

Application of the Principle of Legal Certainty in Land Ownership Disputes in Pantai Sari Ringgung

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This article analyzes the judicial reasoning and legal consequences arising from a land ownership dispute in Pantai Sari Ringgung, Pesawaran Regency, with particular attention to the application of legal certainty in Supreme Court Decision Number 3153 K/Pdt/2021. This article was adapted from an undergraduate thesis and reorganized into journal format without changing its core substance. This article uses normative legal research with a descriptive character and a judicial case study approach. The primary legal materials consist of the 1945 Constitution, the Basic Agrarian Law, the Criminal Code, Regulation of the Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency Number 21 of 2020, and decisions of the district court, the appellate court, and the Supreme Court examined in this dispute. Secondary materials include books and journal articles on land registration, land certificates, overlapping claims, and dispute resolution. The findings indicate that the appellate and cassation courts prioritize administratively valid documentary evidence over factual control and historical claims unsupported by legal ownership rights. Legal certainty is achieved through the recognition of valid land registration data, the validity of evidence from deleted certificates and photocopied documents, and the rejection of claims filed without legal basis. This decision directly impacts the parties by eliminating the plaintiff's legal basis and strengthening the defendant's protected legal position.

Keywords: Legal Certainty, Land Ownership Disputes, Land Ownership Certificates

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1. Introduction

Land has economic, social, and legal value because it serves as the basis for fulfilling life's needs, a place for living, a means of production, and a symbol of the continuity of human relations with their living space. Therefore, land regulation in a state governed by the rule of law cannot be separated from the constitutional mandate that places land, water, and natural resources under state control for the greatest possible prosperity of the people. Within this framework, land law not only regulates who has the right to a plot of land but also ensures orderly administration, protection of ownership, and certainty of legal relationships between subjects. [1][2].

One of the most important instruments for achieving legal certainty in land matters is land registration. Through registration, the state collects physical and legal data, which is then translated into an administrative product in the form of a certificate. A certificate is not merely an administrative document, but rather strong evidence of title as long as it is legally issued and there is no evidence to the contrary. Therefore, orderly land registration is a crucial prerequisite for protecting landowners, preventing conflict, and stabilizing land rights transactions.[3][4].

However, in practice, the need for legal certainty is actually met with increasing land disputes. Rising land values, changes in land use, unscrupulous transactions, inaccurate land data, and overlapping physical ownership often trigger conflicts over who is the rightful owner. In many cases, certificates, which should

provide certainty, are instead challenged due to alleged administrative flaws, overlapping plots, or conflicting underlying documents. This situation demonstrates that land disputes are not only related to factual ownership, but also to administrative validity and the quality of evidence presented by the parties.[5][6].

A number of previous studies have discussed the resolution of land ownership disputes through a litigation approach, the evidentiary power of certificates, and the cancellation of certificates due to administrative defects. Anggita [7] highlighting the resolution of land ownership conflicts through litigation; Arcaropeboka Raja Agung Kusuma [8] discussing certificates as evidence; Putri dan Silviana [9] and Gayatri [10] describes disputes over duplicate certificates and certificate cancellations. However, studies that specifically follow one case to the cassation level and analyze how the principle of legal certainty is articulated in the judge's considerations and what the legal consequences are for the parties are still relatively limited.

The case of Sari Ringgung Beach in Pesawaran Regency is relevant because it brings together several issues at once, namely the conflict between the certificate and the old land rights, the difference between physical control and legal status, and the direct impact of the dispute on access and utilization of the tourist area. This dispute began when Anton Firmansyah closed access to the Sari Ringgung Beach location after purchasing two plots of land from Soeheri's heirs in early 2020. On the other hand, H. Syamsu Rizal claimed the same land based on SHM Number 00626, SHM Number 00627, and a 1962 sale and purchase deed. The conflict then developed from a field dispute into a civil case that was examined up to the cassation level.

The uniqueness of this case lies in the shift in the direction of the assessment between levels of the court. The District Court initially accepted part of the Plaintiff's claim, but the High Court overturned it, and the Supreme Court upheld the dismissal. This change in direction demonstrates that determining the rightful landowner relies not only on the history of land ownership or the narrative of land use, but also on the validity of the evidence that was still legally valid at the time the lawsuit was filed. Therefore, this case is important to discuss as a reflection of the relationship between orderly land administration, legal standing, and the principle of legal certainty in judicial practice.

