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ENTANGLEMENT FISHERMEN WITH MIDDLE MAN (CASE STUDY ON FISHERMEN OF GERBANGMEKAR VILLAGE, CIREBON DISTRICT, WEST JAVA)

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ABSTRACT

The patronage relationships phenomenon between fishermen and middleman is very hard to being avoided in the fisheries communities. This research aims is to explain the reason why the fishermen established this partnership with the middleman. This research conducted in Mei 2013 at the Gerbangmekar Village in Cirebon District, West Java, Indonesia. This is a qualitative reseach that use case study in order to examine particularly to the relationship between the middleman and the fishermen. The research subject around 10 people that consist of government, fishermen, and middleman that were purposively selected. The data were collected with deep interview using flexible and open questionnaire. The research result shows that 68,57% of Gebangmekar population is a fisherman and 48,87% are fishermen's crew. The relationship between the fisheries and the middleman began from the fishing production and then expand to the loans for daily needs. The benefits of this relationship are the fishermen can go fishing and fulfil their family needs, while the middleman gets supplier to support their production activities. It is a long-lasting relationship and difficult to break, that why it called bounding relationship. This kind of relationship can boost the economy of the fisheries' village called social exchange. The government as the market protector have to prevent market failure to make the economic sustainable.

Keyword: relationship, fishermen and middleman, patron-client

1. INTRODUCTION

Coastal communities are always identical with poor or unwealthy people as stated in Indonesia welfare population's mapping system. In fact, the entire regime has provided huge amount of funding for the coastal economy development and also supported by large number of policy to support that actions. But still, that identity still cannot be removed from the fisheries communities. Moreover, various fisheries' social economic studies indicate that the fishermen crew or small fishermen's still live around the poverty line. They have limited ability to provide their basic needs for daily life. For fishermen communities, food is the most important needs among the basic needs. The guaranty to fulfilment their daily food have very big role for their survival (Kusnadi, 2006).

Poverty in fisheries caused by the limitations of quality in human resources, limited ability in business capital, limited working relationship between ship owner and fishing worker in capturing organization that are considered less favourable to the workers, difficulties in capturing diversification, fishermen have huge dependency in number of times to go fishing, sea natural resources, and also lifestyles that are considered as "wasteful" so that they are lack of future orientation (Suradi, 2008). In sociological science, the fishermen livelihood pattern that has huge uncertainty made a mutual relationship such as patron clients to provide social security to the community. This pattern grows in form of money lending in capital for fishing or for other purposes that naturally have a binding agreement, such as profit distribution with the capital owner that usually called as "tengkulak" or middleman. According to Kusnadi (2004) that the Fisher's social security explain the impact of this pattern, there are a lot of fisheries that disadvantages by the profit distribution with the capital owner that are often far from justice especially for commodity price, profit distribution which are not equivalent to the occupation risk.

Patron client's relationship can be met in Cirebon District while it is classified as Indonesian Capture area number 712 because of its huge potential. The capturing production is always increasing since 2009. There is an increase in fishing caught by 0,80% in 2010, and also an increase in fishing caught by 1,06% in 2011 (Indonesian capturing statistics, 2012). Cirebon Fisheries' District statistics in 2012 shows that all Cirebon fishermen that doing catching activities have a boat with attached engine called outboard engine boat with engine capacity under 5GT capacity (299.164 units). The capturing tools that fishermen use are drag seines, bag seines, gill nets, hook and line

(long line fixed), traps and tool collecting shellfish. Generally, Cirebon fishermen their catching result to their middleman that they are subscribes to because the fishermen have collateral bonds. The middle man has provided the capital loans to the fishermen; however the condition cannot be categorized as prosperous. The relationship between fishermen and middleman had occurred from past decades

Hegemonyfisheries and the middleman always bring up negative image such as exploitation and reducing the fisherman profit by lowering the fish caught price. The patron relationship always considered as the causing factor to the fisherman communities' poverty. On the other hand, the middleman as an actor in the coastal community has to support their family as well. The most interesting phenomena in studying Cirebon's fisheries community is the reason that the fisherman want to do the bounding with the middleman and the collaboration process that made a lasting bond. Therefore, this study aims is to explain the bond of the fishermen with the middleman.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in Mei 2013 in Gebangmekar Village, Gebang Sub district, Cirebon District in West Java. This research is a descriptive-qualitative research that describes and illustrates the dependence between fishermen with the funding and marketing institutional such as the middlemen. Satori and Komariah (2011) explain that the working steps to describing an object, phenomena or social setting in an article in form of narrative, which means is number of facts in form of words compilation. This is a study case research because it only represents fishermen in Gerbangmekar village community group. The research subject or informant used in this research are 5 fishermen, 3 middlemen, head of fish auction place (TPI) and Head of Capture Fisheries Division in Cirebon's Department of Marine and Fisheries. The fishermen that used in this study are fishermen who have a boat and have more than one fishing gear. The Middlemen that used in this study are the entrepreneur that supports the fishermen by providing working capital in form of money, boats, and fishing gears and tools, like wisdom collecting the capturing result for their living.

