
SHARED POVERTY AS A MYTH: AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES IN BOJONEGORO, EAST JAVA, 1880S-1930S

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Abstract

This article explains the endemicity of poverty in Bojonegoro 1880-1930s by analyzing the causes and social-economic changes among agrarian communities. Bojonegoro is one of the regions in East Java that is experiencing a paradoxical process, one side has a strategic location for economic networks, but the other side is an endemic area for natural disasters. As a study of social history, poverty in this article focuses more on dysfunctional social institutions due to geographical location, natural disasters, and the marginalization process as a form of the state's absence from the problem of poverty. Historians often conclude that disasters and geographical issues are necessary conditions in explaining the endemicity of poverty. This study shows that poverty is only an easy way to explain the inability to adapt to local economic dynamics and failure to negotiate with the new market. The infrastructure development and financial institutions which are considered to be strategies for overcoming poverty, does not have clear significance. Poverty does not refer to socio-economic realities with various survival strategies using socio-economic networks and job conversion. The strategy of adapting to various economic opportunities, both based on agrarian and non-agrarian economies, is a way to show that the endemicity of poverty is a myth. The poverty is a form of failure to explain socio-economic behavior which is considered to deviate from the view of modern capitalism.

Keywords: *Bojonegoro; endemic poverty; peasant; shared poverty*

PEMERATAAN KEMISKINAN ITU MITOS: KOMUNITAS PERTANIAN DI BOJONEGORO, JAWA TIMUR, 1880-AN-1930-AN

Abstrak

Artikel ini menjelaskan kausalitas endemisitas kemiskinan di Bojonegoro tahun 1880an-1930an. Bojonegoro adalah salah satu wilayah di Jawa Timur yang mengalami proses paradoks sosial ekonomi dengan keuntungan posisi yang strategis untuk jaringan ekonomi, tetapi sisi yang lain, justru menjadi tempat yang mengalami endemik kebencanaan. Sebagai kajian sejarah sosial, artikel ini menjelaskan kemiskinan sebagai bentuk disfungsi lembaga sosial karena letak geografi, kebencanaan alam, dan proses marginalisasi akibat ketidakhadiran negara. Para sejarawan sering menyimpulkan bahwa kebencanaan dan persoalan geografis menjadi *necessary condition* dalam menjelaskan endemisitas kemiskinan. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa kemiskinan sebenarnya hanya merupakan ketidakmampuan adaptasi dinamika ekonomi lokal dan gagal bernegosiasi terhadap permintaan pasar. Pembangunan infrastruktur dan kelembagaan keuangan juga gagal mengatasi kemiskinan. Hal ini karena kesalahan sudut pandang, bahwa kemiskinan tidak pernah dilihat sebagai upaya bertahan dengan membangun jaringan ekonomi dan konversi pekerjaan. Padahal, strategi adaptasi tersebut sangat penting untuk menunjukkan bahwa kemiskinan dan pemerataan kemiskinan adalah mitos. Oleh karena itu, kemiskinan sebenarnya hanyalah bentuk kegagalan menjelaskan perilaku ekonomi adaptif yang tidak pernah menjadi perhatian kajian ekonomi modern.

Kata Kunci: Bojonegoro; kemiskinan endemik; pemerataan kemiskinan; petani

I. INTRODUCTION

Bojonegoro, is a small town located about 90 km from Rembang that has a strong drive to utilize land economic networks, but on the other hand, Bojonegoro must face the threat of disaster, imbalance in the management of economic resources at the micro level. This paradoxical condition is only seen from the perspective of the marginalization of farmers, poverty and marginal, without considering the job conversion opportunities that are common in agricultural communities. The 1880-1930s period was the most involutive period due to the chaos of the *Kultuur-Stelsel* system and the impact of the malaise of the 1930s. Social institutions as support mechanisms and management of economic resources such as income management, accessing new economic resources and employment networks are unable to survive due to the weakening of the global economic structure (Geertz, 1963).

The debate on the history of poverty in colonial Java still leaving problems of perspective, conceptualization and data. Geertz, who took the case of the agricultural economic system in Java, laid a poverty as the result of a multi-level social process in the circulation of changes in land-owning families (Geertz, 1963). Changes in the family structure of land owners resulted in the need for land division which resulted in a narrowing of the land owned by each family member (Geertz, 1963). Reduced opportunities to manage land due to the increasingly limited land owned by families has an impact on reduced income for peasants. This, what is known as a shared poverty. Fernando looks more closely at the problem of debt and credit, especially during harvest time, which contributes greatly to the problem of food availability which results in the emergence of poverty. This is due to consumerist economic practices and the inability to manage income rationally (Fernando, 2010).

