

Construction of the Character Ki Samin Surosentiko in Oral Tradition in the Kendeng Mountains

Dewi Salindri, Sri Ana Handayani, Eko Crys Endrayadi*

Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, University of Jember, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the construction of the character Ki Samin Surosentiko in the oral traditions of the people in the Kendeng Mountains, Central Java Province. This research aims to find out the history of Ki Samin Surosentiko and his teachings, including the distribution area of Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers, as well as the oral traditions regarding Ki Samin Surosentiko in the Kendeng Mountains. Ki Samin Surosentiko is a figure from the Samin ethnicity who was born in Blora Regency, Central Java Province. Through oral tradition, people around the Kendeng Mountains to this day tell about Ki Samin Surosentiko's exploits from a different perspective. The Samin ethnic group views the figure of Ki Samin Surosentiko as a figure or king, while for the Javanese ethnic group, he is considered a very stereotypical figure. Among the differences in Ki Samin Surosentiko's delivery of history, there are similarities in the oral traditions that developed in the Kendeng area, namely his honesty and concern for the environment.

Keywords: Ki Samin Surosentiko, Kendeng Mountains, Sikep teachings, oral traditions

INTRODUCTION

The history of Ki Samin Surosentiko is very interesting to research because it can provide a complete construction regarding the understanding of oral traditions currently developing in the people of the Kendeng Mountains Region, Central Java Province, Indonesia. Ki Samin Surosentiko's nickname is R. Kohar. His father was Raden Surowijoyo, the second son of the Regent of Sumoroto (now Ponorogo Regency, East Java Province) named R.M. Adipati Brotodiningrat who ruled from 1802 – 1826. In 1890, Raden Kohar changed his name to Ki Samin Surosentiko. He considered the change in Ki Samin Surosentiko's name to be more popular than the name Raden Kohar. Next, Ki Samin Surosentiko began to spread his teachings, which he named the Sikep teachings, until they attracted public interest, and a new ethnic group was formed called the Samin ethnic group (Pemerintah Kabupaten Bojonegoro, 1996: 1).

The Samin ethnicity is a Javanese sub-ethnic, so in general its culture is the same as Javanese culture which is traditional agricultural. Thus, physically, Samin people also have similarities with Javanese people, such as skin color, face, hair, height, and other physical characteristics. The Samin ethnic group strongly adheres to the customs taught by Ki Samin Surosentiko. For the Samin ethnic group, the figure of Ki Samin Surosentiko is considered the King of the Land of Java (Queen of the Land of Jawi) with the title Prabu Panembahan Suryongalam (light of the universe). The story of Ki Samin Surosentiko and his teachings which are full of life values are still conveyed through oral tradition because they cannot read and write (Endrayadi, 2013).

For many years, the Samin ethnic group maintained the teachings of Ki Samin Surosentiko until later the Samin ethnic group was considered "different" from the Javanese ethnic group, which, if seen from their cultural roots, actually both came from the Javanese ethnicity. These differences ultimately lead to differences in the oral traditions that developed in the two ethnic groups. In the Samin ethnic oral tradition, the figure of Ki Samin Surosentiko is considered a king whose teachings are always heeded, whereas, for Javanese people, the figure of Ki Samin Surosentiko is considered a stereotypical figure, whose teachings are considered "deviant". As a result, Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers were treated as outsiders in their environment and became targets of ridicule. The presence of Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers or the so-called Samin ethnic

group is always related to their conflict with the majority group (ethnic Javanese) who have a dominant position and enjoy high social status with several other privileges on the social stage. The majority group also often develops a set of tools that corner the minority group (the Samin ethnic group) (<http://www.interseksi.org>, 20 March 2012)

The oral tradition polemic is currently getting stronger due to the tendency to compartmentalize group identities which is increasingly evident in the Kendeng Mountains community. The discrimination carried out by Javanese people against the Samin ethnic group (which is a minority) boils down to a different point of view or insight into the teachings that are still adhered to by Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers today. However, among the differences in viewpoints that exist between the two ethnic groups, there are similarities in the oral tradition that followers of Ki Samin Surosentiko's teachings uphold an honest attitude and care about preserving nature. To understand the current construction of the figure of Ki Samin Surosentiko in the oral tradition in the Kendeng Mountains, it is necessary to describe chronologically the history of Ki Samin Surosentiko and his teachings, including the distribution area of Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers, as well as the oral tradition regarding Ki Samin Surosentiko in the Kendeng Mountains.

