

Islamic Politics And Nationalism In North Sulawesi (1920-1945): The Case Of Sarekat Islam

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the political and nationalist activities of Sarekat Islam in North Sulawesi in the period 1920-1950. During this time the Sarekat Islam movement adopted three models of action: exploiting political opportunities, setting appropriate goals, and mobilizing resources. This freed the Indonesian community from the Dutch political system, gave rise to a newly educated elite, and fostered a discourse of progress and the spirit of popular nationalism. In certain regions, especially in Bolaang Mongondow, North Sulawesi, the Sarekat Islam movement encountered great success and there was largely an absence of internal conflict both among the member organizations / parties and between the broader community and Sarekat Islam. The paper argues that Sarekat Islam both laid the groundwork for increased political awareness and liberation and created political opportunities for the newly educated elite and the people of Bolaang Mongondow, North Sulawesi. Research methods are based primarily on library research, drawing on books, journal articles, archives, newspapers and magazines, supplemented by non-written sources in the form of several interviews.

ISLAMIC POLITICS AND NATIONALISM IN NORTH SULAWESI

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the political and nationalist activities of Sarekat Islam in North Sulawesi in the period 1920-1950. During this time the Sarekat Islam movement adopted three models of action: exploiting political opportunities, setting appropriate goals, and mobilizing resources. This freed the Indonesian community from the Dutch political system, gave rise to a newly educated elite, and fostered a discourse of progress and the spirit of popular nationalism. In certain regions, especially in Bolaang Mongondow, North Sulawesi, the Sarekat Islam movement encountered great success and there was largely an absence of internal conflict both among the member organizations / parties and between the broader community and Sarekat Islam. The paper argues that Sarekat Islam both laid the groundwork for increased political awareness and liberation

and created political opportunities for the newly educated elite and the people of Bolaang Mongondow, North Sulawesi.

Key words: Sarekat Islam; Politics; Nationalism; Bolaang Mongondow; North Sulawesi

Introduction

Since the Dutch arrived in the Indonesian archipelago at the beginning of the 17th century, Indian, Arab, Chinese and native peoples had experienced discrimination on various levels. Racial policies gradually had an impact on social stratification (Blunden, 1997). The population was classified into several racial groups, with the indigenous population positioned at the lowest rung of society.

The Netherlands East Indies government control extended to political, economic, and socio-cultural sectors. In political affairs, the Dutch intervened across the board in determining policies relating to the native population. Likewise in the economic sector, the Netherlands developed a policy of giving certain trade advantages to the Chinese (Van Wijk, 2019). Chinese traders served as a bridge between the Netherlands East Indies government and the indigenous people in commercial matters. The Chinese controlled certain sectors of the Netherlands East Indies economy, such as in monopolizing batik materials.

The confidence of the Chinese due to their commercial success increased after the Chinese revolution of 1911 (Franklin, 2020). Economic pressures were felt by indigenous people in Indonesia and beyond. Indigenous leaders shored up their power base through cooperation with outsiders. For example, the elites in Brunei competed more aggressively for improved access to the limited economic resources available. It is little wonder that political crises and rivalries among the ruling classes had become a recurring feature since the first half of the 19th century (Mansurnoor, 1996).

In addition to discrimination in political and economic issues, the Dutch also intervened in the educational affairs of indigenous peoples. The Dutch adopted ethical policies encompassing irrigation, education and emigration (transmigration). Moon (2005) sees the ethical policy as linked with technology and economic expansion. Irrigation was carried out to increase crop yields, while in the field of education, agricultural schools were strengthened to educate skilled workers in agriculture. Similarly, in the field of emigration, improved agricultural practices were promoted in various directions with the help of equipment from the government.

The Dutch justified the ethical policies as a sign of a moral commitment to the welfare of all indigenous peoples. These policies represented a critical response to the previous forced planting system imposed from 1830-1870, which caused great poverty through much of the Netherlands East Indies. This forced planting system was criticized by certain advocates for the indigenous community, including L. Vitalis (Inspector of Agriculture), Dr. W. Bosch (Head of the Health Office), and W.R. Baron van Hoevell, a priest assigned to the Netherlands East Indies who later became a Member of Parliament. The three were outspoken in defending indigenous community rights and calling for the Dutch colonial government to pay more attention to the welfare of indigenous peoples (Daliman, 2012: 56).

In 1885, a number of foreign companies commenced operations in the Netherlands East Indies in support of the Dutch colonial government, further undermining indigenous welfare in various ways, such as via the low wages for workers. The colonial government's policy was criticized from various quarters, such as the portrayal in the novel *Max Havelaar* (1860) by Multatuli (Douwes Dekker). The book attributed the poverty and suffering of the peasant community to the policies of the colonial government. In addition, C. Th. van Deventer's work, *Een Eereschuld* (Budi's Debt), published in *De Gids* in 1899, represented the prosperity of the Dutch state as derived from the spirit, hard work and services of the indigenous people. Van Deventer argued that the Netherlands should pay its debts to the indigenous community through ethical policies with a threefold focus on irrigation, emigration and education.

