



Behavioral Analysis and Patterns of Tea Picker Survival Strategies: A Review of Social Anthropology

Theresia Martina Marwanti^{1*}, Didiet Widiowati², Lucia Cyrilla³, Ani Rostiyati⁴, Ria Intani Tresnasih⁵,
Ria Andayani Somantri⁶

^{1), 2)} Politeknik Kesejahteraan Sosial Bandung, Indonesia

³⁾ IPB University, Indonesia

^{4), 5)} Pusat Riset Arkeologi Lingkungan, Maritim, dan Budaya Berkelanjutan BRIN, Indonesia

⁶⁾ Pusat Riset Masyarakat dan Budaya, BRIN, Indonesia

Email: martina.wanti@gmail.com

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Abstract

The life of a tea-picking worker reflects the life of the poor. This research aimed to analyze tea picking workers' survival strategies, including living environments, relationship-building strategies, alternate subsistence strategies, and strategies to minimize tea picker labor expenditure. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. The research was conducted on 3 informants through purposive sampling. Data collection techniques using in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation study. The data analysis technique used a qualitative descriptive analysis. The findings revealed that 1) Working in a tea garden is not an easy task, it is rather tiring, but because of economic conditions that make them work as tea picking workers persistently; 2) To contribute to associative stuff, the technique of developing relationships between them is followed; 3) They would do every job as an alternate survival strategy to gain additional money, however little (self-exploitation); and 4) The expenditure control approach is achieved further by forcing the satisfaction, both in quantity and quality, of food requirements. The diverse coping methods of tea pickers tend to be part of their adaptation to avoid hardship.

Keywords: Pattern. Survival, Tea Picker, Anthropology, Strategy.

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a problem that is of concern to many parties. Poverty can also refer to the condition of individuals, groups, or the collective situation of society (Rakatama & Pandit, 2020; Santika et al., 2019; Reichman, 2018). A nation or country can also be categorized as poor in developing and developed countries because not all countries are free from poverty. Therefore, all countries agree that poverty is a humanitarian

problem that hinders prosperity (Bulter et al., 2014; Achiraeniwati et al., 2022).

In general, the poverty rate in Indonesia has decreased both in terms of number and percentage; based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, the number of poor people in Indonesia from 2010 to September 2017 decreased from 31.02 million (13.33%) to 26.58 million (10.12%) poor people. In particular, the poverty rate in West Java Province tends to slow down from 8.77% in September 2016 to 8.71% in March 2017. The



urban and rural ratios for the period 2013- 2021 are presented in the following figure:

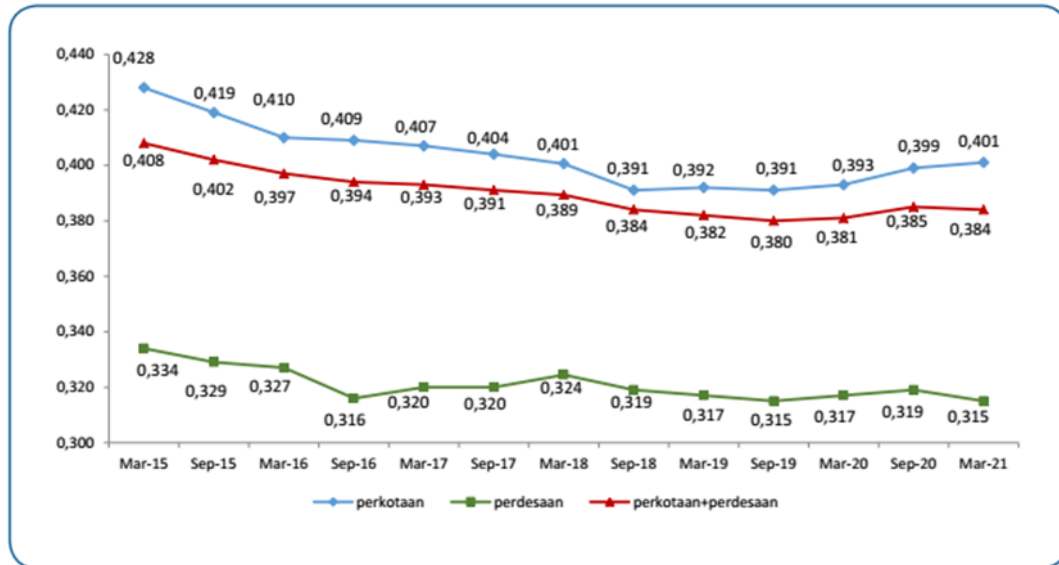


Figure 1. Indonesia Gini Ratio 2015-2021 period

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (2021)

