The Ideology Behind the Power Relations of Punggawa-Sawi in Bajo Ethnic Fishermen in North Tiworo, West Muna Regency

Akhmad Marhadi

1 Dept. of Anthropology, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Halu Oleo University, Kendari, Indonesia

Correspondence: Akhmad Marhadi, Dept. of Anthropology, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Halu Oleo University, Kendari, Indonesia. Tel: 0813-9464-5858. E-mail: ajie_np@yahoo.com

Received: October 6, 2018 Accepted: March 10, 2019 Online Published: April 5, 2019
doi:10.5539/ach.v11n2p20 URL: https://doi.org/10.5539/ach.v11n2p20

Abstract

The power relations that arise in the life of Bajo ethnic fishermen are predominantly influenced by the ideology practiced by the superior group, punggawa to control sawi as an inferior group. The purpose of this study is to analyze the ideology behind the power relations of punggawa-sawi in Bajo ethnic fishermen in North Tiworo. The method used was a qualitative approach with data collection techniques namely observation, interview and document study. The results of the study showed that the ideology of power, the ideology of capitalism, and the ideology of religiosity are the ideologies that cause the existence of power relations of punggawa to sawi. The ideologies are used by punggawa to lead, control and manage the social, economic, political and cultural life of sawi fishermen to get the maximum profit while fulfilling all the interests and desires of punggawa.

Keywords: Ideology, Power, Capitalism, Religiosity, Punggawa, Sawi

1. Introduction

Bajo ethnic groups recognize the sea as they know themselves. Bajo people love the sea because it is considered as part of their lives so it cannot be separated from the sea. One of the most basic reasons for this is the belief that their ancestors came from the sea, lived in the sea, and as sea rulers (mbombonga di lao). Thus, the sea provides livelihood, goodness, health, disease and the sea also protects it from disaster (Trisnadi, 2002: 37).

The daily life of Bajo ethnic group in North Tiworo in relation to the social, economic and cultural systems is classified as still very traditional. Traditional systems that are formed largely depend on the rules or norms of social, cultural and economic relations that grow in every action. Traditional traditions and customs are maintained so as to make it easier for bourgeois groups to easily enter and control them. The effect of this is the creation of the social relations system for punggawa and sawi. The social relation between punggawa-sawi in Bajo ethnic fishing community in North Tiworo formed a patron-client bond which at the beginning was the purpose of the relationship between punggawa and sawi in fishing and sharing the fishing results balanced and fulfilled a sense of justice between the two.

Mattulada (1986: 34) sees the past patron-client relationship as an institution that functions to maintain the collective order and social and economic security for its members. In life on the boat, according to him, there is no clear difference in status and role between punggawa and sawi. However, the entry of modernization of fisheries since the second half of the 1970s indirectly created a differentiation of the role of work in cooperative organizations that strengthened capitalism. The difference in the profit sharing system in turn affects the reduction of income portion of each group member in relation of punggawa and sawi.

Along with the development of globalism and capitalism, punggawa began to recognize the trading system with traders from outside the Bajo ethnic group. The result is that punggawa begins to carry out capitalist practices and power by establishing relations outside the Bajo ethnic group. Punggawa as a capital owner with the ability tried to master sawi fishermen to always work hard with the aim of getting greater profits while always being able to meet the needs of the market which from time to time continues to increase. In addition, sawi fishermen are required to be loyal and obedient by following the rules set by punggawa even though they are aware of their detriment.

The entry of globalization and capitalization has changed the social relations between punggawa and sawi as superior and inferior bond. Trading systems of fish, sea cucumbers, crabs, squid, shellfish and seaweed are
managed entirely by punggawa by utilizing sawi as labor. For the sake of fulfilling the growing market needs, it takes a lot of sawi fishermen. This phenomenon proves that Bajo ethnic society in North Tiworo is able to carry out socio-economic mobility through business expansion towards modern production by practicing the capitalism ideology applied by punggawa against sawi. The capitalism system practiced by punggawa in utilizing sawi is not only limited to the socio-economic aspects, but to the fundamental aspects of sawi’s life like the religious system. The situation is described by (Kumbara, et al, 2016: 3) that the flow of globalization and modernization has led the ideology of capitalism and materialistic rationalism to transformation not only in the socio-cultural and economic aspects, but also the system of diversity of society.