This research is cultural history research, so the use of historical methods is very relevant to analyze and reconstruct the past regarding Ki Samin Surosentiko and his teachings in the oral traditions of the people in the Kendeng Mountains Region. (Gottschalk, 1969:32). The stages in the historical method consist of four stages, namely (1) heuristics (searching, finding, and collecting written sources that are appropriate to the research subject), 2) source criticism (criticizing written sources, to determine the credibility and authenticity of the source history into historical facts), 3) interpretation (transforming historical facts to construct arguments), and 4) historiography (casting arguments as a synthesis in the form of writing/historical construction) (Storey, 2011). This research uses primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from the Central Java Province Library and Archives Agency (Bapersip) in Semarang and interviews with people in the Kendeng Mountains, while secondary data consisted of books and articles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History and Teachings of Ki Samin Surosentiko

Around the 1800s, in East Java Province there was a district called Sumoroto Regency (now included in Ponorogo Regency, East Java Province). The regents who have served in Sumoroto Regency are (1) R.M. Tumenggung Prawirodirdjo (1746 – 1751); (2) R.M. Tumenggung Somonegoro (1751 – 1772); (3) R.M. Duke Brotodirdjo (1772 – 1802); (4) R.M. Duke Brotodiningrat (1802 - 1826). R.M. Adipati Brotodiningrat has two children, namely Raden Ronggowirjodiningrat and Raden Surowidjojo. Raden Ronggowirjodiningrat then came to power in Sumoroto Regency, East Java Province as wedana regent in 1826 - 1844, while Raden Surowidjojo joined the community leaving the duchy and worked as a bromocorah for the benefit of the poor in the Bojonegoro Regency area (Pemerintah Kabupaten Bojonegoro, 1996: 1).

Raden Surowidjojo's decision to leave Sumoroto Regency was because he felt concerned about seeing the people living in misery due to Dutch colonial rule. Since childhood, Raden Surowidjojo has been equipped with knowledge of the royal environment, knowledge of concern, likes to give in to achieve victory, and loves justice. Raden Surowidjojo fell into a life of bromocorah, looting the houses of rich people who were followers of the Dutch colonial era. The loot was distributed among the poor. Raden Surowidjojo also gave lessons on mental and mental exercise to the community which he wrote in Javanese letters in a macapat entitled Sekar Pucung (Pemerintah Kabupaten Bojonegoro, 1996: 1).

Raden Surowidjojo's union with the poor is the union of the king and the people. During his travels, Raden Surowidjojo married a girl from Rajekwesi Village, Bojonegoro Regency named Mbok Kemis. From his marriage, he had five sons. One of the children who then continued his dreams was his second son, Raden Kohar. Raden Kohar was born in 1859, in Ploso Kediren Village, Randublatung District, Blora Regency,

Central Java Province (Hutomo, 1985: 4)

Raden Kohar has provided Raden Surowidjoyo with various kinds of knowledge, such as knowledge about the environment, martial arts, and a humble, fair, and honest attitude. To meet his daily needs, Raden Kohar works as a farmer. He has quite extensive rice fields, about three bau or five acres (1 bau = 0.8 hectare) (Poeponegoro, 1990: 238), one bau field, and six cows (Hutomo, 1996: 14).

Raden Kohar has the same characteristics as his father (Raden Surowidjojo), namely that he enjoys teaching other people, especially poor people, about how to manage their life behavior and good mental attitudes. He wrote these teachings in several kepek (a kind of book similar to primbon). These kepeks include Kepek Punjer Kawitan (historical/genealogical primbon), Kepek Serat Pikukuh Kasajaten (primbon about the limits of character and behavior), Kepek Serat Uri-uri Pambudi (primbon about instructions for performing asceticism in achieving good manners), Kepek Jati Kawit (primbon about the glory of the afterlife) (Sastroatmodjo, 2003: 32 - 34).



