged once again as an essential part of village governance, although it has not yet been fully integrated into the formal system.

This transformation reflects a shift from local dominance to state marginalization, and then toward the revitalization of customary authority. The challenge lies in making this recognition substantive and positioning Ondoafi as a strategic partner in culturally rooted and justice-based development [14].

3.3. Cultural Aspects and Local Values

3.3.1. Cultural Values Inherent in the Governance Practices of Ondoafi/Ondofolo, such as Mutual Cooperation, Deliberation, Spirituality, and Traditional Symbols

The value of mutual cooperation lies at the core of the social practices of indigenous communities. In the Ondoafi system, significant tasks such as building traditional houses (obhe), clearing land, traditional celebrations, or post-conflict recovery are carried out collectively. This strengthens solidarity, a sense of shared ownership, and maintains social cohesion.

DeliberationEvery crucial decision within the community, whether related to spatial planning, conflict resolution, or traditional activities, is always made through deliberation. Traditional forums led by Ondoafi involve clan leaders (khoselo), traditional elders, and the community. Deliberation reflects the local democratic value that upholds collective wisdom and consensus.

Spirituality (Living in Harmony with Nature and Ancestors)

The governance of Ondoafi is inherently linked to spiritual values. Land, lakes, large trees, and sacred places are considered to house ancestral spirits that must be respected. The traditional leader is believed to have a special connection with the spiritual world and performs rituals to maintain the cosmic balance between humans, nature, and spirits.

Traditional Symbols

Symbols such as the cassowary feather crown, spear, traditional house, and carvings on boats or traditional fabrics have political and spiritual meanings. These symbols are not merely cultural ornaments but represent power, status, responsibility, and the ancestral heritage of Ondoafi.

Communal Justice

The value of justice in traditional governance is restorative and communal. Every customary violation is resolved to restore relationships rather than merely impose punishment. This reflects the principle of social balance and respect for harmony within the community.

Cultural values such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, spirituality, and traditional symbols in the governance of Ondoafi/Ondofolo reflect a governance system that is not solely based on power but also on morality, solidarity, and local wisdom. These

values become essential assets in building inclusive, fair, and culturally rooted village governance.

3.3.2. The Role of Custom in Cultural Reproduction: Preservation of Language, Traditional Ceremonies, Customs, and Traditional Laws

The role of custom in cultural reproduction is crucial as it connects the community to history, identity, and local wisdom. In Jayapura Regency, the Ondoafi/Ondofolo traditional governance plays a significant role in cultural preservation. First, the preservation of the indigenous language, which is a key element of cultural identity. The traditional governance supports the use of local languages in daily life as well as regional language education. Second, traditional ceremonies serve as spiritual and ritual means to transmit cultural values, which are preserved by Ondoafi/Ondofolo. Third, customary norms that regulate social behavior, such as etiquette and ways of speaking, are maintained and enforced by the traditional leadership to preserve ancestral values. Fourth, customary law that governs social, economic, and political life, including dispute resolution, inheritance distribution, and marriage, is also the responsibility of the traditional governance. Thus, the Ondoafi/Ondofolo traditional governance plays a vital role in preserving and maintaining cultural aspects that bind the community to their ancestral heritage.

3.3.3. Cultural Legitimacy: How Ondoafi/Ondofolo Gain Recognition from the Indigenous Community

Cultural legitimacy is the recognition given by the indigenous community to traditional leaders such as Ondoafi (in the Tabi region) or Ondofolo (in the La Pago region), based on cultural values, norms, and social structures. This legitimacy is not just symbolic but also forms the foundation of the social and political authority of the traditional leaders. The process of acquiring this legitimacy occurs in several stages:First, a patrilineal lineage, where the leadership position is inherited from father to the eldest son or the closest relative deemed worthy. Second, social acceptance, which is reflected in traditional rituals of enthronement or coronation involving the entire community. Third, mastery of customary values and knowledge, where the leader must understand the history of the clan, customary law, and be capable of leading sacred ceremonies. Fourth, moral and ethical capacity, where the leader must have integrity and the ability

to maintain social harmony. Fifth, involvement in social and cultural practices, such as resolving conflicts and guiding the younger generation. Sixth, support from the customary council or elders, who assess the suitability of a traditional leader.This cultural legitimacy is a social process that combines factors of lineage, personal capacity, customary knowledge, and collective acceptance, making it the primary foundation for performing the role of a traditional leader and symbolizing the cultural identity of the community.

