

# COFFEE AND IDENTITY: Consume Coffee, Build Identity, Maintain Variety on Palintang Community West Java

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# COFFEE AND IDENTITY: Consume Coffee, Build Identity, Maintain Variety on Palintang Community West Java

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## Abstract

This article discusses the Palintang coffee and its social, cultural and ecological impacts on the people of the Palintang Hamlet. Palintang hamlet is located in directly adjacent to the forest under the management of the State Forestry Corporation (*Perhutani*). Last fifteen years, the government began to intensify the cultivation of coffee plant in the Palintang hamlet. Palintang hamlet is located approximately 1,400 above sea level. As a result, coffee of Arabica plant (*Coffea arabica L*) grows well in the area. The focus of this article is to elucidate at the impact of coffee on the social identity of the Palintang community. The method used in this study was ethnographic approach which aims to reveal meaning from the point of view which of cultural stakeholder. Some field research techniques, namely observation, deep interviews, and participant observation were applied in this study. The results of this study showed that the coffee cultivation in Palintang hamlet has been an important impact not only an economic, but also social and ecological aspects of the Palintang community. The community always highlight the distinctive characteristics of the Palintang coffee, even some people claim that Palintang coffee has a characteristic that no other coffee has. This process then makes coffee as one of the markers for the community of Palintang, because through coffee of the community members are known to other community groups. The distinctive characteristic of Palintang coffee also adds to the repertoire of varieties of archipelago coffee, especially those related to the character of coffee.

**Key words:** Identity construction, diversity, coffee, local knowledge, Palintang community

**KOPI DAN IDENTITAS:  
Mengonsumsi Kopi, Membangun Identitas, Menjaga Ragam  
Pada Masyarakat Palintang, Jawa Barat**

**Abstrak**

Artikel ini membahas mengenai kopi Palintang beserta dampak sosial, budaya, serta ekologisnya bagi masyarakat Kampung Palintang, Desa Cipanjalu, Kecamatan Cilengkrang. Kampung Palintang berbatasan langsung dengan hutan yang sekarang di bawah pengelolaan Perum Perhutani. Lima belas tahun ke belakang, pemerintah mulai menggiatkan penanaman kopi di kampung Palintang. Kampung Palintang berada di ketinggian ± 1400 mdpl, membuat tanaman kopi jenis arabika tumbuh dengan baik di daerah tersebut. Fokus dari artikel ini adalah melihat pengaruh kopi terhadap identitas sosial warga Palintang dan bagaimana dampak bagi masyarakat. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode etnografi, penggunaan metode tersebut bertujuan untuk mengungkap makna dari sudut pemangku kebudayaan. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penanaman kopi di Kampung Palintang tidak hanya memberikan dampak secara ekonomi, tetapi juga memberi pengaruh pada aspek sosial dan ekologis bagi warga Palintang. Pada awalnya kopi hanya diproyeksikan sebagai komoditas yang meningkatkan perekonomian warga, meskipun demikian dalam perjalanannya terutama dalam pemasaran, warga secara sadar maupun tidak membentuk citra kopi Palintang. Warga selalu menonjolkan ciri khas kopi Palintang, bahkan beberapa warga mendaku bahwa kopi Palintang memiliki ciri khas yang tidak dimiliki kopi lain. Proses ini kemudian menjadikan kopi sebagai salah satu penanda bagi warga Palintang, karena melalui kopi warga masyarakat dikenal kelompok masyarakat lain. Ciri khas kopi Palintang yang ditonjolkan juga menambah khasanah ragam kopi nusantara terutama yang berkaitan dengan karakter kopi.

**Kata Kunci:** Konstruksi Identitas; Keanekaragaman; Kopi; Pengetahuan Lokal; Palintang.

## INTRODUCTION

Coffee, a commodity that has a great influence on human life since it was first discovered (cf. Cotton, 1996) . In fact, it was mentioned that in the course of human civilization only produced three important non-alcoholic drinks, namely tea leaf extract, cocoa bean extract, and coffee bean extract (Ukers, 2012). Coffee itself is the second most valuable commodity in the world after petroleum (Tucker, 2011). Growing coffee plants is increasing every year and tends to be increased, according to Tucker (2011), which is inseparable from the ever-increasing coffee consumption marked by consumer culture, increased appreciation for high-quality coffee, and people's willingness to visit cafes or coffee shops to relax , doing assignments, socializing, or just tasting coffee. In Indonesia itself, coffee consumption habits and the meaning of coffee shops are shifting. The meaning of the coffee shop is shifting where coffee shops are not only a place to enjoy coffee but also a means of meeting, a place to work, as well as a means to get social status, and entertainment facilities (Anrical, 2018).