The method used to determine the informant is purposive sampling method. The method for data collection is in-depth interviews techniques using a flexible and open questions lists. It will be used to focus and drive the conversation with the informant. The In-depth interview defined as a process of collecting data that significant to the qualitative research approach. It was conducted by interviews and discussion with the informant and recording the interview process and note taking of the important things that are considered important for reporting and concluding the research (Suyanto and Sutinah, 2005). The other technique is to perform a series of simple observation to the fishermen's social life. This Research is also use the secondary data inform of other research result and statistical data that related to the research topic. The collected data will be organized or processed within two steps are mapping process, classification and categorized data with related reference and theories. The second step is linking the classified and categorized data with related reference and theories.

3. THE FISHERMEN LIFE IN GERBANGMEKAR VILLAGE

From 1.191 Fisheries House Hold in Gerbangmekar Village, there are 68,57% of rural population works as a fishermen. It can be divided that 39,38% of fishermen as owner, 48,87% of fishermen as fishermen crew, 7,22% of fishermen as processing fisheries products, 4,20% of fishermen as fisheries product traders, and 0,34% of fishermen as ship craftsmen (Table 1). The fishermen in this Village are traditional fisheries that use outboard motor boat with under 5GT capacity. According to Kusnadi (2003:86) that the traditional fisheries have characteristic such as: (1) simple capturing technology with small boat size, limited cruising range, small size loading dock, limited catching range, and boat are powered by sails, rowing, or small power motorboats; (2) limited business capital; (3) small number of capturing group (2-3 person), with collective roles diversification(non-specific), and generally based on relatives, close neighbours, and or closer friend; (4) The Economic orientation are specially directed to the basic needs.

Table 1. The Number of capturing house hold (CHH) in Gerbangmekar Village.

No	Description in CHH	Number of CHH	Percentage (%)
1	Owner	469	39,38 %
2	Fishermen Crew	582	48,87 %
3	Processing Fisheries Products	86	7,22 %
4	Fisheries Product Traders	50	4,20 %
5	Ship Craftsmen	4	0,34 %
	Total	1.191	100,00 %

Source: Village data processed 2013.

Data national fisheries panel research (panelkanas) from Research Centre for Marine and Fisheries Socio Economics in Ministry (RCMFSE) for Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) in 2010 explain that the fisheries level of education relatively low where 93% of the informants are only having Elementary level and 7% are having junior high school level of education. The informant explains that the educational background is not important for fishing activity. It is because working as a fisherman is an easy work that only relies on muscle and fishing experience. Thus, according to them, higher level of education for fishermen is not relevant to their fishing skills. In Traditional fishery family, it is common to employing children to help their parents to make a living at a younger age (around 4 year's elementary school). It is also common that their parents also allowing their children to go fishing because it is common in the village. This condition also explain that why most of fishermen, especially the informant, often can't see better view about the future. This kind of understanding leads them to lower living standard and also pass through to their next generations. Until now, the fishermen's orientation is only to fulfil their subsistent or daily-basic needs only. They don't think about the profit gained like businesses that manage commercially. It can be seen that they only sell their fish for living today, for tomorrow, it will depend on how they caught tomorrow. Sudarso studies (2007) also explain among the traditional fishermen families is common employing children to help their parents to make a living at early age, so that they usually not finishing their education until college degree. Different with ship owner or modern fishermen which they are in average level of living, the economics condition of traditional fishermen are often live in average level (28,5%), relatively poor (17,5%) or even in the poor level (16%).