Based on this background, this article discusses two main issues: how judges consider the principle of legal certainty in Supreme Court Decision Number 3153 K/Pdt/2021 and the legal consequences for the parties following the decision. The purpose of this article is to analyze the reasoning patterns of judges at each level of the court system, examine the application of the principle of legal certainty in cassation decisions, and explain the legal implications for the plaintiff and defendant.

Scientifically, this article is expected to contribute to the development of agrarian law studies, particularly regarding the function of certificates as evidence, the importance of orderly land administration, and the relationship between legal protection and the formal validity of land rights. Practically, this discussion can serve as a reference for the public, land officials, and law enforcement to more carefully assess ownership documents, the chronology of ownership, and the legal positions of the parties before disputes escalate into protracted litigation. [11][12].

2. Research Method

This research is a prescriptive, normative legal research (doctrinal legal research). Normative legal research focuses on the study of legal norms contained in statutory regulations, legal principles, and doctrines developing within legal science. Through this research, the author attempts to analyze applicable legal provisions and provide arguments regarding how the law should be applied to a particular legal problem. Therefore, this research not only describes applicable legal regulations but also assesses their suitability to current dispute resolution practices. [13]

The approach used in this research is a normative-applied approach with a judicial case study type. This approach is carried out by examining the application of positive law to a case that has been decided by a court. By using this approach, the author can analyze how civil law and agrarian law provisions are applied by judges in deciding land ownership disputes and assess the suitability of the judges' considerations with applicable legal principles.

The object of study in this research is court decisions related to land ownership disputes, namely District Court Decision Number 10/Pdt.G/2020/PN Gdt, High Court Decision Number 38/PDT/2021/PT.TJK, and Supreme Court Decision Number 3153 K/Pdt/2021. These three decisions are analyzed to determine the basis for the judge's legal considerations in resolving the dispute and to assess the strength of evidence for land rights that are the object of the case. In addition, the primary legal materials used in this research include the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 5 of 1960 concerning Basic Agrarian Principles, as well as provisions on evidence in civil law regulated in the Civil Code.

The collection of legal materials was conducted through library research, examining various primary and secondary legal sources. Primary legal materials consisted of laws and court decisions, while secondary legal materials included textbooks, agrarian law monographs, research findings, and scientific journal articles discussing land registration, legal certainty, and the system of evidence in civil law. All of these legal materials were then systematically collected and studied to support the analysis of the research problem.[2]

The obtained data is then processed through several stages: classification, interpretation, and systematization of legal materials. The classification stage involves grouping legal materials according to the topic of discussion, while the interpretation stage aims to understand the meaning of legal norms contained in legislation and the judge's considerations in court decisions. Next, the systematization stage involves organizing the legal materials in a structured manner to facilitate the analysis process.

The data analysis in this study was conducted qualitatively by examining in-depth applicable legal provisions and the judges' considerations in the decisions that were the subject of the study. Through this analysis, the author attempts to construct a logical and systematic legal argument regarding the resolution of land ownership disputes and its implications for law enforcement practices and legal certainty in the land sector.

3. Results and Discussion

Facts of the Case

This case is a dispute between H. Syamsu Rizal as the Plaintiff and Anton Firmansyah as the Defendant in a dispute over ownership of several plots of land in Sari Ringgung Hamlet, Sidodadi Village, Teluk Pandan District, Pesawaran Regency. The Plaintiff argued that he was the legal owner of three plots of land, namely SHM Number 00626 covering an area of 5,825 m², SHM Number 00627 covering an area of 1,279 m², and land covering approximately 13 hectares based on an old sale and purchase deed from 1962. On the other hand, the Defendant based his position on SHM Number 34/PC and SHM Number 35/PC from 1981 in the name of Soeheri which then became the basis for transactions with Soeheri's heirs in 2020.

The dispute arose when the Defendant, after making the purchase, closed off access to Sari Ringgung Beach, installed a zinc and concrete fence, placed boulders, and made physical improvements to the area, which he claimed was part of the land he controlled. From the Plaintiff's perspective, these actions constituted an interference with his property rights and hindered the use of the area, which had been managed as a tourist attraction. From the Defendant's perspective, these actions actually constituted an exercise of rights by a party who felt they had a stronger and more established certificate.