The question that then arises is why coffee has survived and is so widely popular, not only where it has grown, but also in a distant place? The first answer is caffeine which is the content of coffee beans. Caffeine itself has a significant function as a stimulant for the body and has an instant effect in providing the energy, awareness and adrenaline needed by humans. According to Parker and Austin (2011) caffeine is the most commonly used drug in the world because it causes a direct reaction to the body, and most of it is taken in the form of coffee. The second reason coffee is an important part of human life is the socio-cultural and economic factors that surround it. Its great influence on the human body in carrying out daily activities makes coffee plants from planting to becoming a drink cannot be released with the local knowledge of the people who cultivate it. Different environments with different understandings make every society have their own knowledge in cultivating coffee plants to become a drink. Tucker (2011) argues that coffee is a material substance, but growing coffee, drinking coffee, is a culture in which symbolic and social meanings are contained. Similarly, Parker and Austin (2011) also argued where they stressed that there is a great culture in every practice related to coffee because when talking about coffee it cannot be separated from other integrated practices such as association of conversation and brotherhood, political chatter, and others so.

Discussing culture, culture itself can be defined as everything that humans think, have, and do as members of society (Ferraro, 2010). Through culture, consuming coffee can confirm the identity of a group of people, affirm values, and affirm social ties (Tucker, 2011). Tucker further explained that the culture surrounding coffee (coffee culture) can unite actions, beliefs, and special knowledge to distinguish members (groups) from non-members. Coffee is a marker for the community holds it because in the cultural era, as we can now and very likely to see a world characterized by certain signs, a sign that can form the identity of groups or sub-groups that make them different from others (Kahn, 2016) .

This paper is to elucidate the impact of coffee on the social identity of the Palintang community which is based on case study in Palintang Hamlet of Cijanjal Village, Bandung West Java.

## METHODE

Method used in this study was qualitative. This study focuses on the practice of a community member behavior which ethnographically would be displayed in the discourse of coffee construction into a social identity for the people of Palintang. Ethnography was used in this

research which is based on the core of ethnography is an effort to pay attention to the meaning of the actions of events that are observed in the community groups (Spradley, 2007). The Palintang is presented as a locus where the process of identity construction is carried out by community of Palintang. Of course in its formation the Palintang identity does not become a monolithic locus, there is interaction with the locus outside the Palintang area.

In this study the reading of the concept of culture is understood as being flexible, negotiable, fought for, relative, and subject to change (King and Wilder, 2012: 318). Culture that was formed was then seen as a differential culture that grew out of the continuous interaction between people, groups and the environment that constantly changes (Abdullah, 2034 5). Furthermore, identity is understood as a cultural concept described earlier. Identity itself is formed by social processes, once acquired its form, identity is then maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations (Berger and Luckmann, 2013: 235). In other words, identity is not a fact that has been achieved, but is a "production" that is never finished, always in the process and always in representation (Hall in Rutherford, 1990: 222).

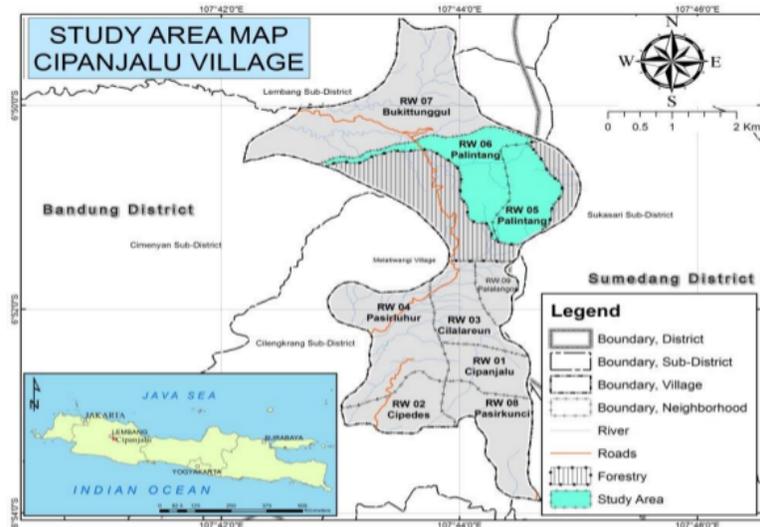
Through a description of the concept of culture and identity in the previous paragraph, some techniques, including observation, participation and participant observation, and deep interview were applied in this study. Regarding observation, researchers observed the environmental conditions of Palintang ecosystems, including the settlement, coffee garden, and forest. In addition, the researchers observed various activities of informants, including management of coffee farming consists of seed selection, land preparation, maintaining coffee tree, harvesting, coffee processing after harvesting, and marketing of coffee beans. The participant observations were undertaken by both observations and involving of the researchers with some activities of the management of the coffee farming system of Palintang (cf. Bernard, 1994).