In the figure, it can be seen that the Central Bureau of Statistics stated that the level of poverty and inequality in Indonesia increased by 0.003 points compared to the same period in the previous year, from 0.381 points to 0.384. However, this is better than the September 2020 period; March 2021 saw a decrease of 0.001 points. This change in conditions cannot be separated from the presence of Covid-19, whose intensity was still very high. The Gini ratio in urban areas has increased, while the Gini ratio in rural areas has decreased. This is also related to the World Bank's inequality analysis that the expenditure distribution for the bottom 40% group is recorded at 17.76%. This indicates that the population's expenditure in the March 2021 period is in the low inequality category.

The causes of poverty, when viewed from the background of work, according to research results from the Center for Research and Development of Social Welfare Services (B2P3KS) Yogyakarta in collaboration with the Bandung STKS Research Center (2015), showed that in urban areas, non-agricultural workers were 29.81%, while in rural areas are non-permanent agricultural workers by 28.93%. Tea pickers in Cicadas Village represent this job as non-permanent agricultural laborers. They are included in the

poor category because their income is minimal and insufficient to meet their daily needs.

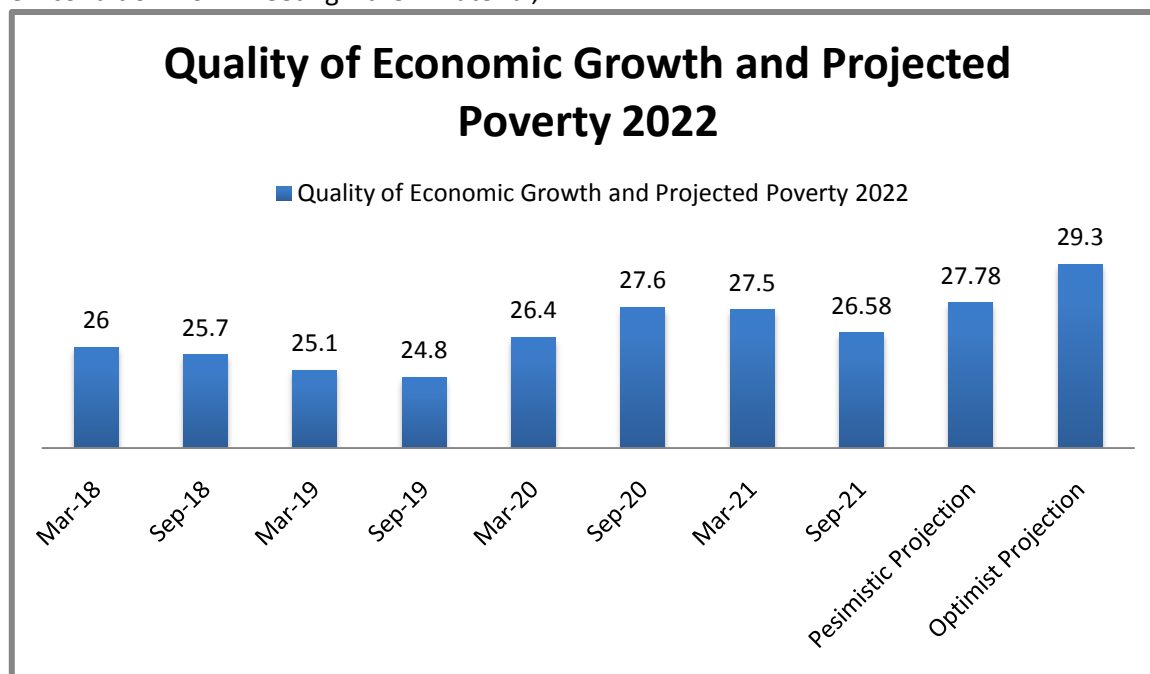
According to Hanandita & Tampubolon (2015), the definition of poverty is: "There are two different approaches to conceptualize poverty. An economic approach narrowly focuses on identifying the income needed to purchase a basket of goods and services that provides a minimum level of material subsistence. This is the approach taken in the United States. In contrast, a social approach considers material subsistence and the ability to participate as full members of society (Singh et al., 2018; Salem, 2019). This is a standard based on a moral imperative that all people should have sufficient resources to develop their capacities and to lead a good and productive life. This explanation is also supported by the results of research conducted by Sambodo & Novandra (2019) and Agustina et al. (2019), which states that poverty includes two concepts, namely the economic concept related to the inability to fulfill basic needs properly and the social concept which refers to the low capacity of a person in carrying out social functions and in utilizing resources.

