

The Role of Priyayi Inside Local Sarekat Islam in the Priangan Residency 1913–1919

1st Fajar Nur Alam
History Department
Faculty of Humanities
Universitas Indonesia
Depok, Indonesia
fajar.nur71@ui.ac.id

2nd Abdurakhman*
History Department
Faculty of Humanities
Universitas Indonesia
Depok, Indonesia
abimaman@gmail.com

Abstract—This article discusses the contribution of priyayi in the local Sarekat Islam (SI) in the Priangan residency. The development of SI in Priangan became so phenomenal due to the presence of priyayi, who led the SI movement from the cities to the villages. The merger of priyayi in SI in Priangan became a significant concern to the government of the Dutch East Indies because the movement was a threat, and the pro and contra of the presence of SI in Priangan caused the priyayi to become divided into several groups. This article aims to explain the role of priyayi in local SI in Priangan. The study used the historical method according to Louis Gottschalk's [1] stages. The method in this research was to look for a heuristic source by collecting primary sources documents, such as archives, documents, and some literature related to the theme of the study like contemporary newspapers. In addition, the study uses secondary sources, such as journal articles and books relating to this research. Further criticism is done to find an objective truth from one point of view. Then, verification of the interpretation of the facts was conducted. The last step of the historiography was to write an interpretation of the various facts regarding the role of priyayi in the local SI in the Priangan residency. The contribution of the priyayi in the local SI in Priangan plays a role as a central figure and has a unique attraction in establishing power relations to gain the trust of the Priangan community.

Keywords—Politics, Priyayi, Sarekat Islam, Local, Priangan.

I. Introduction

At the time the National movement was born, several modern political societies emerged, one of which was Sarekat Islam (SI), which originated from the Society of Sarekat Dagang Islam in Solo. The emergence of SI in the land of Priangan cannot be separated from the role of the priyayi, a group of scholars moved to think of the people's lives of Priangan. The Dutch East Indies colonial government was addressing the presence of SI with a fluctuating attitude because the group was initially considered a threat to the position of the government of the Dutch East Indies. However, in the end, they supported them by issuing *Rechtpersoon*, or legally recognized them, provided that there are only branches in every region, not centered. The early development of SI in Bandung began when Haji Samanhudi encouraged his brother,

Haji Amir, to establish an organization such as Sarekat Dagang Islamiyah in Bandung. The organization was named Darmo Lumekso, or "thousands of devotion" [2]. However, the growing organization was the SI Bandung branch, which was established in 1912 by Abdoel Moeis, A. Wignjadisastra, and R. Goenawan as chairman, deputy chairman, and secretary, respectively. These were more popular than the Darmo Lumakso figures. In addition to political activists, these three people were also journalists [3].

The presence of SI in Priangan seized the attention of the colonial government of the Dutch East Indies because it would be considered disturbing. The same is also the concern originated from the indigenous peoples, such as the regent, Patih, Wedana, and *ambtenaar* ("officials") from Pangreh Praja. The attitudes of the priyayi to SI in Priangan include many being accepted well, some being neutral, and some being hostile. However, in the end, these priyayi, especially the regent and his subordinates, were considered as parties opposed to SI, in addition to *ambtenaar*, consisting of Dutch people [3]. The indigenous peoples' priyayi are divided into two groups. The first is referred to as Bureaucratic Priyayi, who gained the status of priyayi because of their lineage such as, the regent, Patih, Wedana, and Pangreh Praja. Meanwhile, there is a class of professional priyayi, who gained their status through education [4]. The elite group of indigenous bureaucracy generally abstain from SI. However, after Central SI gained recognition from the government there was a change in attitude not only toward sympathy but also toward others who became rulers. After the traditional leadership of the Bureaucratic Priyayi was threatened, the support of SI also increased. In fact, the emergence of threats against the Bureaucratic Priyayi is an embodiment of the conflict between the professional priyayi, who are supporters of SI, and the priyayi bureaucracy. The cause of conflict, among other things, is the presence of social jealousy from the professional SI due to the nepotistic nature of the regents and relatives, who always gained priority promotions in positions due to hereditary factors [5]. Based on the information above, the difference between the attitudes of the priyayi on the presence of SI in Priangan of certain priyayi raises a question: What is the role and football of the priyayi in the local SI in the Priangan residency?

