

COAST, LOWLAND, AND HIGHLAND: A GEOGRAPHICAL UNITY IN SUPPORTING THE ECONOMY OF CIREBON FROM XIX-XX CENTURY

Eva Nur Arovah¹, Nina Herlina Lubis², Reiza Dienaputra², Widyo Nugrahanto²

¹Department of History Education, STKIP Pangeran Dharma Kusuma

²Department of History and Philology, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Padjadjaran University

ABSTRACT

Since 14th and 15th century, the kingdoms located among the islands of archipelago, including Cirebon, have involved in trading activities among the islands of archipelago or even international. Started from the fall of Majapahit and Demak kingdoms, the northern coastal areas of Java mostly are dominated by the rulers and Moslem traders. In 17th century, by the equal disintegration of traditional politics and taking over of the power of Cirebon Palace by VOC and the system and direction of policy which are made by the Dutch government, the sector-based trade in the coastal area of Cirebon becomes increasingly advanced and widespread. Started from the coastal area, in its development, the developing center trade becomes in hand with the developing of agricultural sectors in the lowlands and plantation in the highlands. By the historical method and structural approach from Fernand Braudel, this research is trying to explain Cirebon's Geography as a synthesis that plays a role in Cirebon economic activity. No less important, archaeological evidences will be included as an attempt to identify the historical fact. Because in reality, the three regions (coastal area, agriculture and plantation) are a unity of the mutually bounded and have a reciprocal relationship in its contribution to the economic progress of the Dutch.

Keywords: coast, lowland, highland, economy, Cirebon

ABSTRAK

Semenjak abad ke-14 dan ke-15, kerajaan-kerajaan yang terletak di kawasan pesisir Nusantara, termasuk Cirebon, telah terlibat dalam perdagangan antarpulau Nusantara maupun perdagangan antarnegara. Dimulai semenjak runtuhnya Majapahit dan kejayaan Demak, kawasan pantai utara Jawa hampir seluruhnya dikuasai oleh para penguasa dan pedagang muslim. Memasuki abad ke-17, bersamaan dengan disintegrasi politik tradisional dan pengambil-alihan kekuasaan keraton Cirebon oleh VOC serta pola dan arah kebijakan yang dikeluarkan pemerintah Hindia Belanda, sektor perdagangan yang berpusat di kawasan pesisir Cirebon menjadi semakin mengikat dan meluas. Dimulai dari kawasan pesisir, dalam perkembangannya pengembangan pusat perdagangan menjadi beriringan dengan perkembangan pertanian di dataran rendah dan perkebunan di dataran tinggi. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian sejarah dan pendekatan struktur sebagaimana yang dilakukan Fernand Braudel, penelitian ini mencoba mendeskripsikan geografis Cirebon sebagai sebuah sintesa yang berperan besar dalam kegiatan ekonomi Cirebon. Karena dalam kenyataannya tiga kawasan di atas merupakan suatu kesatuan yang saling terikat dan memiliki hubungan timbal balik dalam sumbangannya terhadap perkembangan ekonomi Hindia Belanda.

Kata Kunci: pesisir, dataran rendah, dataran tinggi, ekonomi, Cirebon.

INTRODUCTION

This article is written in order to observe three geographical features of Cirebon, namely the coastal areas, the highlands and the lowlands as a unity which can be seen from their contribution for the economy development of the Dutch East Indies. Thus, the particular concerns are in the Cirebon harbor, rice agriculture, sugarcane plantation and coffee plantation in nineteenth and twentieth century.

Several historical records show the shipping and trading activities since fourteenth and fifteenth century in the coastal kingdoms, such as Majapahit, Malaka, Aceh, Demak, Tuban, Banten, Bali, Timor, Kutai, Southern Kalimantan, Makasar, Maluku, Cirebon and the others. Those places had become both the trading center in Indonesia and international, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma, China, India, Arab, Syria, East Africa, and Europe (Wardaya, 2001: 23). To some extents, the kingdoms clearly showed that the coastal areas of Indonesia had long been a trading center which opens to the international trading activities.