Photo of Raden Kohar or Ki Samin Surosentiko

(<https://ngrasanipacitan.wordpress.com/2012/03/13/Saminisme-akar-sosialisme-di-indonesia/>)

When Raden Kohar was 31 years old (in 1890), he changed his name to Ki Samin Surosentiko. He considered the change in Ki Samin Surosentiko's name to be more popular than the name Raden Kohar. Next, Ki Samin Surosentiko began to spread his teachings, which he named the Sikep teachings, in Klopodhuwur Village, Blora Regency, Central Java Province. The teachings of Sikep contain three laws, namely: First, the law of action or Angger-angger pratikel. This law of conduct contains a prohibition that as humans we must not be envious, envious, easily angered, like to steal, stingy, lie, cheat, sell, or act insultingly towards fellow inhabitants of nature. Second, the law of speaking or Angger-angger pangucap. This law of speech contains a prohibition that no one can hurt other people's feelings by keeping their mouths free from saying bad things and hurting other people's feelings. Third, the law regarding matters that must be implemented or Angger-angger lakonana. The oral tradition regarding this law says " Do it patiently, you should remember to be patient, and patience must be carried out in life" (Hutomo, 1996:25-26).

The Sikep teachings delivered by Ki Samin Surosentiko are attracting more and more people's interest in listening to Ki Samin Surosentiko's lectures so that his followers continue to increase day by day. Ki Samin's teachings were carried out orally at home or in the field, where most of his followers could not read and write. Based on the Rembang Resident's report in 1903, there were 772 followers of Ki Samin Surosentiko's

teachings. In 1907, it was estimated that Ki Samin's followers numbered 5,000 people. The level of public support for Ki Samin Surosentiko surprised the Dutch Colonial Government, especially since there was news that Ki Samin Surosentiko and his followers were planning a rebellion. Therefore, on March 1 1907 the Dutch controller reported to the resident assistant to convey to the resident about the plans for the rebellion. On November 8, 1907, Ki Samin Surosentiko and eight of his followers were arrested by the Dutch Colonial Government (Sudikan, 2008: 87). In 1914, Ki Samin died while a prisoner in Sawahlunto, Padang, West Sumatra (Sastroatmodjo, 2003: 9).

Distribution of Ki Samin Surosentiko's Followers

The arrest and exile of Ki Samin Surosentiko by the Dutch Colonial Government in 1907 did not stop his followers from spreading the teachings of Sikep. The distribution of Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers started from villages in Blora Regency, including the villages of Klopodhuwur, Bapangan, Kedungtuban, Sambong, Jiken, Jepon, Blora, Tunjungan, Ngawen, Todanan, Kunduran, Banjarejo, and Dopleng. In 1917, Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers had spread to the Kendeng Mountains area, including Grobogan Regency, Kudus Regency, Pati Regency, Blora Regency, Rembang Regency (Central Java Province); and in Bojonegoro Regency, Ngawi Regency, Tuban Regency (East Java Province). The Kendeng Mountains are a row of limestone hills in the northern part of Java Island that extends from the Grobogan Regency area, Central Java Province to Tuban Regency, East Java Province (https://p2k.stekom.ac.id/encyclopedia/Pegunungan_Kendeng, accessed 24 April 2024).



Map of the Kendeng Mountains

(<https://banyumas.tribunnews.com/2023/11/23/membentang-panjang-dari-jawa-tengah-hingga-jawa-timur-ini-arti-nama-pegunungan-kendeng>)

According to Sudikan (2008: 90 - 91), the spread of Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers was caused by several things, namely: (1) The spread of Sikep teachings by his followers, such as Wongsorejo from Madiun Regency; Engkrek from Grobogan Regency, Karsiyah from Pati Regency, Radiwongso from Kudus Regency, and others. (2) the Samin ethnic movement which opposed the policies of the Dutch Colonial Government by refusing to pay taxes and handing over part of the harvest to the village. This method increasingly developed and was then felt to be worrying and dangerous for the colonial government. Because of this, many of Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers were arrested. Those who escaped arrest by the Dutch Colonial Government then fled and hid in the teak forests around the Kendeng Mountains. The spread of followers of Ki Samin Surosentiko's teachings has had positive consequences for the community. They are bound by ties of brotherhood wherever the Samin ethnic group is located. Apart from ties of brotherhood, they are also bound by similarities in customs.