A change or shift in the pattern of patron-client relations between punggawa and sawi in Bajo ethnic in North Tiworo, potentially cause some problems. For example, the distribution of capital and uneven income, poverty that continues to occur, and even has the potential to cause conflict between interest groups. If it is ignored, it will cause disharmony between Bajo ethnic groups of punggawa and sawi. In line with this, Scott (1993: 91-92) states that patron-client relationships originate from the giving of goods or services in various forms that are very useful or needed by one party, and the party that receives the goods or services is obliged to reciprocate the gift.

Changes that occur in punggawa-sawi relationship because the relationship between them hangs in relations that are not balanced or unfair in the distribution of income. The binding of this norm relationship is more determined by its function and role of punggawa as the main character for all sawi who is employed by binding them to loans for money, household goods, and protection or willingness to prepare assistance when needed. The characteristics and behavior of the relationship between social norms of punggawa and sawi determines the level of relations among Bajo ethnic groups in North Tiworo. In principle, Sawi prefer to work with their own relatives rather than having to be governed by others. But it is not realized that the “spirit of capitalism” of punggawa groups can harm the sawi group not only in social relations, but also economically. Based on that, it is important to study the ideology behind the power relations of punggawa-sawi in Bajo ethnic fishermen in North Tiworo, West Muna Regency.

2. Research Methods

This study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative approaches have important characteristics that lie in meaning, message, process, and the absence of distance between subject and object of research that is open and scientific (Ratna, 2009: 48). This research was conducted in Bero Village, Mandike Village, Santigi Village, Santiri Village, Tasipi Village, Tiga Village and Tondasi Village, North Tiworo District, West Muna Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province.

The Sources of data in this study are primary data sources and secondary data sources with the determination of informants using purposive and snowball techniques. Data collection uses observation, interview, and document study techniques. The collected data were analyzed in qualitative descriptive.

3. Results and Discussion

Ideology is a rationale or idea that underlies logical thinking which then makes the idea as a guide in life in accordance with the ideas and thoughts. The word ideology can be considered as a broad vision and a way of looking at things. In general, ideology as a collection of ideas, basic ideas, and beliefs that is systematic and provides direction and goals to be achieved in the national life of a nation and state (Budiman, 1996: 21). Ideology is an attempt to define the meaning and world view that supports the ruler and maps of meaning which, although it looks like universal truth, but actually are historically specific understandings, envelop and perpetuate the power of social groups (Barker, 2005: 515). Helmut (1980: 110) gives three explanations about ideology. First, ideology is an expression of human dogmatic thought (reflection on distorted reality). Second, the doctrine of world views (e.g the ideology of the proletariat, capitalism, etc.). Third, as a science, ideology aims to build a system of knowledge.

Ideology is the glue of social relations that brings community members together by applying values with collectively agreed upon norms. Domination of strengths and relationships are reflected in the power of words and discourses. The social meaning of ideology is also constructed in discourse so that solidarity and solidarity are maintained (Thompson, 2003: 18). Dijk in (Helmut, 1980: 109) states that ideology is a system and a basis for socio-political knowledge of a group. Ideology is able to organize group behavior which consists of overall opinions arranged schematically about relevant social issues. Based on this definition, a Marxist thinker who is often associated with the concept of ideology, Louis Althusser, argued that ideology is actually a mechanism by which elite groups impose interests and beliefs on the masses in a society (Lewis, 2008: 398). In this study, found three ideologies that exist behind the power relation between punggawa and sawi in Bajo ethnic fishermen in North Tiworo, namely the ideology of power, the ideology of capitalism and the ideology of religiosity. For more details described as follows.
3.1 Ideology of Power

The Ideology of Power is the ability of a person or group of people to infuse influence on others so that action is in accordance with their wishes and desires. In Bajo ethnic social system in North Tiworo, Punggawa is present as a capital owner who is able to regulate and control the social and economic life of sawi. In an effort to perpetuate its influence, punggawa lends some capital to sawi fishermen in the form of money and also prepares all equipment and necessities in the form of production equipment that cannot be provided by sawi with various conditions and regulations that must be obeyed when given or loaned to a sawi.