Van Deventer's arguments influenced the Dutch colonial government, as reflected in the contents of Queen Wilhelmina's speech entitled *Ethische Richting* (Ethical Direction) or *Nieuw Keurs* (New Direction) in 1901

(Touwen, 2000). The speech affirmed several elements: first, the need to investigate and address the deterioration of indigenous welfare; second, renewed efforts in the field of agriculture and industry; third, addressing poverty by giving interest-free loans amounting to f . 30 million with a repayment period of 5/6 years, as well as grants of f . 40 million. The Dutch colonial government had effectively accepted the proposals of Van Deventer, Kielstra, and D. Fock, to improve the conditions of indigenous peoples (Daliman, 2012: 64-65). However, in their implementation the ethical policies drifted from the original primary goal of improving the welfare of indigenous peoples. Scholten (1996:270) argues that ethical policies in fact had the effect of expanding Dutch rule throughout the Netherlands East Indies by way of European-style self-government under Dutch authority.

Shihab (1998:43-44) argues that the implementation of the ethical policies was perceived by some Muslims as a sign of a Netherlands East Indies government strategy towards Christianizing Indonesia's Muslim community. This stimulated the emergence of organizations, both cooperative and non-cooperative, carrying an Islamic label and dedicated to Islamic advocacy (Abdullah, 2001: 26). One such organization was Sarekat Islam (SI).

Van Niel (1970:90-92) cites Tirtoadisoerjo's discussion of the establishment of SI in 1912. The reason for its establishment, with the original name of Sarekat Dagang Islam, was not merely economic in terms of batik trade rivalry with the Chinese (Suradi, 1997: 35-36). Rather it represented an effort to counter all forms of racism and oppression, including rejection of Christianizing policies, as well as the overbearing behaviour and policies of the native civil servants and Europeans.

SI was the first mass people's organization as well as the first mass political party in Indonesia, according to many historians. Furthermore, from the perspective of Islamic politics, SI was the first Islamic political party in Indonesia. The organization moved quickly to establish branches in various regions in Indonesia, including Bolaang Mongondow, North Sulawesi.

Sarekat Islam enters North Sulawesi

SI entered Bolaang Mongondow in 1920. This area was termed *Onderafdeeling* (subdivision) Bolaang Mongondow with the status of an administrative area of Manado Residency, which at that time comprised five Kerajaans, namely the Kerajaan of Bolaang Mongondow (the largest Kerajaan), Kaidipang Kerajaan, Bintauna Kerajaan, Bolaang Itang Kerajaan and Bolaang Uki Kerajaan (van Rhijn, 1941: 267; Manggo, 2003: 1). The Dutch placed a Controller and Assistant Controller from 1901 to implement a principle of deconcentration of administrative authority.

The emerging SI movement considered strengthening the economy as vital to raising national awareness. During the Dutch colonial period, economic realities shaped the relationship between social classes. Conflicts of interest had a negative effect on the living conditions of the masses; outdated methods of production could not compete with colonial capitalism, with its strong organization and modern technology. Resulting disadvantage for the indigenous population contributed to the emergence of a sense of community solidarity. This solidarity in turn resulted in increasing agitation against the colonial authorities, with some movements becoming radical and revolutionary.

Such conditions marked the entry of SI to Bolaang Mongondow, with the region lagging well behind other areas in North Sulawesi in terms of economy and education. The SI growth in Bolaang Mongondow resulted from the intervention of SI Central in pursuit of its organizational goals. Several representatives of SI Central were key in this regard, including Miden Towidjojo, Abdul Muis, Suryopranoto, Harsono Cokroaminoto and H.O.S. Cokroaminoto. The first leaders of SI in Bolaang Mongondow were Unta Mokodongan and Adampe Dolot.

An attempt had been made by Miden Towidjojo to establish SI in the Minahasa-Manado area in 1912 but it had not taken root because the majority of the population was non-Muslim and the Dutch Resident was located in this region. SI only flourished when it opened branches in Bolaang Mongondow, Toli-toli and the

Halmahera area of North Maluku. SI penetrated North Sulawesi in mid-1919 through the efforts of Abdul Muis as Deputy Chairman of SI Central. Abdul Muis not only campaigned intensively in this region but also in Toli-Toli, Central Sulawesi in the same year. With the visit of Abdul Muis, and at the initiative of two SI figures named Dahlan and Makmur Lubis, a branch was established in the region (Depdikbud, 1978/1979: 145).

In 1923, SI Central held a regional congress in Manado, tagged by H.O.S. Cokroaminoto as a National Provincial Congress of the Celebes. The event was chaired by Cokroaminoto, A. M Sangaji, and Hajjah Oemar Said Cokroaminoto (Chairman of Central Sarekat Islam Women). The congress participants comprised all layers of society from various regions in North Sulawesi, including Minahasa. As for representatives of the SI branch in Bolaang Mongondow, Pudul Imban, Mustafa Mokobombang, T. Dilapanga, Unta Mokodongan and Dapo Londa attended. The congress resulted in the identification of two main priorities for SI Bolaang Mongondow, namely advancing the economy and developing the education of the people of Bolaang Mongondow (Manggo, 2003: 6).