Cirebon Sea is very unique because the fishermen can perform fishing activities almost the whole years. Around June – August, the fishermen generally use *kejer* (nets) and *wadong* (folding traps) as capturing tools to caught crabs. While the remaining nine months, the fishermen using other capture tools in order to adjust the fishing season. Generally, they use trawl gear and *arad* (local trawl) to caught demersal fish. Every fisherman in village Gebangmekar have more than one capturing tools, and *kejer* is 'mandatory' held for fishermen in this area. However, the catch result is not always abundantly. According to the informants, the fishing season in the Cirebon Sea can be divided into three seasons; they are the western season, the eastern wind season and the beetles' season. During the west wind season, the wave and the wind conditions are very strong so that the fishermen are unlikely to go fishing. However for *kejer*net and *wadong* fishermen, these conditions are highly profitable because of the existence of the wave made the silting raise which there is a crab in it. The condition is similar to the east wind season, while the waves caused not as big as caused by the west wind season. Otherwise the beetle's season, the crab caught is lesser, this famine season for the fishermen.

In this season, the catch is low or non-existent. This condition caused the fishermen incomes decline or even "minus". On this season, fishermen chose to delay or even not doing any catching activities. In that condition, Fishermen make a new debt, and mortgaging or selling valuables items are the survival mechanism. The fishermen run this kind of life for decades, but it is a rational option. The rationality developed in the community is that they have to face it and not to avoid it. Scott explained that the fishermen action is only a moral economy, while the analyses about causes and effect of personal behaviour, act or do in economic activity. It is expressed as a social phenomenon that is most likely to affect the social life. J.C. Scott stated that the farmer's moral economy upon the subsistence and the resiprositas norms, such as a farmer experiencing a situation that according to them that can restrict their survival, so that they will sell or mortgage their valuables items. This is caused by the subsistence norm. This is caused by the subsistence norm. James C. Scott also stated that the farmers are human that bound statically with economic activity. Thus, in its activities, they are very largely depending on existing economical norms (Scott, 1983).

4. FISHERMEN ENTANGLEMENT WITH MIDDLEMEN

Fishermen need two kind of capital for their business; they are investment capital and operational capital (or so-called operational costs for fishing). The investment that the Gerbangmekar Fishermen are ship or boat, fishing gear, machine, anchors, and mine. Other investments capitals are cookware, fiber, basket, *tarpalins*, buckets, water blong, and solar blong. Every fisherman who wants to go fishing should buy their own ship/boat which is not cheap; they also have to have fishing gears. Capitals are the most influenced factor to the fishing activity. Without any capital, they cannot run the business.

The Information obtained explained that the main reason that the fishermen have bound with the middleman because they are lack of working capital, they give loans inform of money. The middlemen in the village are divided into three groups, namely small scaled middleman, medium scaled middleman, big scaled middleman. The **Small Scaled Middleman** typically can give loan around Rp. 2-5 million. The provision usually used only for purchasing the fishing gear because the fishermen already have their own boat. The small middleman targeting Fishermen who have floating-net gears (*kejer, landung*) which gear were operated from the coastal. The **Medium scaled Middleman** are usually give loan until Rp. 50 million, where used to purchase fishing gear (i.e. *Arad*, *wew*, fishing row, and also trap

that need 3-5 person for operating it. The **Large Scaled Middlemen** are the people who give loan until Rp. 100 million. This kind of middle man usually controlled by supplier of fisheries product exporting companies.

The middlemen besides providing the capital, they also serve as the 'controller' after the capturing. As a consequence of 'law of recompensation' from the capital provisions those fishermen have to sell all of their capture to the middleman. Most of fishermen use this system, the main reason is the transaction and the process is not complicated because it only uses mutual trust between the two parties. The fishermen decided to cooperate with the middlemen because if they have financial difficulties and need capital as soon as possible. The fishermen sell any fresh or processed fish that they caught to the middlemen. Thus the 'binding' system made the selling price different from the market price. The middlemen's price usually cheaper than the market price, there is a price differences around Rp 500- Rp. 1.000 for fish, Rp 1.000- Rp. 1.500 for crab, and Rp. 1.000 – Rp. 2.000 for processed crab from the market price.

Suprayoga (2008) explain that the coastal communities, especially fishermen have use this patron-client relationship for a quite long time and it is not profitable for the fishermen. This culture made the fishermen rely heavily on the middlemen and the skipper/boat owner as a patron relationship. The fishermen have been under the middlemen's 'care' for many years. The biggest factor is they still could not get any financing form banking institution. It happened because they are lacking of financing source information such as banking product, banking programs, accessing mechanism, term and condition for borrowing, and how to close the debt form the banking institutions. The good relationship made the fishermen think that the middlemen as their saviour. Emani research (2012) also explained that the fishermen utilized the middlemen to obtain the capital to go fishing. This is because the process is easier, without collateral only most of the fish captured must sold to the middlemen directly without auction.