Studies of SI in the Priangan area have previously only discussed the role of one of the characters and the major events that occurred in the Priangan area, such as the paper from Muhajir salam “Meretas Jalan Perang Sabil: Gejolak Politik di Priangan Timur 1912–1920” [6], in *Historia Soekapoera*, Vol. 4 No. 1., published by the Soekapoera Institute in 2016, and the study of the priyayi in Priangan by Yong Mun Cheong titled [3] “Conflicts Within The Prijaji World of the Parahyangan in West Java 1914–1927,” Field Report Series No. 1, published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in 1973. An additional work by Nina H. Lubis is *Konflik Elite Birokrasi : Biografi Politik Bupati R.A.A. Martanagara* [5]. Of the scientific works, nothing specifically discusses the role of the priyayi in the SI movement in Priangan. This article aims to explain the role of the priyayi in local SI in Priangan by looking at the leadership patterns and relationships of power built to gain the trust of the community. Departing from this objective, the contributions from the priyayi in the local SI in Priangan will be examined. These priyayi began movements from the grassroots to the level of branches in various cities in Priangan. The difference between the priyayi attitude toward SI in Priangan becomes an interesting topic.

II. Method

The study used the historical method according to Louis Gottschalk’s [1] stages. The method of this study was to find a heuristic source by collecting primary sources, such as archives, documents, and literature related to the theme of the study like newspapers, such as *Kaoem Moeda and Padjadjaran*, and several archival documents from ANRI (National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia). In addition to primary sources, this study uses secondary sources, such as journal articles and books relating to the theme of this research. Furthermore, criticism was conducted on the sources that have been gathered to find an objective truth from one point of view. Then, analysis was conducted on various sources that have been verified in the interpretation of the facts that occur so that the data obtained can reveal the events of the SI in Priangan. The final step of historiography is to write the results in an interpretation of the various facts about the priyayi’s role in local SI in the Priangan residency. The contributions of the priyayi to SI in Priangan serve as a central figure and have their own attraction in leading the organization of the movement with so many followers. The scope of the problem discusses the role and influence of the priyayi in SI in Priangan in 1913–1919. The geographical scope includes the Priangan area, but in this study, Priangan does not actually refer to the notion of strict administrative unity, given in the span of time covered in this study. This study is focused in Bandung because it is the center of economics and government in the Priangan area, but it does not exclude the possibility of discussing other areas in Priangan because the branches of SI organizations are scattered in various districts in Priangan, where one event could impact other areas. The scope of years is 1913–1919

because SI Bandung in the Majalaya district was established in 1913, while 1919 was a final benchmark because after the bloody events in Leles Garut, the movement of the local SI in the Priangan residency began to decline and limited its activities.

III. Results and Discussion

A. Social and Political Conditions in Resident Priangan 1913–1919

The bureaucracy activity in Bandung in the early stages of development is very limited. The most prominent relationship was that among the *Menak*, which, in the context of Javanese culture, refers to the local aristocratic group consisting of the regents and their relatives. However, in the further development, and in Sunda especially, the word *Menak* was used to greet all people who were highly respected, both the aristocrats and the high *ambtenaar*, especially the bureaucratic elite, with the regent as a central figure. The downward relationship between the indigenous *ambtenaar* from the relationship with the regents was the same nature as that of the regents with the residents of subordinate relations with superiors [7]. The pattern of such relationships in the wider community led to the elite class of Pangreh Praja to receive pressure from two fronts. In small towns, the new priyayi with their intermediate status had considerable authority and were easily informed, which allowed them to serve as a limited alternative to government *ambtenaar*. While on a higher level, members of the city’s more revolutionary group of scholars were forthright in resisting the moral, social, and political power of the Pangreh Praja. These two new groups felt that they had filled the void caused by the failure of the indigenous *ambtenaar* to represent the people in relation to the government in helping support the small people in a trial period of a decline in the people’s welfare [8]. In the year 1913, unrest felt by the authorities of the SI Bandung emerged regarding the problem of social life in the community of Bandung. Some things felt less in accordance with the prevailing norms at the time and felt awkward with the culture carried by Europeans at that time, which were deemed to be less in accordance with the norm of religion because it affected the life of the people in Bandung and raised the level of crime at that time. For the unrest, they asked the assistant resident to add police personnel from the Dutch East Indies government to maintain peace in the community of Bandung [9].

B. Priyayi Leadership in Sarekat Islam

The priyayi classmate of Pangreh Praja received pressure from two sides, namely the professional priyayi and the bureaucracy, which became his superiors. Some of the *Binnenlandsch Bestuur* (government people) officials asked his subordinates to enter the movement. On the other hand, many indigenous officials had negative responses to the movement because they felt threatened by their status quo. Therefore, it is not surprising if the gap between the priyayi bureaucracy and the professional priyayi was very large. Governor-General Idenburg saw that

SI became an undivided part of indigenous consciousness. His successor, J.P. Graaf van Limburg Stirum, also acted similarly but remained wary of this movement. Finally, the colonial government's support of the nationalist movement, including SI, was increasingly thinning because the Dutch basically did not trust the natives in terms of political freedom [8].