Adampe Dolot, leader of the BM SI and himself a native of Bolaang Mongondo (Kosel, 2010), joined Poedoe Imban in seeking permission from the ruler of Bolaang Mongondow, Datu Cornelis Manoppo, to acquire a plot of plantation land in the upper plains of the Ongkag Mongondow River. The request was granted and a plantation was initiated by eight male and five female SI leaders. After the forest was successfully cleared, various types of annual crops such as robusta coffee and coconut were planted. By the end of 1925, the area that had been cleared to serve as agricultural land for the SI Bolaang Mongondow was around 170 hectares (Mokobombang, 1983: 71). From its produce, SI succeeded in establishing the Khazanatullah Cooperative which was founded with the aim of improving the economy, advancing and financing the needs of the organization/party.

The Middle Class as the Motor of the Sarekat Islam Political Movement: A.P. Mokoginta

The SI political movement was closely connected with the middle class, both those at SI Central and the local branches. The SI Bolaang Mongondow movement, for example, included representatives from the Muslim middle class such as Abraham Patra Mokoginta, born in Bolaang on May 15, 1885) His vision focused on the welfare of society, including the equality of social classes (Depdikbud, 1978/1979: 123).

After graduating from Hoofdenschool (King's School) in Tondano in 1903, he was appointed as Head of Kotabunan District until 1907. After studies at the Bogor agricultural school (1907-1909), Mokoginta served for two years as Head of Agricultural Affairs of the Bolaang Mongondow Kerajaan with the rank of Minister of Culture whose task was to organize the establishment of extensive rice fields in Tungoi/Mopait Village covering an area of 500 hectares, Kopandakan Village covering an area of 200 hectares, Buyat Village covering an area of 100 hectares and Mongkad Village with an area of 40 hectares. He then brought in various kinds of rice and corn seeds from Lombok, elephant durian seeds, Bogor pineapples, grapefruit (pompelmoese) and other products. He also brought in teak wood seeds to be planted in the Loni Moyambak area, as well as superior cattle and sandalwood horses from Makassar, together with Australian grass seeds as food for these animals (Sugeha in Dunnebie, 1984: 115).

Mokoginta's next role was as Jogugu (Mangkubumi/First Minister) of the Bolaang Mongondow Kerajaan, replacing A.P. Sugeha and serving from 1911-1928. This role carried responsibility for managing the government, including fostering the mental and moral welfare of the community, especially targetting opium condensers and monitoring villages whose village heads were uncooperative and recalcitrant. Jogugu Mokoginta, as the executor of the Raja's authority, succeeded in bringing about 80 villages in the Bolaang Mongondow Kerajaan under the Raja's authority, establishing more modern public housing, establishing government offices and residences for officials.

Apart from agriculture, Mokoginta was also heavily involved in health and education. His policies had a major impact on the development of education and culture in Bolaang Mongondow, marked by the construction

of school buildings, both public and Dutch schools. He helped to reinforce the Muslim identity of Bolaang Mongondow by abolishing Christian religious education in public schools which had been introduced and led by W. Dunnebier, a Dutch Missionary Society (NZG) missionary. Mokoginta's action was not without challenges and involved a heated debate between Mokoginta and Dutch officials from the Department of Education and Religious Affairs of Batavia who visited the Kotamobagu area. In a meeting which was also attended by A.J.C. van der Laar Kraft (Principal of HIS Kotamobagu in 1920), Mokoginta spoke for the 95% Muslim community of Bolaang Mongondow, speaking in Dutch and justifying the elimination of the NZG influence in public schools (Sugeha in Dunnebier, 1984: 117).

In 1926, at a time of widespread PKI insurrection, Mokoginta was undertaking studies at Bestuurschool Jakarta. He was appointed as a prosecutor in the Department of Justice with the task of investigating many individual cases related to the PKI rebellion, especially in the areas of Rawa Bangke, Rawa Mangun and Rawa Manggis. He learned a great deal about the political scene in Batavia and witnessed the emergence of various organizations, such as Jong Java and Jong Islamieten Bond (JIB). Meanwhile, Mokoginta's son, Abram (Aleng), was studying medicine at Geneeskundige Hoogeschool (GHS) Jakarta, and was also an activist. After Mokoginta returned to Bolaang Mongondow, he cooperated secretly with SI cadres such as Adampe Dolot and Unta Mokodongan, especially in political activism.

During the leadership of Raja Datu Cornelis Manoppo (r. 1901-1927), assisted by Jogugu Mokoginta, SI continued to gain support in Bolaang Mongondow, although Dutch colonial control continued to hold sway. Datu Cornelis Manoppo was favourably disposed towards SI, as evidenced when the Raja granted plantation land near the north coast (Di'at Village, Lolak District) of Bolaang Mongondow for the cultivation of coconut seeds as a SI plantation (Sigarlaki, et al., 1977: 164-165). SI greatly benefited from clearing agricultural land and establishing Khazanatullah cooperatives throughout the Bolaang Mongondow regency. Likewise in the field of education, Raja Datu Cornelis Manoppo gave permission in 1926 to SI, under the leadership of Adampe Dolot, to open private Islamic schools, with the assistance of Mokoginta.

