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Between Poverty and *Ngalap Berkah* (Seeking for Blessings) Myth: Contradiction of Welfare Perception Among Tobacco Farmers in di Temanggung

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ABSTRACT

Tobacco farmers in Temanggung Regency, the largest and best tobacco producing region in Central Java, still have low incomes. However, local farmers still cultivating tobacco and believed that tobacco is a "tanaman wali" that brings blessings to farmers, so ritual practices similar to ngalap berkah are carried out to gain good luck when harvesting tobacco. This research aims to dissect the cultural factors that influence the economic behavior of Temanggung tobacco farmers and their perceptions regarding welfare. This research method is ethnography with the help of a historical perspective. Data was obtained from field observations and in-depth interviews, welfare data archives at social services, BPS data archives, and scientific literature. Data analysis was carried out using a process of verification, reduction, interpretation and triangulation. The research results show that historical factors in the form of farmers' debt bondage with Chinese middlemen, which are mystified in tobacco myths, are the reason why farmers find it difficult to switch to other commodities. Belief in these myths also creates a perception of prosperity that is inverted from the reality of the tobacco economy, but fosters other sources of welfare that are subjective with three dimensions including harmony, social relations and the environment.

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Introduction

The statistical figures and economic calculations do not necessarily reflect the true level of societal welfare. This is evident, for example, in statistics on tobacco farmers. A study conducted by the Demographic Institute of the Faculty of Economics, University of Indonesia (LDFEUI), and the Tobacco Control Support Centre—Indonesian Public Health Association (TCSC—IAKMI), involving 451 tobacco farmworkers and 66 sharecroppers in three regions—Kendal (Central Java), Bojonegoro (East Java), and East

Lombok (West Nusa Tenggara)—revealed the low welfare of tobacco farmers. This included: (1) poor housing conditions (over 40% living in houses with dirt floors); (2) low levels of education (primary school or less); and (3) low wages (half the national average wage and below the regional minimum wage) (Keyser and Juita, 2012 in Markus, *et.al.*, 2015). The data highlights that tobacco farmers do not meet at least three key welfare indicators: education, housing, and social security (Spicker, 2000).

This situation is not much different in Temanggung Regency, the largest tobacco-producing area in Central Java (BPS, 2019-2021). The average income of farmers in this region is also quite low, around IDR. 1,300,000 per month (Agustina, *et.al.*, 2021). This figure is far below the Regional Minimum Wage of Temanggung, which is IDR. 2,027,569.32 (Governor of Central Java's Decree No.561/54 of 2022). Moreover, this small profit is further exacerbated by middlemen who monopolize distribution. Farmers have no access to factories and must sell their tobacco to middlemen, who also determine the selling price, leaving farmers with no bargaining power. Farmers are unable to observe the price-setting process as middlemen only take tobacco samples and return with a price decision. This opaque price determination process heightens the potential for price estimation fraud. In this region, farmers are often trapped in debt with middlemen (Wibisono, 2022).

Nevertheless, farmers continue to cultivate tobacco. Despite alternatives such as rice, vegetables, or fruits—crops with shorter harvest cycles, faster capital turnover, and market-determined prices—farmers believe that tobacco brings blessings. This myth is common, with tobacco often referred to as “green gold” “Emas Hijau”. Among Temanggung tobacco farmers, the tobacco harvest is seen as a guarantee for meeting future needs or desires. Farmers also believe that tobacco is a miraculous plant, even considered a plant of the saints (Brata, 2012). Farmers regularly hold rituals from planting to harvest to express gratitude for their crops, indicating that Temanggung tobacco farmers gladly pursue this livelihood. With tobacco viewed as a blessing, tobacco farming becomes an effort to seek blessings.

This reveals a paradox in the perception of welfare between the beliefs or myths held by Temanggung tobacco farmers and the statistical calculations of income and market power. This paradox needs further exploration by dissecting the cultural structures of these farming communities. Such analysis can help determine appropriate steps for empowering local tobacco farmers in line with their agricultural traditions. To understand the behaviour of Temanggung tobacco farmers for welfare development, it is essential to delve into their culture. From these issues, the following research questions are formulated: (1) What is the history of tobacco farming in Temanggung?; (2) What are the income levels of Temanggung tobacco farmers, and how do they perceive their income?; and (3) What is the standard of welfare from the perspective of Temanggung tobacco farmers?