In the concept of social welfare, poverty is defined as a social problem (handicap, alienation, vulnerability, neglect) carried by a



person or group of community members that causes them to experience limited levels of social welfare (Dartanto et al., 2020; Valin et al., 2021; Peters, 2019). Social welfare, referred to according to Law No. 11 of 2009, is the condition of meeting the material,

spiritual and social needs of citizens so that they can live properly and develop themselves to carry out their social functions. The graph of poverty for the last four years can be seen in the following graph:



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Figure 2. Quality of Economic Growth and Projected Poverty 2022

Source: Riset Institute for Demographic and Poverty Studies (IDEAS)

Based on this research with a pessimistic scenario, the poverty rate in Indonesia in 2022 has the potential to increase by 10.81 percent, which is equivalent to 27.78 million poor people. This is, of course, triggered by several major factors, including the weakening of the social protection budget, which has made more and more people categorized as poor who are not economically protected. Instead of getting better, the burden of the crisis and the pandemic that has not ended has exacerbated the burden of the crisis. Based on data from IDEAS researchers, in 2020, with the realization of the Social Protection budget of IDR 216.6 trillion, the 2021 State Budget allocation will decrease to IDR 184.5 trillion, and the 2022 Draft State Budget is only planned for IDR 153.7 trillion.

McCarthy & Obidzinki (2017) and Vicol et al. (2018) explained that this culture of poverty is a typical way of life developed by

the lowest stratum of the capitalistic society to respond to unequal conditions of economic deprivation. Further stated by Fathoni et al. (2021) that the characteristics of a culture of poverty are the lack of effective participation and integration of the poor into the main institutions of society. In discussing and describing the culture of poverty at the local community level, one can find dilapidated, overcrowded, clustered houses and, most importantly, a low level of organization outside the nuclear family and extended family (Yuliando et al., 2015). At the family level, the main characteristics of a culture of poverty are short childhoods and lack of parental care, early maturity, high rates of separation between parents and their children, strong tendencies towards authoritarianism, and so on. At the individual level, the main characteristics are strong feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, dependence, and low self-esteem



(Tampubolon & Hanandita, 2014; Supartono et al., 2015; Deng et al., 2020). Other characteristics of a poverty culture include high levels of misery due to the severity of life's suffering, weak personal structure, lack of self-control, feelings of worthlessness, and frequent use and experience of "violence" in their lives (Gunawan et al., 2020; Achmadi, 2019). Regarding the cultural aspect, Kis-Katos & Sparrow (2015) and Gurney et al. (2014) define the culture of poverty as an adaptation or adjustment. At the same time, it is also a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in society.

Cicadas Village is where part of the land is used for rice fields and plantations, especially the expanse of tea plantations along the left and right of the village road. Some of these tea plantations are managed by the State-owned Plantation Company, and private individuals manage some. Therefore, most people's livelihoods are farmers, owner farmers, and farm laborers. Initially, the land belonged to them, but now ironically, they became laborers on their land a long time ago.

One of the conditions of poverty experienced by tea pickers can be seen in their income. The work of being a tea picker involves a lot of female workers, who work from 06.00-12.00. In a month, they only work effectively for 2 weeks, with an average wage of around IDR. 500,000-IDR. 700,000/month, which is paid in bulk. According to them, the job of being a tea picker is not profitable and cannot provide for their daily needs. But they persist as tea pickers because it is difficult to get other jobs.

According to Zameer et al. (2020) and Overlove et al. (2019), survival strategies are a standard set of actions chosen by individuals and households who are socio-economically poor. In other words, individuals can try to be able to add alternative income to meet their needs. Megatsari et al. (2020) stated that the survival strategy is a strategy for farmers who have narrow land and are classified as poor. Farmers with survival strategies usually manage very limited natural resources or are forced to become sharecroppers or farm laborers with low rewards and usually only

enough to survive without being able to save to develop their capital (Agustina et al., 2019; McCarthy et al., 2012).

