

## Legitimacy of Custom Leader: Study on *Selamatan Suro* in Samin Society

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### Abstract

Samin society is a community following rules of Samin as their way of life. Rule of Samin was created and heired by Ki Samin Surosentiko. There are many *selamatan* ceremonies exist in Samin society, but the most important ceremony on their culture is *Selamatan Suro* ceremony. *Selamatan Suro* is a cultural construction of Saminism which provides opportunities for custom leader of Samin to take a greater social role. The aim of this research is to know legitimacy of custom leader in Samin Society. A qualitative method with phenomenological approach was used on this research. Data collection technique used were participative observation technique, intense interview, and documentation. Result of this research shows that the implementation of *Selamatan Suro* ceremony contains a process of custom leadership legitimation, custom leader of Samin society get legitimacy to the existence of leadership from Samin and non Samin society.

**KEYWORDS:** legitimacy, custom leader, *selamatan suro*

### Introduction

Samin society is a community who still has and maintains social behaviour based on traditional values that they believe in. It is rule of Samin that they use as their way of life. With oral method (spoken tradition), rule of Samin survives from the last 19th century until now (Mulder, 2001). Samin society has ever spread to some area. Nowadays, social and cultural condition of Samin society in those areas are different one another. There are some Samin societies that have been changed, so that the colour of Saminism is no longer found on their daily life (FISIP UMM team, 2002). But on the other side, there are still some of Samin societies that still maintain values and rules of Samin, one of them is Samin society living in Jepang village, Margomulyo, Bojonegoro, East Java, Indonesia. From the social life, culture, and faith (religion), Samin society of Jepang can be categorized as *abangan* group based on Geertz terminology. Their social behaviour is likely most of Javanese' in general, taking Javanese spiritual value including animism and dynamism influenced by Islamism and Hinduism. One of evidences that concept of animism and dynamism were still adhere to Samin society is the existence of *selamatan* ceremony.

Based on the rule of Samin, *selamatan* is an act believed as an effort to reach a peaceful, prosperous and safe condition. It also becomes a mean of communication between human and God. By doing *selamatan*, they believe that any calamities and disasters will not come. They also believe that *selamatan* brings luck, peace and safe. The most important *selamatan* ceremonies in the Samin society is *Selamatan Suro*. *Selamatan* ceremony done in month of *Suro* has a strategic mean for Samin society and Samin's leader.

Almost every socially recognized group or institution in society has its own appropriate set of authoritative offices and legitimated sanctions. Society exercises a wider authority. It alone, on Max Weber's account, may legitimately resort to coercive violence or use of force. In that sense, society exercises sovereignty. Sovereignty refers to the ultimate right of command in society. Historically, theories of sovereign authority in society appeal either to God or to the people to ground

ultimate authority. The sovereignty of the people means they must assent to legitimate authority because they consented (through some variant of a social contract) to set it up for the common good. In obeying legitimate authority or laws, the people are really obeying themselves. Sovereignty of the people implies that they, ultimately, author all authorities. They originate and authorize those who represent authority over them. So, authority is always intrinsically limited by the purpose of the original social compact (Coleman, 2013). In the samin society, as part of the government, they have a leader who appointed by the government, sub-district head. But in fact, custom leader of Samin role as leader. The legitimacy of custom leader of Samin appears during the *Selamatan Suro* ceremony. There are three ideal types of legitimation rule, charismatic authority, traditional authority and rational legal authority (Best, 2002). Different modes of legitimation has a different political outcomes, so it needs to examine about the kind of legitimacy exists in samin community.

### Material and Methods

This research used qualitative paradigm with a phenomenological approach, and used the symbolic interaction's method. The data source consisted of documents in form of places and symbols, men and activities. Researcher participated on *Selamatan Suro* ceremony. The data collection techniques included participant observations, in-depth interviews and documentations. Research is based on the rules of EMIC (according to the nature of their thinkings) and ethics (based on the empirical situation observed). The data collection process included three stages, getting in, getting along and logging data. Data processing was started from writing the interviews, observation, data editing, checking the validity of the data using the triangulation method of data sources and data interpretation. Data analysis following the procedure of the first order interpretation, the second order interpretation, and the third-order interpretation.

