

Exploring the Life of Indigenous Sopek Fishermen: Between Economic Pressure and Local Wisdom

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to deeper quarry the life of fishermen who use sopek boat at the city of Tegal - Central Java. Sopek is the smallest type of traditional wooden boats with a day head seaward. As it has been known that the amount of fish in Java Sea has begun to diminish especially in closest areas to the mainland, this situation requires larger ships such as purseine and over 30 GT ships with big engine. However, there are many fishermen who still use sopek boat for fishing and this lead any problems arise. Sopek boat characteristics and the sea conditions do not allow them to be able to get the fish catches in large numbers. It can not be denied that sopek fishermen increasingly squeezed by the economic pressures for families.

Sopek fishermen generally consist of native old fishermen who had ever been the vessel crew at young. The focus of this research is to know the reason of using sopek boat in the thick of technology progress and the condition of the sea with minimum fishing gear at this time. The findings obtained are that the indigenous sopek fishermen had hereditary traditional culture with unchanged boat design from ancient times. Sopek fishermen decided to use the boat as the implication of their acceptance of risk preference. They are also facing economic constraints by lack of capital. From the findings above we can conclude that the culture of fishing communities suffered of declining in technology and risks preference. However, the above conditions are not instantaneous occurred but caused by systemic change of marine and fisheries policy by the government.

Keywords: *indigenous sopek fishermen, the economic pressure, local wisdom, risk preference, culture of society.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Indigenous fishermen are a group of people who occupy in coastal area, live, and develop in a certain transition area between land and sea. They have symbols of culture which is reflected as daily behaviour. Those culture and behaviour factors distinguish indigenous fishermen from other societies. Fishermen society becomes the principal component of Indonesian maritime society construction. They depend on the result of sea fishery to support their life.

So far the fishermen's fate is similar to the farmer's and become category who obtain lack of government interest. Whereas Indonesia is an archipelago and agrarian which there are a lot of fishermen and farmer societies, however their fate is not going better (Astutie, Hartati, dan Widiati, 2008). Kusnadi (2006, p. 35-68) stated that social-economy pressure which is faced by fishermen household is rooted to related factors, such as natural and unnatural. Natural factor is like the season change of fishing and structure of fishery source. While unnatural factor is connected to the problem of restricted of fishing technology reach, the unstable in production sharing and there is no exact medical and financial support from government, the fading of marketing web and fishermen cooperation which is not in maximum function, and also negatif effect of modern fisheries policy by the government in lasted for 25 years.

Thus condition commonly occurs in coastal area where there are a lot of fishermen families live in poor category. One of them is in Tegal – Central Java. Tegal has long coastal area called “Coastal Water” (Perairan Pantai). Along this coastal water consists of variety of fishermen boat for fishing to fulfill family economic needs. The number of sea fishing means such as fishing boat is around 1.041 units which consist of motor temple, purseine, and mini purseine with fishing tools.

Theory of classical economic which is pioneered by Adam Smith (1870) stated that economic problem is a unity process consists of production, distribution, and consumption problem. The prosperity of society is influenced by local and global economic problem. The life of traditional fishermen is not be rid of this problem. However this research has special interest to the reason of use of traditional sopek boat as production tool including the problem faced by fishermen. Kusnadi (2009. P. 37-46) stated that generally problem faced by fishermen revolves to issues such as: 1) poverty and social asymmetry, 2) restricted of capital access, technology, market, 3) low qualified of human resource, 4) degradation of

environment source, and 5) establishment policy which does not optimally take side to fishermen society. Those problems widely raise negative effect to the life of fishermen.

The previous research which is related to the fishermen life concern more to the root of poverty and also endeavoring of coastal occupier. There are only small number of researches about sosiology of traditional fishermen society especially about fishermen who use sopek boat or smallest or simplest kind of boat for sea fishing. Although other kinds and size of boat are already existed, sopek boat fishermen are still in great number. That is the focus in this research.

1.2 Statements of Problem

This research purposes to explore the existence of traditional sopek boat phenomenon through traditional fisherman in Tegal coastal area. Tegal is one of town in Central Java which is nearby the sea. The potential of sea resource is great enough but until 2009, human resource is not optimally benefited caused by the restricted of human resource and budget. The size of coastal water is 7,5 km in length and 10-80 meter in width. The number of sea fishing means such as fishing boat is around 1.041 units which consists of motor temple, purseine, and mini purseine with fishing tools. The amount of catching during 2010 is 20.591.440 kg. The total of fish auction is 3 units.