In a crisis, to maintain their subsistence, farmers must have a strategy to defend themselves; this strategy is called a survival mechanism. According to Kurniawan et al. (2013) and Euler et al. (2016), there are 3 survival mechanisms: 1) Using relationships or social networks, Asking for help from relationships or social networks such as relatives, friends in the village, or taking advantage of relationships with their protectors (patrons) / taking advantage of patronage relationships, where the patron-client bond is one of the forms of insurance among farmers; 2) Subsistence alternatives Using subsistence alternatives, namely self-help which includes activities such as selling small items, working as a handyman, as a freelancer, or migrating to find work. This method can involve all available resources in poor households, especially the wife as an additional breadwinner for her husband; and 3) Tie the belt tighter Reduce spending on food by eating only once a day and switching to lower quality foods, such as switching to barley or tubers.

Most of the tea pickers in Cicadas Village are poor. Poverty makes the tea picker workers unable to meet all the needs of their families, so the tea worker families must implement survival strategies to survive amid their limitations.

METHOD

The research was conducted in Cicadas Village, Ciater District, Subang Regency. This research uses a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach describes the survival strategy of tea pickers in Cicadas Village. In this case, the researcher lived with the tea pickers and mingled. The data collected in this study emphasizes data in the form of words, sentences, facial expressions, and photos. The researcher chose the data sources (informants) purposively based on the knowledge possessed by the informants with various characteristics. Data were obtained from 3 informants who had worked as tea



pickers for 2-5 years. The data analysis method used in this research is the descriptive qualitative analysis technique. The first step of data analysis is to collect existing data, compile it systematically, then present the research results to others according to the research focus, namely the Survival Strategy of Tea Picking Workers in Cicadas Village Sagalaherang District, Subang Regency. There are three data analysis components: unit processing, categorization, and data interpretation. This data analysis is carried out continuously from before entering the field until the end of the research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Research Sites

The living conditions of tea pickers represent the life of the poor. However, the conditions of poverty that he experienced did not make the tea pickers helpless. The social functioning of tea pickers can still be found. The strategy adopted by tea pickers shows that they are not designed for fate and are struggling to survive by doing various things (Gall et al., 2020; Reddy et al., 2018).

Being a tea picker is a job mostly done by women to help their husbands earn a living. According to them, relying solely on income from their husbands is not enough because their needs are many and always increasing (Fiantis et al., 2022; Contreras, 2019). Even though they only work as farm laborers for half a day and only work 2 weeks per month, this does not mean that it is an easy job for them; it is proven that working as a tea picker is not a job that the residents are interested in. Tea pickers have to work hard to keep them safe while working. Heat, wind, cold, snake bites, and rain cannot infrequently hit them anytime. Another experience they often have is accidents due to using knives to pick tea; even though they are experienced, they often get injured (Munasinghe et al., 2017; Tesfamichael et al., 2020).

There is no more time to hold hands between them at work because their only distance (area of work) is far from each other. Apart from that, they will work hard to get more tea shoots from other friends because it will impact the wages they will receive,

definitely higher than the others. There is a certain satisfaction for them, but the interesting thing is that they will compete and compete healthily. Even though they have to try to get the most tea shoots among the others, they are never allowed to take tea shoots outside the pre-determined agreement. In the current dry season, their income is only around IDR. 300,000-IDR. 400,000 / month. In contrast to the rainy season, their income can reach IDR. 700,000-IDR. 800,000/month. Depending on the number of tea shoots, in the rainy season, more tea shoots grow than in the dry season.

Cicadas Village is a village with a stretch of tea gardens which is quite a beautiful sight to see. Located from Cicadas Village, there is also a famous tourist spot, Ciater hot spring, about 10 minutes to reach. Another tourist spot that is no less good in Cicadas Village is Capolaga, a natural scenic spot famous for its waterfalls. The location of Cicadas village is precisely in the Sagalaherang District, Subang Regency. In detail, the boundaries of the Cicadas village, Northside: Sagalaherang Village, Sagalaherang District; To the South: Sukajaya Village, West Bandung District; East: Cisaat Village, Ciater District, and West: Sukamandi Village, Sagalaherang District.

Cicadas Village is categorized as a fertile village because it is located about 5 km below the foot of Mount Tangkuban Perahu. Therefore, apart from rice, food crops also thrive with fruit trees, including avocado, mango, durian, banana, orange, guava, and cloves. This, of course, can be another alternative to support the needs of its citizens. But unfortunately, the wealth of natural resources owned by Cicadas Village is not supported by its human resources. Most of the residents of Cicadas village have an elementary education of 56.89%. The low level of education greatly affects their competitiveness to get a job. Most of the population becomes agricultural laborers, 56.34%. Farming rice with a fairly good irrigation system, but there is also farming in higher places, in the mountains with a rain-fed irrigation system. Other food crops' agricultural products include corn, cassava,



beans, cabbage, long beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, peanuts, and chilies. Marketing their agricultural products through the intermediaries will be sold to the market in Lembang.