The paradigm that were developed by the researchers different with the other research results, it's always shows that the middlemen which caused the fishermen being poor. In this research, it shows that the not always harm the fishermen, but they are instrument to move the village's economy by lending any capital to the fishermen. If they don't lend any money to the fishermen, thus no fishermen can go fishing. On the other hand, this village has huge fisheries potential that have to be utilized maximally and the villagers have to use that benefit. The middlemen have the capital resources while the fishermen have the expertise to manage the marine resources, so the combination of both of them can boost the economy of the fisheries' village. The interaction shows that human as social beings always need someone else in their lives. Human as a part of the community so that it is needed to make interaction to fulfil their individual needs. This interaction then grows to become a communicational process to achieve their goals or their needs. In the life process, there are also elements of rewards and punishment, sacrifice and also profit. These elements were explained in the social exchange theory.

This social exchange theory see that the interpersonal relationship as a part of commercial transaction. People connect with other person because they expect something that meets their needs and mutually satisfying both parties and reciprocal. The relationship can be continues or stopped with considering the consequences, especially considered to the reward and the punishment that can be obtained for what they have done. Bungin (2008: 267) explained that the assumption in calculating the reward and the punishment (profit and loss) doesn't means that people are always trying to exploiting each other, but also that they are having the desired results.

The chain systems between the fishermen and the middlemen have emerged over centuries and passes to his generation. However, the entanglements will actual deliver the fishermen to helplessness position because they must follow the rules set by the middleman unilaterally. On the other hand, it is natural for middlemen as the capital lender has 'obligation get profit 'from any capital they lend to the fishermen. The middlemen just want the certainty of routine and cheap fish supply. Economically, the middlemen have bigger risk on their investment compared to the other financial provider. During this time, financial providers (such as banking institutions/businessman) most likely difficult to provide loans to the fishermen because they have assess that the fishing business is not feasible due to the high uncertainty to the catching result.

In this case, the middleman is brave enough to 'guarantee' the lives of the fishermen with giving loans. Besides of the risks, in reality; there is a huge competition between the middlemen it self's to get a 'subscribed fishermen' and also a fish price war. In this case, the middlemen bargaining positions become lower because they cannot play the price arbitrarily. This research is different with the most research that sees the middlemen as an actor who made the fishermen poor, like Kusnadi (2000 and 2002), which assess the fishermen's social security. Many theories make a lot of disadvantaged fishermen sharing system with the capital owner. The profit sharing is not equal to the job risk.

Suyanto (2004) also explain that the poverty among fishermen is caused by a debt trap. Due to uncertain of the fishing rhythm, thus made poor family sell part of or the whole of their production assets that they have to pay their debt or for supporting their daily life. In famine season, fishermen (with less capital or poor) were forced to hang on their lives to the middlemen to get any loan to fulfil their basic daily life. With such conditions, it become a huge opportunities for the middlemen to grow and spread to exploiting the weakness that the fishermen had. In fact, there is many fact that the fishermen in Indonesia are more interested and comfortable to cooperate with the middlemen, and they dong understand they have been exploited by the middlemen.

Information obtained in this study is different with information in other studies result. According to the informants, the fishermen are very selective at this time. If there is a huge price gap between the middlemen, then the fishermen will sell their fish to the middlemen that could give higher price. Currently, the middleman only wants to get small profit but continuously for their living. Bigger or smaller of the fishermen catching result will affect the middlemen's income. According to the informant, every middleman has at least 10 fishermen subscribed to them. The middlemen in Gerbangmekar village are not only comes from inside the village, but also comes from the outside. The middlemen who have large capital will continue to survive and growing because the profit increasingly doubled from the fish caught by the fishermen. Despite it called debt or loans, a middleman in fact never expected the loan to be paid by the fishermen. That action is conducted in order to make the patron system continued. In fishermen side; they maintain the relationship with the middlemen and with the fish traders in order to get the loan easily any time they need.

These bounds were valued by the fishermen because the middleman act as their financing source that rarely obtained from the government agencies. This is a very long lasting relationship in the fisheries communities, even though several people assumed that the power of the middleman disadvantage the fishermen. Sometimes the fishermen felt that the purchasing prices provided by the middlemen are lower than the market place, but it was considered by the community that it is the exchange for loans benefit. According to the fishermen, the middlemen will not give too cheap for fish price because the market price is an agreement between the two parties. Thus, the relationship between fishermen and the middlemen are social exchange based on profit and loss calculation. Fajar (2011) explained that the social exchange is binding between the actors in the community so that the reciprocal relationship happened. In the relationship there is reward, cost, profit from each actor in the functional requirement in the interaction (Fajar, 2011).