Data collection was also carried out by depth interviews with informants. The deep interview was chosen because to collect historical data on Palintang coffee over times from last time to the present time, which in the past few years have been echoed as a marker of both the socio-economic and cultural aspects of community and biophysical aspects of Palintang community. The deep interviews were aimed for informants who consider they knew in depth the data needed in this study. In this study, deep interviews were undertaken to several informal leaders (*sesepuh*), heads of coffee farmer groups (*ketua kelompok petani kopi*), male and female coffee farmers, coffee traders in Palintang, and village officials (*perangkat desa*). This interview aimed to complete and check research data obtained during the deep interviews. The interview model was often used by researchers when they were in a coffee shop, when they met with Palintang people who also enjoy coffee. This interview was also often used by researchers when observing coffee gardens, and when observing residence of the Palintang Village.

Analysis data involved cross-checking, summarizing and synthesizing from different sources, including observation, participant observation, and deep interview to build up a narrative account (cf. Newing et al. 2011; Iskandar 18). Moreover, it made the narrative with focused on descriptive and analytical. Thus, the data analysis consists of four stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification. The process was carried out repeatedly to get a certain pattern in the community studied. In conducting data analysis the flow was not always sequential because these steps are something intertwined at the time before, during, and after collecting data in a parallel form, to build general insights called analysis. Whereas in the data verification process, researchers used triangulation. Where the researcher compared the observational data with the data obtained at the interview. The researcher also compared interview data from one informant to the other informants.

## Study site

This research was conducted in Palintang hamlet, Cipanjalu village, Cilengkrang sub-district, Bandung district, West Java (Figure 1).



Source: Iskandar et al (2017).

**Figure 1.** Study area of Palintang hamlet, Cipanjalu village, Cilengkrang sub-district, Bandung district, West Java

Geographically Palintang is located approximately latitude  $107^{\circ}43'30''$ - $107^{\circ}44'00''$  North and longitude  $6^{\circ}45'15''$ - $6^{\circ}51'30''$  East. Palintang hamlet is situated about 8 km to the north of Ujung Berung, and is positioned approximately between 800 and 1,400 m above sea level. This hamlet is surrounded by pine forest (*Pinus merkusii*) and quinine (*Cinchona calisaya*) plantation. Administratively, Palintang hamlet to the north and to east is bordered to the forest of State Forestry Corporation (*Perhutani*), to the south is bordered by Ciporeat village, and to west is bordered by Bukit Unggul hamlet (Gunung Kasur).

In 2018 the estimated population of Palintang was 632 households. The majority of people of Palintang hamlet have main livelihood as farmer and labor farmer. Main agroecosystem types of Palintang are recorded the homegarden, garden, vegetable garden and farming coffee (*Coffea arabica* L) trees that is mixed with pine trees of the *Perhutani* forest by applying of *tumpang sari* system (Iskandar et al 2017). Banana trees have been commonly planted in the homegarden, garden, and more recently both banana and coffee trees have been introduced in the *Perhutani* forest to minimize the vegetable garden in the forest, to avoid soil erosion, to improve soil fertility, and to provide good income for the local people of Palintang hamlet. Banana trees (*Musa paradisiaca*) have been predominantly interplanted with other annual as well as perennial trees, including coffee, alvocado (*Persea americana*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), pine, and suren (*Toona sureni*).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Palintang people and faming coffee*

30 Cultivation of coffee in Java, especially for world marketing purposes, had been started since the early 18th century by Dutch Colonial (Breman, 2014). One of the coffee planting areas formed by the Dutch colonial government was Priangan (West Java at the present time) (Geertz 1963; Lasmianti, 2015; Putra and Ferry, 2015; Farokhah, 2017; Zakaria, 2017). This ecological history was explained at least by one informant of the elders (*sesepuh*) in the Palintang. Palintang residents believe that coffee in their area has existed since the Dutch colonial times. Nevertheless, planting coffee was not the main livelihood of residents in the Palintang since that time. One of informants explained that coffee in Palintang had already been exist there but the majority of residents were mostly brought by the Dutch colonial government to plant quinine and only a few people were ordered to grow coffee. After the Dutch colonial times, however, residents themselves have mostly chosen as vegetable farmers.