Penders, took the case in Bojonegoro, he concluded that poverty is the final form of strategic failure in anticipating natural changes, socio-economic changes and political policies (Penders, 1984). Analyzing Bojonegoro as an area of endemic poverty, Penders argued that what Geertz said was structural poverty, was far from what happened in Bojonegoro. Likewise, what Fernando saw as an inability to manage income, Penders denied the argumentation that poverty in Bojonegoro, was an absolute poverty caused by natural disasters. The inability to adapt to nature has a strong effect on weakening food security in various seasons (Penders, 1984)

This article describes agricultural communities in risk land of disaster that are adaptive to socio-economic change as a way of rejecting the conclusion that agrarian communities experience a process of involution due to maladministration of the distribution of family economic resources. The question then arises, how can agrarian communities survive in the midst of natural disasters and mal-administrative practices of financial institutions? Why does shared poverty not occur in a period when it is considered the most involutive?

II. DISCUSSION

A. Agrarian Communities during Post-*Kultuur-Stelsel*, 1880s-1900s

Kultuur-Stelsel, 1830-1870, was a colonial policy in utilizing and managing the economic resources of the colony. At the end of its implementation, it gave rise to problems. Corruption, maladministration and the emergence of resistance movements in several areas are used as ways to see the failure of *Kultuur-Stelsel* (Elson, 1994; Houben, 1994; Suryo, 1989; Kartodirdjo, 1973). Peasants had to look for income outside Bojonegoro due to land transfers and disasters. For farmers around teak forests, *blandongdiensten* which tied the work system of peasants around teak forests could not provide an increasing in the income of peasant families, so in 1865, *blandongdiensten* was abolished. Even though these peasants received subsidies for rice and salt, the economic difficulties that entered the liberal era, in the 1880s, increasingly removed peasants from their land (Penders, 1984: 8). Except during *Kultuur-Stelsel*, where the government designated 5 villages as tobacco villages, peasants could access income from tobacco management. However, peasants have to travel a long way to reach the tobacco village. This results in tobacco villages not producing enough food crops.

Outside of the teak and tobacco villages, several crops was cultivated such as the corn, it was a main crops, lowland rice, upland rice, cassava and some tobacco plantations. Besides being able to access land with available year-round irrigation, peasants along the watershed can also utilize rivers as a source of income from freshwater fisheries (*Encyclopaedisch Bureau van de Koninklijke Vereeniging Colonial Institute*, 1932). At the beginning of *Kultuur-Stelsel*, it was mandatory for 5 villages to be planted with teak. They were Bureno District has 3,594 *Ha*, Pelem District has 1,042 *Ha*, Padangan has 10,024 *Ha*, Tambakrejo has 38,075 *Ha* and Ngumpak has 35 *Ha*. Until 1930, Bojonegoro had a leasehold land area of 60 *Ha*. (*Topogr. Dienst*, 1935:8). Almost nothing is found in what Schrauwers called land that can be easily moved for cultivation or with a system of changing cultivation to all households (Schrauwers, 1995).

During the 1920s, the agricultural economy in Bojonegoro was divided into various types of cultivations. These include wet rice, upland rice (dry land), *polowijo*, tobacco. Several types of farmers are further divided into land-owning peasants, farm workers, *blandong* peasants, *kapok* planters and chili peasants. Apart from arable land, there is a type of land called *branjangan* land, which is land that is infertile and difficult to cultivate. Usually land like this can only be planted with tobacco once a year. Other infertile soil is called *widang* soil, which is soil that is like solid blackish mud, making it very difficult to cultivate. Most of this land is located in the Mlangi area (Warto, 2002).