The production tools that punggawa gives to sawi in the process change into a form of legitimacy of punggawa against their sawi that is bonding and controlling the sawi. Sawi fishermen in North Tiworo in carrying out the sale activities of their catches from the sea, are always based on control according to the rules determined by punggawa as the owner of capital and means of production as a result of the consequences of borrowing capital and production equipment borrowed by sawi. On the other hand, the sawi will be more careful in selling with other punggawa in order to maintain the trust of their punggawa who lend them capital. Even almost all sawi fishermen justify any treatment from punggawa toward them. Sawi fishermen never have enough strength to fight punggawa.

Through mastering fishing tools technology, punggawa play an important role in strengthening their position as superior. This power makes punggawa have a clear and definite control system to assert their power in front of sawi. Bajo ethnic fishermen in Tiworo Utara really depend on the technology and accept all changes that are determined by punggawa. Absolute trust in punggawa as the owner of the power that rests on capital is able to influence the activity of sawi in fishing and this is used by punggawa to get the maximum profit. A punggawa plays an important role in the process of collecting marine resources and all parts of the production management of fishermen's catches.

The existence of Punggawa and sawi is basically an inseparable series, both in economic, social and political aspects. As a form of participation and realization of sawi’s compliance to punggawa, then each catch of the sea is never sold to the other punggawa, and sawi never moves and serves the other punggawa. Punggawa as the owner of power and capital can maintain their power to expedite their business by forming a power network with other punggawa and outside merchants so that it is increasingly binding on sawi’s life as a whole so they can not do anything against the influence of their punggawa’s authority. Therefore, sawi with all the abilities they have is directed to continuously fulfill all the needs and interests of punggawa. The lack of knowledge and ownership of sea-fishing technology tools owned by sawi causes them to get worse and easily controlled by punggawa.

Punggawa as the holder of the highest power control in the structure of the fishermen's work becomes more existent. Their direct relationship with outside merchants becomes a force of power that continues to hijack sawi for the sake of their interests and profits. In the siege of power from various relations built by punggawa, the position of sawi became dependent and helpless.

3.2 Ideology of Capitalism

The ideology of capitalism is a tool to facilitate the achievement of the interests of punggawa in controlling aspects of the production of Bajo ethnic fishermen in North Tiworo. This ideology of capitalism controls the economic life of sawi’s fishermen; this is done by punggawa by building a trading network with traders from outside such as from Java and Surabaya. In the impetus of this capitalist ideology, punggawa applies a system in accordance with their will and desire to gain profit. To achieve this, punggawa carried out mastery of important aspects in the life of sawi’s fisherman. One of them is by utilizing the poverty of sawi family by lending money to help overcome its economic difficulties.

Capital is a natural obstacle for sawi’s fishermen in terms of starting their business as a fisherman. The sawi who borrows money will be bound by the conditions set by punggawa to control the sale of the catches of sawi fishermen. Punggawa as the owner of the capital has the right to buy every catch of sawi based on price the punggawa sets. This shows that the power of the punggawa’s capital becomes a very effective tool in regulating and controlling sawi. The pattern of loan repayments is made in installments taken from each sale results from sawi to punggawa. If a sawi wants the debt to be paid off quickly, there will be a bigger price cut and certainly will be very detrimental to sawi.

In carrying out market capitalization, the big punggawa creates small punggawa under his control by giving capital and then distributing it on other islands in North Tiworo to recruit fishermen to be his sawi. The fishermen who lack capital to carry out their fishing activities, will accept the offer with the consequence that all the results of their catches cannot be sold to others. The marine catches collected by the small punggawa are then handed over to the big punggawa and then distributed to outside traders.
Punggawa is a supplier of business capital and financial assistance who is very instrumental in determining the activity of sawi fishermen. In this case, it is placing sawi as an inferior group and punggawa as a superior group that controls sawi’s life. In addition, the function of punggawa who becomes a distributor of fishermen’s catches makes his role and status stronger in intervening and exploiting the income sources of sawi.