A.P. Mokoginta's gifts and capabilities almost led to him assuming the throne of the Bolaang Mongondow kingdom. When Raja Datu Cornelis Manoppo died on 12 February 1927, Mr. Creutzberg (Vice Chairman of the Indies Council), representing Governor General De Graeff who was travelling to Aceh, requested that Mokoginta return to Bolaang Mongondow to occupy the royal throne. However, this move was blocked by the Dutch authorities in the area, as well as by several traditional leaders from Bolaang Mongondow who supported the accusation that Mokoginta was a progressive and rebellious leftist who was associated with the PKI. As a result, the late Raja's son, Laurens Cornelis Manoppo, assumed the throne.

Mokoginta also had a difficult relationship with Dutch missionaries. Dunnebier (1915: 97-106), an erstwhile opponent of Mokoginta, argued that while he was an intelligent and strong figure, Mokoginta was not cooperative with the missionaries and Dutch colonial officials in Bolaang Mongondow. In 1915 Dunnebier had published a report on the progress of mission work in "Notices of the Dutch Missionary Society", which indirectly criticized the rulers and indigenous officials of Bolaang Mongondow for intimidating those who wanted to convert to Christianity and treating as "infidels" those who refused to become Muslim. Dunnebier (1916:287-289) claimed that he received a direct rebuke from Mokoginta who urged him to abandon the views which he had expressed in this report.

Kosel (2005) sees Mokoginta's role as an example of the ambiguity in the relationship between the Bolaang Mongondow people and the Christian mission, which represents part of a much more complex series of power struggles between Bolaang Mongondow and the Netherlands. Some Dutch Controllers worked closely with Mokoginta as he was more efficient than Raja Datu Cornelis Manoppo, which gradually weakened the king's position and contributed to an escalating power struggle between Manoppo and Mokoginta's respective supporters. Kosel did not see this conflict as a Christian-Muslim struggle, rather arguing that it was more local in nature, although it was masked in religious terminology. The aforementioned relationship of Christianity with European and Minahasa outsiders made Islam a gathering point for an emerging ethnic identity and for voicing dissatisfaction with the policies of the Dutch government (Kosel, 2005). Regardless of these debates, Islam largely underpinned the identity of the Bolaang Mongondow community. Mokoginta

exploited that fact in pursuing his political strategy, especially to gain community support in the face of pressures from the Dutch and from Christian missionaries in Bolaang Mongondow.

Sarekat Islam Campaigns and Accusations of Unrest

The edition of *De Sumatra Post* of 9 December 1926 and *Nieuwe Amsterdamsche Courant-Algemeen Handelsblad* edition of 3 January 1927 reported unrest in Bolaang Mongondow at a coffee company around six kilometers from Kotamobagu. The coffee company workers had been campaigning for increased wages and had quit their jobs. Some media reports linked this unrest with the intervention of SI, mentioning Unta Mokodongan by name and particularly targeting Adampe Dolot, suggesting he was the instigator of the troubles and associating SI with crime. At the same time, Dolot and SI were labelled as communists in the media.

In 1928, Adampe Dolot and the leaders of the SI were accused of planning a bombing incident. The newspaper *Het Nieuws* edition of 3 February 1928 reported that the Raja of Bolaang Mongondow had been informed that conversations were overheard between Adampe Dolot and the leaders of the SI Bolaang Mongondow who were planning to use dynamite. A search of Dolot's house revealed nothing but dynamite was found under the house of another unnamed person. However, according to the author of the article, since the Dutch wanted Adampe Dolot to be arrested from the start, they devised a strategy to trap him. The leaders of the SI were arrested and detained in Manado.

In 1940, Adampe Dolot was again accused of provoking unrest and opposition to Dutch authority in Bolaang Mongondow. The *Het Vaderland* newspaper edition of May 28, 1940, reported that the SI Bolaang Mongondow Party was considered the most powerful group among the political parties in the entire Netherlands East Indies.

In 1932 Harsono Cokroaminoto (1912-1992), second son of H.O.S Cokroaminoto, was assigned by SI Central leadership to campaign on behalf of the party in North Sulawesi while also serving as a school teacher of English at one of the Kweekschools, drawing on skills acquired from earlier studies in India. Harsono remained for two years, staying with Adampe Dolot and also developing good working relations with O.N Pakaya and Y.F.K. Dampolii. Harsono reported that he learned a great deal from the three figures of SI Bolaang Mongondow, which equipped him to better understand the strategies of the SI struggle. Harsono observed that although the Bolaang Mongondow area was directly adjacent to Minahasa, the latter was a centre for Christianity, while in Bolaang Mongondow Islam was the majority religion. Bolaang Mongondow therefore was the most suitable springboard for SI political progress in North Sulawesi. Harsono's service in North Sulawesi representing the SI Central was challenging physically; in 1932-1934 the journey from one area to another could take months because all travel was on foot or on horseback, often through dense vegetation. (Cokroaminoto, 1983: 48).

1930s: Nationalist campaigning through cooperation and the Soetardjo Petition

Political debates at the national level also influence grassroots politics, and vice versa. The struggle for Indonesian independence involved political parties, various other organizations and leaders as well as the masses. With the 1929 arrest of several nationalist figures such as Soekarno, exiled from Java by the Dutch and accused of radical activities (Palmier, 1957), staunch supporters of the nationalist movement founded a number of new parties. Sutan Syahrir (1909-1966) and Mohammad Hatta (1902-1980) founded the Indonesian National Education (PNI-Baru), while Sartono (1900-1968) founded the Indonesia Party (Partindo). PNI-Baru focused more on strengthening political and social education, while Partindo focused on strengthening mass action (Lev, 1967; Tas & McVey, 1969; Hatta, 1985). The two parties, founded to struggle for Indonesia's political independence through tactics of non-cooperation, received close scrutiny from the Dutch, especially when Governor General de Jonge cracked down on the nationalist movement, leading to the arrest and exile in 1934 of the PNI-Baru nationalist leaders and Partindo (van der Kroef, 1972).