Before the dispute was brought to court, tensions had already arisen at the local level through attempts at clarification and deliberation that failed to produce a resolution. The matter became more complicated after the Defendant reported the Plaintiff for alleged forgery or use of fake documents related to SHM Number 00627. In this series of facts, important information emerged from the Pesawaran Regency Land Office that SHM Number 00627 in the name of Syamsu Rizal had been returned and removed from the land register since July 16, 2020, or before the lawsuit was filed.

In addition to questioning SHM Number 00627, the Defendant also considers that SHM Number 00626 and the old right basis in the form of a 1962 sale and purchase deed are not sufficient to defeat the certificate he holds. According to the Defendant, some of the land objects claimed by the Plaintiff overlap with SHM Number 35/PC, while the old right basis used as the basis for the Plaintiff's claim is considered to contain administrative weaknesses. Thus, the core of the dispute does not only concern who first controlled the land, but also concerns the quality of the evidence and the legal validity of the evidence at the time the case is examined.

The case was then submitted to the Gedong Tataan District Court through Register Number 10/Pdt.G/2020/PN Gdt. At the first instance, the District Court essentially granted part of the Plaintiff's lawsuit and declared the Plaintiff as the legal owner of the disputed object. This decision was then appealed by the Defendant to the Tanjungkarang High Court. At the appeal level, the direction of consideration changed significantly because the High Court placed the status of SHM Number 00627 and the strength of the documentary evidence from the Land Office as central factors determining the legal position of the parties.

Dissatisfied with the appeal, the Plaintiff filed an appeal with the Supreme Court. However, the Supreme Court, through Decision Number 3153 K/Pdt/2021, rejected the appeal and declared that the appellate court's decision was not unlawful. With this decision, the dispute reached its final point in the ordinary legal process and demonstrated how shifts in the focus of evidence between levels of court can result in completely different decisions.

This case demonstrates how land disputes can escalate from conflicts over access and control of land to highly technical debates over the validity of certificates, the status of basic documents, and the legal standing of plaintiffs. Therefore, mapping the case is crucial as a basis for understanding why judges at each level of the court reached different conclusions and how the principle of legal certainty plays a key role in the final judgment of the case.

Judge Considerations

The judges' reasoning in this case demonstrates the development of legal assessments at every level of the court system, from the District Court, through the High Court, to the Supreme Court at the cassation level. This difference is particularly evident in the judges' emphasis on the relationship between factual control of the land and the legal validity of the rights.

At first instance, the Gedong Tataan District Court placed greater emphasis on physical control, the legal history of the parties, and the Defendant's actions deemed to have disrupted access to and use of the disputed object. The first instance judge tended to view the Plaintiff as still having grounds to claim legal protection for the disputed land. From this perspective, control of the land, the origin of control, and the Plaintiff's relationship to the disputed object are treated as important elements in assessing the existence of rights or at least the Plaintiff's legal interest in the land.

However, the direction of the consideration changed at the appeal level. The Tanjungkarang High Court placed the issue of legal standing and the validity of the evidence of rights as the primary focus of the examination. The High Court considered that the dispute could not be resolved simply by looking at who

physically controlled or who was socially considered to have a relationship to the land, but rather must first determine whether the party suing truly still had a valid legal basis for the rights. In this context, the letter from the Pesawaran Regency Land Office stating that the Land Ownership Certificate Number 00627 had been revoked due to administrative defects was a crucial factor. With the revocation of the certificate, the basis of the rights used by the Plaintiff was deemed no longer legally binding as a basis for demanding the cancellation or protection of the disputed object.

Furthermore, the appeal judges did not stop at the issue of the certificate's revocation. The High Court also assessed the consistency of the Plaintiff's arguments with other evidence presented at trial. Claims regarding control, land origins, and the history of the previous title were indeed considered, but these were deemed insufficient to negate the fact that the formal evidence the Plaintiff relied upon had lost its administrative force. Therefore, even though there was a narrative of control history, the appeal judges considered that this narrative could not stand alone without the support of evidence of rights that remained valid and accountable under land law.