According to the situation above, frame thinking which is prefaced by the following questions appear as follow:

1. Who are fishermen who use traditional sopek boat as fishing means in Tegal?
2. Why do fishermen use traditional sopek boat as fishing means?
3. How is the economic condition of fishermen family who use traditional sopek boat?
4. How is the value of culture and tradition which is possessed by the fishermen who use traditional sopek boat?

5. What problem which is faced by the fishermen who use traditional sopek boat related to production process?

1.3 Objective of the Study

This research aims to answer questions at point 1.2 statements of problem above using approach of *instrumental case* study. Study case is conducted to externally comprehend certain phenomenon, regularity, and specific case. This research explores life economic and culture of fishermen who use traditional sopek boat as the smallest industry of fishing in Tegal.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Theory of Abraham Maslow Motivation

Motivation is an activator from someone's heart to conduct or reach a purpose. Motivation is also a plan or desire to get success and avoid life failure. In other terms, motivation is a process of purpose achievement. Someone has a motivation means he/she has power to get life success.

Abraham Maslow (1943-1970) stated that basically people have prime needs. He tells 5 levels in a pyramid where people start demand of needs from beneath. Those five needs are called Hierarchy of Maslow Needs, which is begun by basic biology needs until more complex psychology motive which will be important after the basic needs are completed. Needs on certain level at least must be completed before the needs on following level become determiner of important action. (See figure 2.1). When food and safe are hard to obtain, completion of those needs will dominate someone's action and the higher motives will be less significant. People have time and energy to occupy aesthetic and intellectual interest when the basic needs have already been fulfilled easily. Work of arts and science will not grow healthy in society where the members are in great difficulty in finding food, protection, and safe.

2.2 Theory of Macrosociology Conflict

Main idea which is contained in Theory of Dahrendorf Conflict (1976, p.162) with assumptions of conflict theory is: 1) Every society is bent down to change process; change is everywhere, 2) Conflict or dissensus is everywhere, 3) Every society gives contribution to disintegration of society change, and 4) Every society is grounded to force from a few members to the others. Karl Marx's contribution to sociology can be found in Class Theory. Marx argues that human history until now is class struggle history, (Coser, 1977, p. 48). Capitalism cause sharp separation between master who own production tools and people who only have manpower. According to Marx prediction, proletar will win the class struggle and create society without class or country.

In Marx's frame thinking, determiner factor of society structure is the production way which can be found in society. Another important concept which is developed is alienasi concept. Alienasi is a history process where human go isolated from nature and product from their own creativity which is considered by following generation as lost and pressed power. This opinion is gained from the effect of production process in capital industry. Marx views that human history shows the increasing of human governance to nature and human alienasi (Sunarto, 2004, p. 213-228).

2.3 Previous Literatures about Traditional Fishermen

The previous literatures related to research about traditional fishermen are Sobari, Kinseng, dan Priyatna (2003) who stated that with local wisdom which is owned by fishermen indigenous, so an approach of resource management which can be executed is co-management which is expected be able to solve current problems. While Unus (2004) concluded that there are a lot of regulations/policies about fishermen safety which have not been accommodated yet, even though some of them are proper to international policy. Haryono (2005) found that family fishermen should be able to fulfil family economic needs.

Economic needs demand them to be able to find alternative of another income source, including working housewife and children. While Ustriyana (2005) stated that fisherman change (NTN) in regency of Karangasem Bali is one which the meaning is there is no allocation of saving from fishermen income. And Wijaya, Rohmah, dan Ismani (2009) concluded that conflict between traditional fishermen and modern fishermen can be muffled with territory admission, clarity of sailing route, company encouragement and fair law system, and also corporation.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

Research design which is used is single instrumental case study, that is study case to explore more in a certain case/phenomenon about fishermen life who use traditional sopek boat. Another purpose is to comprehend certain social circumstance, event, role, interaction, and group. Data obtained in various methods is then analyzed and categorized so that it results further case study. Case study is illustration of single event, a single example from a wider phenomenon, (Gerring, 2007, p. 42).

3.2 Research Method/Technique

Action which is conducted related to research technique is to choose needed data, source, suitable data finding technique that is constructively where purpose appears after interacting to the fact, and process data and interpret it. Narration data interpretation is divided on theme and sub theme which is taken based on information contained plot. The case which is explored in this research is conducted in order to a perspective about issue or theory improvement is provided.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data is collected in several ways such as; in-depth interview toward the fishermen sopek boat user, observation of fishermen life and family, and also literature study of Tegal

Fishery Department document. Data analysis technique which is applied in this case is analysis technique type interaction which is stated by Miles dan Huberman (1994) that is analysis consists of four firm steps (see figure 3.1). To determine the trustworthiness, data is required to be examined. Creswell (2007, p. 202-220) states that there are some perspectives and conditions in qualitative validity and reliability. One of them is perspective using condition which applies the natural truth which is stated by Lincoln dan Guba (1985, p. 180).