### Result

*Selamatan Suro* ceremony was held on custom leader's birthday. This ceremony was started in the morning. Jepang people worked together to prepare all 'uba rampe' (all the equipments and supplies) of *Selamatan Suro* ceremony. Uba rampe were foods including *tumpeng* (made of rice), *inkung* (made of chicken), *jajan pasar* (traditional snacks), *kulupan* (mixed vegetables), *krupuk* (cracker), red and white porridge, water in a jar called *kendi*, two bunches of bananas and two glasses of milk. Not only the leader and followers of Samin, the regional official governments were also invited to the ceremony. *Selamatan Suro* ceremony was held at 7.30 pm on Custom Leader's house. Many official governments attended the ceremony, such as sub district head, commander of rayon military, head of district police, chief of regional religion ministry, and regional investigator officer. On this point, the role of those government figures are both as culture learners and connectors between Custom leader and whole regional governments. All audiences sit in circle while the *uba rampe* was put in the middle. The procession of ceremony was started when custom leader asked the regional investigator officer, Mr. Jeki, to open and lead the ceremony. Then short speech was given by the subdistrict head. Next, the subdistrict head cut the *tumpeng*, put it in a plate completed with another menu mentioned as *uba rampe*. The plate then be given to the custom leader to be brought to a room. There the ritual was done personally by custom leader. The activity done by him couldn't be identified since no one was permitted to enter the room. After that, audiences ate the rest of *tumpeng* including all *uba rampe* together. By that time, *Selamatan Suro*

*ceremony* was turned more likely as a citizen's party closed with pray read by chief of regional religion ministry.

## Discussion

### Samin Society

Samin society is a part of Javanese that is bound into a community whose daily life is based on values and rules created by Samin Surosentiko. Based on written manuscript found in Tapelan village entitled *Serat Punjer Kawitan*, Samin Surosentiko was descent of Raden Mas Adipati Brotodiningrat, a regent of Sumarata Area (in the colonial period) in 1802-1826 period. He had two sons. The first one named Raden Ronggowirjodiningrat the second son named Raden Surawijaya. Raden Surawijaya was the father of Samin Surosentiko. Raden Kohar was his cognomen. The name Samin derived from the word *sami-sami* means together. He felt the name Samin sounds to be closer to the people. While the added name Surosentiko was got when he become spiritual teacher. The name was added by his followers. They called him Ki (clergyman) Samin Surosentiko. Upon after the departure of Samin Surosentiko, Samin leadership was taken by Suro Kidin and Mbah Engkrek. Suro Kidin is Samin Surosentiko's son-in-law. While Mbah Engkrek is one of loyal followers of Samin Surosentiko. The leadership pattern on this era was no longer centralized, but more depended on local leader of each area. Next generation of leadership was Surokarto Kamidin, son of Suro Kidin. Surokarto Kamidin was the 3rd generation of Samin leadership. He lived and settled in Jepang village. The leadership of Samin then hold by his son, Hardjo Kardi until this time. Samin society has ever spread to some area such as Blora, Bojonegoro, Ngawi, Madiun, Pati, Tuban and so on (Hutomo, 1985).

Main source rule of Samin come from Hinduism and Buddhism. Shortly, basic values of Saminism are: 1. Religion is life's basic. It can used as a weapon that protects human from disaster. Saminist believes that all religion are good. They don't differentiate one religion to others. The most important thing is a person's manner. This belief is similar to parenalism, a spiritual movement emphasizing on occultism and mysticism; 2. Do not disturb others. Do not make any conflicts. Do not be easily envy and never take anything without permission from the owner. 3. Be patient and stay down to earth; 4. Always remember and understand the true meaning of life. There is only one soul that be brought forever eternally; 5. Respect each-other and speak well, do not hurt anybody's heart. From politic side, Ki Samin Surosentiko taught his followers to strive against Dutch Colonialism. He told his followers to refuse paying tax, fixing road, *ronda* or night guard work, and forced labor (Onghokham, 1977). Ki Samin's idea about state structure is written on *Serat Pikukuh Kasajaten*, said that a country will be respected and be shelter for its citizens if every person living there always pay a good attention to science and live in peace (Sastroatmojo, 1983).

Based on interview, saminist's way of life cannot be separated with Javanese culture. It has three basic concept of life: peace, harmony, and safe or *selamet*. Communities of Samin give priority to peace and friendly living on their daily life. They emphasize the harmony of macrocosm and microcosm as well the harmony among people as society member. *Selamet* means that they live to find safe. In line with the way of life, rule of Samin confesses the existence of superior power in this world. They believe that this universe has soul and power. On this context, Saminist still believes on animism and dynamism. It is collateral with Saminism syncretism among animism, Hindu, Buddha, and Islam. From philosophical side, rule of Samin

tends to parenialism practice (immortal wisdom). The most important thing is spiritualism.