Based on the 1930 Census, Bojonegoro had a total of 7,522 until 8,398 peasants included married/unmarried peasants and their family (*Volkstelling* 1930). The number of peasants referred to above is of course based on ownership of cultivated land. This is the basis that statistically, until 1930 there were still quite a lot of agricultural land owners in Bojonegoro. This is when compared with the total number of farmers, both land owners and cultivators and farm laborers,

the total number can reach 7,522 (*Volkstelling*, 1930). If data is taken from total workers, especially those working in the agricultural, plantation and mining sectors, it reaches 68,800. Perhaps the calculation of the total number needs to be looked at again because often mining workers are also peasants who work side jobs in mining (*Volkstelling*, 1930).

Meanwhile, fertile land is only located along the Bengawan Solo watershed, as in the Pelem and Burneo districts (Warto, 2002). Meanwhile, limestone soil mixed with sand and clay is very good for growing beans and corn in Bureno, Sugihwaras, Pelem which is suitable for the rainy season, while during the dry season tobacco is planted (Warto, 2002). Therefore, when *Kultuur-Stelsel* was implemented, Bojonegoro did not become an important area because land was difficult to obtain for export crops, except for tobacco (Elson, 1994: 81)

However, peasants are forced to work more than 9 hours and have to walk “miles” because the distance between their house and the tobacco plantation is far (Penders, 1984:14). Even in the decades after the implementation of *Kultuur-Stelsel* began to stop, many farmers left Bojonegoro for Pasuruan to become tobacco leaf pickers and sugar cane workers (Elson, 1994: 142). The profits of tobacco are increasing, so that there is increasing expansion of tobacco land which thereby reduces agricultural land. To avoid the increasingly extensive land conversion from rice or cassava farming to tobacco, the Colonial Government implemented a policy of reducing and restricting tobacco areas in 1889-1850 (Penders, 1984).

In the 1900s, Bojonegoro began to experience serious economic problems related to high taxes, reduced income due to drought and floods. The only hope to access family economic resources in Bojonegoro was tobacco and a few years later not only in the Bojonegoro area, but outside Bojonegoro (Penders, 1984). This is also accompanied by high crime which makes it increasingly difficult to leverage Bojonegoro’s economy.

High levels of crime in the form of murder and rape, serious assault, violent theft, road crime, livestock theft and robbery had never been part of colonial or local government policies to anticipate and eradicate it (Noorduyn, 1984; Warto, 2002: 91). As a result, the agricultural production process only grew on a limited scale, land that required intensive processing experienced stagnation (MvO, 1905-1936).

Watershed areas, especially those around teak forests and areas such as Burneo and Pelem, are the places where bandits carry out their initial actions because they are poor and disaster-prone areas. Later on, the targets of the bandits were usually merchants and rich people who were at the center of economic activity and wealthy families. One of the centers of economic activity is Rajeg Wesi (Radjak Wessie), which was previously called Rajeg Winangun (Noorduyn, 1984).

The city center had even been a target for bandits before the *Kultuur-Stelsel* had being introduced. The attack by a group of bandits on the city center forced the city center to shift, which was previously in Rajegwesi, then was forced to relocate to Kebo Gadung. The name Kebo Gadung was not approved by the Resident of Rembang and then Rajeg Wesi was again used as the center

of city activities. In the following period the city center was changed to use Bojonegoro to denote a name which means “respectfully receiving benefits” (Noorduyn, 1984: 273). This proposal was then approved by P. H. Baron van Lawick van Pabst, who had just become Resident of Semarang, but had served as acting resident of Rembang from 1824 to 1826 (Noorduyn, 1984: 272).

Reports of sending workers to Pasuruan for the sugar cane and oil mining industries have become an important social phenomenon that shows the problem of inequality in labor, but it seems as employment opportunities (Elson, 1994). The opportunity to become a tobacco worker in Bojonegoro or a sugar cane worker in Pasuruan has not changed the economic conditions of the agricultural community. Theft also remains a serious threat to the economic stability of agricultural communities. Meanwhile, the district government did not do much to tackle crime cases which tended to persist and increased slightly in 1884-1895. Below is the table that compose the high level of crime, especially animal theft and grand larceny in 1884.