Literature Review

The Welfare of Temanggung Tobacco Farmers in Numbers

In the context of tobacco farmers, several key factors that determine their level of welfare include the high prices offered by middlemen, easy access to loan capital, support for fertilizers and seeds, the absence of imported agricultural commodities, and the prosperity

of farmers' households, which encompasses health, education, and food security (Puspaningrum, 2021). Research conducted by Dewanta (2022) found that middlemen deduct tobacco prices based on weight, NPU (net public utility), taxes, and transportation costs to the factory. Tobacco farming is also challenging to start due to the difficulty of accessing capital, which forces farmers to rely on loans from middlemen.

Meanwhile, Fada's (2020) research in Petarangan Village, Temanggung Regency, revealed that tobacco farmers in the area are considered to have a low welfare level. The majority (40%) of tobacco farmers earn less than IDR 5,000,000 per month from their harvest. In terms of education, 58% of the farmers are elementary and middle school graduates (32% middle school and 26% elementary school). Most tobacco farmers (38%) only own land between 0.51 and 1 hectare, with only 7% owning more than 2 hectares. Though the majority of farmers (38%) have only two dependent children, 32% have more than two children, increasing their living costs compared to their income. Additionally, in terms of health, the stunting rate in the area remains high at 20.5% (Kusumastuti, 2022). Based on these figures, Temanggung tobacco farmers are categorized as having low welfare.

Tobacco Myths Among Temanggung Farmers

There are several myths believed by tobacco farmers in Temanggung. One of the most popular stories is the origin of tobacco in the region, with a well-known figure named Ki Ageng Makukuhan. According to Syafieq and Pratiwi (2018), Ki Ageng Makukuhan was one of the seven students of Sunan Kudus, who spread Islam through agriculture. As part of his efforts, he introduced tobacco to Temanggung. Since then, the local community began cultivating tobacco. This story holds significant importance among Temanggung farmers, as seen in the grave of Ki Ageng Makukuhan, located at the peak of Mount Sumbing, whose slopes are now tobacco fields for local farmers. The farmers regularly perform traditional rituals as a form of respect for Ki Ageng Makukuhan.

One such traditional ritual is called "Among Tebal," usually conducted before the tobacco planting season. During this event, the community prepares a "tumpeng" containing Ki Ageng Makukuhan's favorite dishes as a form of tribute to the bringer of tobacco seeds. The ritual is held as a prayer for a successful tobacco planting season, hoping that the crops will yield a good harvest, and to express gratitude to God for the blessings given (Syafieq and Pratiwi, 2018). The local community believes that tobacco is a sacred plant brought by the saints that must be protected. Tobacco farming has also become an integral part of the local culture, passed down from generation to generation through family education (Setiani, 2021).

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Subjective Well-being and the Substantive Approach in Understanding Farmers' Economic Behavior

Welfare is not always measurable by a single standard, such as income levels, consumption, housing conditions, health, and so on. In reality, welfare is relative, which in the context of Ed Diener is referred to as subjective well-being (SWB). In subjective well-being, a person's sense of prosperity is determined by personal perceptions and experiences of positive and negative emotional responses, as well as cognitive evaluations of life satisfaction (Diener, et al., 2002). This relativity also applies when assessing farmers' welfare.

Before the second half of the 20th century, the development of industrialization in Europe prompted Western economists to study the agricultural economy in the Eastern world using the neoclassical formalist approach. This approach led to the thesis that peasant economies were backward (primitive economies) because they lacked the organizational elements seen in Europe's industrial economies. This approach failed to understand the farmers' economies, as it could not identify the different organizational elements, systems, and cultural drivers compared to industrialized societies. This approach was later revised with a substantive approach. This new approach studied peasant economies based on field conditions. Economic phenomena were viewed through the lens of the meaning humans attach to their use of economic resources (Sairin, et al., 2002). Therefore, farmers' economies should be interpreted using a perspective that aligns with their cultural context. Additionally, welfare, as an inseparable entity from farmers' economies, must also be viewed through the cultural lens of the farmers' communities.

Previous Studies Conducted

Several studies have been conducted on Temanggung tobacco farmers. These studies have primarily focused on (1) the economic condition of farmers, (2) tobacco trading systems, and (3) the relationship between farmers and middlemen. All these studies concluded that farmers are not economically prosperous. Fada (2020) used SPSS to analyze the influence of independent variables such as income, education, land area, number of children, and length of work on farmers' welfare. Sari and Rusdijjati (2021) studied the perceptions of Temanggung tobacco farmers towards the trading system, which relies on middlemen, and found that the system is not beneficial to them. Dewanta (2022) used a Marxist approach to study the relationship between middlemen and

Temanggung tobacco farmers, concluding that there is a patron-client relationship between the two.