Ecologically, Palintang is situated in mountainous area, located in the high land approximately 1,400 m above and average annual rainfall is 2,120 m (<https://en.climate-data.org/asia/Indonesia/central.Java/bandung-607890/>). Since the Palintang is located in the high land, this area suitable for farming Arabica coffee (*Coffea arabica* L). As many documented that Arabica coffee well in region between 1,000 and 2,000 above sea level and high rainfall (Kurniawan, nd; Hulupi and Martini, 2013; Nugroho et al. 2016; Iskandar et al. 2018).

The reason the ecological appropriate of Palintang for planting coffee was to raise idea of *Perhutani* to introduce coffee in this area. Before the 2000s the majority of Palintang residents had not planted coffee. This was because the price of the coffee market at that time according to informants was less promising, so that residents were not interested in planting it. Even so, some residents have started growing coffee since the late 1990s, some residents realized that Palintang was suitable for coffee cultivation. In addition, residents who planted coffee since then know the story of the past coffee planting carried out by the predecessors of Palintang residents. These residents became actors who are now as respected old men (*disepuhkan*) and considered as senior and expert in the cultivation of coffee in the Palintang.

Some reasons for the actors are interested in farming coffee, such as they have past knowledge of coffee planting in Palintang and also the awareness that forest land of *Perhutani* in Palintang is increasingly being eroded into forested land that can be restored by intercropping with coffee plant. Empirically, it has been found in Palintang, forest land around the Palintang village at that time was used by residents as vegetable farming. Although forest wood trees, such as pine, has been still planted (because there are indeed regulation for planting pine trees), the land that has been used to plant vegetables is increasingly showing its ecological negative effects. Several of the informants told us that growing vegetables in Palintang made land more "damaged", some locations occurring soil erosion and landslides even though the impact was not too large. In addition, massive vegetable planting makes the soil's capacity to absorb water less. Soil is not able to penetrate water into the deep soil because of the decreasing number of trees in the forest. Among these environmental reasons were one of the reasons that several actors in Palintang began to intensify coffee cultivation under the direction of *Perhutani*.

Coffee cultivation in the *Perhutani* pine forest in Palintang began to be actively socialized in 2004. The government represented by *Perhutani* provided a socialization program for the Community Based Forest Management (CBFM or *PHBM=Pengelolaan Hutan Berbasis Masyarakat*) in which the program invited the community to jointly manage the forest. The follow-up of this program is the planting of perennial plants in the *Perhutani* forest area. *Perhutani* provides knowledge about the planting program of perennial plants, such as coffee (*Coffee*

*arabica*), avocado (*Persea americana*) and jackfruit (*Artocarpus hetrophyllus*) to replace vegetable planting that has been carried out by the Palintang community. One of the residents who became a coffee planting actor in Palintang explained that at that time not only was given knowledge about planting coffee, but also socialized the distribution of yield from coffee and the selling price of coffee. Increasingly promising coffee prices have made residents slowly start farming coffee (Iskandar et al 2018).

In Palintang itself coffee is predominantly harvested once a year from April to July. After the harvest period the coffee plants will flower again, bear fruit, and be harvested again the following year. Palintang residents plant coffee in stages, starting from 500 trees and each harvest has the advantage or capital of farmers by adding coffee trees planted. At present time the Palintang residents have an average of 1,000 – 2,000 coffee trees on mixed-garden system. The planting of coffee by the residents themselves also depends on the area of land they cultivate. In one harvest, 1,000 coffee trees during the productive period will produce approximately 4 tons of coffee beans. Meanwhile, for the price of coffee beans in the form of cherries, in 2009 around Rp. 9,000.00. This price will be different when it has undergone processing which includes stripping, washing, and drying. Informants, coffee farmers in Palintang argued, one of the obstacles in planting coffee is the capital that must be spent to start growing coffee. Some coffee farmers say that more capital is needed to grow coffee compared to growing vegetables. However, if the coffee has grown well, the cost is less than the vegetable. This is one reason residents gradually plant coffee in the *Perhutani* forest. In addition, easy maintenance and long life of coffee plants with long productive periods are also the reason for residents to plant coffee in the Palintang.