Due to fulfilling the logistical needs of Batavia and increasing profits of the colonial government, also by means providing solutions for the financial problems, the lowlands and highlands in Cirebon were also occupied by the colonial government. Particularly, in nineteenth century, marked by an extremely intense colonial penetration in Java, most people involved in planting the commercial plants which were in demand for international trades, such as indigo, coffee, tea and quinine (Zakaria, 2011: 98). This means that the geographical position of the kingdoms as the strategic role holders should be noted first. The coastal areas not only might economically simplify and prosper the trading activities, but also open the competitiveness for the traders. This was started from the trade through sea and together with the agricultural activities, particularly rice and other commercial plants, such as sugarcane, coffee, indigo, etc. in the lowlands and highlands of Cirebon. In the contexts of economy

development of Cirebon, three geographical factors (coast, lowland and highland) were significant for the power sustainability of the colonial government. Therefore, the research question is how the description areas in Cirebon and how the synthesis and the relationship between those areas and the economic activities in nineteenth and twentieth century.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research used the historical method including four stages, namely heuristic, critics, interpretation and historiography (Herlina, 2013: 1-55), and the structural approach as conducted by Fernand Braudel when studying the History of Mediterranean Sea and the surrounding world during Philip II era. Braudel stated that there should be attempted and practitioner of historical and social sciences disciplines to observe the people experiences as a unity. Because in reality, the history explanation was framed in three important structures, namely geography, economy and politics. The geographical structure became a medium to the historical facts to the human activities, especially from the economic side (Braudel, II, 1995: 112). Thus, this research was trying to present the history of Cirebon affected by its geographical structures, namely the coast, lowlands and highlands as a unity to support the economy for Dutch East Indies from nineteenth to twentieth century.

As a literature review, several researchers had presented their studies related to the social-economic impacts from the geographical conditions of Cirebon. The research by Singgih Tri Sulistyono (1994) was about the Cirebon harbor which had rapidly developed in the second half of nineteenth century, so it ranked fourth of the biggest harbors in Java. This might represent the coastal areas of Cirebon. M.R. Fernando (1982) argued the social-economic impacts from the plantation in the forced cultivation era in the early twentieth century. In line with M.R. Fernando, Awaludin Nugraha (2001) also chose the social-economic life of the farmers as a theme related to the

industry and plantation in the highlands of Cirebon. Meanwhile, Murdiah Winarti (1999) analyzed the economic linkages between the rice farmers and their social life in the Residency of Cirebon in 1900-1940.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Coast of Cirebon

The position of Cirebon which was in Java Island and directly adjacent to the northern coast of Java Sea with the long coastline and the Muara Jati Bay formed this area as both a harbor and strategic trading and shipping routes. Geographical analysis by J.J. Baggelaar (TT: 130-131), Singgih Tri Sulistiyono (1994: 39-40), and Veth (1882: 195) stated that Cirebon harbor had an extremely strategic position because it was in a bay protected by Indramayu Peninsula and coral reefs from the waves coming from the northern part of Java Sea.



Figure 1. Map of Cirebon Residency in 1912
Source: Leiden University Libraries-Colonial Collection

In Cirebon harbor, the traders from Semarang and Pekalongan, China, Arab, India,

Europe, and other countries mingled and created trading networks with the local and Indonesian traders (*Algemeene Archief Depot Ministerie van Kolonien, 1814-1849*. Inv. Nr. 308 -Cheribon: 17-18). In addition, the invention of stamp marked *al mulku, al wahid, al qohhar*, and also ceramics, statues, bronzes, gems, hilts, and other valuable goods which became the part of treasures and succeeded to transport from the ruins of foreign ships in the waters of Cirebon (*Kompas*, 17 November 2006). They were artifacts which became a true indicator concerning the arrival of the traders and voyagers to Cirebon. Similarly, the ship ornaments could be found in the ceramics mounted in the wall of Cirebon's palaces. Therefore, this might be an evidence of trading and shipping activities there.