Tabel 1. Criminality Cases in Bojonegoro 1884

Year	Animal Theft	Grand theft	Murder with Assault	Serious Abuse	Kampak	Brandal	Begal
1884	214	-	26	24	5	14	3
1887	20	502	34	60	3	17	4
1888	29	631	37	51	5	10	3
1889	38	600	20	32	-	3	-
1891	124	613	11	32	-	8	1
1892	92	472	17	32	-	7	2
1895	132	454	15	60	1	23	5

Source: Wartyo, 2002

The data above very clearly provides an explanation for the high level of grand theft and animal theft during the end of the nineteenth century. Crime-related matters, although they have increased, are not comparable to animal theft. In 1896, for example, the crime rate involving animal theft increased to 206 cases, as well as grand theft reaching 621 cases. This is also relevant to the increase in murder cases with assault reaching 21 cases. However, serious abuse decreased compared to 1895, as well as cases of mugging and axes decreasing, respectively, 5 cases for mugging and 1 case for axes. Meanwhile, *brandal* (local bandits) cases actually increased in 1895 with 23 cases (Wartyo, 2002).

The fundamental problem of the endemicity of poverty is not refer to a matter of geographical location and natural factors, but it is also important to place high levels of crime as part of what contributes to what Geertz called agricultural involution (Geertz, 1944). Even during harvest time, crime has no socio-economic consequences for rural communities. On the other hand, livestock theft can also explain the existence of prosperity at the farmer level with the ability to own large livestock during a period called endemic poverty. Therefore, poverty, which is considered as the

basis for the emergence of crime, has not provided evidence (Warto, 2002). The large number of peasants who own livestock such as cattle and goats is an indicator that the agricultural community, at least until the end of the nineteenth century, was not a poor community (ANRI, 1977). The type of cattle that is often kept is the *Onggole* type. This type of cattle is kept by many peasants in Bojonegoro and Tuban. This type of cattle was imported from Sumba and Pekalongan (ANRI, 1977). Livestock such as cattle are part of the social status among farmers.

The prosperity and adequacy of peasants as evidenced by the ownership of livestock and productive agricultural land contributes greatly to increasing funds stored in village banks (*dessabanken*). This will provide fresh funds for the availability of rural credit which at the time of the poverty research (*mindere welvaart*) Bojonegoro was classified as poor zone (Penders, 1984). The basic problem in credit distribution is that peasants find it difficult to access credit because rural credit practices often involve maladministration. Sharp criticism emerged from activist Wolff van Westerrode, assistant resident of Purwokerto, who asked for rural credit to be carried out in accordance with independence and farmers basic needs (Akhyat 2015; Penders, 1984: 45). Initiated by a Schnitzler controller by placing village banks (*Lumbung Desa*, Village Barns) that are more independent and targeted, then providing fresh funds for peasants will not be a problem. Until 1924, there were 158 *Lumbung Desa* and 61 village banks in 1927, then this increased in 1929 to 110 village banks (Penders, 1984: 47).

The increase in the number of village granaries and village banks until the 1920s provides an important indicator of how agricultural communities did not experience significant financial problems. Even in the 1926 report, the village bank had a guarantee fund of 45,200,000 guilders (Penders, 1984: 46). With the calculation that each bank has a guarantee fund of 636,000 guilders (Penders, 1984:46). In fact, in 1924-1928, village banks and *lumbung desa* in Bojonegoro generally experienced a deficit. Therefore, the village bank reorganized the credit collateral, no longer using animals or land as collateral, but using a "joint liability" system. This means that this liability is collective and usually the collateral is in the form of animals managed by the village. However, this credit practice in 1930-1931 experienced serious problems because of large-scale corruption that occurred in Padangan, Tambakrejo and Bojonegoro involving committees and village heads (Penders, 1984: 53). As a result of this corruption, village banks in Bojonegoro were then closed, including in the Ngumpak District which was recently hit by a corruption case with a loss of almost 22,000 guilders.

For peasant in the Pelem, Tambakboyo, Dander and Ngumpak areas, which are areas prone to crime and barren, they do substitute and side jobs as a way to survive in crisis conditions, whether due to disasters or crime. The ability to adapt and look for opportunities outside the peasants' cultivated land, because Bojonegoro farmers do not experience dependence on local agrarian structures that are feudally bound (Penders, 1984). As freelance peasants, they can move freely in space and even have adaptive capabilities, both to natural changes and new, more industrial economic opportunities such as tobacco and oil drilling.