Residents of Cicadas Village, Sagalaherang, and Subang Regency are rural communities. Most of the population has a Sundanese background, with Sundanese being their daily language. The close kinship between its citizens is part of their life. They know each other, not infrequently around the area where they live; it turns out that they still have kinship relations; they are an extended family.

If there are ceremonial activities related to the circle of life: marriage, birth, death, circumcision, and those related to religious ceremonies (*muludan*) and village cleansing ceremonies, these are days that they cannot abandon. If necessary, the work will be left to participate in the celebration of the ceremony. In the case of a wedding, the party will be celebrated for 1-3 days, inviting all villagers by inviting a *gembyung* art group, which invites residents to dance and dance. Most Cicadas villagers are Muslim, so the nuances of activities related to religion are also very closely related to their lives.

Living Conditions of Tea Picking Workers

The description of the living conditions of the tea pickers was obtained from the results of in-depth interviews with informants. Characteristics of informants who became sources of information in this study were 3 people, namely ES, CU, and EL.

ES is a 53-year-old mother whose husband died 3 years ago. Has 2 children, a married girl and a boy who graduated from high school, working in a construction shop. ES looks very energetic, open, and easy to communicate with. The house looks clean and tidy, with walls, 1 guest room, 2 bedrooms, and 1 kitchen. Inside the house are a 14-inch color TV, new guest chairs, wardrobe, and dining table. The house looks new because the green and white paint on the walls still looks light. Even though he only finished

elementary school, his level of understanding of a problem was very good.

CU is a housewife, 44 years old, and has a husband who works as a cattle laborer with 2 children. The first child of a girl is married, and the second child of a girl is still in junior high school. When the researcher came to his house during the day, he was seen peeling pineapples in the kitchen. His house has walls whose paint color is already dull; beside the house is a cattle barn. Inside the house are 2 bedrooms, only a weathered guest chair and wardrobe, and no other household furniture. Like Mrs. ES, Mrs. CU looks energetic, fast, and responsive in answering questions, open, and talks a lot, even though her education is only up to elementary school.

EL is a 33-year-old housewife with a husband who works as a construction worker with 2 sons. The first child is in the 2nd grade of high school, and the second is in the 5th grade of elementary school. The house has just been built, is walled in, and still looks unwalled. In the house, there is not much furniture; there is a weathered guest chair, a dining cupboard, and a wardrobe with two bedrooms. EL looks calmer, more reserved, and doesn't answer much, except when asked. EL's education level has graduated from junior high school, so his opinions and views are far ahead.

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with the 3 informants, it was found that, generally, tea picking labor is a job that women mostly do to help their husbands earn a living. Her husband works as a farm laborer, construction worker, and cow milking worker, and there is an informant whose husband has died. According to them, relying solely on the income from their husbands is not enough because their needs are many and always increasing. As the CU informant said, the reason for working as a tea worker is because: "*Untuk makan, dan membantu suami mencari uang*". Like what CU said, informant EL said: "*Ekonomi teu cepak, kudu ngabantun suami, nu kerja na teu matuh*" (the economy is not enough, you have to help your husband whose job is not permanent). EL's husband works as a construction worker, not every month getting a fixed income.

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The life of a tea picker is not much different from the others. His activities every morning around 06.00 are getting ready to go to the tea garden, but always at the same time as the others. Coming home from work around 12.00 when the sound of the noon call to prayer was heard. They will promise to wait at a certain place when they leave for work. The reason is that waiting in the garden alone feels "*keeng*" (silent). They don't dare to be around the tea garden alone because of the large area of the tea garden where they work.

Before starting work picking tea, they would open their lunchboxes because they had not had breakfast at home. *Botram* (eating together) is a fun moment for them; eating only with salted fish, tarasi sauce, and vegetable is very delicious. The CU informant said: "*Recipe Ngariung Kieu, Gaduh Rancangan, Teu Gaduh Oge Pan Oge Sareng Rancangan Sareng*" (I like gathering like this, I have it with friends, I don't have it with friends). Usually, they will bring their lunch but eat together. According to EL: "*Aya nu teu mawa bekel, tapi ngadahar oge*" (some did not bring lunch, but also ate). While eating, they will usually talk about their family, children, or whatever they meet.