3.4. The Role of Customary Governance in Community Governance

3.4.1. Role in Conflict Resolution, both Internal (Family/Tribe) and External (Conflict with Outsiders)

Zartman [15] states that in postcolonial societies, such as in Africa and other indigenous regions, conflict resolution is more effective when it involves traditional mechanisms with local legitimacy. He found that modern conflicts in many postcolonial countries cannot be resolved solely through the modern state approach. Traditional institutions and mechanisms have a high mediation capacity because they have historical and cultural legitimacy, prioritize reconciliation rather than punishment, and are based on community relations. This approach is relevant for understanding the role of Ondoafi/Ondofolo in managing indigenous community governance in Papua.Conflict resolution in Jayapura Regency begins with the identification of the issue by the Ondoafi, who gathers information from all parties. This is followed by a traditional consultation involving clan leaders and neutral parties to open dialogue and reaffirm customary norms. Once an agreement is reached, traditional solutions are established, such as apologies, compensation, and peace agreements. This process is concluded with a traditional ritual as a symbol of relationship restoration. This approach is restorative and strengthens social cohesion. In external conflicts, Ondoafi also acts as a mediator representing the interests of the indigenous community.The conflict resolution mechanism consists of problem identification, traditional consultation, determination of customary-based solutions, and closure with traditional rituals. This approach emphasizes the restoration of relationships and the preservation of the dignity of the indigenous community.

3.4.2. Natural Resource Management

In natural resource management, Ondoafi, as the guardian of indigenous lands, has the authority to regulate the use of resources such as forests, rivers, and customary land. The extraction of forest products or logging of important trees must be approved by the Ondoafi, with customary sanctions for those who violate the norms of natural resource management. Suebu and Kendi [16] found that the customary spatial planning system in Yo Hele Mabouw Traditional Village in Sentani, known as Khani He Kla He, is closely tied to the governance of Ondofolo. This system includes the management of communal assets such as land and forests, which are governed by customary officials based on community roles. In Sereh Village, the role of Ondofolo is divided into five main functions, reflecting an effective and sustainable local governance system. If this traditional bureaucracy model were formalized in regional policies, several positive steps could be achieved. First, formal recognition of the customary governance structure and local spatial planning would strengthen the legal position of indigenous communities. Second, policies that accommodate the customary bureaucracy system would promote more participatory and contextual governance. Third, involving customary officials in development planning would accelerate the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs). Fourth, this formalization would also be an affirmative step to preserve indigenous culture.

3.4.3. Relationship with Formal Government (Village/District/Regency)

The relationship between traditional governance (Ondoafi/Ondofolo) and formal government (village, district) in Jayapura Regency reflects a complex dynamic, with both collaboration potential and tension. Traditional governance has cultural and spiritual legitimacy, while formal government holds administrative legitimacy from the state. Their collaboration can strengthen village development, the protection of customary land rights, and social conflict resolution. In practice, many development decisions are only effective when supported by Ondoafi/Ondofolo, demonstrating the importance of recognizing indigenous authority as a strategic partner.However, Kendi's research reveals low responsiveness from the local government in strengthening customary governance, particularly among the Sentani people. Although the Special Autonomy Law for Papua encourages the recognition of indigenous rights, its implementation has not been optimal. Regulatory drafts such as the Regional Regulation (RAPERDA) on indigenous village

governance have not been passed, leaving the role of Ondoafi/Ondofolo unrecognized formally. Tensions arise due to overlapping authorities, the marginalization of customary law in decision-making, and external interventions without involving indigenous stakeholders. This lack of integration creates conflict between village officials and traditional leaders, even though indigenous institutions have proven effective in maintaining order and resolving conflicts. Kendi recommends synergistic cooperation between village and customary governments through legal recognition and active involvement to create equitable, culturally-rooted, and sustainable village governance.

3.4.4. Interaction Between the Ondoafi/Ondofolo Governance System and the Village/Kampung Governance System

In the context of Papua, especially in Jayapura Regency, the Traditional Governance System (Ondoafi/Ondofolo) remains strong and alive, while the state is present through the village, district, and regency government systems. Both systems interact with each other in daily practices. Before examining how these two governance systems interact, here are the differences between the two governance systems (Table 1):

TABLE 1: The Differences Between the Two Governance Systems.

