

From an Independent to Non-autonomous Village

(The History of Status Change of Selo Village, Grobogan District)

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Abstract— Selo is one of historical villages in Java which had existed in the Mataram Islam Kingdom era as an independent village. Independent villages means villages which received special autonomy from the king in its governance and was exempted from tax payment. Together with the change of governance in Java, the status of this traditional village also changed. Thus, this study tries to analyse the social status change of Selo from Mataram Islam era, Dutch colonization to the New Order era. This research used a historical method by using both documentary and oral sources, either oral historical interviews or oral tradition. The results show that in the Mataram Islam Kingdom era, the status of an independent village of Selo was highly respected by the Islam rulers. However, since the Dutch Colonial era, the government policy was issued to restrict the independence of this traditional village. Nevertheless, the Netherlands still respected in the existence of Selo as a village where sacred tombs of Mataram Islam king ancestors were located. After the issuance of Laws number 5 year 1979 concerning the equalization policy of village status throughout Indonesia, the status of an independent village, Selo, has been lost.

Keywords— *independent village; special autonomy; tax; colonial era; new order era*

I. INTRODUCTION

An independent village is one of rural typologies which has existed in Indonesian society and cultures. Etymologically, a word “perdikan” (independent) is defined as “freedom”, which means that the village is free from the intervention of government control, thus manage the village independently. This village was exempted from taxes, either in crops or labours. This type of village had been existed a long time ago estimated since Hindu-Buddhist era. An independent village was a gift from the king, so the people was exempted from taxes and compulsory work. This area was considered as an independent or a free area led by a village head. The village head was directly under the king’s authority, not other lowly leaders.

The existence of the independent village continued in the reign of Muslims. The Muslim kings continued the tradition to respect the independent village as a state institution exempted from the tax payment and workload for the country. There were several reasons behind the gift of a special authority to the independent village, namely: (1) to promote religion, (2) to preserve tombs of the kings or other people who were venerated and sacred, (3) to maintain heritage pesantren (boarding schools), langgar and mosque, (4) to give reward to people or villages that contributed to the kings [1].

Selo was one of the independent villages in the Mataram Islam kingdom. Selo village located in Tawangharja District, Grobogan Regency is a historical village. The historical value of the village is related to the existence of a tomb from a legendary figure, Ki Ageng Selo. This tomb is located in the southern part of Selo village. From the intersection of Tawang Harjo District, the tomb of Selo is located next to Selo market and Selo Village Hall. This tomb is a sacred tomb and visited by many people, from common people to the state officials who come to pilgrimage [2].

II. THE CONTINUATION OF THE INDEPENDENT STATUS TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Dutch Colonial government was trying to recover villages in Java. The villages in java were observed by the colonial government as a part of non-autonomous feudal order required into independent and democratic villages. The village which initially was based on the land relations and bound of the supra village authorities, then changed into an independent, democratic and autonomous village based on the contractual bound with the state.

When the general villages in Java were reorganised in the nineteenth century by the Dutch colonial government, the independent villages including Selo village was not reorganised. In Staatsblad No. 77 year 1853 which was a

continuation of Staatsblad year 1819 no. 5 article 26, it was mentioned that independent villages were still exempted from taxes. Thus, the privileges of the independent villages including Selo were still recognised by the Dutch Colonial government. However, according to Schriecke [3], the charters of the independent villages in the colonial era did not include the similar information about the characteristics of these and how to manage them. This was different from the charter of independent villages in the past which included the privilege of tax exemption and followed by the rules regarding the distribution of village wealth.

The Dutch government supported the existence of the independence villages because they were considered as the villages which were not exploited by the kings and supra village authorities feudally. The colonial government did not realise that giving freedom to the independent village without the limitation of rights and authorities had created arbitrary actions from the rulers to their people. The independent village was allowed to be a kind of small kingdom which oppressed their people without the government's supervision.

The colonial government's policy towards the independent village changed due to the excesses caused by the fact that they did not intervene this problem. In addition, the government also realised that giving unlimited freedom might cause the village rulers demanded more rights to their people and considered themselves as little kings in their regions.

The colonial government did not only give freedom to the independent village, but also took all actions to limit the rulers of the independent villages. The basic principles, limitation and freedom in the independent village were written in Bijblad no 1847 dated 20 December 1912. The rules stated that the descent principles in raising the village heads of the independent villages were maintained. In raising these village heads, the rights and duties of the village heads were stated, namely types and the number of cession, force labour, obligatory cession and land division both in the people and the village heads in each village.