### ***Selamatan Suro* Ceremony**

Basically, *selamatan* ceremony is a pray to The Almighty. It is also believed as a communication mean between human and God. *Selamatan* ceremony done in month of *Suro* has a strategic mean for Samin society and Samin's custom leader. On Javanese culture, month of *Suro* is very special, especially for doing any spiritual acts. Based on interview with the cuatom leader, *Selamatan Suro* ceremony is one of rules of Samin and believed as a mean to ask safe, prosperity and peace to God. Moreover, it is also believed as a mean to grateful to God for all good things He has given to human in this world.

On site observation shows that *Selamatan Suro* ceremony engaged not only saminist but also non-saminist society including government officers to come in to the social dinamic. *Selamatan Suro* ceremony was basically a spiritual need of human to communicate with The Creator. But in progress, it has experienced meaning and function displacement from spiritual-transcendental aspect to social-politic aspect. Especially since it's under leadership of Hardjo Kardi as the custom leader. *Selamatan Suro* ceremony feels more as an instrument of bargaining power from Samin leader to formal leader (government) and wide society needed his help and role. Can also be understood that the ceremony tend to be a symbol of status consecration to Hardjo Kardi as a person having special power and authority to the government and wider society outboard Samin. Using *Selamatan Suro* ceremony, the custom leader, Hardjo Kardi is able to keep his existence in spiritual and social life. So that the situation has given a legitimation –both directly and indirectly– to Hardjo Kardi as a leader.

It is proven and confirmed to whole processions of *Selamatan Suro* ceremony. The ceremony places Hardjo Kardi as center of ritual. The centralized role including time determining and preparation of ceremony. Hardjo Kardi's top leadership is on implementation of ceremony itself. With his role as connector between 'bottom world' (*jagad cilik* where real life happened) and 'upper world' (*jagad gèdhé* or transcendental world), acclamationly Hardjo Kardi has been 'crowned' as social leader. The social show gives Hardjo Kardi an authority room as Samin leader since all procession series of ceremony centred to Hardjo Kardi. Viewed from sociologic perception, the phenomenon leads to clues that priority elements in social interaction happened is being upon Samin leader's hand. It means that status, authority, and territory of Samin leader has been acknowledged. Thus Samin leader has a clear validity of role and status in society. On the other words, the existence of leadership is automatically been accredited both for Samin society and for non-formal leader in wider society.

### **Legitimation**

There are three ideal types of legitimate rule. First, *charismatic authority* that's concerned with how a ppolitical order can be maintained by the force of a leader's personality, this form of authority is 'resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person and of the normative pattern or order revealed or ordained by him. Second, *traditional authority*, concerned with how a political order can be maintained by the constant reference to customs, traditions and conventions, this type of authority is: 'resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority

under rule'. The third type is *rational legal authority*, it is concerned with how a political order is regarded as *legal* in the eyes of the population. Weber explains that this form of authority is 'resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of that elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands'. Rational legal authority is then a structure for making decisions, and the legitimacy of the structure is maintained by reference to a legal code. In addition, rational legal authority is based upon 'natural law', whenever people interact with each other they make expectations of each other's behavior, and these expectations form a 'normative order'. In other words, Weberian natural law is a form of non-religious morality. This normative order puts pressure on people to behave in particular ways, and this becomes codified (written down) as a set of legal rules (Best, 2002).

### Legitimation of Custom Leader

*Selamatan Suro* ceremony has become a rhetoric legitimation. Sociologically, a rhetoric is limited treasure of meaning, i.e. a set of symbol functions to communicate a certain meaning that is directed and organized to an image representation or specific impression. The treasure is not only verbally mean, but also visual symbols such as objects, signs, emblems, and so on. Social representation about *selamatan Suro* ceremony to Samin leader gives a logical consequence to the existence of leadership custom legitimation to various sides having relationship to Samin society. Principally, legitimation is a problem of authority from functional side. Custom leadership coronation as well as informal leadership of Hardjo Kardi has become more valid when wider society outside Samin has confessed and followed his position and authority. Facts that local and regional governments give full support to *selamatan Suro* ceremony, many socialites and elements of wide society outside Samin also do the ceremony, show their acceptance to the ritual. On the same time it shows that they accept the existence of Samin leader since *selamatan Suro* ceremony is very identical and strongly adhered to the leader of Samin. Those acceptance and confession of Samin leadership means also acceptance and confession to its existence both as Samin leader and also as a person having specific ability.