The priyayi, who were a representation of the intellectual character of SI in Priangan, made the newspaper a movement propaganda tool, like H. Moch. Sanoesi belonged to the professional priyayi, who became the activator of the intellectual movement in eastern Priangan [6]. These new priyayi were considered to have filled the void caused by the failure of indigenous officials belonging to the red tape priyayi to represent the populace in conjunction with the Dutch East Indies government. One of the classes of priyayi, the scholars, and the businessman in the local SI organization had successfully embraced the great support of the eastern Priangan people. So among the indigenous officials was felt a serious threat regarding the various action movements. In the *Menak* view, the activists of S.I. spread the poison of dreams about independence and equality of political rights. The notion endangered the conservative view of the priyayi bureaucracy and the traditional Sundanese aristocracy. Then, there were conflicts and influences in the midst of the people. The attitude of mutual antagonism between the two was inevitable. The indigenous *ambtenaar* strove to obstruct the development of SI in its area. Conversely, activist circles also antagonized the *ambtenaar* because of the attitudes and mentality were considered autocratic and despotic [10]. SI was loudly accusing the indigenous officials to be a tool of invaders and capitalists. They assessed the officials not good at bringing the people in the direction of having independent lives. The feud of both sides lasted quite a while. The conflict culminated until a bloody tragedy, the murder of H. Hasan Cimareme Leles Garut in 1919. [6]. This new priyayi group was greatly appreciated by the indigenous peoples at the time. One of them was P.A.A. Djajadiningrat, who became the chairman of the SI Serang branch. According to P.A.A. Djajadiningrat in Lubis [5], he thinks the birth of SI was welcomed only by officials who were his size, while the older ones were generally opposed to feeling threatened.

As stated above, regarding some of the Binnenlandsch Bestuur officials who advised his subordinates to enter the SI movement, in the Ciparay district, the head of Cibodas village entered as a member of SI, as did Tutor of Cangkring village *Mantri* (People of Government) in the Ciparay district [11]. This was supported by the many people of bureaucracy at the head of the village or *Mantri* who entered SI R.H. Hasan Mustapa, *Hoofd Penghulu* (Head of Pengulu) Bandung [12]. In addition, the local SI movement in the Priangan district also attracted influential people in various areas of Priangan to follow SI. The existence of SI raises a different sociocultural appeal according to the level and pattern

of the development of the community that it touches. In addition to the SI movement that emerged with a large scale of events, we also know the "local SI," which has its own uniqueness in each region [13]. In rural areas, SI members moved under the command of prominent community leaders who had the title of Hajj, whether Hajj or clerical. The members included the majority of the people, such as smallholders, small merchants, and laborers, while the pilgrims included the middle class, such as merchants and large or medium-sized farmers, entrepreneurs, and middlemen. Members who belonged to the majority of the people entered into SI for religious reasons, while the leaders entered and dabbling in SI for various reasons. The SI movement in the countryside was driven by various reasons, among others, due to the rivalry with the Chinese because of the actions of the local government or village governments that were considered unfair [11].

C. *The Influence of the Priyayi in SI in Priangan*

The inclusion of Bureaucratic Priyayi in rural areas, along with the increasing number of members of SI, quickly brought consequences to most followers of the SI movement because members who came from rural areas did not fully understand the aims and activities of SI. A further result was the occurrence of irregularities and misuse of the name SI [14]. The leaders of SI in rural areas often abused their positions as leaders for personal interest. Some used SI to become influential people, using it as a stepping stone and made movements that did not align with the SI at the branch level of the city or the central SI.

In less than a year, SI extended throughout Java and Madura, such as through *afdeling-afdeling*. The key to this development originated from the publication of newspapers led by journalists who then became the leaders of SI, which belonged to the professional priyayi. SI expansion occurred when the colonial policy and legal status of SI had not been established. [15]. The enthusiasm of the community in Priangan entering into the organization of the SI movement and the leadership of the priyayi in the local SI in the Priangan residency can be seen in terms of the character of the priyayi in society, where Priangan became a magnet for people to follow the movement of SI. The relationship between SI and the bureaucracy had a positive impact because of the power the priyayi had to advance the activities of SI. This occurred from the involvement of the indigenous elites and the priyayi bureaucracy with SI, which is seen from the attitude of the indigenous elites who had close ties with formal or nonformal regents, such as the *Hoofd Penghulu* R.H. Hasan Mustapa, who occasionally criticized some aspects of SI, which contradicted the religious law. However, he praised the efforts of SI to advance the education and welfare of the people. From the report, it can be concluded that R.H. Mustapa belonged to the priyayi who were neutral to SI as he did not refuse or accept the full presence of SI [12].