The level of poverty in Bojonegoro until the 1930s was uneven because there was a decrease in poverty on the one hand due to the tobacco economy (*Java Tabaksblad Maatschappij* and British American Tobacco Company, BAT) and mining, but on the other hand there was a slight increase, especially in areas affected by disasters. Poverty varies with diverse socio-economic reactions, making it difficult to conclude that there is endemic poverty in Bojonegoro (Bennett, 1961). The combination of wet rice, dry rice, cassava and corn provides another perspective of poverty in Bojonegoro (Bennett, 1961). Drought, which is often used as an argument for the causes of poverty, does not seem to provide a clear answer. The availability of water as an irrigation supply for agriculture is sufficient with the benefit of being flowed by the Bengawan Solo which flows from Glonggong to Simo. Although, this River Watershed (DAS) only provides irrigation for approximately 102,654 *Ha.* corn crops and 120,719 *Ha* of rice fields-corn in 1930, but for these two types of commodities there were no serious problems (*Blijlage van het Economisch Weekblad for Nederland-Indie*, 1932). The shape of the river channel is not balanced with a drainage system that can accommodate river water which can overflow at any time resulting in frequent flooding, as in the Bureno and Bojonegoro districts (Penders, 1984:31).

Apart from benefiting from the watershed, until 1902, several reservoirs were also built in Bojonegoro. Utilization of reservoirs with an average capacity of 41 million meters³ provides a level of land fertility and sufficient water for vital agricultural areas (*Tien Jaar Provincie Oost Java 1929-1939*, 31). The locations of these reservoirs are in Panjang, Tlogo Haji, Kudur, Pasinan, Blongsong, Karangdinojo, Metaoenan with different areas. On the Peganten River in 1905 it was also proposed to build a new reservoir. What is a water management program through reservoirs has become an effective way to regulate water management, but the amount of rainfall and flooding remains a threat every year (Penders, 1984: 33-34).

Watersheds and reservoirs provide solutions for reducing flooding and at the same time providing sufficient water, at least in some areas, floods and droughts are starting to be resolved. However, several scientists have concluded that the endemicity of poverty occurs not because of disasters, but rather is determined by the character of farmers who do not have the ability to innovate in land management and regulation of agricultural products (Warto, 2002, Fernando, 2010). This has resulted in inadequate land management as the main economic resource. The same pattern occurred in the agricultural community in Semarang in the late 1880s (Akhyat, 2020). In Semarang, many peasants actually sell their land and then they turn to industrial labor because peasants do not have the adaptive capacity when urbanization occurs. In addition, buying and selling land provides benefits for land owners because the agricultural production process often creates an imbalance between production costs and production results, peasants often experience losses. Land then becomes an investment that can be used to cover the increasing cost of living in the city. Although they, in the next process, have to shift to suburban areas or become vulnerable urban communities (Akhyat, 2020).

The entry of investors and government involvement in land management, especially in case of land buying and selling can be a form of bargaining power imbalance in adopting land-based economic opportunities (Jellinek, 1991). The acceleration of government and private sector acquisition of land as a source of income has resulted in increasingly inaccessibility for poor communities to access new economic opportunities (Jellinek, 1991). In fact, in the extreme, investors and the government become machines that cover the production-reproduction process and ultimately the agricultural community falls into a poverty trap (Jellinek, 1991). It could be that the endemicity of poverty in Bojonegoro as Penders mentioned, is not only a result of natural processes and social problems, but also due to limitations in capital, expertise, and networks to access new economic resources (Jellinek, 1991; Penders, 1984, Akhyat, 2020). The tobacco economy, which is an alternative economic source, cannot be accessed because the distance between workers' or peasants' settlements and tobacco fields is very far (Elson, 1994). That is why transportation costs and time taken are inadequate as basic economic resources (Elson, 1994). Meanwhile, dry land farming, which is mostly located around teak forests and hills, does not generate much income, except for corn and some cassava (Bennett, 1961).