Furthermore, at the cassation level, the Supreme Court essentially upheld the direction of the considerations established by the High Court. The Supreme Court deemed that there was no error in the application of the law by the appellate court. The cassation decision emphasized that this case was not solely about who first controlled or who felt the most entitled to the land, but rather about whether the party filing the lawsuit truly had a valid, valid, and legally provable right to it. Thus, the Supreme Court placed the quality of legal evidence as a crucial element in land disputes.

Overall, the judge's reasoning in this case demonstrates two broad principles. First, the validity of the lawsuit must be assessed based on the existence or absence of a legitimate legal basis for the claimant. Second, land documents and official statements from the land office are considered stronger references than arguments based solely on narratives of ownership. This consideration also demonstrates the judge's careful distinction between factual ownership and legally recognized ownership. While control of the land, social relationships, and past transaction history can be valuable as clues, they do not automatically override the need for evidence of rights that meets formal requirements.

With this consideration pattern, final decisions tend to be directed at maintaining orderly land administration and preventing the recognition of rights that no longer have a strong legal basis. This demonstrates that both the High Court and the Supreme Court place greater emphasis on the importance of synchronizing field facts, land registration data, and authentic documents recognized in the national land law system.

Application of the Principle of Legal Certainty in the Judge's Considerations

Thus, the application of the principle of legal certainty in the judge's considerations in Supreme Court Decision Number 3153 K/Pdt/2021 does not stop at an abstract recognition of the importance of certainty, but is realized concretely through the use of the norms of Article 19 paragraph (1) and paragraph (2) letter c of the UUPA, Article 32 PP Number 24 of 1997, Article 1866 of the Civil Code, Article 1338 paragraph (3) of the Civil Code, Article 1365 of the Civil Code, as well as the policy direction in PP Number 18 of 2021. All of these articles form the basis that land legal certainty must be built on valid formal evidence, orderly administration, and consistent judges' assessment of the legal status of the object of the dispute.

Strengthening the principle of legal certainty can also be linked to more recent land policies, including Government Regulation No. 18 of 2021, which emphasizes the arrangement of land administration and the certainty of land rights through orderly land registration. Within this framework, the judge's decision demonstrates that orderly administration is not merely a bureaucratic matter but a foundation for legal

protection. Therefore, parties seeking recognition or protection of land must be able to demonstrate that their rights are still registered, have not been revoked, and have not been administratively erased.

In addition, the judge's considerations are also related to the principles of good faith and propriety in the exercise of rights. Article 1338 paragraph (3) of the Civil Code stipulates that agreements must be executed in good faith, while Article 1365 of the Civil Code provides the basis that any unlawful act that results in a loss requires the perpetrator to compensate for the loss. In the context of this case, the judge does not immediately accept the argument of an unlawful act simply because there is a closure of access or control of the field. The judge first examines whether the party who feels aggrieved truly has a legitimate basis for rights. This means that the application of the principle of legal certainty precedes the assessment of the elements of loss and unlawful act.

The judge's considerations can also be interpreted in line with the evidentiary provisions in Article 1866 of the Civil Code, which prioritizes documentary evidence as one of the primary forms of evidence. In this dispute, official letters from the Land Office and other land documents carry greater evidentiary weight because they directly relate to the legal status of the disputed object. Conversely, arguments based solely on narratives of ownership or claims of transaction history are insufficient to overturn recorded administrative facts. Therefore, legal certainty is achieved through a preference for objective, documented, and verifiable evidence.

The principle of legal certainty is also reflected in the way the panel interprets the evidentiary power of certificates in the land registration system. Article 32 paragraph (1) of Government Regulation Number 24 of 1997 states that a certificate is a document that serves as proof of rights and serves as strong evidence regarding the physical and legal data contained therein, as long as the data is in accordance with the relevant measurement letter and land book. However, this power is not absolute. When, based on an official letter from the Land Office, it is discovered that SHM Number 00627 has been deleted due to administrative defects, the basis of the rights used by the Plaintiff loses its legal support. It is at this point that the judge applies the principle of legal certainty strictly: certainty is given to evidence that is still recognized in land administration, not to rights that have been administratively declared deleted.