4. FINDING AND RESULT

4.1 Life of Tegal Fishermen Sopek

Sopek fishermen live in settlement in Tegal coastal area. Most of them occupy simple house in certain group based on type of boat used. Residence where fishermen live is including to the poorest settlement of all. It is because the low income to fulfil their daily needs. The education level is also in the lowest rank where most of children of fishermen family can not go to school.

Sopek is the smallest type of traditional wooden boats. Sopek is usually used by 1 until 3 crew members and sail only for one day for fishing. Pak S (a fishermen respondent) tells in an interview:

I sail together with my son, leave at 4 in the morning until 5 in the afternoon or sometimes until 7 in the evening. Sometimes I get fish, but other time I get nothing, just based on the condition of sea wave. The average of income per day is Rp 30.000,-. I do not go sailing when the wave is big, but looking for jobs on the land like being web maker labourer.

Sopek type which is used by Pak S is sopek raweh (pancing). Raweh is kind of fishhook where each of it consists of 300 fishhook which is bounded to a long bamboo. So, before fishhook is thrown to sea, it is must be filled by small fish one by one. This is the lowest and most traditional type. Another one is web type where fishermen only throw it to the sea and wait for the fish come together.

4.2 Boat Selection as Production Tool

The sequence of boat type starting from the simplest one is sopek, cantrang, mini purseine, pursein, dan vessel >30 GT. Unfortunately sopek is the neglected most of government contribution, like Pak W's (a fishermen respondent) as follow:

The fishermen in this settlement are never assisted by government, like condition of river gully which keeps precipitating but it is not dredged soon. It is difficult for boat movement when leaving or going home from sailing.

However they keep using sopek boat until nowadays. Fishermen have working experience before as pursein crew and use another type like sampan. The motives that are given are various. Pak W as sample, he said:

I am not interested being pursein crew anymore. I only earned low income. A friend of mine earned Rp 700.000,- after sailing during 3 months using pursein.

While Pak S gave different personal statement as follow:

I want to keep in touch with my family. I prefer sopek boat since I may go home everyday to control my family. My wife does not have a job, while I am getting old. I am not as brave as at young, especially facing big ocean wave.

Pak S' statement is in line with family function stated by Horton, 1980 on Wahyu (1980, p. 241-56) where family function consists of: 1) sexuality arrangement function, 2) reproduction function, 3) social function, 4) appreciation function, 5) status function, 6) protection function, and 6) economy function. The reasons which had been stated by Pak S execute family function as protection and economy.

4.3 Local Wisdom of Sopek Fishermen

Sopek fishermen inherit ancient tradition which is kept holding. It is proved by the culture of holding sopek shape until nowadays. Sopek boat is created in Tegal territory. For those who are not able to create it themselves, they can order to local creator around them. From 1.041 boats in Tgeal, about 25 percents of them are sopek. However the number of sopek fiherman is lower, similar to Pak W's answer:

There were 42 sopek boat fishermen in my settlement. There are only 32 left, lately. It was decreasing since some boats were sold and the owner went old.

Beside holding culture of boat characteristic, sopek fishermen also have local wisdom which is agreed like sailing territory boundary and also save the everlasting of sea environment and ecosystem. Further, Pak S explained as follow:

My sailing boundary is appropriated to boat type. If my boat is only able to sail around closest areas to the mainland, I will not compulse to the middle. It has own part. I decline using soft web, since it may take small fish which should be let growing.

4.4 Economic Endure of Sopek Fishermen

Sopek fishermen family has the lowest economic endure, they must face economic pressure sacrificially. They do face capitalism economic law where they who are great squeeze them who are small. Pak W explained the broker practical which he experienced as follow:

Fishing result is sold to broker, because I must pay sailing capital and debt which is used for daily needs completion. Fish cost is totally defined by broker, and it occurs to all sopek fishermen who live in our settlement.

While Pak S' respond to the question about fish auction is:

Once, I sold some fish to fish auction, but there I was like getting deceived of fish cost. I predicted that some fish of mine would be highly coasted, but it was up side down. Besides, sopek fishermen only got less concern. It was hard to get credit since the too high requirement.

This is fishermen background and manifestation as stated Siswanto (2008, p.15-35).