In Pati Regency, the distribution of Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers has several versions, as follows. (1) Sudikan (2008: 90) states that the existence of the Samin ethnicity in Pati Regency, Central Java Province was spread by a student of Ki Samin Surosentko named Karsiyah. He continued the Sikep teachings in Kayen District, Pati Regency in 1911 by inviting people to refuse to pay taxes to the Dutch Colonial Government. Karsiyah received the nickname Prince Sendang Janur from his followers. As a result of his resistance, Karsiyah was arrested by the Dutch Colonial Government. Today, Karsiyah's figure is unknown among the Samin ethnic group, in fact, the existence of the Samin ethnic group in Kayen District, Pati Regency can no longer be found. According to Gunretno, it is possible that Karsiyah was one of Ki Samin's students. This can be understood because Ki Samin's character caused many people to come and learn from him (Endrayadi, 2013). (2) Korver (1976: 256) stated that the spread of Sikep teachings in Pati Regency started with someone named Troeno who came from Kayen District, Pati Regency, and was then continued by Soeroleksono. Soeroleksono was the teacher of a famous follower of Ki Samin Surosentiko in Pati named Dangir, who in 1928 was criticized by the Regent of Pati for opposing the colonial government by not wanting to pay taxes.

Currently, Ki Samin Surosentiko's followers in the Kendeng Mountains are found in the Kudus Regency and Pati Regency. In Pati Regency, the Samin ethnic group is found in Sukolilo District. The spread of Samin's followers to Sukolilo District was carried out by Suronggono who was the son of Radiwongso from Kaliyoso Hamlet, Karangrowo Village, Kudus Regency. In 1920, Suronggono married Sarmi (a resident of Sukolilo District) (Interview with Gunretno, Pati, 18 July 2023).



Map of the current distribution of the Samin ethnic group.

(https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=b2746cf197726f04&rlz=1C1YTUH_idID948ID948&sxsrf=ADLYWIJvEp3YKYWhzCMFyt1BHH9NooVtog:1715383207673&q=peta+persebaran+Samin&tbm=isch&source=lnms&prmd=isvnmmbtz&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjMy_y1nISGAXUTyJGHSGeDIIQ0pQJegQICxAB&biw=1280&bih=585&dpr=1.5#imgcr=xmMNZwCFUtiYWM, diunduh 11 Mei 2024)

Oral Traditions in the Kendeng Mountains

The story of Ki Samin Surosentiko's actions against the Dutch Colonial Government with Sikep teachings, especially in the Kendeng Mountains, Central Java Province, is currently not widely known by the general public. Only in the Samin ethnic group, especially in Sukolilo District, Pati Regency, the noble teachings about life values from Ki Samin are still obeyed and conveyed orally by Samin leaders because they cannot read and write.

The oral tradition about Ki Samin Surosentiko and his teachings, conveyed by his followers to the younger generation of Samin, has formed a pattern of Samin ethnic behavior which is considered different from society in general (Javanese). For the Samin ethnic group, the figure of Ki Samin Suroento is considered a king and his teachings must be obeyed. Until now, we can find the obedience of Samin's followers in Sukolilo District,

Pati Regency, where they still adhere to the three core teachings of Ki Samin, namely the law of action (anger-anger pratikel), the law of speaking (angger-angger pangucap), and the law of what must be done. executed (angger-angger lakonana) (Hutomo, 1996:25-26).

The obedience of Samin's followers has shaped their lifestyle, namely:

(1) Refuse to use modern tools and go to school. The Samin ethnic group rejects modernization and going to school because they adhere to the principle of simplicity. This attitude was once part of Ki Samin Surosentiko's rejection of the "changes" brought about by Dutch colonialism; Always dressed in black/dark clothes, and shorts (knee length). This habit pattern is carried out by Ki Samin's followers in connection with their work as farmers. Black is considered a color that does not get dirty easily, while congkrang pants will make the work of the Samin ethnic group easier when farming in the rice fields. For example, in Pati Regency, in 2013 it was shown that of 123 Samin families consisting of 633 people, none had studied at elementary school (Endrayadi, 2013).

(2) Marrying within your group. This lifestyle is based on the continuity of Samin's teachings. Marrying someone outside the Samin ethnic group is considered not to be related because they are considered to have different principles, so it is feared that this will affect the continuity of Ki Samin Surosentiko's teachings.