Trade across Indonesia and abroad increasingly was increasingly dynamic supported by the position of Cirebon on the "silk path", a connection to both shipping and trading routes between Indonesian archipelago and other islands in the world. The *silk path* was a witness to the historical development of civilization and trades in the past through the land path. In fact, this path was difficult because of the weather and crime there. This condition then encouraged the traders to seek easier and safer alternative routes for supporting their trade. These efforts resulted in the water transportation system as well as strengthening the coast of Cirebon as one of the developed harbors in the colonial cities.

Until entering the seventeenth century, the inclusion of VOC to Cirebon marked by an agreement on 7 January 1681 and continued by other agreements (Hoadley, 1975: 48.49, and 390), in fact, managed to shift the economic advantages which previously were obtained by the traders. VOC took an authority over commodities which had considerable economic value in the worldwide market. Black pepper and sugar flour were considered as the most profitable commodities at that time, and were chosen by VOC as commodities entirely controlled by VOC.

Meanwhile, VOC only took portions below 50 percent for the other commodities. Even for the particular commodities which did not have any economic impacts for VOC, the authority was ignored and belonged to other parties, and then was adapted by VOC's interest. Since 1700s, the combination between the power of trade, ship — and the power politics— seemed became the special rights of VOC to control them. At certain points, the VOC power towards trade and ship was extremely exploitative and looked like extortion.

Approximately a century later, after VOC disbanded, the Dutch East Indies government as the following ruler performed several improvements and expansion of Cirebon harbor started from 1865, 1888, 1918, and 1919 by spending money of f. 800.000 (J.J. Baggelaar, 1931: 130-134). Although it did not become a priority development as Tanjung Priok harbor in Batavia, the various expansions and improvements encouraged Cirebon as one of the biggest harbors along the northern coast of Java, between Tegal and Pekalongan harbors. Cirebon harbor belonged to the middle harbor (*middem-haven*), and placed fourth from the biggest harbors in Java, namely after Batavia, Surabaya, and Semarang harbors. The evidence could be seen from the number of shipping which took place in 1926. The first place was Batavia harbor with the number of ship-

ping by 13.854 times, the second place was Surabaya harbor by 13.854 times, Semarang harbor by 13.427 times and Cirebon harbor by 7.589 times (Department of Education and Culture the Republic of Indonesia, 1998: 63).

Another development of the trading and shipping activities in Cirebon could also be seen from the number of ships and cargos which was in and out from the Cirebon harbor as can be seen in the table 1.

Apparently, there was a positive response towards the existence of Cirebon harbor from the traders. This could be seen from the increasing number of ships which came to Cirebon harbor each year. Those ships were carrying commodities for trade. Commodities from Cirebon were rice, sugar, laksa, shrimp paste, tobacco, leather, indigo, tapioca, etc. on the other hands, goods from other countries were European fabrics, Chinese porcelain, raw metal, gold, gambier and decaying materials, etc. (*Algemeene Archief Depot Ministerie van Kolonien, 1814-1849*. Inv. Nr. 308-Cheribon: 17). One inevitable thing was what the Dutch East Indies government did was essentially to win the trade competition and to maintain the trading and shipping supremacy by the prior rulers (VOC).

Beyond the development of the harbor, Cirebon was popular in one of the producers of fresh fish and processed

Table 1. The Number of Ships and Cargos in and out Cirebon Harbor

No	Year	The Number of Ships (in-out)	Amount of the Entered Goods (M3)		Amount of the Goods out (Ton)	
			Gross Weight	Net Weight	Gross Weight	Net Weight
1.	1823	914	-	-	-	-
2.	1824	922	-	-	-	-
3.	1926	1.110	12.263	7.589	4.333	2.681
4.	1927	1.157	13.277	8.219	4.692	2.904
5.	1928	1.217	14.733	8.993	5.206	3.178
6.	1929	1.292	15.678	9.651	5.540	3.397

Source *Algemeene Archief Depot Ministerie van Kolonien, 1814-1849*. Inv.Nr. 308-Cheribon: 19; J.J. Baggelaar, "De Haven van Cheribon" in *Gedenkboek Der Gemeente Cheribon 1906-1931*. p. 142.

products for a long time. As a part of shallow waters in Sundanese flat, the waters of Cirebon had the high level of turbidity and the highest clarity which rarely exceeded twenty meters. As sea in the waters of Java which generally was full of plankton, therefore, the waters of Cirebon had many fish (Bottemanne, 1946: 13-14). Approximately 1.500 species of fish, 250 species of them had been identified as profitable fish (Hage, 1910: 105).