Legitimacy was seen as one possible source, or motive of support, but it was realized that legitimacy is potentially scarce. The belief in legitimacy depends on claims that must be accepted as truth, but that truth claims became increasingly precarious; his crisis of legitimacy is basically a crisis of culture. The claim to legitimacy and the belief in it can have different bases.

Hardjo Kardi as custom leader, has social and cultural legality to wider community in society –especially those who confess his ability of spiritual communication with Heaven and need his help–. In one occasion, he said:

*"I pray to The Lord safe, peace and prosperity to this region and this country –by the ceremony–. It's very good to keep this rule, if it's not then it's ok. But –if it's not– then it means no respect to former heroes struggled for independence"*

That statement is a satire to government and those who do not take care of the ceremony. Especially last words of the statement: 'But –if it's not– then it means no respect to former heroes struggled for independence'. It gives emphasis how important to do the ceremony linked to history of this country. By using that, it gives guilt to the ones neglecting Hardjo Kardi's suggestion related to implementation of *Selamatan Suro* ceremony more over to government who are responsible for society's safe. Beside Hardjo Kardi's statement, researcher also noticed government officer's statement. Margomulyo's subdistrict head stated that regional government has put a

quite big attention to existence of Samin society in Jepang Margomulyo. It is caused not only long historical side of Samin's struggle, but also Samin society has become certain icon for the village enriching regional culture and having specific wise local values. Explanation from Margomulyo's subdistrict area has given an implicit confession to Hardjo Kardi's existence as Samin leader. Local government's support and attention to Hardjo Kardi both as an individual and as a leader for Samin society structurally showed that he has strong position in social status in structural government context.

Based on interview with Hardjo Kardi, he explained that long time before his father –Surakarta Kemidin– has passed away he has explicitly stated about Hardjo Kardi's leadership.

*My father has said that I don't need to go anywhere. Just stay here and people will try to find me. Somehow it's true. Now that even I live in forrest, there are still many people come to see me. What could i say then?*

That prediction is considered as form of leadership coronation upon Saminists and wider society. Explanation from Hardjo Kardi's father that many people will try to find Hrdjo Kardi has become key exclamation that Hardjo Kardi will be the next leader. Beside that, Hardjo Kardi has also been inherited a book from his father –a *primbon* book, kind of divining manual book of Javanese value, considered as leadership symbol–. Related to Samin society and Samin leadership, it can be clearly seen that legitimation happened is charismatic legitimation. The legitimation develops in form of commad right in supranatural level. Based on the data collected by researcher, some proofs support the premise. First of all, anybody in Samin society will ask to Hardjo Kardi if they will do something's important, not ask to the government. Second, fact that an oil company in Bojonegoro has asked Hardjo Kardi's help to muffle citizen's demonstration and somehow the demonstration were canceled. Third, visit from a candidate of regional parliamentarian to Hardjo Kardi to consult about candidacy possibility in general election of Tuban's subdistrict head (Tuban is an area north to Bojonegoro). Fourth, any appeal for helps from Hardjo Kardi to give suggestions for business needs, governmental condition, and best time to conduct any special moments. These show that even Hardjo Kardi is not a legal leader but he is a leader for both Samin and non-Samin society as long as he lives this world.

Considering all of those facts and explanation mentioned above, the legitimation of leadership legitimation of Hardjo Kardi is charismatic legitimation. This is in line with the term charisma which refers to an extraordinary power, and Weber defined it as: "The term 'charisma' will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities (Hansen, 2001). As conceptualized by Weber, charisma (the gift of grace) referred to "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." There are at least five elements of Weber's formulation of charismatic authority which must be taken into account in any political research using the concept. These elements, are the charismatic leader is always the creation of his followers, an "individual personality" or leader capable of generating a charismatic authority relationship in one context may fail completely to generate that relationship in some other context, the leader does not regard himself either as chosen by or as solely dependent on his followers but rather as "elected" from

above to fulfil a mission, the behaviour of the charismatic leader in power is anti-bureaucratic, Charismatic authority is unstable, tending to be transformed (routinized) through time (Fagen, 1965). And Hardjo Kardi has already had those five elements to be called as a charismatic leader.

### Conclusion

Based on all data found above, it can be concluded that legality of Hardjo Kardi's authority and leadership is a kind of charismatic legitimation. Fact that ritual of *Selamatan Suro* ceremony has developed as a habit for those society outside Samin, so legality of Hardjo Kardi's leadership has become more steady. It can be clearly seen that *Selamatan Suro* ceremony has become a mean of legitimation for Hrdjo Kardi's leadership, both for Samin leader and social-political context in nowadays life.

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