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FARMERS IN THE FOREST: AN ESSAY ON HUMAN NEEDS AND POSSIBILITY OF INDONESIA NATURAL WORLD DEVELOPMENT

(Petani di Hutan: Sebuah Esai atas Kebutuhan Manusia dan Kemungkinan Pembangunan Dunia Alam Indonesia)

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ABSTRAK

Rangkaian kata-kata kunci dalam artikel ini dimaksudkan untuk memberi pedoman bahwa 'petani dalam hutan' sebagai lambang rakyat kecil, *berpotensi besar dan arif*. Mereka merupakan pionir hidup di dunia alami melalui suatu proses evolusi interaksi yang panjang terhadap ekologi dan ekosistem. Kelompok masyarakat ini *menimba ilmu* sebagai hasil dari interaksi itu, sehingga tidak boleh diabaikan dalam konservasi dan pembangunan Indonesia. Kebijakan konservasi dan pembangunan Indonesia hendaklah menggali kembali ilmu pengetahuan masyarakat kecil ini. Hasil galian itu dapat dipadukan dengan temuan ilmu terkini. Tujuannya adalah mempercepat upaya evolusi guna memperoleh kesejahteraan ekonomi rakyat.

Kata kunci: evolusi, koevolusi, reformasi, ekologi, nilai.

INTRODUCTION

The term "farmers in the forest" in this paper is basically refers to the natural world evolution where human being occupies an ecosystem. It is interesting to notice, that many writers make a note on farmers in the forest. One of the earliest writing on such matter is *Farmer in Thailand* by Pieter Kunstadter of East-West Centre, USA. This piece of writing concerns about the prospects of human ecology approach. Firstly, this approach can be used in search of finding possible means to keep Indonesian forest intact. This is done in order to understand the "folk economic" background concept of what Indonesian government should do and to discover the sustainability and welfare of the whole national development today.

Secondly, folk economy needs to be clarified because sometimes it is misinterpreted by macro economic scientists. It is referred to the traditional way of life of people who are involved in the process of cultural evolution. In this view, "farmers in the forest" is indicated by values of a community as a whole through an evolution.

Thirdly, in my opinion the value of knowledge lies in the contemplation of that which is wonderful and beautiful. Such contemplation extends our well-being. There is a relationship between our capacity to appreciate the value of the natural world and human well-being.

Cultural Core and Economic Change Problem

A farmer is one who possesses himself and his family life based on the interaction with ecosystem. As a farmer,

he is involve with his family and he is also a member of a community as a whole indicated by a specific culture which is determined by cultural core formed from generation to generation. This signifies that a farmer is one dynamic person and interacts with his social system as well as ecosystem where ever possible. He himself together with his family interacts with energy, material and information of resources in an ecosystem. He can also reverse processes within an ecosystem. His way of life is a result of evolutionary process based on hunter gatherer in Band community →tribal people community→Traditional community.

Currently, a farmer is associated with traditional community, where his actions toward ecosystem are wisely taken to exchange information between his community as social system and his ecosystem. Everything that he experiences from ecosystem is accumulated to generate better ecosystem knowledge. This accumulated information will be passed orally through generations as the wisdoms of traditional farmers.

Farmers and their communities are very specific as specific as their ecosystems. They are very wise and intelligent. The interaction between a farmer's characters as a member of the community and western economy as a world society shows the following indication:

"Redistribution and reciprocity enter the market exchange through rupiah's conversion into US dollars. These features of foreign exchange are consequences of economy-wide market integration and require explanation from anthropological context. Foreign economy is

integrated by market exchange and can be explained by the wide range of natural resources, labour, goods and services transaction through purchases and sales at market-determined prices, and by the extent to which people in our national economy depend for livelihood on wage profit, interest and rental income obtained from market sales. Natural resources especially from forest or agriculture and capital goods (land, labour, machines and building of all varieties), consumed goods (food, automobiles), personal and impersonal services (dentistry, electricity) are all purchasable “on the market”. Goods and services which are ceremonial and religious, or which serve as prestige indicators, are purchasable in the same way and with the same money as subsistence goods. In market-integrated economy, very different items and services are directly comparable, because all are available at prices stated in the same currency. The subject of price determination of product and resources under varying conditions of supply and demand is an important field of economics because market exchange is our dominant transactional mode as western economy. This is an example that our money in modern society is impersonal and commercial while the traditional or primitive money has pedigree and personality, sacred uses, or moral and emotional connotations has been changed by interaction between Western society and farmers community for long time in Indonesia history. In this sense, we have to beware that government policy should recognize the wise exchange of interactions between farmers community and ecosystem: maybe the involvement of over exploited resources indirectly by foreign determination.”