Homans exchange theories (Ritzer& Goodman, 2010:358 - 367) are the interaction between individual to do interest exchange with basic law of "benefit and advantage gained from any individual who did the exchange trading". Social exchange that occurs between two individual was not running statically, because as long as the individuals get a benefit from that social exchange processed. According to Homans, in order to explain the whole theory need to be done proportionally, i.e. the success proportions, the simulations, the values, the approvals and the rationality. Basic assumption of the success proportion is that "the more often the person act is being appreciated that means the more often n that person will do the same actions". In contrary, the more often the person's failed their actions or did not get appreciation then the action will not be repeated again by him. This proposition illustrates the dynamic of social exchange theory, individual have the opportunity to do social exchange freely according to the individual needs. This fishermen-middlemen relationship cases explain both of them feel successfully (profitable) make a business in their field because this kind of relationship. Logically, if not profitable for each of them, thus they will not do it anymore.

The government, Cirebon District of Marine and Fisheries Department have been trying to reduce the fishermen dependencies to the middleman by building a fish auction place (TPI) which aim to encourage the fishermen sell their fish to get highest price from the auction process. However, TPI that were built in 2004 is not operating. According to the head of TPI (Mr.Sunandar), "auction and scaled from the fishermen caught have never done on TPI, because the fishermen bring their caught to the village and scaled by the middleman directly. After the TPI built (2004), there is once auction done, it is the anchovy auction. Likewise the existence of the Mina Bahari Village Unit Cooperative has no activity since 2005. The explanation suggests that the middlemen existence are more reliable compared to any economic institution (capitalization and marketing) formed by the government. While the government built the KUD and TPI in order to facilitate and provide greater economic benefits to the fishermen and expected to cut the middleman-fishermen relationship (as explained by the Head Division of Captured Fisheries, Mr. Sobikh). The fishery port (PP) as the fisheries economic center is one of the important components in captured fisheries system that utilized, organized, and managed properly. Fish auction is a major important activity in fisheries at fisheries port that need to managed optimally, because the fishermen sales revenue gained in the auction (fishermen owner and crew). Article 3 of Indonesian Act No. 31 in 2004 and Act No. 45 in 2009 about fisheries said that one of the fisheries port function is to improve livelihood for small scaled fishermen and small scaled aqua farmer. Thus, the role should be optimism in order to hold fish auction so that the small scaled fishermen have bargaining power in fisheries trading system.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with the middlemen system, because this is a small phenomenon of the economic system in fisheries communities in Indonesia. The big investors are dominating the economic system. However, in order to increase the fishermen welfare, the government's action or programs must change the fisheries communities' economic system by unleashing the fishermen for the middleman trapping system. Generally, the fishermen are economically free (independent) if the middleman chin can be cut. Despite of the impact of this system, it needed for government intervention to bridge of the problem in form of act or policy which does not burden in sharing mechanism. In economic theory, there is market perfection term which is in that condition, all parties will feel happy, and every one gain profit and nothing will restrict and inhibits every steps of the interaction. In practically, this system has not been realized, because it is difficult to satisfy everyone.

Governments as the market component protector, have to provide an instrument to prevent the market failure in order to make the economics runs. Middlemen system hegemony will create monopoly system because

they operate from providing any capital, production factors' ownership, and marketing. That means they control the economic chain and in the social relations would be harmful. It is needed to regulate the appropriate result and maximum control in practice, but it does not mean to against the middleman.

5. CONCLUSION

In Gerbangmekar coastal communities, entanglement between the fishermen-middleman looks closer and lasting relationship. Their relationship is not only productive relationship but also on reproductive aspects and social aspects. Fishermen and middlemen have a mutual relationship for village economy in utilizing the fisheries potential. Middlemen are actors that required by fishermen capital loans provider for business and for daily needs. Fishermen also needed by the middleman as fish provider which is a production tools. These relationships can be categorized as the social exchange act, where individual interaction between individuals that exchange interests with the Basic Law of rewards and profits earned by traded individuals. In relation with success preposition says that the more often one's action are being appreciated the more often the person do the same act. Logically, if it is not profitable then the relationship will not be conducted again. There is nothing wrong with the middlemen, but the system they run seems to suppress the fishermen. For the fishermen's welfare, the Government does not need to eliminate the middleman, but just cut off the bounded labour system prevail. There should be to be regulations for appropriate results distribution and maximum control in practice.

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