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## The Saminist Movement of the Kendeng Mountains Complex of Java during the Dutch Colonial and Indonesia's Reform Eras

**ABSTRACT:** Saminist community is widely known for its strong resistance tradition. One major similar feature of the Saminist resistance movement during the Colonial and Reform periods is the rejection to the external influences and their related agencies that have been regarded as threatening the Saminist livelihoods and values. This article discusses the Saminist resistance movement in the Dutch colonial period and the era of Reform, thus displaying a historical comparison of a local community in a different period. By using the historical method and drawing upon various available sources that have been reached, this article aims to explain the similarities and/or differences in the Saminist resistance movement in the past and the present, in terms of the conditional factors giving birth to the movement and characteristics of the Saminist movement. It is argued that the Saminist resistance movement has changed from a socio-economy-based resistance movement in the context of colonial exploitation to an environment-based resistance movement. This change at once also transformed it from an old social movement into a new social movement. In addition to raising the new issue that is radically different, the novelty of the Saminist resistance movement in the Reform period is also evident in the form of the appearance of Saminist women actively in the forefront of resistance actions that they did, and the alliances it built with other groups having concerns with the environmental issues.

**KEY WORDS:** Resistance Movement; Saminist Community; Kendeng Mountains Complex; Dutch Colonial Period; Reform Period.

### INTRODUCTION

Samini community is widely known for its strong resistance tradition. This tradition has attracted much scholarly attention. A classic study by Harry J. Benda & Lance Castles (1969) has shown that in the past, Samini movement was a reaction to the growing economic pressures imposed by the

Dutch colonial rule in the form of taxation system, labour services, and the forest regulations (Benda & Castles, 1969). Another valuable study by Victor T. King (1973) has revealed that the Samini movement represented a social unrest among the rural inhabitants, due to the integration of village heads into the colonial bureaucracy

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(King, 1973). Meanwhile, A. Pieter E. Korver (1976)'s study shed a light to the aspects of millenarianism in the Saminist resistance movement (Korver (1976).

A number of studies have put more interest in the Saminist movement during the Reform era. One major focus of analyses is the Saminist resistance movement against the development of cement industry in the Kendeng mountains complex. This issue has been subject to analyses, for instances by Dian Chandra Buana (2012); Munawar Azis (2012); and Subarkah & Anggit Wicaksono (2014).

Despite their valuable contributions little has been known on how the Saminist movement during the two eras might present different or similar features. Using the historical method and drawing upon the available source materials, such as newspaper and magazine reports, research articles, and other relevant sources, this article is expected to fill in the lack of knowledge on historical comparison of a local community in different temporal scopes and political orders.

Its focus of interest is directed to the Saminist community living in the Kendeng mountains range complex, which extends from Grobogan in Central Java to Lamongan in East Java, Indonesia. Different terms have often been used to name the Saminist community. But, they prefer to be called as *wong sikep* or *sedulur sikep*, rather than *wong Samin* (Rosyid, 2008:4-6). The Saminist community was and still is well-known for their honesty, compassion, brotherhood, humble, and harmony with the natural environment (Octaviani, 2015:28).

By historically comparing the Saminist movement during the different periods, it is expected to broaden our knowledge on the unique and typical characters of the movement and the reasons behind them (Storey, 2011). Major issues to be examined in the article are as follows: why was the Saminist resistance movement launched during the Dutch colonial period?; and what were the characteristics of the movement? Similar questions are going to be asked to the Saminist movement during the Reform era. What features have changed and remain unchanged over time?

The objectives of the article are: (1) to examine the conditional factors that provide the seedbed for the resistance movement; and (2) to elaborate the fissures and/or similarities existing in the Saminist resistance movement during the two different periods of time.

The theoretical framework informs the discussion is social theory movement as developed by Rajendra Singh (2002) and peasant resistance movement as employed by Sartono Kartodirdjo (1987). Rajendra Singh (2002) distinguishes two types of social movement: old and new social movements. The difference between the two forms of social movement is partly linked to the base of mass support. Old social movement is exclusively restricted to a particular class. The novelty of new social movement lies in the mass support base that comes beyond class barriers. New social movement is not a manifestation of class struggle or class movement and the focus is non-material (Singh, 2002:19-20). Meanwhile, according to Sartono Kartodirdjo (1987), peasant movement is generally short-lived, segmented, and local in nature (*cf* Kartodirdjo, 1980, 1984 and 1987).

