

The Sarekat Islam in Surakarta (1912–1915)

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Abstract—This article examines the local development of the Sarekat Islam movement in Surakarta, and the influence of local figures on the socioeconomic dynamics of that community, in the period 1912–1915. This occurred in the context of the economic conflict between the Sarekat Islam and the Tionghoa group in Surakarta. The dominant figures among the Surakarta Chinese at that time were Sie Dhian Ho, Be Siauw Tjong, and Bwe Kwat Koen, whereas the Be Tjong Hwee association managed to embrace the Chinese community as a whole. The particular purpose of this article is to consider the impact of the establishment of Sarekat Islam Surakarta on politics, society, and the economy and describe the influence of local leaders who would later make many changes in Surakarta in 1912–1915. The historical method employed in this study encompasses heuristics, criticism, and interpretative historiography. The heuristic step involved the use of primary sources, such as archives and newspapers from the same era. These consisted of the *Bataviasche Nieuwsblad*, *Darmo Kondo*, *Pantjaran Warta Sarotomo*, and *Taman Pewarta* newspapers and published Dutch government archives. Besides relying on primary sources, this article also refers to relevant secondary sources, such as journal articles and books. Then, source criticism is undertaken on the collected data to find objective truths, and the data are analyzed and presented in a descriptive form.

Keywords—*Sarekat Islam, Local, Economy, Movement, Surakarta*

I. Introduction

Before the emergence of the Sarekat Islam in Surakarta in 1912, there were several local societies among both Chinese and Javanese groups [1]. One conspicuous Javanese society before the establishment of SI Surakarta was Budi Utomo, which spread through Surakarta, Klaten, Sragen, and Karanganyar and fostered social bonds as a means of defraying costs associated with death by soliciting donations from members. The central figures of Budi Utomo in Surakarta also founded a newspaper organ for their society, *Darmo Kondo*, as a local publication in Surakarta. The journalists and managers working on the newspaper initiated the establishment of Sarekat Islam, which previously consisted only of a local assembly in Laweyan, namely, Rekso Roemekso. The key figures were Haji Bakrie, a director of *Darmo Kondo* in early 1911, and Haji Mohammad Sareef, an administrator. Haji Hisamzaijne, who followed Haji Bakrie as director of *Darmo Kondo*, was also involved, as well as editorial chiefs Hardjoesemitro and R. Soeleiman, who later entered the management of Sarekat Islam. From its very beginning, SI Surakarta successfully recruited individuals from various backgrounds, including a dominant group of Muslim merchants and *priyayi*. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine the influence and impact of the emergence of Islam Sarekat Surakarta on society, politics, and the economy in Surakarta between 1912 and 1915 [2].

The establishment of Sarekat Islam in Surakarta was triggered by factors, including economic rivalry between Chinese and Muslim merchants, a growing consciousness of solidarity among indigenous people, and the recruitment of both *priyayi* and some journalists from the Budi Utomo Surakarta to Rekso Roemekso. Before 1912, economic activities in Surakarta had been dominated by Chinese groups, including Sie Dhian Ho and Be Kwat Koen, both of whom were influential in the Chinese movement. Sie Dhian Ho had first opened a printing press and then published the newspaper *Taman Pewarta* and then played a broader role in the development of journalism in Surakarta by helping several new newspapers to begin publishing in early 1912 [3]. Until the end of 1911, Chinese activities were increasingly prominent, especially after Be Kwat Koen helped organize the celebration of China's independence on January 15, 1912, at Sriwedari. Be Kwat Koen was a widely respected figure in Surakarta; a very large party celebrating his child's wedding in 1911 was attended by Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono X (*Darmo Kondo*, May 31, 1911).

The results of this study can thus illuminate the activities of SI Surakarta in various areas, including the economic and religious areas. In the economic sphere, SI succeeded in forming cooperatives that were established in several places, including Keprabon, Timuran, and Kepatihan. In the religious field, members of the SI Surakarta spread to villages in Sukoharjo, Sragen, and Klaten. They thus became organized at subdistrict and village levels while giving away the Qur'an and a record of the government's administrative law to the community, district administrators, and villages. To explain so clearly, local figures who could play an important role in these activities needed to be found. This study has identified the officers at both subdistrict and village levels in Sukoharjo and Klaten (a branch of Surakarta). As it is important to discuss changes in the management structure of Sarekat Islam Surakarta, this research was summarized in the form of a table, outlining the composition of the local SI of Surakarta for the year 1914. From the management of the local SI, it can be concluded that Sarekat Islam Surakarta was a unified organization, comprising Muslim traders, *priyayi*, and Arab groups who joined the SI.