Meanwhile, there has been little research that includes the cultural aspects of Temanggung tobacco farmers. Setiani (2021) applied social construction theory to examine farmers' behavior and concluded that family education plays a significant role in encouraging the continued planting of tobacco from generation to generation. Runtiko, et al. (2018), studied local wisdom in farmers' efforts to obtain high-quality tobacco (Srinthil), particularly in Legoksari Village, Tlogomulyo District, Temanggung, focusing on rituals, house structures, and work ethic. Meanwhile, Ardila (2022), using the same spatial scope, applied folklore to study the myth of Dewi Sri in tobacco farmers' thanksgiving rituals.

No one has yet studied Temanggung tobacco farmers using the perspective of subjective and substantive welfare, applying these perspectives to comprehensively map the tobacco farming culture in Temanggung, formulating alternative welfare standards, and developing alternative ways to improve welfare based on the culture that has been mapped.

Methods

This research employs an ethnographic and historical approach. Ethnographic data were collected through field observations and in-depth interviews in Legoksari Village, Tlogomulyo Subdistrict, Temanggung Regency, Central Java, over two phases: the first in July 2023 and the second in September 2023. The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, including tobacco farmers, village officials, traditional elders, middlemen, and other stakeholders involved in the tobacco economy. There were 12 informants, all of whom were tobacco farmers, with two also serving as village officials, one as a traditional elder, and one working as a local sub-grader for tobacco. Ethnographic data were also obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Temanggung Regency and the Temanggung Regency Social Services Office. Meanwhile, historical data supporting the analysis were gathered through scientific literature reviews.

The analysis of ethnographic data followed the flow of ethnographic research methods, while the analysis of historical data adhered to historical research methods. The results of both analyses were then triangulated with the ethnographic data before being compiled into a taxonomic diagram. In the first phase, ethnographic data, including interview notes and observations, were identified and sample domains were collected that provided basic knowledge elements from the informants or observed subjects. At the same time, historical data (sources) consisting of archives and scholarly works were verified for authenticity or credibility and then interpreted.

After separate processing, the ethnographic information and historical data interpretations were combined and compared during the triangulation phase to identify patterns of similar or related information. Once triangulated, taxonomic analysis was conducted by mapping all the information into a hierarchical diagram and dividing it into detailed domains to understand specific domains relevant to the research problem. Finally, an interpretation was made by analyzing, reviewing the data, and formulating conclusions.

Results

Local Oral Traditions and Historical Accounts on the Origins of Tobacco in Temanggung

Temanggung Regency is geographically surrounded by a series of mountains, making the area highly fertile. It borders the mountains of Merapi, Merbabu, and Telomoyo to the east, Sindoro, Sumbing, and Prahu to the west, and Ungaran to the north. Archaeological evidence suggests that this region was a significant rice producer (Ardrijskundig en Statistisch Woordenboek van Nederlandsch-Indie, 11, P.J. Veth, ed., 1869 in Djuliat Suroyo, 2000). Later, Temanggung became part of the core region (*negaragung*), and a rice granary of New Mataram (Suroyo, 2000). The introduction of tobacco to Temanggung occurred during the colonial era when the region was part of the Kedu Residency's administrative area.

The clearest historical record of tobacco cultivation in Kedu is linked to a tax imposed by Mataram rulers in 1746 (Boomgard, 2002). After this period, tobacco became a popular crop and was exported to Sumatra, Kalimantan, and eastern parts of the Indonesian archipelago. During the Cultivation System (*Tanam Paksa*) implemented by the colonial government, tobacco was extensively planted as a mandatory crop alongside coffee and exported to Europe as "Javanese tobacco" (Budiman and Onghokham, 2016; Padmo and Edhie, 1991; Margana, et al., 2014). Even after the Cultivation System ended, tobacco continued to be cultivated in Temanggung, eventually making it a prominent tobacco production center in the Dutch East Indies, alongside Cirebon, Priangan, Banyumas, and Semarang. Tobacco from Kedu, particularly Temanggung, was highly sought after by the market, leading to an expansion of cultivation between 1929 and 1939 (van de Koppel and van Hall, 1946).

While tobacco contributed to rapid economic growth, it also attracted Chinese traders in Java, who saw it as a lucrative business opportunity. Their special privileges granted by the colonial government allowed them to monopolize the trade. These Chinese traders, later known as *tengkulak* (middlemen), began to control the tobacco economy by lending credit to farmers, leading to a cycle of debt. Local officials, including *bekel* (village leaders) and other native authorities, were unable to intervene because they were also involved in the tobacco trade and indebted to the Chinese. For example, one prominent Chinese middleman, Ong Indit from Pekalongan, lent 95,438.50 guilders to farmers and officials, including *bekel* and regents. Officials couldn't prevent the Chinese from entering Kedu, as farmers would lose an annual income of one million guilders (Suroyo, 2000). In the *tegal* (dryland) areas, especially in the foothills of Mount Sindoro and Sumbing, this long-term debt heavily impacted farmers (Boomgard, 2002).