This article can also be placed in the context of writing what Kuntowijoyo called as an "androgynous historical writing" that give a fair place for women and men (Kuntowijoyo, 1994:110). The writing of Indonesian history tends to be androcentric or more centered on men, as if women did not play an important role in history (*cf* Keller, 1985; Kuntowijoyo, 1994; Parpart, Connelly & Barribeau eds., 2000; and Lindsey, 2016).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

***Saminist Movement during Colonial Era.*** The Saminist movement started around 1890, when Samin Surosentiko began to spread his teachings in Klopoduwur village, South Blora, Central Java. Many people from the neighbouring villages, especially Tapelan village in Bojonegoro regency, also joined to learn his teachings (Hutomo, 1996:13). In 1906, the Saminist teachings spread to the southern part of Rembang regency. Villagers from Ngawi and Grobogan regencies were also interested in learning Samin's teachings

(Benda & Castles, 1969:211). See picture 1.

In two decades, the followers of Saminist teachings had been found in various places. Apart from its place of origin, Blora in Central Java, the presence of the Saminist followers were observable in Rembang, Pati, Kudus, and Grobogan regencies. In East Java, they were found in Bojonegoro, Ngawi, Madiun, Tuban, and Lamongan regencies (Endrayadi, 2013:95; and Manijo, 2016:57). The major period of Saminist movement took place roughly between 1905 and 1920 (King, 1973:459).

Key figure in the movement was Samin Surosentiko. He was the second son of Raden Surowidjojo, whose father was the Regent of Sumoroto (now, part of Ponorogo). When he was small, his parent named him as Raden Kohar. Later, he decided to remove his aristocratic titulair and changed his name into Samin Surosentiko, which was regarded as more populist (Widiana, 2015:207).

Samin Surosentiko was a spiritual teacher and inherited the spirit to struggle against the oppressive rule from his father, who leaved comfortable life and lived among the ordinary people (Widodo, 2009:59; Rosyid, 2012:405; and Rosyid, 2014:190). The teachings of Samin Surosentiko were contained in several books (*serat*), including *Jamus Kalimasada*, *Serat Uri Pambudi*, and *Serat Punjer Kawitan* (Rosyid, 2014:199).

A number of Samin Surosentiko's teachings had strong political implications, especially his book entitled *Serat Punjer*



**Picture 1:**  
The Figure of Samin Surosentiko  
(Source: Agus Budi Purwanto, 2010)

*Kawitan*. Samin Surosentiko's political teachings were implemented in daily life in the forms of rejecting to pay taxes, rejecting to improve the roads, rejecting to perform night patrol, and rejecting to deliver statute labour services (Hutomo, 1996:32-37;



**Picture 2:**  
The Saminist Followers  
(Source: Prameswari Mahendrati, 2015)

Saputra & Subaharianto, 2008:12; and Rosyid, 2014:199).

The spread of Saminist teachings to some villages resulted in the growing number of Saminist followers. It was reported that in 1903, the Saminist followers were 772 people. It grew approximately to 3,000 heads of households in 1907 (Benda & Castles, 1969:211). As the Saminist followers grew in number, the movement began to attract the Dutch administrators' concern. There was a growing rumor that the Saminist followers would launch a rebellion against the Dutch colonial rule (Kroef, 1952; and Shiraishi, 1990).

In response to the rumor, on March 1907, a number of Samin Surosentiko's followers in Blora were arrested, when they attended a *slametan* gathering with an accusation of plotting a rebellion. At that time, Samin Surosentiko was not there, but in Rembang regency (Endrayadi, 2013:93). On 8 November 1907, Samin Surosentiko was appointed by his followers as just king, with a title *Panembahan Suryongalam*. To anticipate the supposedly worsening situation, Samin Surosentiko and a number of his followers

were detained. Samin Surosentiko was later sent to exile in Padang, West Sumatra (Benda & Castles, 1969:211-212; and Rosyid, 2012:405-406).