In the context of an agrarian structure, it is not easy to link crime and poverty, but in a macro context it can be hypothesized that both provide their own dynamic patterns in the post-*Kultuur-Stelsel* agricultural community of Bojonegoro. Social stability and integrity are often as the ideal concept in agrarian communities, so that crime is often concluded to have external influences and disruption of social stability (Kartodirdjo, 1966). The strong influence of the emergence of crime is not only a decrease in purchasing power and accessibility in the rural banking economy, but also a weak economic network pattern which is the basis of economic institutionalization (Alexander and Alexander, 1979). At the beginning of the 20th century, it was marked by a decline in the purchasing power of the agrarian communities which was already at a quite severe level. The period 1937-1940, for examples, as was described by Penders as the worst period in the early decades of the 20th century. The failure of the corn harvest in 1937, which was then followed by failure to pick tobacco due to continuous rain from December to July 1937. Likewise, the drought that occurred from the beginning of 1938 until August had a quite severe impact on corn and tobacco peasants (Penders, 1984). The serious condition of the agrarian economy was not a concern in the report of the Prosperity Commission (*Mindere Welvaart Commissie*) at least between 1904-1914 (*Onderzoek naar de Mindere Welvaart der Inlandsche Bevolking op Java en Madoera, 1914*). The prosperity commission report then only became a basis for concluding that aspects of disasters, drought and floods, were of concern to the colonial government.

In an effort to overcome the crisis caused by rain and drought which resulted in failed corn and tobacco harvests, the Colonial Government issued a subsidy of 50,000 guilders in 1937 and increased to 211,000 in 1938. This assistance included aid for rice, corn and cassava, including cassava seeds. This assistance shows the serious condition of Bojonegoro due to disasters,

especially in the Dander, Sugihwaras, Kanor areas. At the end of 1937, the food disaster situation spread to the Bojonegoro, Rengel and Tuban areas. The situation continued to worsen until 1938. According to research by the *Instituut for Volksvoeding* (Institute for People's Food) the worst conditions of malnutrition showed areas such as Trojalu, Karangdayu, Pucangarum, Teyo-Pesen, Kanor and Bureno (Penders, 1984:131). The decline in nutritional intake and high levels of crime require these peasants to obtain other income outside of agriculture.

Until the 1930s, the agricultural community had not been able to get out of the trap of declining socio-economic conditions resulting from disasters, corruption and crime. However, for various opportunities outside of agricultural land affected by disasters, the farming community has a survival strategy by creating diverse intake patterns and looking for opportunities outside of agriculture. The disaster then was not a significance factor and failed to explain the existence of poverty in Bojonegoro.

B. Failure to Impoverish Agricultural Communities

The village financial report in 1920 showed profits from Village Treasury profits reaching 20,221.86 guilders. Compared with Tuban, Bojonegoro is below it with the amount of Village Cash, 40,836,401 guilders. However, village finances originating from the Village Treasury could be an indicator that there would be no financial problems at the village level at least until the beginning of the 20th century. If the report is used to explain actual socio-economic conditions, it is not easy to find a clear relationship between village prosperity and the socio-economic reality of farmers. This is because the Village Treasury only comes from land tax and the Village Bank. During the crisis, these farmers did not directly contribute to the Village Treasury through agricultural products. The independence of the agricultural community in facing various socio-economic problems uses a survival strategy based on food diversification. On the other hand, this agrarian communities have the adaptive capacity to become a workforce outside the agricultural land and even outside Bojonegoro (*Voklstellings*, 1930). The agrarian structure is not strict because much of the *yasa* (inherited) land is not used optimally, so farmers have the freedom to make choices to seek economic opportunities. The risk of splitting families to seek opportunities outside the land becomes an important social stake. Therefore, the large number of idle lands used shows that Bojonegoro peasants do not dare to bear the risk of the threat of disaster or high taxes.

The reduction in the number of farming family members has an impact on the sale or pawning of uncultivated land and the need for cash. A report from the *Mindere Welvaart Commissie* regarding the high level of land being mortgaged has resulted in high job conversions. Communal land, which is collective cultivated land, which in almost all districts has an average of 2.5-8.8 percent, has been mortgaged. The following table shows the total area of land (*bau*) with the area mortgaged.

Tabel 2. Comparison between Land Owners and Land Pawned in The Early of 20th Century

Districts	Individually landowners	Totally land pawned	% of total landowners	Partly land pawned	% of total land pawned
Bojonegoro	9168	232	2,5	338	3,6
Bureno	5066	63	1,2	313	6,1
Pelem	6740	410	6,2	799	11,8
Padangan	3432	177	5,1	197	5,7
Tambakrejo	5128	61	0,1	181	1,1
Ngumpak	8066	713	8,8	537	6,6

Source: Penders, 1984

The data provided by Penders above shows that a lot of land is mortgaged to guarantee the availability of basic needs, as well as capital to find work outside of agriculture. For landless peasants or those who have limited land, the role of money lending services was very important during the early 20th century (Penders, 1984). The pattern of labor mobility in and out of Bojonegoro as a pattern of survival in a critical environment is not an easy thing for the agricultural community. This pattern of social mobility actually becomes a survival strategy when nature and social change remove them from the lands that created them as peasants (Penders, 1984).