Today, Temanggung farmers have their own interpretations of the history of tobacco in their region. A well-known local folklore revolves around Ki Ageng Makukuhan, originally named Ma Kuw Kwan, a Chinese Muslim convert and disciple of Sunan Kudus, who spread Islam in Kedu and its surroundings through agriculture. Before Makukuhan's arrival, Kedu was a barren and dry land. During the scorching dry season, no crops could survive. Makukuhan, having received tobacco seeds from Sunan Kudus, scattered them on the mountain slopes in Kedu, where they grew and thrived. He used these plants as a medium for Islamic propagation among local farmers. At one point, when Makukuhan fell ill, he consumed the tobacco plant and recovered. He then exclaimed, "*Iki tambaku!*" ("This is my medicine!"). This expression became the origin of

the word tobacco (Javanese: *mbako*). The story of Ki Ageng Makukuhan as a disciple of Sunan Kudus who spread Islam through tobacco farming led to the belief that tobacco is a sacred plant associated with *wali* (Islamic saints) (interview with an informant, July 1, 2023). Even today, Ki Ageng Makukuhan's name is used for roads, schools, places of worship, and art groups. His tomb and *petilasan* (sacred site) are located in Kedu Village, Kedu Subdistrict, Temanggung Regency, and are frequented by local pilgrims during religious holidays. His *petilasan* is also located on the summit of Mount Sumbing, an area known for producing the best tobacco, within the administrative area of Tlogomulyo Subdistrict, Temanggung Regency. Local tobacco farmers sometimes visit this *petilasan* before planting tobacco as a form of seeking blessings (*ngalap berkah*) (interview with an informant, July 10, 2023), believing it will bring good fortune for a successful harvest.

Another version of the story involves the transportation of tobacco from Kedu to Kudus, where Ki Ageng Makukuhan is said to have received assistance from a Chinese merchant who arrived in Java alongside Admiral Cheng Ho. This merchant, lured by the tobacco trade in Java, helped farmers reach the factories. Locally, he is known as Juragan Dampu Awang, and is revered by the community as much as Ki Ageng Makukuhan (interview with an informant, July 10, 2023). Both figures are considered sacred, along with Dewi Sri, Dewi Pertimah, Panembahan Sunan Tegil, Kyai Gedhobrak, Sridana, and Srilulut, in various tobacco-related rituals such as *Among Tani*, *Nyecel*, *Among Tebal*, *Miwiti*, *Tungguk*, *Kepungan Jenang Candhil*, and *Nyampar Bun* (Larasati, et al., 2018). Even though, there is no authentic historical evidence for either Ki Ageng Makukuhan or Juragan Dampu Awang.



Figure 1. Ki Ageng Makukuhan's *petilasan* grave is at the top of Mount Sumbing, about 8 km from the Legoksari Village Office. *Source:* Anonym, 2015, “Menengok Makam Ki Ageng Makukuhan Di Puncak Gunung Sumbing - PLH Indonesia”, awalinfo.blogspot.com

Uncertain Tobacco Economy, Hopes for Fortune, and Farmers' Reluctance to Switch to Alternatives

Based on interviews conducted with farmers, it was found that incomes vary between farmers. This is influenced by the diverse soil conditions of each farmer's land, resulting in different tobacco qualities. As a commodity consumed for leisure or entertainment (tertiary needs), differences in quality significantly affect the market value of tobacco. However, in addition to this factor, several similarities among farmers lead to comparable incomes, including limited differences in land size, high dependence on weather, and bargaining power in the market.

According to informants, farmers in Legoksari Village have an average land area of 1 hectare. In one season, farmers produce an average of 25-30 dried baskets, each weighing about 40 kilograms. In a profitable year, farmers can earn a gross income of around IDR. 80,000,000, with operating costs ranging from IDR. 40,000,000 to IDR. 50,000,000. Thus, the net income earned is between IDR. 30,000,000 and IDR. 40,000,000 per year, meaning that on average, farmers have a monthly income of around IDR. 2,500,000 to IDR. 3,333,333. The high production costs, especially from the labor required for planting, harvesting, slicing, and packaging, play a significant role in reducing profits. For planting alone, the average resident of Legoksari Village requires about 5-6 workers. Additionally, daily labor costs just for the harvesting stage can reach IDR. 150,000, not including slicing and packaging. Annual income also fluctuates due to variations in weather conditions and the fluctuating market.