The Dutch colonial pressure on the nationalists also prompted the formation of a National Faction within the Volksraad (People's Council) (Adiputri, 2014). This was initiated by M.H. Thamrin (1894-1941) who was also a member of the People's Council and Chairman of the Betawi People's Association. The National Faction was officially established on January 27, 1930 in Jakarta, with ten representatives from all regions in Indonesia, covering Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi, with M.H. Thamrin as the chairman. The formation of the National Faction, apart from concentrating its efforts on the Volksraad, also expedited progress towards independence through changes to the state administration system, reducing political, economic and intellectual differences, as well as through other methods that fell within the law (Poesponegoro, 1984: 218).

The establishment of the National Faction resulted from the heavy-handed policies of Governor General B.C. de Jonge who sought to suppress the Indonesian nationalist movement. The arrest of non-cooperating nationalists led some Indonesian nationalists to adopt more cooperative strategies with the Dutch. Apart from the National Faction, various parties and organizations moved in this direction, such as Budi Utomo, Sarekat Islam (renamed in 1929 as Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia, PSII), the Indonesian People's Movement (Gerindo), the Greater Indonesia Party (Parindra) and the Union of the People of Indonesia (PBI).

A significant initiative as part of the effort to achieve nationalist aims through cooperation was the Soetardjo Petition of 1936 promoted by Soetardjo Kartohadikoesoemo (Pluvier, 1965; Abeyasekere, 1973). Soetardjo and several other figures such as G.S.S.J. Ratulangi, Alatas, I.J. Kasimo, Kwo Kat Tiong and Datuk Tumenggung drew up a proposal for future cooperation between Indonesia and the Netherlands that was presented to the Volksraad (van Helsdingen, 1944; Benda, 1966; Ingleson, 1980). The proposal submitted by Soetardjo on July 15, 1936 envisaged an imperial conference under the umbrella of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to discuss future relationship between Indonesia and the Netherlands, including the political status of the Dutch colonial government. At its core was the status of autonomy in order to determine the fate of Indonesia as a sovereign state, with independence in the following 10 years, based on the limitations of article 1 of the 1922 Dutch Constitution (Kartodirdjo, 1990: 182).

The petition attracted a mixed reception from the various parties due to their different agendas and political programs. Those from the Indonesian side who rejected the petition were Goesti M. Noor, Soekardjo Wirjopranoto, Wiwoho and Suroso. Goesti M. Noor explained that his opposition was not due to the content of the petition, but rather because the petition was submitted by raising both hands, asking and pleading, to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It was also rejected by the National Faction who were sceptical about its benefits.

Most of the Dutch parties also rejected the petition. The Vederlandse Club (VC) claimed that the petition was premature and did not match the economic and social conditions of Indonesia, which could not survive as an independent nation. Non-Muslim parties such as the Christian Political Party (CSP) and the Indies Catholic Party (IKP) argued that there were more urgent problems to deal with and that unity under Pax Neerlandica should be maintained due to unstable political conditions. By contrast, the Indo-European Union (IEV) viewed the petition favourably, seeing a match between the idea of the Royal Council and the idea of the Greater Netherlands which included its various regions (Kartodirdjo, 1990: 183).

In an attempt to breathe new life into the petition, the Volksraad held a vote on September 29, 1936, aiming to submit the votes to the *Staten Generaal* (Dutch Parliament) and the Dutch Government. The vote attracted 26 in favour and 20 against the petition with 15 abstentions, figures unlikely to be accepted by the Dutch Parliament and the Dutch Government for several reasons. First, the petition seemed premature given the level of political awareness in Indonesia. Second, the position of minorities was uncertain in the proposed new political structure. Third, it was unclear who would hold power. Fourth, the demand for autonomy seemed inappropriate given the unstable economic, social and political conditions at that time (Kartodirdjo, 1990: 183).

Nevertheless, there was still enthusiastic support to push for the Soetardjo Petition to be approved by the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On October 5, 1937, the *Centraal Comité Petitie Soetardjo* was created,

with sub-committees established in various regions. Central committee members were Soetardjo Kartohadikusumo, Otto Iskandar Dinata, Hendromartono, Agus Salim, Atik Suardi, Ignatius Joseph Kasimo, Sartono, Sinsu, Datuk Tumenggung, Kwo Kwat Tiong and Alatas. The Central Committee held a conference in Batavia on November 21, 1937 which was attended by representatives of political associations, including Tumbulaka (Minahasa Association) and M.H Thamrin, Gani, Amir Syariffudin, Juanda, Bajasut (Indonesian Arab Union-PAI). Subsequently, on November 28, 1937, a large meeting was held in Jakarta, in which M. Soetardjo Kartohadikusumo explained that he, as the office-bearer of Domestic Governance (*ambtenaar binnenlandsch Bestuur*, BB) who submitted the petition, saw BB as a bridge between the people and the government (Sutjiansingih, 1983: 36). During the meeting, many parties supported the Soetardjo Petition, except PSII and PNI-Baru which rejected it outright. Their arguments in rejecting the Petition were that the contents of the Petition killed the spirit of the Indonesian people's struggle. In contrast was the political stance of Parindra and Gerindo, both of which did not agree with the intent of the contents of the petition, but accepted that holding an Imperial Conference (*Imperiale Conferentie*) would have benefit in bringing representatives from the Netherlands and Indonesia together to discuss Indonesia's future.