Dander, Sugihwaras, Pelem, Ngumpak and Bureno areas were critical areas that produced a lot of labor for tobacco plantation needs before they were banned due to reducing rice land and mining. Bojonegoro was the place where *Krosokcentrale* was founded in 1938. An organization that regulates tobacco cultivation and trade under local government officials and tobacco industry commissioners. *Krosokcentrale* carries out a planting policy in collaboration with the village government to determine special land for tobacco and look for market opportunities for cigarette products (Penders, 1984: 88). The area of tobacco land fluctuates, according to demand and climate change. In 1924 the area of tobacco land reached 47,425 *bau*, while in 1925 it fell to 31,207 *bau* (*Uitgave van Dients der Belastingen in Nederlandsch-Indie, 1925: 136*). The development of tobacco plants then expanded with inter-city networks, especially after going through the 1930 crisis. Chopped or tobacco leaves that had been cut to size, and were still in the form of *krosok* or dry tobacco leaves, became a commodity that sold well in the local market. The trade in *krosok* and chopped meat as direct ingredients for cigarettes is distributed by local Chinese to big cities in Java.

This causes the need for labor to increase, especially tobacco pickers and choppers. These workers earn an average wage of under 1 guilder per day. Below are the wages of each worker who works according to their job;

Table 3. The Daily Wage Structure of Tobacco Labor, Years of 1913, 1920, 1924 (gulden/day).

Type of Works	genders and a kind of task	1913	1920	1924
Drying	men	0,25	0,25	0,50
	women	0,15	0,25	0,25
Sorting	colours	0,35	0,30	0,35
	colours and lengths	0,30	0,30	0,50
Stacking	men	0,50-0,60	0,50-0,60	0,50-0,60
Bunching/ <i>pikul</i>	women	0,30	0,40	0,70-0,75
Pressing (10 men and 2 women)	men and women	0,25	0,25	0,25
Loading to station (8 labors)	men	2,50	2,50	2,50

Source: Penders, 1984

The wages earned by tobacco workers are not high enough, but they provide certainty of getting cash. Therefore, many agricultural workers have shifted to tobacco plantations. Not much attention has been paid to the transition of profession from cultivating agricultural land, both wet and dry rice fields, to tobacco plantations. In terms of job conversion or even in certain cases peasants have the ability to divide jobs. When ready to pick, peasants turn into picking and chopping tobacco leaves, but at the same time or when harvesting corn or cassava, peasants usually become cultivators of rice fields or moors for corn and cassava (Bennett, 1961). This means that job conversion as a way of survival provides evidence of the oddity of the endemicity of poverty in general in Bojonegoro (*Uitgave van Den Dients der Belastingen in Nederlandsch-Indie*, 1925).

Another thing that is of concern to look at the income conditions of peasants apart from working on land is as construction workers who work on dams and irrigation water channels, known as *pacal*. *Pacal* is also actually the name of the dam which later became a term for workers who worked at *Pacal* Dam. These *pacals* are working on a dam project which is used to irrigate 22,700 acres of land in the Bojonegoro area. They were previously rain-fed farmers. This work not only increases the income of farming families but also benefits from water availability throughout the dry season (*Tien Jaar Provincie Oost-Java 1929-1939*: 31). The construction of the dam absorbs quite a lot of labor which provides additional income apart from working as sharecroppers or laboring farmers. When the average wage earned as a tobacco worker is 0.25 – 2.50 guilders while still being able to expect income from rice fields and moors, it seems very difficult to say that Bojonegoro is experiencing quite severe endemic poverty. This does not include dam workers and *blandong* workers in teak forests. If a worker in the tobacco industry can earn 0.50-2.50 guilders every day, with an average family size of 3-5 people, then the family's primary needs will be met. If we look at food security strategies, in fact both seasons, both rainy seasons which have the potential for flooding and crop failure and drought which also have the potential for crop failure for wet rice fields, can be overcome with a more diverse crop conversion strategy to suit the climate

and land type. The pattern of combining types of food crops as a food security strategy is the way in which poverty in Bojonegoro is actually not endemic poverty (Bennet, 1961). Corn, cassava and soybeans are food crops that grow well in Bojonegoro. For example, in the area around the *Pacal* Reservoir, agricultural intensification is increasingly providing increased productivity (Putri, 2021).