The application of the principle of legal certainty in this case is evident from the way the judge placed land registration and the legal status of the certificate as the basis for the assessment. This is in line with Article 19 paragraph (1) of Law Number 5 of 1960 concerning Basic Agrarian Regulations, which states that to guarantee legal certainty, the Government shall conduct land registration throughout the territory of the Republic of Indonesia. Furthermore, Article 19 paragraph (2) letter c of the UUPA states that land registration includes the provision of a certificate of proof of rights which serves as a strong means of proof. With this construction, the judge has a normative basis for assessing that the dispute is not sufficiently proven through a claim of control, but must be tested against the formal status of the registered land rights.

Legal Consequences for the Parties

For the Plaintiff, the rejection of the appeal has a fundamental legal consequence: the grounds for the claim, which were accepted at first instance, are nullified. Because the Supreme Court upheld the appeal decision, all legal benefits previously obtained through the District Court decision are nullified. The Plaintiff can no longer demand enforcement of the first instance order ordering the Defendant to cease activities, vacate the land, or hand over the disputed object.

In addition to losing the basis for the claim, the Plaintiff also finds himself in the position of the losing party and is thus burdened with court costs according to the relevant court level. Furthermore, the rejection of the cassation confirms that the claim based on SHM Number 00627 and its derivative evidence is no longer recognized as a sufficient basis for rights in this case. From a legal certainty perspective, this consequence

demonstrates that a party unable to demonstrate valid rights will lose litigation protection, even if they previously won at first instance.

For the Defendant, the cassation decision has legal consequences in the form of strengthening the legal position regarding control of the land which is the object of dispute in this case. The Defendant was free from all first level orders which initially declared him to have committed an unlawful act, required him to stop his activities, and ordered him to hand over the land to the Plaintiff. With the confirmation of the appeal decision, the Defendant's status as a party who successfully defended his legal objection receives stronger protection.

However, the legal consequences for the Defendant are not merely defensive. The cassation decision also strengthens the Defendant's position in any subsequent legal relationships related to this case, at least against the opposing party in the same dispute. The final and binding decision provides a more solid basis for the Defendant to reject claims based on arguments and evidence deemed insufficient by the court. In this sense, the decision serves as an instrument for stabilizing legal relations after a lengthy conflict.

For both parties, another important legal consequence is the certainty that ordinary legal remedies will cease. Once an appeal is rejected, the decision becomes final and binding, preventing the parties from pursuing an appeal or re-appeal against the same object and grounds. Consequently, the dispute cannot be maintained in limbo through the same forum, and the parties must align their legal actions with the final decision.

More broadly, this ruling also has legal implications for land governance. It emphasizes that land rights claims cannot be based solely on a history of social control, economic management, or objections to the physical actions of others, but must be based on valid and verifiable rights. The normative message is clear: orderly land administration is the front line of legal protection. Without such order, disputes can easily escalate, and parties risk losing legal standing in the legal process.

From the Plaintiff's perspective, another equally important legal consequence is the delegitimization of the control narrative previously used to support ownership claims. In land disputes, parties who have long controlled, managed, or utilized land often feel that these social facts are sufficient in themselves to establish rights. This decision demonstrates a different perspective. Factual control can indeed provide relevant context, but its value is significantly diminished if it is not aligned with legal data recognized by the state. Thus, the Plaintiff's position in this case is weakened not only because of a formal defeat, but also because the construction of rights they proposed is no longer able to bridge the field facts with valid administrative evidence.

From the Defendant's perspective, the decision provided legal benefits in the form of restoring his legal reputation for his actions, which the District Court had previously deemed unlawful. After the appeal decision was upheld at the cassation level, the Defendant's actions of control and physical arrangement were no longer read solely as an interference with the rights of others, but as actions that were inseparable from his legal position as the party who successfully defended a stronger legal basis in this case. This is important because the label of unlawful acts in land disputes not only impacts the obligation to hand over the object, but also the social and economic legitimacy of land control.