Livelihood and Way of Life Reposition

In the wonderful way of life, the farmers’ behaviours are the results of natural evolution. These are related to the indigenous lowland to upland kingdoms, providing valuable forest products as taxes and tributes. This process continued through the period of Dutch ruling. The consequences of this relationship can be observed in the farmers’ cultural evolution of political structure. For example, the tribal community such as the inland people of Sumatra shows that the headman is often appointed or confirmed by outsiders” – in the past the representative of Rangkayo Hitam were well recognized within the Jambi Custom to facilitate collection of tributes in the form of precious forest goods (Rachman 1991:314).

The forest people such as the Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) of Sumatra are now in a state of economic and social transition, and their habitat is being degraded. However, this has not brought extensive alterations in their pattern of nomadism, foraging and shifting cultivation.

It is commonly assumed that inland people such as the SAD are experiencing some sort of evolutionary trajectory

from full-time hunters and gatherers, to full-time agriculturalists. Such an assumption is visible in the title of many tribal people in the world. These are called “farmers” in transition activities. Even though they are experiencing changes in their way of life in dealing with their ecosystems, from indigenous or traditional into modern way of life that includes the adoption of technology and ideas, their daily behaviour can still be regarded as traditional. This suggests that it is unfit with values of new modern thought. This is what social sciences would refer to as “cultural lag”.

Cultural lag is one possibility for stating point of understanding of how to bring the farmer’s culture with **reposition** into farmer cultural core itself, recovered and then **its capability** for self propelling growth in world society. The Indonesian government needs strong policy for “folk economy“ *i.e* all activities in interaction with the ecosystem should be based on **cultural evolution** (Rambo and Gillogly 1991) and cultural core (Rachman 1991) in order to protect or to stop practical maladaptive determinisms toward farmer today. The social scientists point of view is: “Our theories .are rays of light, which illuminate a part of the target, leaving the rest in darkness”. It is obvious that a theory which performs this function satisfactorily must be well chosen. Furthermore, since it is a changing world that we are studying, a theory which illumines the right things at one time may illumine the wrong thing at another.

Forest and our ancestors’ livelihood as well as their way of life are full with mysteries. We are currently in need of some **tracer research** focussing more on livelihood and way of life for the farmers’ welfare and development of Indonesian policies. Even though scientific research on cultural evolution have been by far the most productive theoretical force in empirical research on long term socio-cultural change, at least in the New World tropics, empirical studies such as in Indonesia , are still partly carried out. What do we have to do for Indonesia today? The answer is government policy have to protect the continuation of long processed cultural evolution because cultural evolution has always been concerned primarily with the kind of far-reaching, long-term changes on which archaeology, more than any other discipline, is and must be focused. Furthermore, compare to any other approaches, cultural evolution has stimulated and guided the archaeological research on which our knowledge of long sequences of change is based upon. On the other hand, government policies have to provide welfare for the farmers through their tradition wisdom.

Wheel of Development

“Wheel of development” is a notion that changes the process of reposition or reformation within the interactions

between farmers in their local community and external social environment. There are 10 components of the wheel to show the reformation process (Figure 1).

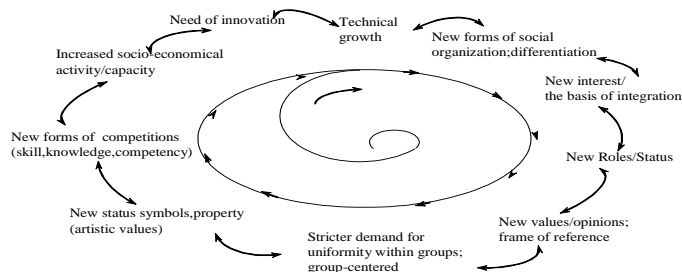


Figure 1. Reformation: wheel of development as change process

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