Tobacco is a plant highly dependent on the right environmental conditions to produce good quality. In Legoksari Village, located on the eastern slopes of Mount Sumbing, the altitude, slope, sun exposure, and dew conditions are favorable for producing high-quality tobacco. However, another critical factor is the weather, which presents the main challenge for farmers. During its early growth, tobacco requires a precise amount of rainfall—not too much, nor too little—and sufficient sunlight. Once past the early growth stage, tobacco needs dry conditions until harvest time. Dry weather is crucial for tobacco, as any rain during the harvest can damage the leaves, leading to crop failure. Even if rain occurs only once, it can reduce the quality of the tobacco leaves, even without total crop failure.

In addition to land size and weather challenges, all farmers essentially face the same position in the tobacco market. Since tobacco is not a staple commodity, its price is entirely controlled by market forces. As a result, tobacco prices fluctuate according to the business cycle in the economy. In addition to these fluctuations, farmers' income is further diminished by the presence of middlemen and brokers who take excessive profit cuts from sales. Some unscrupulous brokers even disappear with the farmers' tobacco, leading to a loss of capital for the next planting season. This also results in the loss of income needed for daily necessities, thus causing new debt. Increased credit loans can also result from crop failure, causing a sharp decline in income. Often, to address these issues, farmers obtain loans from middlemen at very high interest rates—50%, known as the *nglimolasi* system or borrowing 10 to pay back 15 (*limolas*). Moreover, as one of the areas producing srintil tobacco, the best in Temanggung, Legoksari Village is targeted by brokers, as evidenced by the numerous subgraders from outside the village offering prices significantly higher than local subgraders. According to one informant, subgraders from outside the village can offer more than IDR.10,000 per kilogram higher. The branded Legoksari Village tobacco also attracts sub-graders from various regions. However, some irresponsible subgraders or brokers disrupt the tobacco trade chain.

These overall risks ultimately lead to unstable farmer incomes. Factors such as crop failure, limited market bargaining power, unhealthy capital conditions, and other exploitative actors negatively impact farmers' income. As a result, the welfare of farmers does not improve (stagnates). In Legoksari Village, where most people are tobacco farmers and the area produces some of the best tobacco in Temanggung, only a small percentage of farmers succeed. Success is defined as being able to build good homes, send their children to college, buy vehicles, and more. Meanwhile, more than 40% of farmers fall short of this success, earning just enough or not enough to meet their basic needs (Legoksari Village Profile, 2022).

Poor Population	Total population	The percentage of poor people compared to the total population
724	1.755	41.25%

Table 1. Percentage of Number of Poor Population in Legoksari Village 2022. Source: Legoksari Village Profile 2022; Social Agency Regency of Temanggung, 2022, Poverty Data for Legoksari Village, 2022, with processing.

However, despite the uncertainty regarding prices and unpredictable harvest outcomes, farmers continue to plant tobacco each year.** Farmers also believe that tobacco is not merely a commodity but is linked to supernatural entities and represents a source of hope for the future.

Farmers' hopes are further bolstered by the geographic conditions of Legoksari Village, which produce *srintil* tobacco—a type of tobacco with extremely high nicotine content and considered one of the best quality tobaccos in Indonesia. This tobacco commands a very high price, with a kilogram potentially reaching over IDR. 800,000, or ten times the price of medium-quality tobacco, even reaching IDR. 1,200,000.00 in 2015 (interview with informant, 8 July 2023). Even if the harvest is not very large, the amount of *srintil* quality tobacco will be able to cover production costs.



Figure 2. *Srintil* tobacco belongs to a farmer in Legoksari Village. *Source:* Author's documentation.

Apart from steadfastly planting tobacco and performing blessings, local farmers also routinely carry out various rituals starting before planting until after the tobacco harvest is finished. Local farmers even have their own traditional agricultural calendar, namely the traditional Javanese calendar variation called *Aboge*, where in this calendar system, the implementation of all activities in tobacco farming, including rituals, is counted. This calendar is prepared by the village head together with village traditional elders, and is used by all farmers.