In addition to capital issues, there are other central problems that are often faced by sawi that is borrowing capital to meet the needs of household when entering the tide season. This means that the sea season does not last all the time, so that the results obtained are also small, such as in the tide season and in moonlight season (tilla wulan). In the uncertainty and risk of the crisis, often makes sawi shackled by the amount of operational costs incurred every time sawi go to sea and even experience losses. To overcome these difficult times, there are no other choices that sawi have besides must borrow some money to punggawa whatever the risk.

The existence of punggawa is felt to be very beneficial for sawi in overcoming difficulties. Bajo ethnic society who seems consumptive, make them unable to regulate their financial condition. In their daily life, if they get a lot of catches, then their expenses will increase according to the money they have at that time. This then makes them do not have saving that is sufficient to solve various kinds of debt and their daily needs properly.

The ideology of capitalism applied by punggawa in fisheries business is firmly rooted in the socio-economic life of sawi fishermen. The capitalism system curbs sawi into a model of debts that never breaks which has an impact on the low purchase price set by punggawa. In addition, the creation of a market monopoly by punggawa makes sawi have no other choice in selling their catches to their punggawa. The power of capital in the capitalist ideology run by punggawa makes punggawa have the power that is able to move and influence the aspects of the social and economic life of sawi family.

Punggawa people understand the substance needs of sawi people, making it easier to create sawi dependence on them. In this condition, punggawa people usually play a role so that sawi will continue to depend on them by offering additional capital loans to sawi. For example, by offering to buy or borrow new equipment. In addition, punggawa will continue to try to make their sawi to remain bound by various means such as offering new capital loans to develop equipment or offering services to buy the needs of sawi household, so that sawi has a relationship tied to punggawa.

In such a situation, punggawa get benefits because the more the sawi debt, the longer the repayment process will and cause the sales price to remain in the control of punggawa and multiply the profit. In addition, another strategy adopted by punggawa is to create an emotional bond of kinship by giving gifts to sawi on every major day such as Idul Fitri and Idul Adha. This implies that even if sawi people have paid off their capital loan, they will not replace the punggawa because they assume that their relationship is not only limited to the capital lender but also has become a family who can provide assistance when needed.

Behind the various ways which punggawa usually do is actually only business oriented. The main purpose of punggawa is to get personal benefits through the fishing catches of sawi that is sold to punggawa in accordance with the initial agreement. Meanwhile, the problem of capital loans is not questioned by punggawa, because fixed capital can be paid through the deduction of sales of catches. Therefore, the ideology of capital applied by punggawa will not provide welfare to sawi. The power of the punggawa’s capital has turned into a power relations system that is able to control sawi’s life.

The ideology of capitalism directs the way of thinking and acting the owners of capital to always master and conquer sawi activities by mastering the production system to get the maximum profit. Sawi helplessness in dealing with punggawa hegemony is caused more by the lack of capital and knowledge. These conditions make sawi cannot open network access to larger outside traders. On the contrary, sawi can only rely on the supply of demand and the giving from their punggawa. This condition keeps the existence of the ideology of capitalism in socio-cultural life, of Bajo ethnic especially for sawi’s life.

In the interests of capitalism, punggawa expand their business activities by utilizing various weaknesses of sawi. The strategy applied to strengthen its existence is by applying capital loans. Capital is an instrument to create sawi dependence to punggawa. Capital is the main weapon for perpetuating punggawa’s capitalism ideology. Through this pattern, punggawa play a role in determining the market price for sawi. The ideology of capitalism finally goes in the same direction and only gives benefits to punggawa.

3.3 Ideology of Religiosity

The beliefs of Bajo ethnic towards the supernatural beings who control the sea, do not cause any concern for them to continue fishing. When going to sea activities, Bajo fishermen actually glorify sea dwellers who they usually call grandmothers in the sea such as bombonga ma dilao, mbo janggo, mbo tambirah, mbo dunggah as guards.
during the fishing. The mention of this name is always hidden and changed to grandmother because the sacredness should not be named. This is believed to be a belief that if the mention is wrong it can offend the dwellers of the sea so that it can bring bad things. Any activity carried out in the sea is always preceded by various rituals, both before going to sea and after going to sea.