Although the Soetardjo Petition was proposed by its supporters in a legal manner, and the proposed Indonesian government would still be within the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, this still did not attract the support of most members of the Dutch Parliament. The petition was rejected on November 16, 1938 on behalf of the Queen of the Netherlands on the grounds that the Indonesian people were not sufficiently prepared to take responsibility for their own affairs (Sutjiansingih, 1983: 37). Those who supported the petition in the Dutch Parliament were only Rustam Effendi (communist faction) and Van Galderen (socialist faction).

The Dutch rejection of the Soetardjo petition disappointed the nationalists. Meanwhile, the precarious international situation in Europe as a result of the rise of Nazism threatened many countries, including the Netherlands, and encouraged the nationalists to rally together. On 11 May 1939 the Central Committee for the Soetardjo Petition was disbanded, with the National Faction formed by M.H. Thamrin within the Volksraad carrying forward the campaign for Indonesian nationalism (Muljana, 1986: 63) and in anticipation of greater assertiveness towards the Dutch.

Advancing the Nationalist cause: GAPI and the 1940s

On May 21, 1939, at the initiative of Parindra, a meeting was held to form a Preparatory Committee as a step towards the formation of a National Concentration Agency. The official meeting was held in Jakarta, and was attended by representatives of Parindra, namely M.H. Thamrin and Soekarjo Wiryopranoto; the PSII sent Abikoeno Tjokrosujoso, Moh. Sjafei and Sjahbuddin Latif; Paguyuban Pasundan was represented by Atik Soeari, Otto Iskandar Dinata, S. Soeradiredja and Ukar Bratakoesoema; Gerindo sent Amir Sjarifuddin, A.K. Gani, Wilopo and Sanusi Pane; Partai Islam Indonesia (est. 1938) presented Wiwoho and K.H. Mas Mansur; and the Minahasa Union was represented by Sam Ratulangi and Senduk.

At the meeting, M.H. Thamrin declared that the increasingly uncertain international conditions required the immediate establishment of the National Concentration Agency, a unified body that would fight for the interests of the Indonesian people. In addition, members of various political organizations in this body could continue to carry out the programs of their respective organizations. The National Concentration Body, known as the Indonesian Political Association (Gabungan Politik Indonesia, GAPI), was thus born, with the goal of encouraging all Indonesian national political parties to cooperate and organize an Indonesian People's Congress. In addition to its goals, GAPI was based on the right of self-determination, as well as the unity of the Indonesian nation on the basis of democracy in politics, economy and society, and unity in action (Kartodirdjo, 1990: 186; Muljana, 1986: 65). The formation of GAPI was thus designed to unite political parties committed to Indonesian independence in one organized forum.

On 19-20 December 1939, GAPI held a congress and determined that all members should avoid acting individually. On 23-25 December 1939, GAPI assembled an Indonesian People's Congress (KRI) consisting

of both political and non-political organizations. This gathering resulted in several decisions including calling for an Indonesian parliament, identifying the red and white flag and the song “Indonesia Raya” as the flag and anthem of Indonesian unity, as well as increasing the use of the Indonesian language. GAPI’s serious intent was evident in 1940 when it urged the Netherlands to immediately form an Indonesian parliament to supersede the Volksraad by involving all Indonesian society. At the central level, the first GAPI leadership team was M.H. Thamrin (Parindra), Raden Mas Abikoesno Tjokrosoejoso (PSII) and Amir Sjarifuddin (Pringgogidgo, 1967: 140), while membership was drawn from several other national parties.

At the end of 1939, GAPI expanded to North Sulawesi through the campaigning efforts of Abikoesno Tjokrosoejoso (1897–1968). In Bolaang Mongondow, R. Muaja (Parindra) met with Adampe Dolot of PSII to plan the formation of the Bolaang Mongondow Branch of GAPI (Depdikbud, 1978/1979: 153), of which Dolot became chairman. In December 1939, GAPI Bolaang Mongondow held a general meeting of all members of political parties and social organizations across the BM regency. The meeting was held in the Islamic Education and Teaching Center (BPPI) of PSII located in Molinow Village and was attended by around 5000 participants. Speakers were Adampe Dolot, Y.F.K. Damopolii, Kinompol Imban and Andung S. Sugeha. During the meeting, a red and white badge was distributed to each participant (Raupu, 2019).