The arrest of Samin Surosentiko did not deter the struggle of his disciples to spread his teachings. In 1908, Wongsorejo propagated Samin Surosentiko's teachings in the District of Jiwan near Madiun, East Java. He provoked the inhabitants there to reject the taxes payment, because the collected money was not used to support them, but to the colonial government. They were also provoked not to perform labour services in roads construction, because the roads would only be used to benefit the Dutch (Kroef, 1952; and Shiraishi, 1990).

There were also other Samin's disciples played a major role in the spread of Saminism in other places. Surohidin and Pak Engkrak, for example, propagated the Saminism in the Grobogan regency in 1911. Both figures took over the leadership of Saminist movement after the death of Samin Surosentiko (Widodo, 2009:60). Meanwhile, in the regency of Pati, the spread of Saminism were



greatly credited by Karsijah (Benda & Castles, 1969:212-213).

Another key figure was Samat, a peasant and Samin Surosentiko's disciple propagating a variant of Saminism in Pati between 1914 and 1920. This variant of Saminism, called as *Samatism*, believed that the Dutch was only a leaseholder of the land, not the proprietor; that the the time would come when the land was returned to the natives as the true owner (Blumberger, 1931:9-10; and Benda & Castles, 1969:215).

The illustrations seems to have indicated that the Samin Surosentiko's movement during the colonial era was a male-based movement. The major role in the Samin Surosentiko's movement was played by men. There are no evidences indicating that Samin Surosentiko's women took an active part and appeared in the forefront of the movement. More conclusive evidences, however, are available to suggest that the Samin Surosentiko's movement was basically a peasant-based movement. Its supporters came from the rural peasantry. Initially they were middle landowning peasants, but later relatively poorer peasants also joined the movement motivated by the increases in tax burdens (King, 1973:465). See picture 2.

The Saminist followers had been widely recognized as skillful farmers (Benda & Castles, 1969:228). They had close bonds with their lands and the earth had a central place in their belief (King, 1973:459). Despite this fact, environmental consideration was not yet part of the arguments used to support the Samin Surosentiko's movement.

It is quite clear that socio-economic factors formed a major cause of the Saminist movement. The emergence of Samin Surosentiko's movement occurred in a period when the influences of the Dutch colonial rule went deeper into the village life. The monetization process performed by the Dutch had imposed heavier burdens on the rural inhabitants. It intensified the implementation of colonial taxation system, agricultural produces trade, paid labour system, and problems of ownership and control to lands (Kartodirdjo, 1984).

Under the increasingly high socio-

economic pressures and remarkable decline in welfare, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Java saw a widespread phenomena of social unrest taking place in rural areas, as indicated by the outbreak of protest movements across the island (Peluso, 1992:68-69). The close link between the Saminist movement and economic grievances was indicated by their resistance taking in the forms of anti-taxes payment and statute labour (Benda & Castles, 1969:219).

The Saminist movement was also motivated by grievances linked to forest regulations. The creation of *Houtvesterijen*, stipulating that forests were reserved exclusively for government exploitation, deprived the Saminist peasantry of an important resource for its domestic needs. The Samin people living near the forest no longer had the access to use the forest as a source of their livelihoods. All forms of economic activities related to the forests were prohibited (Widodo, 1997:268). This explained why the Saminist movement spread widely in areas near the state forest (Idhom, 2009:70).

To enforce the regulation, the Dutch colonial government unilaterally made provisions governing the boundary of public lands, where the lands ended and where a forest area began. They plotted and marked the forest areas in the form of maps known only to the colonial government. Forest rangers were employed to patrol the forests from any encroachment by the inhabitants. In order to fetch firewood from the forest, they had to buy a license from the forest foreman. Legal sanctions were imposed for those who made a use of the forest resources without permission from the colonial authorities (Widodo, 1997:268).