#### ***Palintang coffee: Livelihoods and Life***

Coffee cultivation in Palintang had been started since the Dutch colonial period as one of the plants that must be planted. It was like being stopped, but the coffee was planted again by residents starting in the 2000s. Coffee cultivation has been increasing because of support from the government through *Perhutani's* Community Based Forest Management Program (PHBM= *Pengelolaan Hutan Berbasis Masyarakat*) (Iskandar et al. 2018). *Perhutani* has an important role in planting coffee in Palintang, prohibiting vegetable planting in the forest, to socializing, as well as teaching coffee making *Perhutani's* role cannot be ignored. Gradually the forests around the Palintang village are overgrown with coffee plants which are increasingly growing in size.

Coffee farming in Palintang itself has caused changes to the residents of Palintang. Gradually now the changes began to appear in the daily lives of the Palintang people. Previously, most of the Palintang residents worked as vegetable farmers, now their livelihoods are added as coffee farmers. Vegetables have not been completely abandoned by the community, although there are calls for a ban on growing vegetables in the forest (Figure 2a and Figure 2 b). Of course to leave vegetable farming completely requires a long time, residents reasoned that planting vegetables has been done since its predecessor so that the activity is difficult to abandon the residents of Palintang now.





called as "honey" processing (coffee beans are dried in the sun after being peeled without washing). But for these two processing are rarely demanded in large quantities.

Because the management of coffee has been improving, the coffee commodity more develop to be a main commodity in Palintang hamlet. The sale of coffee beans from Palintang has increasingly increased not only in the local market (in West Java) but also in the national market. Increased coffee appreciation among coffee connoisseurs or coffee lover (*pencinta kopi*) and the community at large makes each coffee-producing region trying to show the distinctive characteristic of coffee beans from the region. The government of West Java Province itself encourages coffee production as an effort to introduce West Java specialty coffee to the wider community, besides that step is also an effort to improve West Java's economy (quoted from *repubika.com*, 2016). Similarly, in Palintang, coffee collectors and farmer group leaders are well aware that Palintang coffee must be promoted to other regions widely to have more bargaining value. Several leaders of farmer association began to learn how to process coffee to become beans that had been 'roasted' and coffee granulated. One of farmer associations has been assisted by a group of campus community tries to process coffee to granulated and sell it in packaged form. The chairman of the farmer association said that selling ready-made coffee (coffee granulated) and brewed coffee was their attempt to introduce the distinctiveness of Palintang coffee to the wider community (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Coffee product processed and sachet coffee are being traded by a women in small shop (*warung*) of Palintang hamlet

The development of the processing of coffee products by the people makes coffee in Palintang, which is run by the community of coffee lovers. Coffee is treated by the public like daily drinks. In contrast to the Sundanese community, generally in other areas that are used to consuming fresh tea, most Palintang residents, especially men, have a habit of drinking coffee (*ngaleueut kopi* or *minum kopi*) in the morning and/or in the afternoon (cf. Igarashi, 1985). Similarly when presenting guests from outside the area, the persons who received guests presented coffee drinks and always mentioned that "this is typical Palintang coffee". In addition, Palintang coffee farmers often tell the history of the Palintang coffee, the character of the coffee plant, and distinctive taste character of the Palintang coffee.

Occasionally some coffee farmers from Palintang also participated in coffee exhibitions organized by the government of West Java and the Palintang coffee competition that is the character of the taste of the Palintang coffee beans. From the exhibitions and competitions that were followed, Palintang coffee farmers knew that the character of the Palintang coffee flavor tended to be "fruity" which was fresh bitter acid and had a fruit aroma such as jackfruit and banana. This special taste of coffee according to coffee farmers in Palintang is influenced by coffee plantations which are also planted with other plants such as jackfruit, banana and avocado in the agroforestry of *Perhutani* forest.

The activity took part in the exhibition and the competition was held to introduce and get recognition from the groups themselves and groups from outside the Palintang hamlet. The actions taken by the resident of Palintang as described by Barth (1988), that identity basically has a relational nature, in which identity is created, maintained, and transformed through interaction and the relationship between them is defined as "we" (their own group) with people others are defined as "they" (other groups). The introduction of the characteristics of coffee plants and the taste of coffee according to one resident is to introduce to the general public that coffee Palintang has a different character than coffee from other regions.