The raise of the independent village heads was handed over to the head of the local government, as long as these heads were not elected by their people. The heads were also given authorities in creating the changes to their order. Thus, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the existence of the independent village had been interfered by the colonial government [3].

Since 1912, the independent village (Selo) leadership was a single leadership, that was a village headman was also responsible for the existence of Selo tombs. The leadership pattern was the traditional leadership. The unique characteristic of this leadership was: first, the village headman in Selo was not elected by his people, but was raised by Sunan Pakubuwono X. The raise of the village headman in Selo by Sri Susuhunan in Surakarta was because at that time, Selo village was legally an enclave belonging to Sunan Surakarta, even

though geographically it was located in Grobogan District, Semarang Residency. The village head always came from the oldest male line from the previous village head. Second, the authority of the village man of Selo came from not only his descent but also his created rituals. These rituals were related to the memorial ceremony to the main figure in the Selo tombs, namely khol or the commemoration of Ki Ageng Selo death every year in Ruwah month. Third, as a descent of the holy man, Selo head was seen of having powerful power. This power came from supranatural power which allowed people to obey their head's command. Fourth, as a strong Islamic based area, the village head was supported by the local clerics. These clerics supported the village head as well.

III. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE AUTONOMOUS STATUS OF THE INDEPENDENT VILLAGE

Since 1912, land reorganisation occurred in Surakarta areas. The lands which were authorised by the nobles and royal officials were then handed over to villages. The rural land management and its supervision were in the hands of district heads [4].

Selo village was an enclave village of Kesunanan Surakarta and it was not explained in the process of agrarian reorganisation. However, because the authority of Sunan to the rural land had been handed over to the village under the village head's supervision, most likely the pattern occurred in Selo followed the pattern in Surakarta. It was just Selo areas included in the geographical area of Grobogan Residency, and Wirosari District, so the supervision of land ownership and control in Selo village was based on the district head or called Wedana Wirasari.

The interesting thing was that land reorganisation was followed by reorganisation of village government. In the reorganisation of village government, the rural administration order under the Javanese kings had to follow the rural administration pattern under the Dutch colonial government directly. One of the unique characteristics of the rural administration under the colonial government was the tradition to elect the village heads by their people.

The election of village head in Selo village seemed to be equal with the reorganisation process of the rural administration in Surakarta. This was in line with the oral information from the informants who have bloodline with their ancestors, namely the former village heads in the past. Maskun, a village head of Selo Krajan told that during the Dutch era, his ancestor named Sontowijoyo became village head in Selo through election. There was no exact time when the village head election in 1931. If this information was true, this could be assumed that village head election occurred in the second decade of twentieth century. After 1931, this was certain that the village heads in Selo appeared due to the democratic election process. Due to the election of

village head, there was separation between the village leader and the leader who managed the tombs. The village head leading the people in Selo was elected through the general election and appointed by the resident of Semarang through the district head of Wirosari, while the tomb leader and later was called as a tomb headman was still handed down from generation to generation by Sri Susuhunan Surakarta. Hence, since the second decade of twentieth century there were two leaders in Selo, namely a formal leader, the village head of Selo, and an informal leader, the tomb headman. Both leaders had different orientation, the first one was related to the worldlines and the second one was related to spiritual affairs.

The direct election system could not break generation network of the village head of Selo. During the election, the people initially still considered the origin of offspring. The initial selected headman was Sontowijoyo who was hereditary descendant of the village ruler in the independent village of Selo. The headman was in charge until 1932. In the following election, he was replaced by his son named Muhammad and he only governed for two years (1932-1934). Next, his successor, namely Rusdi who governed in 1935 was not the descent of Sontowijoyo. He was initially a village secretary of Sontowijoyo who then later became a candidate of the village head election in Selo village, and he succeeded in obtaining the greatest voices from his people, so he was elected to be a village head. He even was not a native, he came from Kedung Jati, an area in the southern part of Grobogan Residency close to Boyolali Residency. The successor of Mumammad Rusdi after Indonesian independence (around 1945/46) was S Hadi Sukarno, and he was not a descent of either Sontowijoyo or Rusdi. The new Sontowijoyo family could govern again after the governance of S hadi Sukarno ended (around 1956). At that time, Masrokhan, a grandson of Sontowijoyo from his daughter Supiah was elected to be the village head of Selo. He was in charge for eight years (until 1966), and then was replaced by the village head, Jasmo. Based on the explanation above, it could be seen that after the election system was established, the descent in the village head leadership was not a main requirement [5].