After *botram*, they began to prepare for work using all the equipment they had brought. The work equipment they always carry includes sacks, baskets, boots, gloves, knives, headgear, plastic aprons, trousers, sarongs, and long-sleeved work clothes. The work equipment is not provided by the tea owner but is self-financing (own capital).

They must feel comfortable and safe to keep them safe while working. Not infrequently, heat, wind, cold, and rain can hit them anytime. The experience EL has experienced says: During the rainy season, there's a lot of lightning; that's what I'm most afraid of). Another experience that has been experienced CU said, "*Di kebon aya we hiled, oray, dibabug we dipaehan*" (in the garden, there are caterpillars, and snakes, kill them). Another experience they often have is accidents due to using a knife to pick tea; even though they are experienced, they often get injured as CU said: "*Kamari sakit,*

motongan enteh, rahet ku peso" (yesterday was sick, picked tea, was injured by a knife).

There is no more time to hold hands between them at work because their only distance (area of work) is far from each other. They will work hard to get more tea shoots from other friends. There is a healthy competition between them; they must try to get the most tea shoots among the others. This will impact the wages he will receive, which is higher. Around 12.00 they will soon finish their work to go home. With the supervision of a foreman, they can work effectively. The foreman will always remind their work that is considered not good. Working in the tea garden is quite tiring, but they are forced to continue to work as tea pickers due to economic factors. Once upon a time, there was a desire to leave work, but as EL said: "*Kacancang, aya nu teu betah, haroream tapi balik deui*" (bound, some don't feel at home, lazy to work, but come back again).

The tea pickers who were the informants in this study preferred to work on H. Kosim's plantations because the plantation area was not too far away the tea plantation area was very affordable. Unlike the government-owned tea plantations, Perkebunan Nusantara Ltd 8, whose very large territory, makes tea pickers uncomfortable working. According to CU: "*Di pabrik mah tebih pisan, kutebihna teras-terasan, teu aya liburna*" (At company it's far away, so far away, work continues, no holidays). Likewise, EL said: "In the factory, my work is far from my house, I have to work every day, I can't stop, it rains, I still have to work, I have to leave at 06.00, if I don't, the truck carrying the workers will be left behind. The experience CU, who once worked in a Plantation Factory, but left, said: "*Di pabrik mah, cape pisan, kebonna jauh-jauh, timbangan oge teu asli, timbangan dirombag, teh 50 Kg jadina ngeun 45 Kg* (The garden is far away, the scales are also not original, the scales are changed, the tea from 50 kg has become 45 Kg). Another reason they don't like working at the company is that when it's time for worship, they can't worship at 12.00, and 15.00 is the right time to be able to worship.

The difference is working in H Kosim's tea garden, according to ES: "*Upami pucuk kirang, ah libur heela, kerjana mung 15-17 dinten tabuh 12.00 tos uih*" (if there are not enough shots, you can take a vacation first, work only 15-17 days. At 12.00 you are already home). Work can be "*Sabrahna*" (as much as possible), depending on the presence or absence of tea shoots. Judging from the working hours, it turns out that working at the Plantation Company is longer, from morning to evening. The working system must reach the target and get as many tea shoots as possible. Even though the tea shoots are not growing thickly, because of the dry season, they still have to work full time by the prevailing working hours.

Relationship Strategy

The relationship between them is sought to lead to associative things, relationships that lead to efforts to get closer to each other. Maintaining good relations, helping each other, communicating, and working together must be maintained between them. In relationships with coworkers, if someone starts a story by talking about other people's horror, they will remind each other. However, a sense of offense can also arise, as EL said: "*Maneh mah kitu hayaangeun, dahareun wae ti batur*" (you are like that, you always want food from other people).

Maintaining an attitude of not harming each other will always be firmly held. However, some coworkers quit their jobs because of their nature, often pit each other, and report it to their employer. Usually, the person will go out alone because he feels disliked by other friends. According to them, the criteria for a good friend are, don't like to talk about people, don't get angry easily, want to listen to other people's opinions, don't complicate a problem, feeling each other, and covering each other's shortcomings. As CU said: "A good friend, I'm not difficult, I don't get angry easily."