There are several indicators of poverty that lead more to structural poverty. If we look at the implementation of *Kultuur-Stelsel*, Bojonegoro has experienced problems of economic pressure due to disasters, crime and economic governance which is more directed towards colonial interests alone. The food conversion strategy as a pattern of food security and labor mobility from one locus of economic activity to another becomes a socio-economic character that maintains critical land peasants (Bennet, 1961). When there was a transition from the *Kultuur-Stelsel* system to the Liberal one, what was then called *blandong-dienst* was no longer an alternative economic source (Benda and Castle, 1969: 214). The loss of opportunities as *blandong* workers does not stop peasants, especially wet rice peasants, from trying to process the remaining land into land for cassava and *polowojo* as an alternative economic source. The agricultural pattern using a staple crop conversion strategy is not only a food security strategy, but also to cover the taxes that must be paid, especially the crop tax (*taneman pajeg*) which is quite burdensome. For farmers who earned 0.25 guilders, they had to pay the farmer *pajeg* 0.50 *guilders*. If Penders' data is correct, then in fact land-owning peasants and sharecroppers who are subject to crop taxes both experience financial problems when they work on land as commercial agricultural land. To cover the shortfall, sharecroppers had to take two days off to get money as collateral for credit installments (Penders, 1984:40). This means that when paying taxes, peasants must apply for a loan from the Village Bank or Village *Lumbung*.

The condition of the tax burden and guaranteed credit installments is quite high, resulting in farmers having to work outside of agriculture as laborers or casual workers or in non-permanent jobs. So it is natural that the credit report in Bojonegoro is considered successful with the high number of customers, but behind the success of the farmer credit institution (*volkscreditwezen*), the peasant economy is experiencing serious problems. Behind the narrative of farmers having to survive under the siege of poverty, a group of rich peasants bought rice before the crisis at a price of 1.50-1.75 *guilders/pikul*, during the crisis the price of rice could be sold for 2.25-250 *guilders*. The peasant is usually the owner of the leased land who still bears taxes and must be paid before the leased land is returned. Among peasants, the model for paying taxes on rented land is "adol duwit bali" (selling money again) (Penders, 1984:42). A concept of how peasants who own land, and even land renters, experience the problem of high taxes.

Simultaneously, both land-owning farmers who have to pay taxes, and laboring peasants who receive wages are trapped in a complicated agrarian economic system. Meanwhile, the government is building dam infrastructure, without making any efforts to restructure tax payments

and reconstruct the governance of the agrarian system. The case of Bojonegoro, which is often considered an endemic area of poverty, is actually just a colonial way of “maintaining” poverty by allowing peasants to only support colonial needs. The colonial government required taxes, on the other hand the colonial government established pawnshops (*pandhuisdienst*) as an alternative for providing cash funds, but both actually became a kind of “poverty trap” for the agrarian communities. Below is data that shows the failure of pawnshops to provide economic security for agricultural communities.

III. CONCLUSION

Geertz has succeeded in stigmatizing poverty as a gradational and hereditary pattern as a result of land use patterns bound by traditional ties. What Geertz calls agricultural involution is the main cause in forming an endemic poverty in agrarian communities. Since the emergence of Geertz’s thesis, many criticisms have been leveled at it, the historical evidence of the failure of Geertz’s involution thesis in seeing ecological changes in agrarian communities in Java has become increasingly clear. Penders, Fernando, Jellinek and even Houben explain from a different perspective the agricultural economy in Java which does not experience shared poverty. Some critics not only focus on the issue of the relationship between changes in land management which has experienced narrowing due to genealogical division, but also resulted in a very significant reduction in the income of agrarian families.

Paying attention to conditions and adaptive processes in facing various risks changes the concept of shared poverty. Not only is it seen from the perspective of the marginality of income and expenditure, let alone the level of nutritional intake, but there is also a need for a new perspective to measure the resilience and adaptive level of peasants in natural and socio-economic changes. The adaptive capacity of agricultural communities can be another perspective from the way of looking at the concept of shared poverty which is often trapped in a colonial-centric perspective.

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