Bajo ethnic has an order in carrying out their activities as fishermen. Before going to sea, they first perform a ritual called the ritual of repelling bad things to happen (nyalamak ma dilao) or avoiding calamity and asking for the salvation and sustenance of the Almighty God during the sea activity. When they don’t do fishing activity, they do a ritual called mole pilibu performed during the moonlight season (tilla bulan) as an expression of gratitude for the sustenance and salvation given by the Almighty God to them while at sea.

One of the benefits of the belief is the control of the attitudes and behaviors of Bajo ethnic community in their daily lives, especially when they go to sea. Arbitrary treatment of the sea is believed to bring various calamities to their lives as a result of the punishment from the sea guard. Obedience and adherence to the religious system is utilized by punggawa to control the attitude of sawi fishermen. The religious system in belief to the sea guard, contributes to strengthen the power and influence of punggawa. This is due to the belief that the sea guard can communicate with shaman (sandro). Through this sandro, punggawa entered and gave their influence by controlling the sandro, the obedience of sawi to sandro gives impact to punggawa.

The belief of sawi to the supernatural beings that exist in the sea makes all of their activities more religious by being filled with various understandings and taboos in life (pamali). This was then used by punggawa to do covert hegemony to fulfill all their demands and interests. Religious values embedded in a sawi make it easy to obey and behave as it is without resistance and rebellion. While punggawa do not attach importance to these values in their business matter but only pursues profit.

In the social life of Bajo ethnic people who believe in the sea spirits also believe in the ability and knowledge of sandro. Sandro’s duties and responsibilities are to lead traditional rituals and ceremonies. Every pray offered by sandro is believed will protect the fishermen from calamity and can bring sustenance as expected. However, if they do not believe the prays from sandro, it can result in reduced sustenance, and there will be damage to sea equipment or frequent calamities.

Punggawa who present with their business interests in life of Bajo ethnic community utilize the religious aspect as a space to control sawi through sandro. The punggawa then begin to form a power relations network with the sandro to smooth their intentions and interests. Sandro is empowered and utilized to control sawi so they keep obeying punggawa. This power relations network runs smoothly and indirectly makes sawi’s life getting worse with the level of prosperity of their family that does not experience development every time. The sawi people still routinely carry out capital loans and consider the existence of punggawa as the helper and savior in their difficulty. The attitude of religiosity that is used by punggawa for their business interests places sawi in a weak position because they are confronted with sandro as a punggawa trustee in leading every ritual they do.

In addition, the belief in taboos (pamali) in the life of Bajo ethnic has a special meaning and a role that is so important in carrying out their life activities as a fisherman. Pamali is run and adhered by Bajo ethnic fishermen and will not be violated, as for example when taking seawater using rice pots, it will cause fishermen can not get any catches at sea. That belief makes Bajo ethnic community have a compliant, obedient and prudent attitude to their fellow beings and nature. These obedience and compliance make Bajo fishermen in North Tiworo easier to be controlled under the belief and religion systems. Bajo ethnic fishermen are very obedient to the existence of pamali, because it is believed that if it is violated, it will experience bad luck and difficulties such as a catch that is not maximal, even for themselves and their possessions. Religious values grow in every fisherman. The belief system that turned into a view of life in sawi fishermen then became a tool for punggawa in managing the social life of sawi culture.

4. Conclusion

An ideology plays an important role in shaping the power relation of punggawa to sawi, that ideology includes power, capitalism and religiosity. The ideology of power is a tool that is used by punggawa to influence and control sawi life by way of hegemony to achieve the goals and interests of punggawa. Then, the ideology of capitalism applied by punggawa by establishing a trading system that places them as the owner of capital, by providing assistance to various kinds of loans to sawi with the aim to get the maximum profit without regard to the welfare aspects of the sawi family. While the ideology of religiosity is a belief system of Bajo ethnic community that is used by punggawa to influence and control the sawi attitude so that they are always obedient to punggawa by utilizing the existence of sawi as a respected person.
References

Copyrights
Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).