The Saminist movement resisted against all the colonial regulations abrogating the traditional rights of the Samin Surosentiko's people. Regarding to the natural resources, the Saminist followers believed in common property. They held the principle that lands, water, and woods were common property, or in Javanese language they said "*lemah podho duwe, banyu podho duwe, kayu podho duwe*" (cited in Benda & Castles, 1969:223;

and Warty, 2001:51). In their beliefs, anyone could use the available natural resources whenever they needed. Nobody, including the government, could claim an exclusive right to the resources.

With this principle, the Saminist believers generally recognized no authority (Korver, 1976:250). This was one of the reasons why they continued to take woods and other resources from the forest, despite of being regarded as an offence against the colonial forest regulations (Benda & Castles, 1969:223). They had their own way of living and social institutions, which were strikingly different from the ones introduced by the Dutch colonial government (*cf* Shiraishi, 1990; Mumfangati, 2004; Purwanto, 2010; and Mahendrati, 2015).

The Saminist movement during the colonial period had several characteristics. Firstly, it was small-scale and local in nature characteristics that were commonly found in the peasant movement (Kartodirdjo, 1987:278-279). This was due to the fact that, as other rural societies, Samin Surosentiko's community was horizontally and vertically segmented. Their interactions worked mainly within local boundaries and the only tie linking them to the world beyond their village was teacher-disciple (*guru-murid*) relationship.

This movement was not yet a modern social movement operating on the basis of vertical channels and modern political organization, as found for example in the case of *Sarekat Islam* or Islamic Union (Mehden, 2009). The Saminist movement also constituted an old social movement according to Rajendra Singh (2002)'s conception, because of its focus on economic resources distribution issue and its single, peasantry-based mass support (Singh, 2002).

The Saminist movement represented a non-violent reaction to the colonial system that disturbed the rural livelihood founded on the basis of agriculture and the forest resources. They basically rejected the money economy and market-oriented commodity production system. In resisting the policies of the Dutch colonial government and its local apparatus, the Saminist followers

took a variety of forms of resistance. Not only did they reject to pay taxes, to perform statute labour, to deliver rice to the village bank (*lumbung*), to submit their compound lands for teak forest expansion, the Saminist followers also used verbal and cultural forms in their resistance (Manijo, 2016:53).

They spoke non-hierarchical Javanese language, sayings with uncommon meanings to other Javanese (Benda & Castles, 1969:225-226; and Lestari, 2013:85). This character made the Saminist movement a very unique compared to the other Javanese peasant resistance movement. The Saminist movement added a new variety of peasant resistances by its firm rejection to the colonial rule and its withdrawal from the rest of the public colonial life (Idhom, 2009:272).

In addition, unlike other peasant movements that were generally short-lived, the Saminist movement was able to last long. This movement has shown a strong durability. It continued to survive, despite the death of its key leaders. In this context, Harry J. Benda & Lance Castles (1969) described it as "the longest-living social phenomena in modern Javanese history" (Benda & Castles, 1969:208).

Even, it has also been depicted as the oldest social phenomenon in Southeast Asia (Rosyid, 2009:230). The Saminist movement has been able to go through the Dutch colonial, the heat of the Japanese occupation (1942-1945), the independence periods (1945-1950), and even is still in existence until this day.

***Saminiist Movement in the Reform Period.*** As their ancestors in the past, during the Reform era (1998 to date), the Samin people have been launching a resistance movement. There are three conditional factors playing major role in providing the seedbed for birth and growing up the ideas of resistance in the recent period. The first is historical factor forging them to hold "a resistance tradition" (Shiraishi, 1990; Purwanto, 2010; and Mahendrati, 2015).

As previously shown above, since the Dutch colonial era, the Samin's people had been posed to the external influences threatening their livelihoods and welfare.

There were attempts made by the Dutch government to integrate the Saminist community into the colonial exploitative relations. Under the leadership of Samin Surosentiko and his disciples, the Saminist people struggled to resist against the colonial pressures in their own ways (Sastroatmodjo, 1952; and Benda & Castles, 1969).

