

The Patron-Client Relations in The Distribution Chain of Coffee Products in Jambon Hamlet, Medono Village, Boja Sub-District of Kendal Regency

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Abstract—This paper discusses the patron-client relations in the coffee distribution chain in Jambon Hamlet, Medono Village. Before discussing the patron-client relations, this paper first discusses the coffee as one of the main agricultural commodities in Jambon Hamlet. As the main commodity, the coffee has not been able to generate high economic value. The coffee distribution chain in the Jambon Hamlet moves around "internal middlemen" who still have kinship relationships among themselves. Therefore, those middlemen are the main actors in the coffee distribution chain. The distribution chain does not only involve internal middlemen, but also continues to the larger external players, namely middlemen in the Boja market. The problem that will be solved in this research is the patron-client relations, where the middlemen act as the patrons, and the small coffee farmers as their clients. The research method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive. The data sources used are the primary data in the form of in-depth interviews with several informants, and the secondary one obtained from articles, journals and scientific works. The data collection techniques used are documentation, observation and literature study which are then described in the form of written reports. The results of this study indicate that the patron-client relations grow and develop in line with the products distribution of the small farmers who need the middlemen to connect them in fulfilling their daily and social security. The patron-client relations in Jambon hamlet are not only limited between the middlemen and farmers, but it is also a form of duality, where the patrons do not only act as the middlemen, but also as the coffee farmers.

Keywords— *Coffee Distribution; Patrons-Clients; Middlemen*

I. INTRODUCTION

Jambon is a hamlet which is geographically located in the eastern part of Mount Ungaran and administratively included in the Medono village, Boja sub-district, Kendal regency, Central Java. The people of Jambon hamlet culturally are still strongly related to the agrarian culture, including their main job as the farmers. This agrarian culture occurs because the Jambon hamlet has abundant cultural resources such as rice fields, crops, palm sugar, and plantations, especially coffee.

Most of the Jambon hamlet people work as the coffee farmers. This proves that the coffee has become a part of the culture of the Jambon community. The coffee plants that grow in the Jambon hamlet were originally the wild plants in the land owned by the local residents that were not intentionally cultivated and were produced of the first generation of Jambon community. Along with the development of the community, the Jambon people begin to replace the wild coffee plants by planting the new ones to be cultivated as an economic commodity. The kind of the coffee plant that was firstly cultivated by the local people is Robusta variety due to its physical structure that expands and widens like a propeller.

Along with the diversification of the coffee plant varieties, the Jambon people are currently cultivating Robusta Mayung coffee plants. They have many advantages in both quantity and quality aspects that invite quite much profits for the Jambon coffee farmers.

The coffee for the Jambon hamlet people is a valuable economic commodity and is 'considered' as a typical characteristic of the Jambon region. Even though

considered a local specialty, in reality, it still cannot yet result in a high economic value. There are some factors that cause the low economic value of the coffee, one of which is the coffee distribution process. The coffee distribution chain in Jambon hamlet is still conducted traditionally and even feudal. This is because the coffee distribution only revolves some middlemen who monopolize the 'distribution chain' of the coffee. As a result, the patrons-clients relations are built between the middlemen who have the large capital and control of the coffee trade with the small coffee farmers.

The patron-client relations do not only occur in the coffee distribution chain, but are also extended to the socio-cultural dimension and influence the system and social structure of the Jambon hamlet community. This paper tries to look at the coffee distribution chain in Jambon hamlet in two perspectives, namely: 1) distribution of the coffee as a "typical" economic commodity in Jambon hamlet, and 2) observing the relationships among the Jambon hamlet people due to the patron-client relations.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this study was a qualitative descriptive study based on the field observations and interviews with some informants to find more natural data, so that this research would emphasize more on the data quality and validity. Sugiyono (2014) defined the qualitative research as a research based on the philosophy of post-positivism, used to examine natural conditions, and the results of the research emphasized on the meaning of the studied object [3].