The term which is used by Siswanto for relationship condition between fishermen and broker above is "hanging system" where fishermen are exploited by broker.

4.5 Obstacles Faced by Fishermen

With sopek boat characteristics, some obstacles which are often faced by fishermen are technical and nature obstacle or natural and unnatural obstacle according to statement of Kusnadi (2006). Pak S told in an interview:

Problem which I face is like leak boat or broken caused by big wave. If this is so, boat must wait until the wave calm down, but engine must keep going on for moving. Sometimes I wait until evening. Another

problem is when my fishhook hits friend's and damage both of them and need a couple days for repairing.

Sopek fishermen condition which all of those problems and also government minimum contribution similar to Kusnadi's statement (2006) about Philosophy of Coastal area Occupier Efficiency where fishermen is community "without a country" because their ability in encountering social-economy problem without government worth contribution.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, AND LIMITATION

5.1 Conclusion

Based on finding during the research and depth interview and also discussion as presented above, the conclusions are drawn as follow:

1. Sopek boat fishermen have been vessel crew at young. There are several sopek fishermen settlements who occupy in a group in coastal area.
2. The reason of preferring sopek boat than the modern one is because being vessel crew is not expected anymore, the older age, the implication of their acceptance of risk preference, and also desire to be closer to their family.
3. Family of sopek fishermen face high economic pressure because of the low ability to earn more income. The fishermen change of sopek user is on number <1 . This fact is appropriate to Theory of Maslow Motivation where fishermen are only able to fulfil basic need, that is physiology, so that they are not able to fulfil the higher need.
4. Sopek fishermen keep holding local wisdom and ancient heredity which is proved by high spirit in holding sopek boat characteristic and caring sea environment.
5. Production problem which is faced by fishermen is low capital for sailing and maintenance cost. Contribution and care from government are really expected to create prosperity even distribution of coastal beach occupiers. Fishermen sopek boat is according to Theory of Class by Karl Marx.

5.2 Implication

This research is expected to contribute implication as benefit to several parties such as: 1) Adding literature for theory which is tried to be tested in this research especially about theory of motivation and alienasi concept, 2) Knowing illustration of fishermen family life directly and quality, and 3) Giving addition reference to government in determining policy of fishermen efficiency.

5.3 Limitation and Suggestion

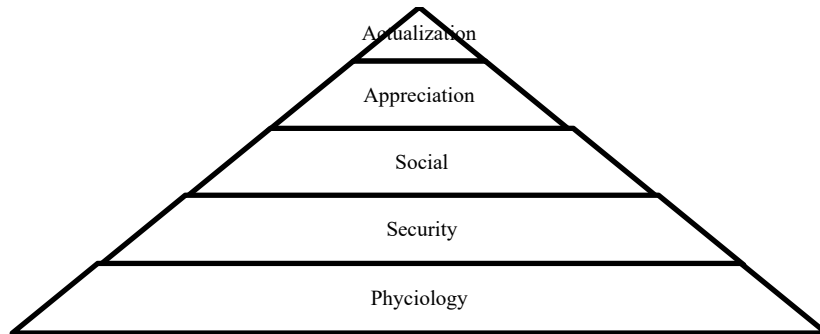
Case/phenomenon which is only conducted to a boat type aims to deepen illustration of life and also problem faced by fishermen sopek boat, because of the emphasis of the research is boat type selection. Another limit is on research setting in a certain area only. The following research about sopek boat can be developed in various setting research.

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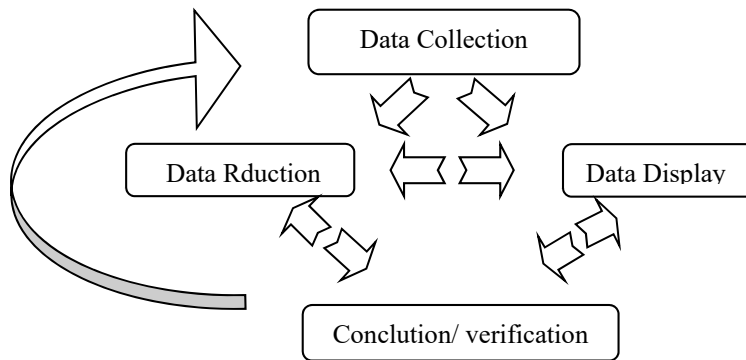
APPENDIX

**Figure 2.1
Hierarchy of Maslow Needs**



Source: Corr, P. J., & Matthews, G (2009)

**Figure3.1
Component of Data Analysis Model Miles and Huberman Interactive**



Source: Miles and Huberman (1994)

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