Customary System (Ondoafi/Ondofolo)	Formal System of Village Government
Legitimacy based on cultural and spiritual heritage	Legitimacy based on positive law and regulations
Social authority based on clans, customary land, and traditional values	Administrative authority based on structural positions
Collective decision-making mechanism based on customary deliberation	Administrative mechanism, top-down or participatory according to regulations
Dual role: political, spiritual, and social leader	Administrative, technocratic, and development role

Source: Author's Analysis

The traditional governance system led by Ondoafi or Ondofolo has characteristics that are very different from the formal governance system operated by the state. Legitimacy in the traditional system is derived from cultural and spiritual heritage that has been passed down through generations and recognized by the local community, while the formal system obtains legitimacy through positive law and regulations established by the state.

In terms of authority, traditional leaders hold social power based on clan structures, customary land ownership, and traditional values, while formal leaders possess administrative authority based on structural positions within the government bureaucracy.

Decision-making mechanisms in the traditional system prioritize collective customary deliberations, typically conducted at the traditional house called Obhe, whereas the formal system uses administrative approaches that may be top-down or participatory, depending on applicable regulations.

The role of Ondoafi/Ondofolo is also dual in nature, serving simultaneously as political, spiritual, and social leaders, while village government officials primarily function as administrative and technocratic executors within the framework of development. Understanding these fundamental differences is crucial so that local development policy formulation does not rely solely on the formal state approach but also accommodates social structures and local values, thereby creating inclusive governance rooted in the cultural context of the Jayapura Regency community. Below, we describe the dynamics of potential cooperation that could take place (Figure 1).
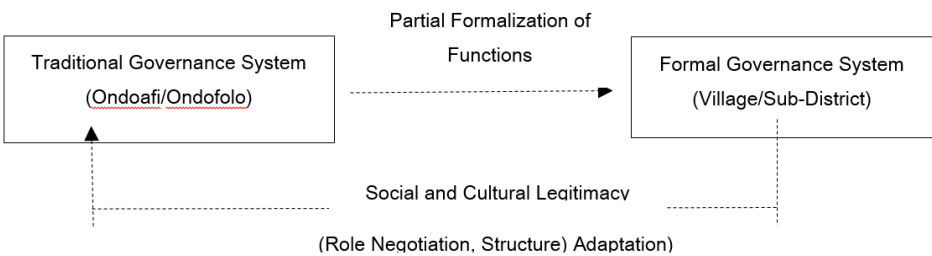

Figure 1: Dynamics of potential cooperation between Traditional and Formal Governance. ource: Author's Analysis Results (2025).

The image illustrates the dynamics of the relationship between the traditional governance system (Ondoafi/Ondofolo) and the formal governance system (village/sub-district) within the context of local governance in Jayapura Regency. This relationship shows the process of formalization of certain functions, where specific socio-political roles of traditional leaders begin to be adopted or integrated into the formal government structure. Conversely, the formal system still requires social and cultural legitimacy from traditional governance in order for development programs to be accepted by the community.

This interaction is not static; it unfolds through a process of role negotiation and structural adaptation, indicating that both systems continue to adjust to evolving social and political dynamics. Thus, the relationship between the traditional and formal systems does not negate each other but forms a distinctive hybrid institutional configuration, where there is space for collaboration, legitimacy exchange, and ongoing institutional adaptation.

Institutional transformation in the interaction between traditional power (Ondoafi/Ondofolo) and the modern governance system (village/sub-district) in Jayapura Regency can be explained through three main approaches: co-optation, hybridization, and marginalization. These three forms of transformation reflect the dynamics of adaptation and shifting roles in local governance, particularly when the traditional system confronts the formal government structure.

3.4.4.1. Co-optation

Co-optation occurs when the modern governance system "takes over" the roles or functions of traditional governance without fully involving traditional institutions in the decision-making process. In the context of Ondoafi/Ondofolo, co-optation is seen when the local government uses traditional symbols and rituals in formal activities without involving traditional leaders in the planning or implementation stages. For instance, in some development activities in Jayapura Regency, traditional rituals are used as part of social legitimacy. However, traditional leaders are not directly involved in the planning process, so the presence of tradition only serves as a "decoration" or symbolic function, without strengthening the authority of traditional leaders in decision-making. Additionally, co-optation occurs when the recognition of traditional governance by the government is merely ceremonial and not followed by strengthening the position of Ondoafi/Ondofolo within the village government structure. In the planning process, the views of Ondoafi as the manager of customary land are often overlooked, while decisions are mostly made by the village authorities who hold administrative power.