The role of the priyayi in SI can be said to be the protector of the indigenous peoples in the face of the

social gaps that occur, as happened in the 1913 event in the city of Bandung during a plague of smallpox. This of course created unrest for the inhabitants, and the SI authorities at that time paid great attention to the outbreak of smallpox that occurred because it was considered a disaster for the people of Bandung, even for the professional priyayi. SI leaders such as Wigjadasastra asked the assistant resident to add a Mantri to the outbreak of the smallpox disease because many people suffered from the disease, and it attacked various groups, such as toddlers, teenagers, and even elderly people [9]. In addition, the leadership of the priyayi in SI could unite the indigenous peoples through religious and ideological approaches. The presence of the priyayi in SI at the residency of the Priangan at that time had such an impact in the foundation of using SI as an ideology, so the movement had more revivalism, namely life returning to the belief in a burn within the spirit. The religious spirit not only imbued the movement but also mobilized many followers. In the internal SI, the form of social consciousness was not separate from religious consciousness; the two reinforced each other so that sensitivity increased in dealing with competition issues with foreign entrepreneurs, discrimination according to color lines, and the process of moral decadence. In rural areas, SI was more symbolic of religious struggle, so it had great potential to control the community through the actions of the library. Seeing the context of the times, it can be considered natural if reactive movements in the form of protests in indigenous newspapers were followed by active efforts to improve the fate and dignity of the people, including, among others, the demands of elimination of discriminatory rules [16]. Followers of SI consisted of people who were united by religion and profession, but they disagreed about the interpretation of religion or its role in SI activities. The movement also attracted students who hoped that SI would present a popular religious interpretation of the modernists among urban traders, as well as conservative-minded groups [17]. If we look a few centuries behind the suspicion of the colonial government against the Kiai and clerics to those who had the title of Hajj, they actually existed since long ago. The suspicion was essentially departing from the many scholars who had been involved in the Hajj involvement in the farmers' resistance to the Dutch East Indies colonial government [18].

D. Pro and Contra of the Priyayi in Response to the Presence of SI

An assessment of the priyayi bureaucracy and the priyayi professionals cannot be generalized because there is a part of the priyayi bureaucracy that has a stance supporting SI. Hence, the author will expose the groups of priyayi who supported, were neutral toward, or refused SI. First, Raden Hasan Djajadiningrat, who was the brother of the regent of Serang, revealed that SI was only welcomed by low-bureaucracy officers or levels of regents, whereas senior figures in the community included in the priyayi bureaucracy were opposed to it. The scholars and religious teachers in Banten are classified as a group of SI opponents

because they feared their importance was violated. Second, Raden Adipati Wiranatakusumah, regent of Cianjur, who was later in the regent of Bandung, was included in the bureaucratic elite supporters of SI. This is evident from the organizing meeting of SI in his residence before the Congress of SI held in Bandung. According to Wiranatakusumah, the local SI had fulfilled the needs of the people that were not met by the government priyayi [2].

As for the priyayi who were neutral toward SI, they can be seen from the involvement of the elite Bumiputera or between the relation *Hoofd Penghulu* Bandung and R.H. Hasan Musatapa, who had to act formally or informally to demonstrate a neutral attitude. R.A.A. Martanagara was a regent of Bandung and always held deliberation activities with the elite of religion every Friday. and R.H. Hasan Mustafa always gave a lot of input and opinion regarding the movement of SI to R.A.A. Martanagara [5]. On the other hand, there were the priyayi who resisted SI, as can be seen from the attitude of one indigenous elite hostile to SI, Prince Aria Suria Atmaja, retired regent of Bandung. He wrote a letter to the colonial government in 1921 that contained a petition against SI and its leaders that had a bad influence on his people. This attitude was shown openly [5]. Attitudes toward SI were very diverse for the priyayi due to the backgrounds and thoughts each of the priyayi had.

IV. Conclusions

The birth of SI in the residence of Priangan was only welcomed by some priyayi, whereas others were opposed to feeling threatened. The scholars were partly a group of opponents to SI because they felt fear that its importance was being violated. The role of the priyayi in the local SI in Priangan can be viewed from the leadership pattern and power relationships that built its purpose as gaining the trust of the community. The contributions of the priyayi in the local Islamic Sarekat in Priangan began its movements from the urban to the village level. The attitude of the priyayi toward SI in the residency of Priangan varied. Some received it well, some were neutral, and some were hostile. This was certainly caused by various factors. Firstly, the priyayi sought to keep a good name among the central government of the Dutch East Indies. Secondly, the priyayi sought sympathy from SI to create a good image and avoid hostility. Third, the form of rejection was openly caused by various events posed by SI in Priangan. The lunge of the priyayi in the local SI in Priangan played a role as a central figure and had its own appeal by placing itself as a new hope for indigenous peoples.

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