II. Method

The study employs a historical method that is divided into four phases: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Heuristics is a preliminary step in conducting historical research, an activity seeking resources to obtain data, or historical material, or historical evidence. In this process, historical sources were collected by consulting archives, contemporary newspapers, and reference books. The primary sources used in this study were contemporary newspapers published in 1912–1915, such as *Bataviasche*

Nieuwsblad, Darmo Kondo, Taman Pewarta, Sarotomo, and Pantjangan Warta. Additional use was made of published archives of the Dutch government, such as *R.C Kwantes De Ontwikkeling Van De Nationalistische Beweging In Nederlandsche-Indie 1917–1923* and *S.L Van Der Wal De Volksraad En De Staatkundige Ontwikkeling Van Nederlands-Indie 1891–1926.*

Criticism of sources is conducted to assess their authenticity and level of credibility and is thus a tool to filter and select from among the collected materials to obtain the most original and trustworthy evidence. The main purpose of source criticism is to select and inspect data until facts are obtained. The facts acquired are then analyzed and interpreted according to a chronology. Interpretation is then performed to capture and explain the facts whose truth has been tested and to analyze the evidence that can be synthesized to ascertain the series of events that took place. In this stage, the author is required to observe and reveal the facts acquired and the relationships among them and then to establish a sequence of events that are organized on chronological principles to connect separate events in a coherent manner [4].

III. Results and Discussion

Sarekat Islam emerged in Laweyan, an area heavily populated by Muslim merchants. It was formed by the Rekso Roemekso Society that aimed to protect the batik cloth industry from thieves. Security conditions in Laweyan began to worsen from the beginning of September 1911 due to the rise in the number of batik cloth thieves. As a wealthy merchant area, Laweyan was targeted by thieves after several other areas in Surakarta experienced similar events. Thus, the residents in Seerrngan started to take additional precautions at night due to the frequent thefts. In Laweyan itself, batik houses owners and wealthy merchants began to tell their men to make Sasak Djawa (woven bamboo) to deter the criminals. The merchants also saw that poor houses were unable to make Sasak and so told the workers to make woven bamboo (Darmo Kondo, September 11, 1911). The areas in Laweyan targeted by thieves included the village of Baron-Gede and an area near Mangkunegaran in the village of Margoredjo. Thefts usually involved goods worth 30–60 f (Darmo Kondo, June 3, 1911).

Rekso Roemekso was actually a homegrown society, formed on local initiative at district level. Several associations had already been formed in Surakarta, such as Mardhi Tresno, centered on the village of Ketelan Mangkunegaran, and Soetarso Moeljo in the Gading area. These movements were almost identical to Rekso Roemekso, in terms of security, stability, and maintenance of community solidarity (Darmo Kondo, September 9, 1911). Rekso Roemekso emerged because thefts remained common until the beginning of 1912, so people needed the services of the society in their regions. Originally, Rekso Roemekso was largely present only in Laweyan and Kauman, where the large houses of Muslim merchants and production sites for batik cloth were located. Then, however, the association spread to Chinese settlements, such as those in Coyudan, Singosaren, and around Pasar Gedhe. The spread of Rekso Roemekso provoked conflict between the Javanese and Chinese, resulting in open clashes. This culminated in April 1912, when Chinese merchants came to Laweyan and beat the batik workers, an incident that was reported to the Assistant Resident and Resident of Surakarta (Darmo Kondo, April 20, 1912).

After the fight at Laweyan, the conflict involving the merchants expanded further. The next issue to arise was a boycott of the firm Sie Dhian Ho, which had spread across Singosaren and Pasar Gedhe, by indigenous peoples, especially in areas dominated by the Rekso Roemekso. Journalists writing in the Darmo Kondo noted that the boycott was greatly supported by almost all indigenous groups. While it is unclear which assembly initiated the boycott, almost all areas influenced by Rekso Roemekso and similar associations, such as Mardhi Tresno and Soetarso Moeljo, participated in the boycott of shops belonging to Sie Dhian Ho (Darmo Kondo, April 27, 1912).

Meanwhile, Muslim traders started to combine their business ventures with the Sarekat Islam cooperative. For example, Haji Mohammad Sadjad of Keprabon provided funds amounting to 1000 f, and Haji Abdul Fatah and R. Ng Wiromintargo of Kepatihan provided 5000 f to Degan. Large SI shops then began to appear in several places, many of which were in fact built by Muslim traders who had sufficient capital. Examples of these shops were located in Djaksonegaran, in Pangoelon, and in the Keprabon area near Mangkunegaran. In addition, local assemblies that had been established before SI became members of the SI cooperative, such as Budi Sampoerno which spent 2000 f. This kind of activity continued until 1913, when the SI cooperative was managed by R. Ng Hasmoetani, an officer in Kepatihan, Surakarta, who helped defend Rekso Roemekso, along with R. Djojomargoso.