They will continue to strive for good relations, even though conflicts still occur. The conflict that had occurred between them was related to the distribution of THR, as stated by

CU: "*Kalau THR ti bu Haji mah rata, nu lama jeung nu baru, tara dibedakeun, tapi nu lama kerja diditu teu tarima*" (if you get the Holliday Allowance from Mrs. Haji, both the old workers and the new workers, were never distinguished, but the old workers did not accept it). As a result of the conflict, he finally came out on his own. The Hari Raya allowance they receive ranges from IDR. 200,000-IDR. 300,000. However, the amount of the Hari Raya Allowance may increase because the children of their employers, some of whom are already working outside the city and have a fortune, usually also like to give an envelope of Hari Raya Allowance containing IDR. 100,000.

Strategi Alternative Subsistence

There are many alternative ways of working for tea pickers because if they only rely on their income from picking tea, they will not be able to meet their needs. They often snore and clean the grass and moss around the tea tree. However, not all tea pickers there will also be employed as ngored laborers. Those who have worked there longer and the way they work is considered agile, that's what will be selected as ngored workers.

Unlike the tea pickers, who work wholesale, the ngored workers will be paid daily. Working daily means the wages paid to them are calculated in IDR. 25.000-IDR. 50,000/day. Being a ngored worker is an additional job for them. Another job they usually do when they are on vacation is to help their relatives who have rice fields. As stated by CU: "*Upami keur libur, ngiring kerja ka sawah sareng wargi, kerja dugi jam 12 siang, dibayar 20.000 rupiah, 25.000 rupiah. atawa 30.000 rupiah teu tangtos*" (When he is on vacation, he goes to work in the fields with his brother, works until 12 noon, gets paid IDR. 20,000, IDR. 25,000, but IDR 30,000 is uncertain). The wages they get while working in their spare time are usually uncertain, and they only get wages without an actual size.

During their tea picking holidays, they also work as people's tea "*kulir*" (coolies). What is meant by people's tea is tea plantations owned by individuals, the area of



the tea gardens is an average of 1-2 ha. According to EL: "If someone invites me, I join the people's tea coolies". Usually, the wages they get working at the people's tea are not much different from the wage system they have received.

They can also do their job to help their brother who sells in the market. As CU did: "*Nyaba ka pasar, ngabantosan mitoha, aya wae nu masihan emameun*" (going to the market, helping in-laws, some people give food). After helping his brother, usually after returning from the market, something is given to him, such as eggs, oil, sugar, and so on. He also often works to help neighbors who have rice fields or gardens. If you need to be a laundry worker, he also does it. Although the wages are uncertain, it's just sad, but they are happy to do it. Muller et al. (2020) and Njenga et al. (2021) call it "Agricultural Involution," meaning that even though the results from the additional work are very small, it is not a problem for tea pickers to carry out alternative subsistence strategies because they must be able to continue to support their families.

Expenditure Reducing Strategy

Working as a tea picker is not a lucrative job in terms of income. The expenses are greater than the income. They keep working because "I need talent" to survive. In the current dry season, their income is only around IDR. 300,000-IDR 400,000 /month. In contrast to the rainy season, their income can reach IDR. 700,000-IDR. 800,000/month, depending on the number of tea shoots. According to EL: "*Teh keur usum halodo, tara lebet*" (tea shoots during the dry season, rarely dense).

The income earned from picking tea is only enough to meet the needs for 10-15 days; according to them, this is very reasonable because, in a month, they only work half a month. As stated by CU: "the income for 15 days is not enough, so maybe I'm kanggo ngajabkeun wae, sometimes I am given by children, even though the work is not fixed, but if there is leftover, I like to be given money". CU's living needs will be met by his son, who happens to be working.

Another way to meet their needs is by borrowing or borrowing from a shop, reaching IDR. 300,000 – IDR. 400,000 per month. When they are paid, EL will only pay the debt: "*Ngareyek, sagedik-sakedik oge, tos gaduh mah dibayarkeun*" (a little bit, too, if you already have paid). The shop will usually allow them to borrow when they know they are working. Some stalls still provide loans, even though they can't pay them monthly. According to EL: "*Nganjuk ka mamah roroh mah, 2 bulan teu mayar utang teu nananon, kalahkah ditawarkan deui nganjuk deui*" (debt to Roroh's mother, if you don't pay for 2 months, it's okay, instead they are offered to borrow again). Mrs. Roroh is a very good shop owner, so many people come to her shop.