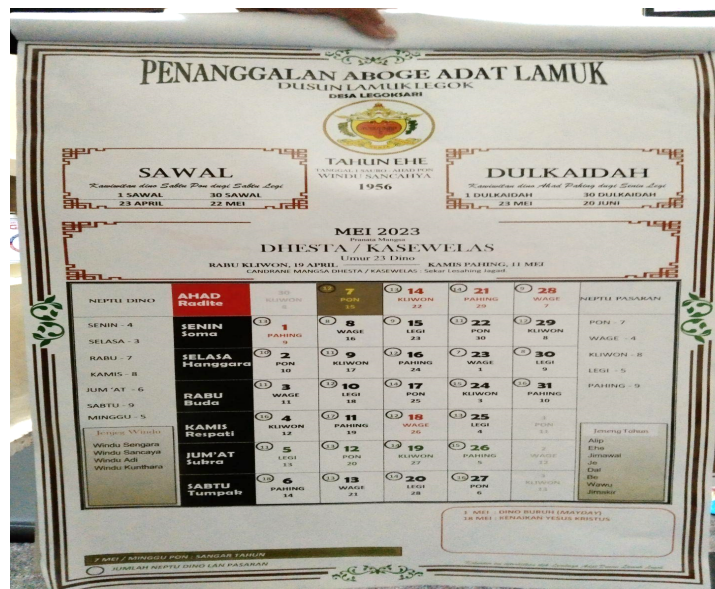


Figure 3. Legoksari Village traditional calendar. *Source:* Author's documentation

Apart from income statistics, there is a tendency for farmers to be reluctant to change their fate. Farmers tend to take an accepting attitude towards all circumstances and feel that the absence of change provides peace for farmers. There is a perception among informants that the tobacco farming job is the best choice, not changing to another job, even if they are farmers for other commodities. Based on Legoksari Village Data for 2022, the population's profession is still dominated by farmers, namely 876 people out of a total population of 1,755 or 49%. Meanwhile, other professions are only occupied by no more than 10 people in each type of profession, which can be seen in the following table.

No.	Profession	Total Population
1	Doesn't/hasn't worked	511
2	Student	92
3	Taking care of household	231
4	Farmer	876
5	Farm labourer (hodger)	2
6	Daily wage laborers	2
7	Merchant	10
8	Civil servant	2
9	Private sector employee	9
10	Doctor	1
11	Tailor	1
12	Teacher	6
13	Driver	2
14	Village Apparatus	8
15	Entrepreneur	2
Total		1.755

Table 2. Variations in Profession of Legoksari Village Residents 2022. Source: Legoksari Village Profile 2022.

The Meaning of Tobacco and the Profession of Tobacco Farmers: Subjective Welfare of Temanggung Tobacco Farmers

In in-depth interviews conducted with informants, it was seen that farmers have an emotional-spiritual closeness to tobacco. For farmers, tobacco is not just a commodity, but a part of nature that has a spirit. The belief that tobacco is a sacred plant also causes tobacco to be sacred, saved, which differentiates the treatment of farmers from other commodities. Apart from being tied to culture, tobacco cultivation is also tied to the social system and the universe. In another part of the in-depth interview, the tobacco cultivation process involves togetherness which encourages farmers to grow tobacco so that they feel connected to the community. Apart from that, nature has become an inseparable part of farmers' lives, so closeness to nature. All of these elements accumulate to form a positive perception of tobacco farmers towards tobacco cultivation activities and provide value to the profession they undertake.

"Tobacco farmers don't just cultivate, they also have culture. A sheet of tobacco leaf contains the spirit and memory of tobacco. The tobacco leaves record what the farmer or master thinks. Even though the farmer doesn't see this as just a commodity, there is a spiritual and emotional connection, in my opinion there is a very extraordinary relationship between the farmer and his tobacco. We started farming in 1991. I graduated from high school and then I didn't look for work outside. I would have preferred to be independent in the village as a farmer, even though at that time and perhaps even now the farmer's profession was not cool when it was covered in dirt and the costumes didn't match the village people. But I'm happy that farming teaches us to be independent. Farmers are the most peaceful profession in Javanese philosophy. Javanese people used to say that if they wanted a peaceful life, they should become farmers. If you want to be rich, become a trader. If you want to live an honorable life, become a religious expert. I chose the safe one. In my opinion, tobacco farmers are very cool, one way we cultivate is planting, starting from sowing the seeds, then moving them, uprooting them and planting them on the agricultural land, after that the maintenance process takes place. We can mingle with nature and the universe." (interview with informant, 10 July 2023).

"The people here have a special closeness to tobacco because it is sacred from the guardians, that's why there are many salvations. "We also have to find a certain day to pick it and that is a form of our gratitude." (interview with informant, 11 July 2023).

Discussion

Regarding the historical account of the origins of tobacco in Temanggung, the fact that the local oral tradition has offered can not be received. However, there is a notable intertwining of folklore and the historical role of the Chinese in the tobacco trade, a role that continues today. The Chinese control the tobacco trade through their position as *tengkulak*, referred to by farmers as *juragan*, who entrap farmers in debt. The term *juragan*

itself implies a power relationship between master and servant, reflecting the dependency of farmers on these middlemen, a relationship described as *ngawula* (serving) or *njuragan* (Dewanta, 2020). Today, Temanggung farmers often express reluctance to switch to other crops, stating that no other crop is as suitable for cultivation in their region as tobacco.