Table 1. List of Stores Belonging to the Sarekat Islam Surakarta in 1913.

NO.	SHOP NAME	OWNER'S NAME	TYPE OF MERCHANDISE	CAPITAL	INCOME/DAY
1.	Toko Keprabon	Haji Mohammad Sadjad	Staple Goods	f 1000	f 10
2.	Toko Tahoeman	Raden Winarwi dan Haji Nahrawi	Staple Goods	f 300	f 5
3.	Toko Pembuatan Roti Haji Saleh	Haji Saleh	Bread and Various Food Items	f 1000	f 20
4.	Toko Kayu Raden Abdulfatah	Raden Abdulfatah	Timber	f 2000	f 60–100
5.	Toko Beras Kepatihan	R.Ng. Wiromintargo	Staple Goods	f 5000	f 1–10
6.	Toko Djaksonegaran	-	-	f 2000	f 1
7.	Toko Pangoelon	-	-	f 300	f 1
8.	Toko Pakaian Budi Sampoerno	Milik perkumpulan Budi Sampoerno	Clothing	f 2000	f 5

Source: Sartono Kartodirjo, 1975: 441.

Stores included in the SI Cooperative Management received capital assistance from the funds of Haji Samanhudi and Laweyan batik merchants. According to a report from the Resident in Surakarta, stores belonging to the SI stood to rival those belonging to the Chinese, to the extent that the officials in Kepatihan, Surakarta, dared to boycott Chinese shops.

Natives who were already members of the SI then became regular customers and traded exclusively with the fellow members of Sarekat Islam.

The administrators of Sarekat Islam had actually sought government assistance to build shops in various areas of Surakarta, but their request was rejected by Resident Van Wijk in Surakarta for not having a clear administration. As presented in the relevant report, Van Wijk stated that, although the application for capital assistance from SI Surakarta members was reasonable, it did not meet the legal requirements. Moreover, the SI manager did not have a special advocate to oversee such capital matters. Van Wijk also banned officers of the SI in Surakarta from recruiting new members, since this practice had been banned by the Governor-General in accordance with a new regulation on local branches of the Sarekat Islam to be implemented in June 1913.

SI Surakarta continued to expand in Klaten and Sragen, as some members of Budi Utomo there helped to establish the management of Sarekat Islam. In Klaten, this was accomplished under the management of Raden Djojorahardjo, with the aim of developing the economic network of SI Surakarta. In Klaten itself, Sarekat Islam spread to several subdistricts. In Trucuk, for example, the village head was influenced by the local management to join the SI Klaten. In addition to Klaten and Sragen, by May 1913, SI branches had been formed in Wonogiri, Sukoharjo and Boyolali, by involving local *priyayi* interested in building economic relationships with people in Surakarta. SI deployment activities in some areas around Surakarta were assisted by the Darmo Atmoko Association, which consisted of employees of Surakarta Kasunanan [5].

In Sukoharjo, under the guidance of the SI, branches were established in the villages and divided into groups led by M. Somoprajitno. Uniquely, the management of SI Sukoharjo was undertaken by *priyayi*, including government officials from the office of Sukoharjo attorney M. Werdopanoeksoemo, with Commissioner Raden Ponasastro as secretary, and Raden Ramelan as chairman (Sarotomo, August 10, 1914). According to the journalist Djawi Kando, SI Surakarta activities in 1913 were developing in rural areas but weakening in the city center. The hostility between Sarekat Islam and Chinese merchants in Surakarta actually continued to strengthen, as fires in the houses of Muslim merchants in Kauman heightened suspicions between the Javanese and Chinese. Police never resolved these issues.

In June 1914, a month before the foundation of the SI in Sukoharjo district, a meeting in Tawang Sari recruited village heads in the area. Envoys of SI Surakarta attended, namely, R. Hatmoesoehardjo and Djojopranoto, who gathered the village heads as officers for SI management in Tawang Sari. The establishment of this board facilitated the growth of the SI in villages and districts, including recruitment of Bumiputera and requesting a donation of 1 f as a registration fee (Sarotomo, July 16, 1914).

Table 2. Management Structure of the Local Sarekat Islam Surakarta in 1913–1914.