Following the meeting, Controller A. van Weeren (served 1938-1940) ordered the arrest of the leaders of PSII Bolaang Mongondow on charges of having engaged in subversive political activities, including: (1) aiming to overthrow the autonomous government system; (2) usurping the position of a king; (3) distributing the Red and White Badge; (4) disturbing the peace with the frequent singing of the anthem “Indonesia Raya” in every school; and (5) inciting the masses to oppose the legal Dutch government (Paransa, 1983: 20). The Dutch police led by Commander Ficher arrested the leaders of PSII Bolaang Mongondow: Masiando, Popekou, Matero, Adampe Dolot, Damangayo, Rote, Daanan and Humu Tunggal.

The party leaders were brought to trial before the *Zelfbestuur Commissie* (Self-Government Commission), consisting of Mr. Quick (chair) and M. Mokodompit and H. D. Manoppo (members). The defendants were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Masiando (from Solimandungan), Popekou and Matero (from Motoboi Besar) were sentenced to two years imprisonment in Nusa Kembangan. Adampe Dolot was sentenced to four years imprisonment (from 1939 in Kotamobagu, then transferred to Manado and in 1942 he was transferred to Sukamiskin, Bandung). Damangayo, Rote, and Daanan, were sentenced to two years in prison in Glodok, Jakarta. Finally, Humu Tunggal was sentenced to two years in prison in Pamekasan, Madura (Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 1940; Mokobombang, 1983: 39-40; Iman, 1984). Damangayo, Matero and Humu Tunggal returned to the Bolaang Mongondow area after their prison terms, while the others died in detention.

With the arrest and detention of its leadership, PSII Bolaang Mongondow activities continued under the guidance of Husin Raupu, Yohan Faisal Kasad Damopolii, Zakaria Imban, Lour Mokobombang and H. Saleh Mustafa (Depdikbud, 1978/1979: 153-154). With the death of Adampe Dolot in prison, he was replaced as leader by Y.F.K. Damopolii. In 1940-1941, Damopolii and his wife, Nurtina Gonibala Manggo, who was also an activist for the PSII Bolaang Mongondow, worked hard to promote the organisational agenda, including making visits to various regions to raise awareness of the proposal for an Indonesian Parliament. On December 16, 1940, he held a general meeting in Kwandang and Suwawa, followed by visits on December 18 to Gorontalo, January 15, 1941 to Sanger Talaud, January 20 to Buol Toli-toli, and February 8 to Palu Donggala. However, the situation in Palu Donggala was particularly challenging because Damopolii was unable to hold general meetings and was also prevented from meeting with PSII leaders because of close scrutiny by the Dutch, who considered that his activities posed a serious threat. When he returned to Bolaang Mongondow, Damopolii and his wife were arrested by the Dutch and taken to Luwuk Banggai. On April 11, 1941, the Resident of Manado sent a vessel to transport them to Manado where they were imprisoned, questioned for three days and accused by the Dutch of leading an organisation that was subverting the legitimate government. On May 25, 1941, Nurtina Gonibala Manggo was released by the Dutch, while Damopolii was only released on June 30, 1941 (Manggo, 2003: 13-14).

Thus, PSII Bolaang Mongondow Party as a constituent member of GAPI was at the forefront of activity in

the independence struggle. From 1939-1941 GAPI's primary efforts were devoted to (1) initiating a manifesto for the formation of Parliament; (2) organizing the Indonesian People's Congress; and (3) issuing a resolution on constitutional changes.

Japanese Defeat, Sarekat Islam Bolaang Mongondow and the Red and White Flag

After Japan surrendered to the allies, Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta proclaimed Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945. News of the Proclamation only reached Bolaang Mongondow by word of mouth after some days due to the lack of communication facilities. Hearing the news that was still confusing, regional leaders held a meeting in Woloan Tondano, North Sulawesi, on August 22, 1945, attended by employees of the former Japanese government, including E.H.W. Palengkahu and B.W. Lopian of the civil service. H.J.C. Manoppo, the Raja of Bolaang Mongondow, and Y.F.K. Damopolii also attended the meeting which lasted for two days and did not encounter any significant obstacles. The instruments of local government were established, covering all of North/Central Sulawesi, including Bolaang Mongondow, Minahasa, Sangir Talaud, Gorontalo, Palu, Poso and Donggala as well as Buol Toli-toli. Within the government agencies there were several civil service personnel who did not support the text of the Proclamation, so on September 2, 1945, regional political figures held a further meeting (Manggo, 2003: 17).

On October 3, Damopolii received the visit from Gorontalo of Baharudin Y. Kadullah, former leader of PSII Molibagu, and Arun Tangahu. Around this time, Siata Paputungan, one of the teachers assigned to Molibagu, had returned to his hometown in Molinow Village with the newspaper "Suara Nasional Gorontalo" which contained the complete text of the Independence Proclamation, to be handed over to PSII Bolaang Mongondow (Manggo, 2003: 18). Siata Paputungan had carried the text of the proclamation hidden under his horse's saddle to avoid being questioned by the Nederlandsch Indische Civiele Administratie (NICA) police. Newspaper clippings containing the text of the proclamation were handed over to Kinompol Imban as the Youth Chair (Raupu, 2019).