Another characteristic was that these waters also had sloping beach, flat and muddy seabed and became a water reservoir from other either big or small rivers, and this was possible to create embankment. Several rivers could be used for a natural transportation between the lands and supported the economic activities from the coastal areas to hinterlands and vice versa. Another function was for household necessities (Dahuri, et.al, 2004: 14-26).

Fisheries in sea and embankments created fishermen, sailors, traders or seafood producers. This showed the historical power which succeeded in strengthening the economic and social bases of most Cirebon people. Due to the significance of fisheries, in 1902, *Mindere Welvaart Onderzoek* commission was established to investigate the causes of poverty among those people, including fishermen. In addition, the commission also provided advices to the government in order to improve the fishermen's life (Widodo, 2011: 34-35). Through the fishermen's work, the fish was caught, carried and then directly sold to the fish market, but if there was leftover, fish was carried to the fishermen villages to be proceed. In other words, this might show the fisherman journey was shifted from sea to the villages.

Lowlands

Moving from the coastal areas of the eastern Cirebon, the lowlands were from Losari District to Sindang Laut, Ciledug, Tersana to Karang Sembung Districts. Almost all lands were dominated by rice fields. In addition, sugarcane fields were also could be found in those areas, and

they became the most significant central of sugarcane in Cirebon (Veth, 1882: 187).

Similar to the lowlands in the eastern Cirebon, roads in the northern areas mostly lead to sea. This was started from the first district of *Afdeling* Cirebon which was directly adjacent to Indramayu District, namely Gegecik Lor. Furthermore, the big sugar plantation was located in the western part of the main highway within a distance of 6 *paal*, which was called Arjawinangun. At 14 *paal* distance, there were rural areas and rice fields (Veth, 1882: 187).

Sugarcanes then were transported to several sugar factories around the plantations and processed to be sugar. In 1824, there were four Chinese sugar factories in Cirebon (*Algemeene Archief Depot Ministerie van Kolonien, 1814-1849*. Inv. Nr. 308-Cheribon: 15) and continued to increase together with the expansion of sugarcane fields. Until the early twentieth century, there were 13 sugar factories in Cirebon with the land use by 12.675 *bau*. For more detail, see table 2.

Thus, another important sector encouraging the economic activity of Cirebon was the invasion of sugar industry. In the northern part of Cirebon, there was a big sugar plantation called Arjawinangun. Even though in the eastern part, several plantations had worked through contract with government such as Sindanglout and Karang Sembung. Initially, Sindanglout had a land area of 500 *bau* and was the first sugar plantation in the forced cultivation era while Karang Sembung had a sugarcane land area of 300 *bau*, Ciledug 705 *bau* and Tersana 480 *bau*. Another location was called Blender with 300 *bau* which was rented to the Chinese businessman (Veth, 1882: 198).

Then, the condition changed after the forced cultivation in which the sugarcanes were planted in the rice fields as in the eastern part of Java. Even Sindanglout became a main area of sugarcane producers in Cirebon with the land area by 600 *bau* (approximately 420 hectares) (Breman, 1986: 136). This was recorded that the sugar production and export from

Table 2. The List of Sugar Factories in Cirebon in the Twentieth Century

No	Name of factory	Besluiten	Land Area (Bau)
1.	Tersana Baru	G.B. 8 Augustus 1900 No.29	2375
2.	Soerawinangun (Plumbon)	G.B.19 Juni 1901 No.4	1375
3.	Gempol	-----	700
4.	Arjawinangun	-----	675
5.	Sindanglaoet	-----	1625
6.	Karangsoewoeng	-----	900
7.	Djatipiring	-----	575
8.	Leuwinggajah	-----	1000
9.	Losari Baru (Panggang)	-----	375
10.	Paroengdjaya	-----	725
11.	Djatiwangi	-----	1175
12.	Kadipaten	-----	1025
13.	Tjidahoe	Dir.bes. 25 Januari 1910	150

Source: Memori van Overgave van G.J.Oudemans, Aftredend Resident van Cheribon aan zyn Opvolger den Heer F.Ch. N. Van der Moore, Assistant-Resident van BLORA. Arch. Kol.Mailrap.1362/1911. pp. 53.