No.	Name	Position
1.	Haji Samanhuji	President
2.	Haji Bakrie	Vice President
3.	R. Hatmoesoehardjo	Secretary 1

4.	M. Soeprapti	Secretary 2
5.	M. Djojopranoto	Deputy Secretary
6.	M. Mangoensoetirto	Deputy Secretary
7.	R. Sadikin	Deputy Secretary
8.	R.M Soewandi	Deputy Secretary
9.	M. Kartowihardjo	Treasurer
10.	M. Kartopandjojo	Commissioner
11.	M. Wirjowigoeno	Commissioner
12.	M. Wiriosoemitro	Commissioner
13.	R. Sastrosoepomo	Commissioner
14.	M. Ng. Hasmoetani	Commissioner
15.	R. Ng. Wirowadjojo	Commissioner
16.	R. Ng. Mangoenprawiro	Commissioner
17.	Syekh M. Bin Awabsoengkar	Commissioner
18.	Sajid Mochammad Aljoefri	Advisory
19.	R. Ng. Martoehosodo	Advisory
20.	Haji Hisamzaijne	Advisory

Source: Sarotomo, July 16, 1914.

The organization of the SI Surakarta after the First Congress in March 1913 underwent a change, as R. Djojomargoso was replaced by R. Hatmoesoehardjo as secretary. Moreover, Haji Bakrie officially entered as vice president, whereas several other influential figures, such as Haji Hisamzaijne, were appointed as advisors. The legal status of SI Surakarta also underwent a change, in accordance with the new rules stipulated by the Governor-General's Regulation of June 13, 1913. This required SI branches in various regions to have their own legal status separate from that of the Central Sarekat Islam. This reorganization can be said to be the first legal identity that SI Surakarta had. At the end of 1912, and until its crucial First Congress, the SI had no official legal status because the Governor-General had not yet issued rules for the establishment of an *afdeling* or branch.

In accordance with the decision of the meeting in Surabaya, the First SI Congress was held in Surakarta on March 23–24, 1913. The decisions set forth in this Congress included the four articles of intent and purpose of the SI. First, the SI aimed to advance the economic prospects of the Bumiputera in terms of business; second, to advance the education of the Bumiputera; third, to foster a binding brotherhood among fellow indigenous peoples; and fourth, to distribute correct knowledge of Islamic religious teachings (Pantjaran Warta, February 22, 1913).

In the year 1915, the organization of the SI Surakarta continued to change dramatically; while the activities it has undertaken were also evolving, militant activists began to enter management, with one such individual, Sosrokoernio, replacing R. Hatmoesoehardjo as secretary. Marco Kartodikromo, who previously assisted the newspaper Sarotomo, was already busy with his own newspaper *Doenia Bergerak*, which later changed to *Goentur Bergerak*. Haji Hisamzaijne, after departing from the SI at the Third Congress in Surabaya in July 1915, became editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Meedan Moeslimin* that he founded with Haji Misbach. In general, the activity of SI Surakarta in 1915 was confined to the world of journalism and to sustaining the batik industry that was threatened by economic crisis after the war in Europe. Business competition with Chinese groups also began to disappear, whereas shops formed by the SI cooperative began to close. The management of SI Surakarta was left in the hands of militant journalists who continued to fan the flames of indigenous struggle and spread the doctrine of Islam.

IV. Conclusion

The formation of Sarekat Islam in Surakarta caused social change, bolstering consciousness of both native and Muslim identities. These consequently inspired modernization efforts, such as associations, gathering capital to form cooperatives, and spreading the teachings of Islam from the city to villages. All of these efforts were affected by other groups, most notably the Dutch Government and Chinese groups in Surakarta, that were external to the environment of Sarekat Islam and the local organizations that supported it. Sociologically, before the establishment of SI in Surakarta, most indigenous groups were left behind, both in terms of economics and thinking, apart from the successful batik traders in Laweyan and the *priyayi*. The birth of Sarekat Islam in 1912 drastically changed these conditions and provided indigenous groups with political and economic opportunities that are more comparable to those already enjoyed by others in Surakarta, namely, the government and the Chinese.

In addition to being a struggle organization, Sarekat Islam indirectly promoted a merger between *priyayi* and Muslims, both Arab and Javanese. This situation was unprecedented before the existence of SI; for example, the Budi Utomo Surakarta only managed to embrace Muslims from among wealthy merchants, such as Haji Bakrie and Haji Hisamzaijne. Other associations, such as the Mangkunegaran Legion, Darmo Hatmoko, and Narpo Pandowo, were only for the *priyayi* and Kasunanan officers. The birth of Sarekat Islam initiated a new wave of social change among indigenous peoples. The SI survived, thanks to the contribution of the officials, such as the clerks R. Marthodarsono and R. Djojomargoso, and built an economic base relying on capital from traders, including Haji Samanhudi and Haji Bakrie. In addition to being a new movement, the SI was open and massive in membership and did not exclude anyone from joining, with the exception of non-Muslims. The nature of this openness had a great impact that was inseparable from underlying social and economic conflicts. Competition between Javanese and Chinese shops in Surakarta and conflict between the mandors and workers in rural Klaten and Sukoharjo were affected by the emergence of Sarekat Islam.

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