The arrival of newspapers with the text of the Proclamation added confidence that Indonesia's independence had indeed been proclaimed. The news prompted community leaders and youth to fly the Red and White Flag in Bolaang Mongondow. Damopolii, who at that time served as Fukugunco/Head of District (Assistant Wedana), met with Abdul Rahman Mokobombang, commander of Seinendan Bolaang Mongondow, to discuss the matter. They concluded that the legal basis for the Proclamation was strong because it was based on national unity, such as the Youth Service Oath, the National Flag of Sang Merah Putih and the National Anthem of Indonesia Raya.

On October 5, 1945, a committee was formed with responsibility to assemble forces to defend the Proclamation of August 17, 1945. The committee consisted of members of Sarekat Islam Angkatan Pandu (SIAP), a group which provided training to graduates from the Sarekat Islam schools, and Pemuda Muslimin Indonesia (PMI) which had been disbanded on June 26, 1942, as well as assistants to Japanese soldiers (Heiho Jumbo) and Barisan Pemuda (Barisan Pemuda). The task of the organizing committee was to collect and register the names of the members, which at that time stood at about 500 people. They were then given a week's training in matters of discipline and unity as well as the ideology of the struggle, despite certain differences among them. They were taught the motto "one for all and all for one, selfless and reserved, if one friend is captured, then it is not allowed to mention the other, stay hidden, have the motto independence or death" (Manggo, 2003: 19-20).

Sarekat Islam and the Banteng Paramilitary Unit

In mid-October, 1945 in the wake of the Independence Proclamation, the Banteng Paramilitary Unit was officially formed by Y.F.K. Damopolii and took the title "Kelaskaran Banteng Republik Indonesia Bolaang Mongondow". Although there was no formal organic relationship with the PSII Bolaang Mongondow, all PSII members joined the unit as a continuation of the ongoing independence struggle in the region.

The Banteng Paramilitary Unit was divided into two parts, according to male and female troops, with the leadership of the unit taken from former members of the SIAP. On October 19, 1945, Y.F.K. Damopolii, as the male commander, and Nurtina Gonibala Manggo, as the leader of the female troops, informed Raja H.J.C. Manoppo that the unit had been formed in Molinow Village. The Raja remained silent, merely smiling and nodding his head. On October 23, 1945, Damopolii, Manggo and Abdul Rahman Mokobombang were discussing plans to obtain weapons from the Japanese army when a Dutch Police Inspector named Yakob van Beugen delivered an arrest warrant to Damopolii. As he was being taken away by the police, he said to Nurtina Gonibala Manggo in the Bolaang Mongondow regional language “pomolat, akuoi moiko, moiko akuoi” (“go on, I am you and you are me”). As he walked towards the police car, Damopolii shouted the oath of the Banteng Unit of “Freedom or Death”, drawing the response from witnesses of “Once independent, always free”.

The following day, Nurtina Gonibala Manggo and other leaders took several important decisions: (1) to appoint a new leadership team of Laan Massi, Abdul Rahman Mokobombang and Nurtina Gonibala Manggo to replace Damopolii; (2) to form several regions of action: the Rayon Dayan under the command of A.H. Raupu, Panang Rayon under the command of S.M. Saridin, Rayon Kobidu under the command of Adi Mamonto, Rayon Siau under the command of M.S. Detu, Rayon Tanoyan under the command of Harun Mamonto and Rayon Lolayan under the command of S.A. Mokobombang, as well as the Small Motoboi Rayon under the command of S.M. Daun; (3) to master the use of Japanese weapons in the Mopusi forest, Bolaang Mongondow; (4) to hold military exercises in Tanoyan and Mopusi under trainers Laan Massi and Abdul Rahman Mokobombang; and (5) to maintain good relations with neighboring areas, such as Molibagu, Pinolosian, Minahasa and Gorontalo (Manggo, 2003: 21-22).

On November 1, 1945, the regional leaders and commanders as mentioned above held a meeting and took important steps: (1) all regional commanders gathered their fully equipped troops in the forest areas of Tanoyan and Mopusi to participate in military training. Before starting the training, the Red and White Flag was flown; (2) Abdul Rahman Mokobombang, A.H. Raupu and S.A. Mokobombang went to Molibagu to meet Baharuddin Kadullah; (3) M.J.W. Gonibala was sent to Pinolosian Village; (4) Agus Suroto and Suhani were sent to Gorontalo; (5) Nurtina Gonibala Manggo was sent to Minahasa (Tomohon, Tondano and Manado) because of her significant reputation in that region (Paransa, 1983: 6-7; Manggo, 2003: 23-24). On November 19, 1945, Manggo, accompanied by several members of the Banteng Unit, sought weapons from the Japanese soldiers hiding in the Mopusi forest where the weapons were stored. A certain Mr. Hirayama provided Manggo with several chests of hand grenades, stenguns, and revolvers, as well as two red and white cloth rolls.

Conclusion

The stage was thus set for the following war of independence, with SI a vital component in the struggle. Sarekat Islam was not the sole determining factor of independence in Bolaang Mongondow. However, the organisation played key roles in stimulating a thirst for independence through participation, facilitation and active involvement in the independence struggle. Sarekat Islam stood under the Red and White Flag in Bolaang Mongondow, even to the point where the place where the last Raja of Bolaang Mongondow resigned was the BPPI Molinow Building belonging to Sarekat Islam. The Sarekat Islam political movement in Bolaang Mongondow was one important element in the long struggle to establish the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia.

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