But some stalls enforce very strict rules; if there are residents who have not paid their debts for a month, they will not be given anymore. Usually, they will pay the debt even if only half of the total debt. There may also be residents who like to avoid collecting the debt because the person has a small income, but the expenses are very large.

In Cicadas village, there is also a mobile bank, but it is less attractive to the residents because they have to deposit/pay every day, even though the people who work in general only get paid and are paid every 2 weeks. As stated by EL, "*Abdi mah asa teu tenang, sekarang pinjam, besok sudah datang kudu mayar. Enakeun ka BRI pinjam uang mah*" (I'm not calm, now borrow, the next day you have to pay. If you want to borrow money, it's better to borrow money from BRI). Usually, the customers of mobile banks are stalls to increase their capital.

The items usually bought at the shop are nine basic commodities: rice, coconut oil, salted fish, sugar, salt, soap, and so on. To anticipate the amount of debt to the shop, they will suppress their daily food needs, only eat modestly, and to avoid increasing debt to the shop, they will stop it first.

When their income is low, they have to reduce their monthly expenses. What CU did, according to his narrative: "*Gaji sakitu, daripada direrewet, budak teu barangdahar, kajeun puasa Senin-Kemis*". (Salary is not much, rather than mess around, children



don't eat, it's better to fast Monday-Thursday). Fasting Monday-Thursday is a good way, and we should imitate it. Reducing food rations, usually 3 times a day, can also be reduced to 2 times a day. There is also an informant, EL, who said: "*Lamun pas gajian beli ayam 1 kg, kalau sudah habis kembali makan nasi dan asin lagi*". The daily food menu for residents in Cicadas village is rice, chili sauce, and salty dengkleng. On the other hand, if they have money, they will add to their menu chicken, eggs, and Sarimi.

The life of a tea picker is near the subsistence limit; his life is mediocre. People who live near the subsistence limit prioritize what is considered safe and reliable over long-term benefits (Langford, 2019; Wang et al., 2018). Furthermore, Rowland et al. (2022) explain that farming families who have to live in misery, live on the produce of labor or small lands, will work hard and take a long time to earn even a small addition (self-exploitation). Since labor is often the only factor of production a farmer has in relative abundance, he may be forced to undertake activities requiring a lot of labor with very little yield until his subsistence needs are met. Utilization of free time by helping people who have celebrations, looking for grass for livestock, cleaning workers, and so on, although the results are very small, only in that way can they take advantage of the excess labor (Sunam et al., 2021).

The social reality that his life is at the level of a subsistence crisis by Roumasset calls the principle of "safety first." Farmers prefer to minimize the occurrence of disasters than to maximize their average income (Xu et al., 2021; Azapagic et al., 2016). The principle of putting safety first, refusing to seek more profit, and being grateful for what is obtained even if it is mediocre, the important thing is being able to eat, is a picture of the life principle of a tea picker.

Regarding the cultural aspect, Rudito (2014) defines the culture of poverty as an adaptation or adjustment, and at the same time, it is the reaction of the poor to their marginal position in society. Becoming a tea picker is part of their adaptation to escape poverty. In addition, it appears that the

culture of poverty created by tea pickers is more positive. The characteristics of the poverty culture of tea pickers, as suggested by Reddy et al. (2018), show the opposite situation. They at the individual level are more empowered, more confident, and have the independence to always fight for their lives with their various survival strategies.

CONCLUSION

In terms of strategies for establishing relationships, tea pickers will strive towards things that are associative, relationships that lead to efforts to get closer to each other. Maintaining good relations, helping each other, communicating, and working together must be maintained between them. Keeping the attitude not to harm each other will always be firmly held. In the alternative subsistence strategy, there are many ways of working for tea pickers because if they only rely on income from picking tea, they will not be able to meet their needs. They often snore and clean the grass and moss around the tea tree. During their tea-picking holidays, they also work as local tea coolies. What is meant by people's tea is tea plantations owned by individuals. He will work to help his brother's job selling in the market, help neighbors who have rice fields or gardens, and also become a washing laborer.

Meanwhile, the strategy of Reducing Expenditures must also be carried out by tea pickers because the work as tea pickers is not a lucrative job in terms of income. The income is less than the expenses. They keep working because "I need talent" to survive. To suppress their daily food needs, they will only eat modestly, if necessary, with rice and salt; fasting Monday- Thursday is a good way and should be imitated. Reducing food rations, usually 3 times a day, can also be reduced to 2 times a day. Likewise, the variety of menus/types of food will be adjusted to the situation and financial condition they have.

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