There is no doubt that the Saminist resistance movement against the Dutch colonial government has provided a major source of inspirations and historical lessons for the present Saminist generations to guide their actions. The past Saminist resistance movement has formed the Saminist identity and legitimize the present resistance against the establishment of the cement industry (Azis, 2012:260).

The second conditional factor is the creation of wider political openness following the fall of the New Order government in 1998 (Eklöf, 1999; Dijk, 2001; and Pepinsky, 2009). There are more room for expressing public opinions and even for voicing aspirations through mass gatherings and demonstrations. The collapse of the New Order has paved the way for the Saminist to struggle for demanding rights over natural resources management. The rights are seen as important to secure the foundations of their livelihoods (*cf* Sastroatmodjo, 1952; and Mumfangati, 2004).

The Saminist people believe that even though the management of all natural resources in Indonesia were in control of the state, but should be used as well as possible for the welfare of the community. As in other places, among the Samin's community, there is a growing demand for transparency and openness in the policy making process linked to the development projects in order to accommodate the aspirations of the local community. The legal case of corruption involving the local executive created to a growing suspicion that there was also corruption practice linked to the granting of license to establish a cement factory in the Kendeng mountains region (Sufyan, 2014:19).

The third conditional factor igniting the outbreak of Saminist's resistance movement is the plan to exploit limestone and to

establish a cement factory in the Kendeng mountain complex. Following the political change from the New Order to the Reform era, the Central Java provincial government and the Pati regency government have issued an economic policy to attract investment. One of the investors, PT Semen Gresik, was interested in putting its capital on cement production in the Kendeng mountains complex. The company planned to invest \$ 3.5 trillion for setting up a cement factory with a production capacity of 2.5 million tons/year. The factory would require approximately 1,560 hectares of land (Endrayadi, 2013:236).

The mining of limestone and the establishment of a cement factory in the Sukolilo district was based on the following regulations: (1) the Regulation of the Governor of Central Java, Number 128/2008 on Karst Area of Sukolilo; (2) the Decree of Governor of Central Java, Number 660.1/27/2008 on Environmental Feasibility Agreement of the Establishment of a Cement Factory by PT Semen Gresik in Sukolilo; (3) Letter of the Pati Regency Head, Number 131/1814/2008 on the Compatibility of Mining with Master Plan of Pati Regency; and (4) the Decision of the Head of the Office of Integrated Licensing Services of Pati Regency, Number 591/058/2008 (cited in Buana, 2012:111).

The rejection of Saminist community to the investment plan by PT Semen Gresik in Sukolilo district, Pati regency is based on the belief that the construction of cement industry will have detrimental impacts on the local economy and the environment. The Saminist people depend largely on agriculture for their welfare (Sastroatmodjo, 1952; and Mumfangati, 2004). Farming is the identity of the Saminist community. One informant says, "A Samin is a farmer, if not a farmer, then one is not a Samin" (interview with Gunretno, 6/8/2012).

The Saminist people are traditional farmers growing rice and other agricultural crops, such as corn, beans, cassava, and tubers. Their agricultural areas are situated around their villages in the Kendeng mountains complex. Agriculture forms the foundation of the livelihoods of the Samin's





**Picture 3:**

A Poster in the Village Gate Resisting the Establishment of Cement Factory  
(Source: Private Collection)

community (Endrayadi, 2013:223). The Kendeng mountains provide a main source of irrigation for the agricultural crops (Buana, 2012:117). Many springs originate from the Kendeng mountains and have become a life-giving force for the people of Pati and other regencies (Mojo, Hadi & Purnaweni, 2015:238).

Mining the Kendeng mountains is feared to bring destroy the environment, to cause the loss of water sources vitally needed for the crops, and to jeopardize the survival of farmers in the region. Their fear is also justified by pointing at the bad experience of environmental damage occurring in Tuban area, where PT Semen Gresik has previously expanded its operation (Raharja, 2015:6).

The conditions of the people living near the Tuban-based cement industry were said to have made Gunretno and his Saminist fellows, who once visited them, feel sad and devastated because far from what has been promised before (Azis, 2012:257; and interview with Gunretno, 6/8/2012). See picture 3.