Accordingly, along with changes in times, coffee have been inspiring and a media for the Palintang community in protecting the *Perhutani* forest by managing the coffee agroforestry. Indeed since coffee have been providing good income for the community of Palintang. Coffee has been symbol of prosperity that means economic prosperity. The process of identifying coffee symbols has been undertaken by gradual process of means, including coffee drinking habits, success stories, experiences, labeling, coffee as an important commodity as an economic plant has economic value and identity (cf. Yenrizal et al. 2018). The story built from coffee such as the history of coffee cultivation in Palintang has been an important role in maintaining a local variety of coffee when compared to other coffee varieties in West Java in general. It has mentioned by many scholars, such as Brush (1992) and Prober et al. (2011) that socio-economic and cultural aspects has generated collection actions to conserve varieties of crops across culture in the world.

## CONCLUSION

Based on ecological history, in contrast to the general Sundanese community, which has a basic livelihood of cultivating rice in the fields, the Palintang community is not involved in rice cultivation in the we-rice field (*sawah*), because there is no "*sawah*" area in the area. Since considering the Palintang community has intensive interactions over time with the environment, in the form of the *Perhutani* forest area, in the form of highland mountainous areas, with cold temperatures, and fertile soil, Palintang community have involved in vegetable cultivation. In other words, they have shaved each other (cf. Milton, 1996:40). They plant vegetables in "*tumpang sari*" on the *Perhutani* forest. *Tumpang sari* may be defined as reforestation under which farmers are permitted to agricultural crops between the rows of the forest plant species; their payment for restoring the plot is the usufruct right to that land intercropped species. Palintang residents have deep local knowledge in cultivating annual crops, including vegetables, because in the past they have been involved in "*tumpang sari*" programs on land since the Dutch colonial government, the Forestry Service (*Dinas Kehutanan*) or *Perhutani* post-independence (Iskandar et al, 2018).

Therefore, the behavior of the residents of Palintang in cultivating vegetable plants, is the result of consideration of the interaction of the population with their environment, as well as information from their environment, resulting in perceptions and actions, in choosing vegetable plants and

cultivating in the environment in the form of *Perhutani* forests (cf. Visser, 1989; Cotton, 1996; Iskandar, 2018).

Because Palintang residents have more involved in the cultivation of vegetable crops than rice, unlike the Sundanese people in general in the lowlands, the vegetables are an important role for Palintang community (cf. Iskandar 1998; Mustapa 1996). The Palintang community from the beginning until now is still involved in vegetable cultivation in the *Perhutani* forest land. The community of Palintang do vegetable gardens, not only because of the suitability of the physical environment, because they are in the highlands, have cold temperatures and fertile soil, but are also supported by other factors, such as near traditional markets, such as traditional Ujung Berung market, to sell production of vegetable. In addition, considering that Palintang is located not far from the city of Bandung, many middlemen (*pengepul*) from the city come to Palintang to buy vegetable production from farmers.

Therefore, with the development of vegetable farming in Palintang, as well as providing high economic benefits to the community, vegetable cultivation has become a symbol of prosperity while supporting the life of the people of Palintang

Cultivation of vegetable in the forest area of *Perhutani* even though it has high economic benefits, but has some negative impacts on the environment, such as the emergence of agricultural erosion, and pollution of pesticide poisons, Consequently, in the early 2000s, the government through *Perhutani* promoted coffee cultivation, with agroforestry system in *Perhutani* forest. The aim is to improve the forest environment and provide economic benefits for the people of Palintang. Given that the Palintang region is suitable for planting Arabica coffee (*Cofea arabica*), and can provide economic benefits to the Palintang community.

Therefore, the effort to develop coffee cultivation undertaken by Palintang residents, especially coffee farmers, made the socio-economic conditions of the Palintang community change. Coffee which was initially underestimated is now one of the sources of livelihood for the community of Palintang. The increasing coffee cultivation and coffee farmers in Palintang make coffee increasingly imbued as the self-reliance of the people of Palintang. With the coffee being consumed, coffee is a marker for Palintang residents. In addition, as a commodity used for "fence" in forest conservation and types of coffee.

In other words, coffee can be a commodity producing money and a family source of income, and can be a distinctive identity in the Palintang community, through social processes in society, such as drinking habits, stories of success, experience, labeling, and yields. Indeed, by adoption of the Palintang community in the forestry forest in *Perhutani*, the important impact not only economic, but the social and ecological aspects of the Palintang community.

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