"To be honest, for me as a farmer, whether tobacco sells well or not this year, it's life and death with tobacco. It's the tradition and culture here. If people in Lamuk don't plant tobacco, they'll just be confused." (Interview with an informant, July 10, 2023).

The farmers' indebtedness to Chinese middlemen likely explains why they struggle to switch from tobacco to other crops, as they need to repay the capital they receive from the **tengkulak**. Initially, the farmers in Kedu were rice farmers, primarily subsistence farmers who grew crops for daily consumption, with tobacco as a supplementary commercial crop (Suroyo, 2000). This long-standing debt dependency may explain the emergence of tobacco myths among today's tobacco farmers, including the heroization of Ki Ageng Makukuhan and Juragan Dampu Awang, and the mystification of tobacco as a sacred plant associated with *wali*, revered and treated with special rituals.

The specialty of high quality of tobacco (*srintil*), which can only be produced in their village, is what drives farmers to rely heavily on tobacco. Farmers then become believers in *pulung* or hockey (luck), continue to grow tobacco and carry out blessing rituals in the form of visiting sacred graves such as Ki Ageng Makukuhan in the hope that their tobacco plants will produce *srintil*. Local farmers named the tobacco *srintil*, which is an abbreviation of "Sri ne ngintil", meaning "Goddess Sri follows", as a form of farmer belief that the emergence of good quality of tobacco was determined by a supernatural entity, namely Dewi Sri (Goddess of Agriculture). This is also the reason why various rituals are carried out in the process of planting and processing tobacco, to gain good luck so that the farmer's tobacco can become *srintil*. In other terms, Dewi Sri's involvement is also seen in the name "mingsri", which is the term used to refer to tobacco resin. The more sap there is in the leaves, the higher the nicotine content in the leaves and it is predicted that they can become *srintil*.

"Tobacco is already united. Already integrated with the people here. It cannot be changed. From the beginning of the procession, we Javanese have been taught to be friendly with nature. People here want to leave and say goodbye. Farmers are like that. The term is asking for permission. Indeed, there are things that can be believed and things that are not that make sense too. That is why tobacco is unique. It's just a person's hoki (luck) that determines his luck" (Interview with an informant, 9 July 2023).

The profession of tobacco farming, although it does not guarantee economic well-being over time, provides another form of well-being. This form of well-being can be

understood through the lens of subjective well-being. Subjective well-being is closely related to a good state of self, where happiness is an expression that arises as a result of satisfaction with something related to life, ecstasy over a moment of happiness, and satisfaction with an achievement (Davis 1981; Sumner 1996; Kahneman 1999). According to tobacco farmers in Temanggung, satisfaction is when they get good harvests and are able to hold traditional ceremonies as an expression of gratitude. Tobacco, which is known as the plant of the saints, has its own meaning for farmers, namely as a blessing. So there is special treatment given to tobacco as a form of respect and an effort to seek blessings. Various practices of receiving blessings carried out by farmers include various rituals in the tobacco production process (Among tani, Nyecel, Among Tebal, Miwiti, ngguk, Kepungan Jenang Candhil, and Nyampar Bun). Apart from traditional ceremonies, another ritual is nyadran or pilgrimage to the grave of Ki Ageng Makukuhan who is considered to be the bearer of the first tobacco seeds in Temanggung just before the tobacco planting period (Interview with informant, 10 July 2023). In the process of farming, practicing salvation rituals, and receiving blessings for a good tobacco harvest, there are three dimensions of subjective well-being contained, including:

The Harmony Dimension

Basically, religion and culture is one of factors which influence subjective-wellbeing (Diener, 1984). In general, religiosity of person tend can increase higher subjective-wellbeing, such as praying and worshipping also have been associated with the higher (Diener dan Ryan, 2009). Harmony, conformity, or proximity in life of tobacco farmers are felt by the farmers when they helped with each other in make it success in various traditional ceremonies.

“this is a symbol of gratitude to God for planting or harvesting. What is called the produce of the land, apart from asking permission from God. Hopefully the results are good and good. After that, we prove it again "O Allah, Ya Gusti, My harvest is good this year. As my gratitude I give this tumpeng, and so on." (Interview with informant, 10 July 2023)

The Social Relation Dimension

The wider perspective is happiness as creation functional social condition for an individual (Rothstein, 2010). Similarly, the tobacco farmers in Temanggung who feel happy when they can do gotong royong when tobacco harvest season is. Therefore, whatever condition will be set tries for planting tobacco. In-depth interview, several farmers feel discouraging if they do not plant tobacco and look all neighbors tobacco harvest. Furthermore, the farmers feel discouraging because they did not plant tobacco. The farmers also have social relation who shape white middleman. This relationship shape naturally because of involving directly white tobacco commerce. Some of the farmers also mention if belief which ware built with middleman gives good impact to result tobacco selling.