News about the plan to establish a cement factory in the Kendeng mountains region by PT Semen Gresik has been circulating among the Saminist people in 2006. In

anticipating this development, an alliance called the JMPPK (*Jaringan Masyarakat Peduli Pegunungan Kendeng* or a Network of Concerned Society on Kendeng Mountains) was formed in 2008, with Gunretno acting as the leader (Endrayadi, 2013:195; and interview with Gunretno, 6/8/2012). Gunretno is a young Saminist leader, who previously served as a treasurer to the KTM (*Karya Tani Maju*), an organization of farmers established in 1999 (Endrayadi, 2013:192-193; and interview with Gunretno, 6/8/2012).

The JMPPK play a major role in raising an awareness of the danger of the establishment of cement industry among the Saminist community by framing the issue in the context of environmental crisis. The sense of environmental crisis that is approaching the community is disseminated by the JMPPK through the routinely-held meetings of Saminist's women or *Arisan Ibu-ibu* (Sufyan, 2014:18).

It is realized that the Saminist community could not stand alone in their struggle against the penetration of the capitalist corporation backed up the state authority. In order to boost their resistance power, the JMPPK seek supports from other parties. A close



alliance has been built, for instance, with the WALHI (*Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia* or Indonesian Environmental Forum). In cooperation with this organization, in 2008, the JMPPK filed a legal challenge to the government's decision to allow the operation of cement industry in the Kendeng mountains region (Buana, 2012:118; and Raharja, 2015:5). In addition, the JMPPK also has obtained support from the LBH (*Lembaga Bantuan Hukum* or Legal Aid Institute) in Jakarta;<sup>1</sup> and also from other groups, such as Sheep Indonesia, *Serikat Petani Pati* or Union of Pati Farmers, and so on (Azis, 2012:257).

The Saminist struggle in opposing the establishment of the cement industry and the exploitation of limestone in Sukolilo managed to produce results. On 26 July 2009, Central Java Governor, Bibit Waluyo, decided to cancel the plan proposed by PT Semen Gresik (cited in Subarkah & Wicaksono, 2014:184). On early 2010, the Indonesian Supreme Court issued a decision revoking the license of the establishment of the cement factory by PT Semen Gresik (Buana, 2012:118). But this victory was only temporary.

The failure in Sukolilo has been followed by an effort made by PT Semen Indonesia to build a cement factory in the Kendeng mountains regions in Rembang regency. PT Semen Indonesia is a Strategic Holding Group incorporating three Indonesia's cement factories (PT Semen Gresik, PT Semen Padang, and PT Semen Tonasa) and Thang Long Cement of Vietnam (Subarkah & Wicaksono, 2014:181).

In the case against PT Semen Indonesia, lawsuit filed by WALHI and JMPPK on environmental permit No.660.1/17 of 2012 concerning a mining activity by PT Semen Indonesia has been rejected (Raharja, 2015:5). The defeat of their struggle through legal avenue has pushed them to adopt other forms of resistance. Their resistance movement indicates that the Saminist people are genuine opponent of capitalism. As their predecessors in the colonial era, they refuse

to depend on money. Interviews conducted by Blue Indonesia Team reveal that they prefer land and water rather than money. In their view, land and water can be transferred to their grandchildren (cited in Raharja, 2015:4).

Like during the colonial era, the Saminist resistance movement to maintain the environment of Kendeng mountains can be seen as an attempt to resist the hegemony of the state. The government, both central and local, has used its power to oppress the Samin's community. In this respect, the government has consciously provided the rights to manage the Kendeng mountains region to capitalists. The relationship between the government and the business groups is feared to create monopolistic practices (Cassing, 2002).

Such a practice is believed to exclude the interest of the Samin's people and their traditional rights to the Kendeng mountains resources will be taken away. In their beliefs, nature and all its contents are God's creation, so that every human being should have the equal right to use them (Sulistiyono, 2011:42). All natural resources are believed as a common property, as reflected in their expression in Javanese language, "*lemah podho duwe, banyu podho ngombe, kayu podho duwe*" or it means that soil, water, and woods are commonly utilized (cited in Benda & Castles, 1969:223; and Wardo, 2001:51).