IV. THE LOSS OF THE INDEPENDENT STATUS

In the beginning of the New Order, the village head of Selo was being changed. The changing process did not naturally take place through election, but through appointment by the district head. This process rarely became a habit in most villages in Java due to the interests in the new regime to ensure that the village head was like-minded with the government. One of the reason was to eliminate the communist village heads.

The first village head appointed in the New Order era was Jasmo. He was a native of Selo, but he was not a descent of the preceding village head. He ruled for eight

years and then was changed by the new village head from the election process.

The election process of the village head in the New Order era seemed democratic. However, in fact, the intervention from the central government through the government of Grobogan district was strong. The intervention could be seen from the selection process of the candidates. The candidates had to register to the selection team based in sub-district. This selection team created several rules both administrative rules and the quality of leadership. The administrative rules included age, education background, etc. The quality was determined by a test held by the social politics department. In addition, Badan Pembinaan Pedomon Penghayatan dan pengamalan Pancasila (BP 7- an organization for the enforcement of Pancasila) also participated in the selection process.

The selection process from the upper order was brought through CCN (corruption, collusion and nepotism) between the candidates and the committee. CCN included the diploma qualification and whether or not the candidates were passed. One thing that could thwart a candidate becoming a village head was if he was labelled as involved in “left extreme” and “right extreme”. Someone was labelled as “left extreme” if he was indicated involved in the prohibited party in the past, Indonesian Communist Party (called as PKI). Meanwhile, “right extreme” was associated with DI/TII organisation DI/TII.

Selo people was vulnerable to game in electing the village head. Most of Selo people were devout Muslim proved by many boarding houses, mosques, and Islam education institutions. This was easy to mock by the committee as the supporter of DI/TII.

If in traditional era, criteria of the village heads were emphasised in hereditary aspect, in the New Order, it was no longer applied. A person’s skills and loyalty to his superior became dominant. In addition, money capital and wealth were required because in order to pass the selection process to be a village head, massive funding was necessary. The funding was not only used to pay the committee, but also to attract sympathy from the people by organising a public party, supporting the construction of mosques and also handing out money in order to demand them for coming to the election place. Based on these facts, the headman of the tombs commented that money was able to determine the power, all could be paid with money.

The birth of reformation era had changed the leadership pattern in Selo village. The election process of the village head had changed from the sub ordinary’s demand to the people’s enthusiasm. The election committee was no longer from the regional government through district, but from the village established by the Village Representative Institution (BPD). Criteria which were used to a candidate could be eliminated due to the agreement from the members of BPD. The government

was only a supervisor in implementing the election of the village head [5].

Interestingly, after it was handed over to the village, the descent of Sontowijoyo succeeded in winning the election again. He was Alfian who aged 25 years and graduated from one of Senior High School in Grobogan. Even though according to the village secretary, becoming the village head spent hundred million rupiah, the return of Sontowijoyo dynasty at the moment proved that hereditary aspect was still important factor in Selo village.

Thenceforth, Selo village had two leaders, namely formal and informal leaders. A formal leader was held by Alfian Rifai, while the non-formal one was led by the headman of the tombs that was Rois or Mas Ngabehi Diro Harsono. Alfian took care of worldly matter while Diro Harsono handled tombs and several activities related to the people's beliefs about the existence of Ki Ageng Selo tomb. In the past, two powers had been handled by one person, namely the village man at Selo Village who controlled both worldly matter and tombs [2].

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that Selo Village refers to the villages around the tomb of Ki Ageng Selo. This village was initially an independent village free from the government hegemony because it had function of preserving the sacred tomb. However, the status of the village started to change together with the change of governance, from traditional to modern one.

The initial change occurred since the second decade of the twentieth century when the land reorganisation in Surakarta was started. Hence, this affected Selo Village because it was a part of Kesunanan Surakarta. The head village was previously hereditary elected, then changed into being directly elected by the people. This was followed by tax-free loss towards the village.

The following change was in the New Order era after the implementation of the Village Governance Laws. Villages became uniform in the entire Indonesia, including in the Grobogan Regency, so the status of "independent village" of Selo totally disappeared.

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