III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

A. THE DISTRIBUTION OF COFFEE AS A TYPICAL ECONOMIC COMODITY IN JAMBON HAMLET

The cultivation of coffee plants in Jambon Hamlet currently continues to experience a rapid development, and this is marked by the revitalization in the production sector. However, unfortunately, the coffee distribution sector has not been yet revitalized properly, so that the distribution chain in the Jambon hamlet still runs inefficiently and ineffectively. The coffee farmers find it difficult to sell their coffee products based on the market price because of the long distribution chain which constraints their efforts, as stated by Lingga and Rijanta (2014) that the long coffee distribution chain certainly affects the selling price at each level of the business actor. This is because they will only try to obtain the profits as much as possible [1].

The long coffee distribution chain is caused by several reasons such as: first, there is no direct cooperation with

major buyers such as large companies, so that the coffee farmers must sell it directly to the small traders or collectors. Second, there is control of the coffee distribution chain carried out by the local middlemen. Third, the existence of the safety is first principle by the Jambon hamlet coffee farmers because they are fear of the commodity selling prices. Thus, that it is better to sell their products as soon as possible even though the selling price is not too high. Of these three reasons, the number three plays a major role because an agrarian society has a principle of looking for safe from uncertainty, including the price of commodities. For example, the opinion of Scott (1989: 27) in Nugraha (2015) who stated that the farmers who live close to their subsistence limits, will have a strong reluctant to take risks because an outcome above the expected values may not be able to compensate for severe penalties due to the results which are below the expected values [2].

The distribution of plantation commodities, especially the coffee in Jambon hamlet, revolves around people who have strong influences. The small farmers who have relatively a low income do not sell their coffee on the market, but they prefer to sell to the middlemen in Jambon hamlet. The Jambon hamlet middlemen are the local surrounding people. The keyword is that when the coffee farmers sell their coffee commodities to the middlemen. In addition to being paid using money or a barter system, they have a bond of a mutual trust. The small farmers or clients in Jambon hamlet believe that the middlemen as their patrons will guarantee their needs, including loans when there are unexpected problems and calamities coming.

There are two coffee distribution channels in Jambon hamlet, internal and external. The internal distribution means that the coffee farmers sell their coffee products to the middlemen in Jambon. This distribution is applied because the farmers have some logical reasons, such as the difference in the purchase price between the internal middlemen and those in the market is not very significant, so they sell their products more to the local or internal middlemen. Another reason is that the coffee farmers already have 'obligations' due to some agreements made with the middlemen before the harvesting time, so they will inevitably sell the coffee to the local middlemen. Meanwhile, in the external distribution, the coffee farmers sell their products directly to the big traders who are actually the middlemen in the Boja market. The reason why the farmers do the external distribution is because the yields obtained by them (farmers) are higher in quantity, so that they will be more profitable to sell to the external middlemen outside Jambon hamlet. Another reason is that they do not have any "responsibilities" or agreements with the local middlemen.

Local middlemen are the main destinations for small coffee farmers to sell their products. Mr. Syarif is a middleman who usually receives a small amount of the farmers' crops. Aside from being a middleman, he also

works as a farmer and is among the most successful one in Jambon hamlet. This makes the small farmers reluctant to do farming methods like him. It is told that Mr. Syarif has applied the coffee farming methods well and correctly, even though it is not yet perfect. However, there are still many people who implement inappropriate farming methods, where they still use local knowledge believed by the community from generation to generation. Mrs. Dwi (the wife of Mr. Syarif) is one of the middlemen who has the role of 'taking' the farmers' crops to sell to the Boja market and the rest will be grilled into coffee powder. Beside the coffee, she also buys other commodities, such as palm sugar and cloves.

B. THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE PEOPLE OF JAMBON HAMLET CAUSED BY THE PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONS

The Jambon hamlet people still have a homogeneous structure in their livelihoods. Although there have been many of them working outside the region, but not being the farmers still dominates in the village. As a result, there are obvious patron-client relations among them. The patron-client relations that have been established in Medono village community occur between the middlemen and small farmers. The middlemen as the owners of social and economic capital act as the capital providers to the farmers as their clients who need loans as well as fulfill their daily necessities. The role of the patrons is not only run by a 'private middleman', but also by 'village officials and institutions' in the form of social loans for the local people as the clients.

The patrons and clients alike strive to maintain good relations between themselves. The patrons try their best to meet the daily needs of their clients by exchanging either goods in the form of agricultural products, or the plantations in the form of coffee, sugar palm and others. Therefore, the clients feel that they owe to their patrons because they have fulfilled their daily needs and even provide loans, especially if they will have a party or being hit by the disaster.

The patrons' hegemony is an important key in the survival of patron-client relations. The patrons always try to continue to increase their capital (wealth), and with the capital and network they have built, the hard work of the clients will be enjoyed with an exponential increase in their wealth. On the other hand, the clients are increasingly trapped or even comfortable with various guarantees given by the patrons, so that the state of this relationship makes them unable to significantly improve their welfare. The clients, often forced, consciously hand over their crops to the patrons. The mindset of refusing to the patrons' requests will make the clients' situation tend to be insecure. However, in a stable condition, the power relationship between the patrons and clients becomes a norm that has its own moral strength which contains rights and obligations that must be carried out by both parties. These norms will be maintained as far as

it provides a clear guarantee in form of basic protection and security for the clients [4].

The patronage that takes place in Jambon hamlet is still dominated by one 'dynasty', from the family of *Mbah* (elderly) *Salamah* who has significant influences and power in the Jambon hamlet community. The patriarchal 'dynasty' of the patronage in Jambon hamlet has actors who have certain roles, such as Mr. Syarif who plays the role as the coffee collector from the small farmers, Mrs. Dwi (the wife of Mr. Syarif) acting as the collector of agricultural and garden crops (bananas, rice, and palm sugar), Mr. Joko who acts as the village 'loan shark' as well as the village treasurer, the head of the village as the administrative authority of the region, and *Mbah Salamah* as the parent of the patriarchal 'dynasty' who plays a role as a collector of agricultural, plantation and loan sharks for the community. This fact indicates that the patron-client relations that develops in the Jambon hamlet influences the formation of social stratification, where the upper stratification is dominated by 'a dynasty', and the middle and lower groups are occupied by farmers and daily workers.

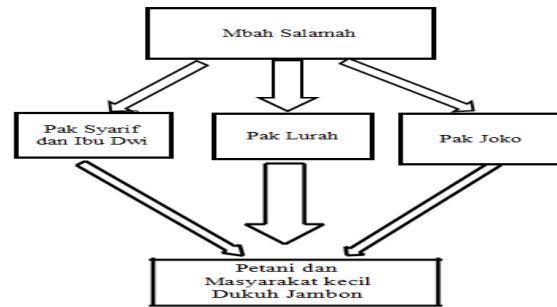


Figure 1. Chain of Patron-Client Dynasty in Jambon Hamlet. Source: Primary Data Analysis

IV. CONCLUSION

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the coffee distribution system in Jambon Hamlet has not been yet effective and efficient due to several reasons such as the lack of cooperation among the big companies, the existence of local middlemen who control the coffee distribution, and the existence of first safety system for the coffee farmers of Jambon hamlet. These three reasons have led to the formation of patron-client relations between the local middlemen and the small coffee farmers. The patron-client relations significantly influence the social system, mobility, and social stratification in the Jambon hamlet community. The village government as a representation of the state is

encouraged to undertake various efforts, such as the establishment of BUMDES (Village-Owned Enterprises) which functions to manage and to market various superior village commodities such as coffee. In addition, the village government is expected to establish a cooperation with various parties and agencies, such as the agriculture and trading services and cooperatives, universities and large companies. Thus, the production process until the distribution of the coffee products in Jambon hamlet can become an economic commodity that benefits and improves the welfare of the local people.

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