They do not want to exclusively use the available natural resources only for maximum individual benefits at the expense of other people. In line with this belief, any kind of external intervention to monopolize exclusively the use of natural resources are considered unfair, harmful, and contradicts their principle and, therefore, should be rejected (interview with Gunretno, 12/8/2012).

But, unlike during the Dutch colonial period, the Saminist resistance movement during the Reform era display a new characteristic, the important role of Saminist's women. They have appeared in the forefront of the protest movement. This strategy is adopted in order to minimize the risk of violent measures by the police personnels in dealing with protesters (Buana, 2012:118).

<sup>1</sup>News on "Samin, Robin Hood, dan Semen di Kaki" in *Indexberita.net*. Available online also at: <http://www.indexberita.net/read/samin-robin-hood-dan-semen-di-kaki-3171004082> [accessed in Jember City, Indonesia: June 9, 2016].



Picture 4:

“The Saminist Women with Cemented Feet in a Theatrical Protest Against the Development of Cement Industry”  
(Source: [http://www.kompasiana.com/teguh\\_puryanto/kartini-yang-terpasung-semen](http://www.kompasiana.com/teguh_puryanto/kartini-yang-terpasung-semen), 10/6/2016)

One key female leader in the movement is Gunarti. She is Gunretno’s sister and daughter of Wargono, a respected leader of Saminist’s people of Sukolilo (cited in Rosyid, 2014:411-413). As a Saminist woman, farming is her routine activity everyday. On Sunday, Gunarti teaches children of the Saminist community in a learning cottage (*pondok pasinaon*), where the Saminist children learn about reading, writing, and moral values (Yudono, 2006), and also basic farming skills.

The learning cottage has become a pivotal medium for passing the Saminist ethics and values of life on to future generations. Through songs (*tembang*) and games (*dolanan*), the Saminist attitude to nature is transmitted to their children (Azis, 2012:261).

The involvement of Saminist women was mentioned in the protest launched by the JMPPK in 2009. It was reported that on 22 January 2009, many women together with other villagers went to the village hall of Sukolilo to clarify the news about the sale of village land to PT Semen Gresik. Their intention to meet their Village Head for a

dialogue failed. This made the protesters upset and later the crowd blocked and took hostage of four cars bringing a survey team of PT Semen Gresik (Anonim, 2009:5).

Until night, there was no sign that their demand for a dialogue with the Village Head was going to be met. The situation grew tense after about 250 police personnels were deployed to dismiss the protesters and to release the hostage. Physical clash was unavoidable after the police took repressive measure. This incident caused some casualties among the protesters, including women. Nine protesters were detained in the incident (Anonim, 2009:5).

To reduce the risk of repressive measures, theatrical acts are later adopted in the resistance actions. Recently, nine Saminist women were reported to run a protest by beating the dimples in front of the State Palace in Jakarta to collect the commitment of President Jokowi (Joko Widodo) to prevent the construction of cement factory and mining sites in the Kendeng mountains.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>News on “Sumber Daya Alam: Negara Dituntut Lindungi Petani” in newspaper of *Kompas*. Jakarta: 7 April 2015, p.14

On 12 April 2016, eight peasant women of the Saminist community cemented their feet in front of the MONAS (*Monumen Nasional* or National Monument) in Jakarta. The two of them were Giyem (48 years old) and Yeni Yulianti (28 years old). The action was taken as the last way to meet President Jokowi (Joko Widodo) to express their objection to the development of cement industry in the Kendeng mountain region. After running their theatrical action for two days, Chief of the Presidency Staff, Teten Masduki, and Minister of State Secretary, Pratikno, met the protesters and promised to arrange a dialog with President Joko Widodo.<sup>3</sup> See picture 4.