3.4.4.2. Hybridization

Hybridization is the process of integrating the traditional governance system with the modern governance system, where both adapt and create a mixed governance structure. In Jayapura Regency, hybridization is visible when decisions regarding the management of natural resources are made through traditional deliberations in the customary house (Obhe), involving the village apparatus. Another form of hybridization is the formal-traditional partnership, where some villages adopt traditional institutional structures into the formal governance system. For example, the role of Ondoafi is recognized in the Village Deliberation Agency (BAMUSKAM), so that the planning and implementation of development involves both parties together. Additionally, there

is also a form of dual legitimacy, where village government programs gain wider acceptance if supported by Ondoafi, strengthening the connection between formal policies and local wisdom. The case in Sereh Village shows indirect recognition of the five main functions of Ondofolo (political, spiritual, social, dispute resolution, and natural resource management) in development activities. This process depicts a contextual and participatory hybrid interaction pattern, where the presence of both traditional and formal governance systems does not negate each other but rather strengthens collaborative-based governance.

3.4.4.3. Marginalization

Marginalization occurs when the role of traditional governance is sidelined or considered irrelevant by the formal state policies. This can happen when local policies do not provide sufficient space for traditional structures in village governance. One form of marginalization is when the draft regional regulation (RAPERDA) on the recognition of traditional governance remains unapproved, causing the authority of Ondoafi to remain informal and legally unrecognized. Marginalization also occurs when local governments make development policies without consulting traditional leaders, often triggering social conflicts because they do not consider customary land rights or traditional management practices. For example, research by Kendi shows that local governments in Sentani are often unresponsive to strengthening traditional governance, causing Ondoafi's role in protecting customary land rights and resolving social conflicts to be sidelined by a more technocratic formal structure. Marginalization is also evident from the tendency of the government to reduce the role of traditional governance in the village decision-making process, so that the top-down approach dominates over traditional deliberation.

3.4.4.4. Institutional Transformation as a Dynamic Reality

These three forms of institutional transformation do not occur in a linear or separate manner. A traditional community may experience co-optation in one context, hybridization in another, and marginalization in a different situation. For example, in a forest management program, hybridization occurs when Ondoafi is recognized as the manager of the land together with the village government. However, in physical development activities without customary approval, co-optation occurs because traditional governance is only involved at the inauguration stage. Meanwhile, marginalization appears

when the aspirations of the indigenous community are ignored in the formation of new villages.

This transformation reflects that the interaction between the traditional and formal systems is not rigid but dynamic and contextual. Therefore, it is important for the local government to understand how these institutional changes occur so that the resulting policies can more inclusively and contextually accommodate the role of traditional governance, without reducing or co-opting the social authority that has long existed within the indigenous communities of Papua. As such, the village development process can proceed in a participatory manner that aligns with the local values that have been passed down through generations.

4. Conclusion

Strengthening the role of Ondoafi in village governance in Jayapura Regency can be achieved through the formulation of policies that are accommodative and based on local wisdom. One strategic step is to design a Regional Regulation (Perda) for the Recognition of Traditional Governance, which provides a formal legal basis for Ondoafi in natural resource management, conflict resolution, and village development planning. Through the establishment of the Village Traditional Council (DAK) and the Traditional Secretariat, the role of Ondoafi can be further formalized. Additionally, Ondoafi's participation in the Musrenbang (Development Planning Meeting) should be optimized by involving them in a way that ensures traditional voices account for at least 30% of the overall discussions. The Musrenbang process should begin with traditional discussions at the Obhe (traditional house) and conclude with a joint evaluation between Ondoafi and village officials.

To enhance the capacity of traditional leaders, a governance training scheme is needed, covering financial management, conflict resolution, and policy advocacy. The training can be conducted through interactive workshops, case simulations, and field mentoring by academics. Further applied studies are essential to test the effectiveness of this model, particularly in the context of the implementation of the Village Law and natural resource conflict resolution. This way, the formulated policies can be replicated in other indigenous areas, tailored to the local strengths and conditions present.

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