"Then, if you don't grow your own tobacco here you can feel isolated because everyone else grows it." (Interview with farmer, 11 July 2023)

"In the past, my grandfather always took good care of the quality of his tobacco. "Until now, my grandson sells to the same person and always gives me a good price because he can maintain the quality" (Interview with farmer, 10 July 2023)

The Environment Dimension

Temanggung tobacco farmers are aware that prosperity comes from the environment. Farmers also believe that every element from soil, water, air, and every part of the plant is a living entity like humans, but more than humans can support. For this reason, farmers, apart from holding a greeting ceremony as an expression of gratitude and respect (permission) for the environment to be planted, each stage of tobacco farming also pays close attention to the potential for environmental damage.

"We must coexist with nature by being grateful for what God has given us. "Humans are given the mindset to utilize nature." (Interview with farmer, 9 July 2023).

Conclusion

Tobacco in Temanggung is essentially the result of introduction to a completely foreign new world, namely Europe, through colonialism. This introduction then attracted another entity, namely the Chinese group, which then formed a debt trap against farmers which slowly formed the mystification of this group into farmer beliefs in the form of tobacco myths and then practiced it in the behaviour of receiving blessings. With this myth, farmers form an inverted perception of the reality of the tobacco economy, which includes a combination of (1) dependence on tobacco commodities, (2) emotional-spiritual connection to tobacco, and (3) hopes for the future. However, the presence of these tobacco myths also gives rise to a new source of subjective well-being with three dimensions including (1) harmony, (2) social relations and (3) environmental dimensions. The paradoxical case of perceived welfare among Temanggung tobacco farmers proves the influence of geography, history, and culture on economic behaviour. In believing in tobacco myths and the practice of giving blessings, farmers have an alternative source of subjective welfare outside of economic welfare factors which creates happiness for farmers and makes them more resistant to various challenges that arise in the tobacco economy.

In several aspects, this research still requires further and comprehensive study, especially regarding fluctuations in the tobacco market every year, income figures for tobacco farmers, expansion of subjects including cigarette factories and tobacco graders directly in order to examine the trading system as a whole. However, at least this research succeeded in getting an explanation of the behavioural patterns of tobacco farmers, who as marginal subjects in the tobacco economy apparently have their own sociocultural

space. Their position at the bottom in the vertical structure of the cigarette industry, while tobacco farmers' perceptions of welfare tend to rely on subjective sources, makes this group very vulnerable to having their rights taken away, especially in relation to the commodities they produce. Moreover, tobacco is a commodity whose trade is fully controlled by the free market without government intervention. This means that if the market, especially industry, as the only buyer of farmers' products does not favor farmers, or the presence of other actors harms farmers, they only have social capital to survive - which sometimes also endangers farmers, for example encouraging farmers to fall into a trap of new debt with middlemen. It is hoped that this study can become a policy reference in the future, especially for developing the welfare of tobacco farmers. Apart from that, findings regarding cultural aspects in tobacco farming should also be considered in formulating policies regarding tobacco. Because, on the one hand, the position of tobacco farmers is already vulnerable due to tobacco market conditions. The only alternative for farmers to remain prosperous is through subjective sources of welfare. If policies do not immediately side with farmers and instead pressure farmers further so that it is no longer possible to cultivate tobacco, then subjective welfare will no longer be an alternative.

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Author's declaration

This research team consists of 4 personnel. Abdila from the History study program who is also a leader. She has several tasks such as collecting historical data, processing and analyzing historical data, and triangulating historical data with ethnography. Member 1, Wahyu Lestariningsih from Cultural Anthropology is tasked with compiling field research guidelines, conducting field research, processing interview transcripts and field notes, and then conducting ethnographic data analysis. Member 2, Devina Savana Putri from Economics, is tasked with assisting in conducting field research in the scope of exploring economic data, processing BPS data, and assisting in writing. Ana Fitro Tunnessa from the Social Development and Welfare study program has tasks such as assisting in field research, processing ethnographic data, assisting in writing, and providing input on social welfare theory in the analysis. The team's supervisor, Dr. Hempri Suyatna, S.Sos., M.Si, who is also from the Social Development and Welfare study program, provided field research supplies, assisted the team in conducting analysis, provided input on social welfare theory in the analysis, monitored the implementation of the research, and conducted a review of the writing of this article.

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Availability of data and materials

All data are available from the authors.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interest.

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