Cirebon gradually increased each year. This was recorded that in 1828, the production of sugar was 4621 loads, then in 1832, production was 635.517 load. The number continued to rise 129.543 tons in 1928 (*Algemeene Archief Depot Ministerie van Kolonien, 1814-1849*. Inv. Nr. 308-Cheribon: 11).

The following period became a difficult time for sugar industries intended for an international market. Abdul Wahid (2006:109-110) stated that in 1930s, together with the critical time (*malaise*) and the decline of sugar price in the international market, reported that the number of sugar factories in which still operated was eight factories, and the operation scale continued to decrease. Another indication according to the declining number of land area used by sugarcane crops. In addition, even though the number increased and decreased (and never recovered) in the sugar industry in Cirebon, the industrialization symptom marked by the achievement in Cirebon plantations and lowlands affected the economic transformation for the society. Thus, this could not be denied that the strength of Cirebon was in its sugarcane plantation and sugar productions

in the lowlands, and this also became one factor to trigger economy of the colonial rulers.

In addition to sugarcane plantation, the lowland areas of Cirebon were also known as one of the most significant rice producers. The importance of rice farming in Cirebon could also be seen from a report submitted by Cirebon Regent to the General Governor Raffles in early December 1815, few months before Raffles left Java and he stated: “there are no definite data showing a change, but its agricultural improvement seemed real” (Raffles, 2014: 100). Furthermore, the development of agricultural activity in Cirebon could also be seen from the notes describing the Cirebon area and its rice fields.

Veth (1882: 186-199) mentioned that almost the areas of Cirebon planted rice, either in the rice fields or fields. This included the northern part of Kandanghaur, Losarang, Lelea, Juntinyuat, Cantigi, Lohbener, to the first district of *afdeling* Cirebon; Gegesk Lor, Arjawinangun, Palimanan, Plumbon, Ender, Mundu, Sindanglaut. Several specific points in Majalengka, Kuningan, and Galuh also planted rice. Hence, this meant

Table 3. Rice Production Cirebon (yoke) in the Second Half of Nineteenth Century

No	District	Rice Field Production	Field Production	Total
1	Cirebon	1.636.324	116.241	1.752.565
2	Indramayu	889.188	7.625	896.565
3	Majalengka	1.317.465	7.625	1.419.463
4	Kuningan	367.666	101.998	458.518
5	Galuh	381.084	59.183	440.267
Total		4.591.727	375.899	4.967.626

Source: W.R van Hoevell, 1863. *Reis Over Java, Madura, en Bali in het Midden van 1847. 1st deel. Amsterdam: P.N.van Kampen*, p. 7.

that although the areas of fertile soil in Cirebon were different for each district, most lowlands in Cirebon characterized in fertile lowlands and were possible to plant rice.

A typical characteristic of rice fields in Cirebon was nearly identical with the narration written by Peter Boomgard (2004: 137-138) concerning the typical characteristic of rice fields in Java. The rice fields were a plot of cultivated fields surrounded by *galengan* which had served to accommodate rain or irrigation inside the fields. *Galengan* was usually a mound of 30-40 cm and made elongated in varied width between 20-40 cm. Besides accommodating rain or irrigation, *galengan* also had a function as a footpath for the farmers to walk and as well as a border of rice fields (Boomgaard, 2004: 135).

Through the door in *galengan*, the cultivated fields could be flooded by water or dried. If the rice fields had water from a river, a creek, a reservoir or a ditch, then we called them as irrigation fields, and as opposed were rain-fed fields (Boomgaard, 2004: 138). The irrigation development was one of the important factors for the rice fields, so the rice farming was also improved. Thus, in early twentieth century, the government worked on the development of irrigation in the significant areas, such as Jatitujuh and Lohbener Indramayu by utilizing the water source from Cimanuk river (Memori van Overgave van G.J.Oudemans, Aftredend Resident van Cheribon aan zyn Opvolger den Heer F.Ch. N. Van der Moore, Assistant-

Resident van Blora. Arch. Kol. Mailrap.1362/1911. p. 75).