However, the legal consequences of the decision must be understood proportionally. The Defendant's victory in this case does not mean that all potential disputes over the land in question are permanently closed to all parties in all forums. However, with regard to the legal relationship between the parties in the same case, this decision is clearly binding and serves as the primary reference for determining who has failed and who has succeeded in defending their case. By reading the legal consequences proportionally, it can be understood that civil court decisions function primarily as determinants of the legal relationship

between the parties in the case, as well as affirming the standards of proof that must be respected in similar cases.

The subsequent legal consequences are evident in the preventive message conveyed to the public. This ruling warns that land transactions, control of tourist areas, construction of access roads, and claims to previously used land must always be accompanied by a thorough examination of the certificate history and the most recent administrative status. This cautious approach aligns with the need for due diligence in land transactions. Without such an examination, parties who believe they have a long-standing relationship with the land risk facing a situation where their claims collapse when tested in court because they no longer align with official land records. [14][11].

Ultimately, the legal consequences for the parties in this case also demonstrate the educational function of court decisions. The decision not only resolves a specific dispute but also establishes a code of legal conduct for rights holders, purchasers, village officials, and land agencies. The message conveyed is quite clear: certificates must be kept valid, old documents must be carefully verified before being used as the basis for claims, and any legal action regarding land must consider the consistency between formal evidence and field conditions. In this context, Supreme Court Decision No. 3153 K/Pdt/2021 serves not only as a conflict resolution tool but also as a preventative measure for future land disputes.

When read within the framework of legal protection, this ruling also confirms that court-provided protection does not arise simply because someone feels disadvantaged, but rather because they are able to demonstrate that the disadvantage is directly linked to rights that are still recognized by law. In the Pantai Sari Ringgung case, the measure of legal protection does not stop at the existence or absence of factual disturbances in the field, but depends on whether the party complaining about the disturbance still has a defensible right. Thus, this ruling combines two things at once: legal protection for valid rights holders and restrictions on the use of the judicial process to assert claims that have lost their administrative basis.

This ruling is also an important reminder that land dispute resolution cannot be separated from coordination between the judiciary and land agencies. The statement or letter from the Land Office in this case proved to be central in shaping the judge's belief regarding the status of one of the disputed certificates. This demonstrates that the quality of land administration and transparency of land information significantly influence the quality of court decisions. If land data is orderly, up-to-date, and easily verified, the possibility of errors in assessing the basis of the parties' rights is reduced. Conversely, weak administration opens the door to longer and more complex disputes. [3][12].

Based on the entire series of legal consequences, this case can be understood as a concrete example of how land legal certainty operates on two levels simultaneously. At the individual level, legal certainty determines who can defend a claim and who must bear the consequences of losing. At the institutional level, legal certainty strengthens the function of land registration, the accuracy of evidence, and the discipline of court proceedings. Therefore, the significance of this decision lies not only in the final outcome, which resulted in a victory for one party, but also in conveying the message that orderly administration, accurate filing of lawsuits, and document verification are key prerequisites for obtaining effective legal protection in land rights disputes..

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, the judges' considerations in Supreme Court Decision Number 3153 K/Pdt/2021 demonstrate that the principle of legal certainty is applied by placing the administrative validity of the evidence at the center of the assessment. The High Court and Supreme Court placed decisive weight on the status of SHM Number 00627, which had been revoked before the lawsuit was filed, the weakness of the evidence in the form of photocopies of photocopies, and the Plaintiff's weak legal basis for defending

all of her claims. Therefore, legal certainty in this case is achieved through consistency between land administration, legal standing, and the evidence presented at trial.

The legal consequence of this decision is that the Plaintiff's lawsuit was ultimately dismissed, the benefits of the first-instance decision were forfeited, and legal costs were borne by the losing party. Furthermore, the Defendant's legal position was strengthened by being freed from the first-instance penalty and receiving protection for the ownership they maintained in this case. This decision emphasizes that land disputes require extreme care in verifying the certificate status, the authenticity of the documents, and the validity period of the rights used as the basis for the lawsuit.

Going forward, research and practice in land dispute resolution need to increasingly emphasize synchronization between field inspections, land registration data, and the validity of basic documents to minimize differences in assessments across court levels. For the public, this case serves as a lesson that every land transaction and claim must be supported by thorough administrative verification. For policymakers and land officials, this case underscores the importance of data updates and prompt and clear communication regarding certificate status to ensure legal certainty before disputes reach the courts.

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