(3) Using Sangkak (deny) language in daily communication. Sangkak language is Javanese Ngoko language which is negative. The general public does not know the terms of the Sangkak language. So far, what is known by the public is that the language used by the Samin ethnic group is Ngoko Javanese. However, those who already understand and have interacted more closely with the Samin ethnic group admit that there is a use of the Javanese Ngoko language, which is somewhat different, especially in some personal questions. The process of forming the Sangkak language is closely related to the attitudes and life choices of the Samin ethnic group at the beginning of the formation of the community, as is the opinion of Fill (2001: 14) that the vocabulary of a particular language is a reflection or description of the physical environment and social environment of its speakers. The emergence of the Sangkak language was a form of expression of resistance against the Dutch Colonial Government by not denying their honest nature and attitude because they were unable to face the forces of Dutch colonialism frontally (armed). This model of resistance is similar to the politics of Ahimsa (a gentle, calm, non-violent, and passive spirit) that Mahatma Gandhi implemented in India when fighting British colonialism. This is in line with Scoot's (2000) view that the Samin resistance model is a typical style of peasant resistance in Asia. An example of Sangkak language is when the Samin ethnic group is asked how old are you?, the Samin ethnic group will answer one forever.

(4) the Samin ethnic group has an honest nature. This characteristic is a form of obedience from the Samin ethnic group in implementing the core teachings of Sikep in the form of Angger-angger pratikel (the law of behavior), namely aja mbujuk (don't lie), aja apus (don't scheme), and aja akali (don't do tricks). The Samin ethnic group works as a farmer and is very concerned about preserving nature. They farm traditionally, so they are very tied to agricultural areas in their efforts to fulfill their daily lives. Therefore, preserving the natural environment is of great concern, especially around the Kendeng Mountains because the Samin ethnic agricultural system is very dependent on traditional irrigation systems (rivers) that originate in these mountains. For the Samin ethnic group, the destruction of nature will destroy the lives of the entire Samin ethnic group. This local wisdom originates from the Sikep teachings conveyed by Ki Samin Surosentiko so that his followers should not commit insulting acts against fellow inhabitants of nature (Endrayadi, 2013).

In contrast to the Javanese ethnic perspective around the Kendeng area, especially in Pati where Javanese still find the Samin ethnic group, little is known about the oral traditions regarding Ki Samin Surosentiko and its teachings. In general, ethnic Javanese know Ki Samin as a bromocorah figure whose teachings are considered deviant. They show these deviations from several life patterns of Ki Samin's followers, including: (1) refusing modernization and going to school, so that the Samin ethnic group is considered "stupid" because they do not follow the times, (2) always wear black/dark clothes, high-rise pants (limited to knees), so that they are considered followers of a heretical sect that can black magic, (3) marry within their group, so that the Samin

ethnic group is considered to be followers of the "cohabiting" sect and have no religion because marriage is not legalized in state religious institutions (4) the language used is Sangkak (denying), so the Samin ethnic group is considered ngeyelan (dissident) (interview with Kasmari, Pati, 12 August 2023).

From the perspective of ethnic Javanese who are stereotyped towards Ki Samin Surosentiko and his teachings, it turns out that there is a similar perspective that can still be found in oral traditions in communities around the Kendeng Mountains area, namely teachings about honesty and preserving nature. Ki Samin's teachings, which contain both qualities, namely honesty and nature conservation, are at the core of Sikep's teachings. The Javanese still admit that the Samin ethnic group is very honest, they don't want to take anything and are very committed if they have promised, and care about the environment. Concern for environmental sustainability is currently being demonstrated by the followers of Ki Samin Surosentiko by opposing plans to establish a cement factory in the Kendeng Mountains area.

CONCLUSION

We can trace the complete construction of Ki Samin Surosentiko and his teachings in the oral tradition of the communities around the Kendeng Mountains through its historical roots. Ki Samin Surosentiko and his followers in the context of ethnicity are part of the Javanese sub-ethnicity, so in their lives, they have similarities and differences with the Javanese ethnic group. These similarities and differences can be found in the oral tradition regarding the figure of Ki Samin Surosentiko and his teachings. The similarities between the Samin ethnic group and the Javanese ethnic group in oral traditions are more due to the historical closeness between the Samin ethnic group and the Javanese ethnic group. The reason for the differences is that the Samin ethnic group still maintains the traditions of its ancestors (Ki Samin Surosentiko), while the Javanese ethnic group has become a modern society.

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