Until the mid-nineteenth century, from the list of rice crop production in *Statistiek van Cheribon 1835-1859*, this could be seen the tendency of increasing rice crop production in the particular districts in Cirebon. Gegesik Lor District was the largest rice producers and the city district was the least (*Algemeen Rijksarchief Depot Aanwinsten Kolonien Afkomsting uit Losse Aanwinsten tot 1980. Inv. Nr.14. Statistiek van Cheribon 1835-1859*, p. 35-36). No wonder if Gegesik Lor and Sindanglout District became the largest rice producers in Cirebon because of the wide areas of their rice fields and the fertile soil features in Gegesik Lor District. While in Sindanglout areas, long time before VOC required this area to produce sugarcanes in the end of eighteenth century, the rice fields were planted by rice.

However, in 1930s, Indramayu occupied a position as a high-quality rice with the largest surplus in Cirebon, so it became one of the rice exporter to the Netherlands. Together with the important projects in early twentieth century created to develop agricultures, especially irrigation channels. One of them took water Cimanuk river built in 1907 with cost f.15.000 (*Memorie van Overgave Resident H.A. Lincklaan Westenberg, 1932. Seri 2E. Reel 03 & 04 p. 75-76*). Together with Karawang, in 1930s, Indramayu became the largest rice producers in Cirebon and succeeded in selling its rice crops outside the area by 115.000 tons in a year

(Creutzberg and van Lannen, 1987: 94-96).

Therefore, it could be concluded that at least, there were two significant crops in the lowland areas of Cirebon, namely sugarcanes and rice. Due to the importance of rice, VOC issued a regulation regarding billing, remittance and management towards all rice crops in Cirebon. The entire regulation of the 24 articles was listed in *Nederlandsch Plakaatboek 1602-1811 Veertiende deel 1804-1808* which mentioned that the detailed rules were related to wage taxes, plant supervision, seed varieties, rice storage warehouses, new land clearing and crops at district level (Chijs, 1895: 711-719).

Highlands

Another fact revived economic and shipping networks in Cirebon was coffee produced in the Kuningan, Galuh and Majalengka highlands. One of the possible reasons to cultivate coffee in those areas was stated by M.R. Fernando and William J. O'Malley (1988: 238-243), namely the natural environment located at an altitude of 1000 meters above sea level, on the slopes of Ciremai and Sawal Mountains which had suitable fields to plant coffee and were supported the great number of people.

Coffee began to plant in Cirebon highlands since VOC succeeded in controlling the entire Priangan in 1705 although Priangan had no direct supervision. Along with Aria Prince of Cirebon as an *Opziener* of the Priyangan regents, VOC established Tatar Sunda areas (Batavia, Priangan, and Cirebon) to implement the mandatory coffee plantation in 1707 as well as to mark the coffee plantation system officially in the Tatar Sunda areas (Ekajati, 1991: 2).

Particularly, Priangan area would become a sample area of coffee plantation in Java. Coffee seeds previously had been successfully tested by the Governor General van Hoorn and Zwaardercroon in their garden at Batavia and Cirebon around 1696, then were distributed to the regents to be cultivated in their own areas.

The Priangan Regent obtained the tested coffee seeds from Batavia, while Bandung Regent and other regents from West and East obtained those tested seeds from Cirebon Sultanate (Lasmiyati, 2015: 218).

Coffee was planted in the highlands of Cirebon approximately in 1720s as a part of coffee and tea planting undertaken by VOC in Priangan area. However, in the end of this century, coffee plantation had begun to be planted in large quantities at the private lands of Cirebon, so it hardly caused people's displeasure. Then, until 1813, they destroyed five million of coffee trees. This incident occurred together with the emergence of resentment inside Cirebon society to the Dutch and Chinese plantation owners or landlords. Thus, this incident was increasingly rampant and then could be minimize in around 1817 due to persuasive actions and exploitation of people's fear towards the coffee supervisors (Molsbergen, 1931: 18).