Apart from the active involvement of Saminist women, the Saminist resistance movement during the Reform era also shows a unique characteristic, distinguishing it from its colonial roots. The present Saminist movement strongly represents itself as an environmental movement. The protection of the Kendeng mountains region has been taken as the major focus of the movement. The Kendeng mountains is a row of hills that extends from Grobongan in Central Java to Bojonegoro in the East Java Province (cited in ISEAS, 2003; and Novenanto, 2015).

With the interests in environment protection, the present Saminist movement falls under the category of new social movement, as conceptualized by Rajendra Singh (2002). It has shifted from an old social movement departing from socio-economic issues linked to the Dutch colonial exploitation and the decline of the Javanese culture. Its novelty as a new social movement can also be seen from the fact that the present Saminist resistance movement obtain support not only from the Saminist farmers alone, but also from other interest groups and parties beyond the social class segmentation (Singh, 2002).

The Saminist's concern on the environment issues linked to the protection of the Kendeng mountains complex has gone farther than merely rhetorical level. Without

any instruction from the top, the Saminist people have planted a variety of perennial trees on bare lands on their own initiatives. Among the planted trees included mahogany, acacia, cashew, teak, and several others (Mojo, Hadi & Purnaweni, 2015:241). The measures were taken on the basis of a belief that without preserving the Kendeng mountains environment, the Saminists' farming activity will seriously suffer (Sugihardjo, Lestari & Wibowo, 2012:150).

Moreover, the Saminist people do care about the environment by wisely making a use of the resources the nature has provided. The Saminist people utilize the available resources only to meet their daily needs, not for commercial purposes. They grow agricultural crops to have a self-sufficiency in foodstuffs, not for trade (Mojo, Hadi & Purnaweni, 2015:241).

As their ancestors, the present Saminist people are used to live a humble and simple life (Sastroatmodjo, 1952:48; and Sugihardjo, Lestari & Wibowo, 2012:150). A materialistic affluence is not the golden objective of the lives of Saminist people. They want to keep living in harmony with nature and guarding the richness of nature against capitalist desires.

## CONCLUSION

One major similar feature of the Saminist resistance movement during the Colonial and Reform periods is the rejection to the external influences and their related agencies that have been regarded as threatening the Saminist livelihoods and values. The Saminist resistance movement in both periods of time is generally run in a non-violent way. But, the ways in which they expressed their resistance have taken different forms. During the colonial era, the Saminist resistance movement took form of anti taxes, labour services, and colonial regulations that represented a colonial exploitative relations and restricted the Saminists' traditional access to the forest resources. During the Reform era, the Saminist resistance movement is aimed at rejecting the development of cement industry in their environment.

<sup>3</sup>See again news on "Samin, Robin Hood, dan Semen di Kaki" in *Indexberita.net*. Available online also at: <http://www.indexberita.net/read/samin-robin-hood-dan-semen-di-kaki-3171004082> [accessed in Jember City, Indonesia: June 9, 2016].



The arguments used to support the movement during the two periods seem to have also been strikingly different. In the Dutch colonial era, the Saminist resistance movement was built more on socio-economic considerations. Meanwhile, the contemporary Saminist resistance movement has been founded mainly upon environmental arguments. The development of cement factory in the Kendeng mountains complex is believed to be potentially harmful to the environment, though eventually also threatening the local, agricultural-based economy upon which the livelihoods of the Saminist people traditionally rely on.

With the adoption of environment-linked consideration, the Saminist movement has transformed itself from an old social movement to a new social one. In addition to raising the new issues that are radically different from the old ones, the novelties of the Saminist resistance movement during the period of Reform are also evident in the form of the active involvement of the Saminist women in the forefront of resistance actions.

Moreover unlike the old Saminist resistance movement that relied exclusively on their own group, the recent movement has been strengthened by building alliances with other groups having concerns with the environmental issues and by making a use of legal channel resistance and theatrical expressions. It might be said that the Saminist resistance movement during the Dutch colonial and Reform periods represents itself as one spirit, in two bodies. There are both historical continuity and discontinuity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>**Statement:** We, hereby, declare that our article is not a product of plagiarism and not to be submitted, reviewed as well as published yet by other scholarly journals. It will also not to be withdrawn by us from the *TAWARIKH* journal.

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