The outcome could be seen in December 1824 that the number of coffee trees in this residency was 6.013.285. In 1850s, the number of entire coffee trees in Cirebon Residency reached 17.552.044 (van Hoevell dan Veth, 1849), and the amount of harvest was 14.740 load in 1857 (*Statistiek van Cheribon 1835-1859*, p. 23-24). Approaching 1870s, a decline of coffee harvest was caused by the age of old coffee. This condition deteriorated in the end of 1870s to 1880s due to *hemalia vestarix*. The coffee production in Cirebon which reached 28.400 load in 1870s fell into 9.000 load in the end of 1880s (Fernando and O'Mallaey 1988: 225-226). Nevertheless, beyond the development and fluctuation of the harvest and price of coffee, it could be noted that Cirebon at that time took profit from coffee plantation in its hinterlands.

The problem occurred was the distribution of coffee crops due to the isolated area of coffee plantation to the main distribution channel, namely harbor. In order to overcome the problem, on the banks of Citarum and Cimanuk rivers, precisely in Cikao and Karangsembung, an adequate large coffee warehouse was

with 60 to 80 piles. Through those rivers, coffee crops were transported by boats to the beach then to the harbor, and finally were exported to various countries (*Algemeene Archief Depot Ministerie van Kolonien, 1814-1849*. Inv. Nr. 308-Cheribn: 10).

Based on a brief overview towards several economic activities there, this could be seen that since 1500s, Cirebon gradually emerged as a new city; a trading and shipping city as well as a city palace. The next phase was since the seventeenth century, we could see the phenomenon of economic development in Cirebon was recognized, especially from the side of Dutch economic achievements as a group succeeded in taking an opportunity to explore the economic functions of Cirebon. Additionally, this phase became integrated economic foundations marked by the rapid spread of trades between both islands and countries in the following century.

Into the seventeenth century, together with the colonial politic strategy who succeeded in conquering the power of Sultan Cirebon, the Dutch East Indies rulers grew as a new colony as well as a great minority. Then, they succeeded in modifying and in controlling almost the entire economic activities, either in the coast, lowlands or highlands of Cirebon. In other words, we could see the role and policy of the Dutch East Indies as a considerable factor which determined the economic development in Cirebon. These policies sometimes tended to cause negative effects consciously and unconsciously. The Dutch East Indies utilized the potential of those areas in order to fulfil their interests and necessities towards various commodities which had a high economic value in an international market. Most of those products could be found in large quantities and had a strategic value.

Together with the varied activities of people, economic roles, characteristics and geographical conditions, weather, soil and water, these three areas became a significant provider of needs for the successful economic development of the Dutch East Indies. This could be seen that the

specialization of products which became the supporting factor of the economic development at these areas: the sea coast areas of Cirebon with its harbor and marine sources, rice and sugarcane plantation in the lowlands and the plantations of coffee, vegetables and woods in the highlands.

In other words, this meant that the main possible factor to expand the economic development was in line with the natural conditions of Cirebon. Certainly, there were similarities, differences, red thread and connection between the coast, lowland and highland areas in Cirebon, and those were mutually connected and related to the economic activities of Cirebon. Because those three were not only geographically dependent, but they were economically coherent. Thus, this showed a symbiotic mutualism where the coast areas became a distribution point and the chain of trading networks for export and import commodities as well as the provider of imported goods required by the lowlands and highlands. Moreover, the coast also became one of keys for the continuity of trades between islands and countries. Meanwhile, the lowlands and highlands became the suppliers of daily necessities for the coastal society.

CONCLUSION

According to the description and the research question above, it could be concluded that one of strengths possessed by Cirebon in early nineteenth century was its geographical compositions consisting of coast, lowlands and highlands. Those three features had different potentials. Nevertheless, due to the ability of the colonial government, those varied natural resources could be utilized by the colonial government in order to earn maximum profits. Those three areas became a unity which had mutual supports with the Dutch government for the sake of increasing profits from the colonies.

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