

IN MEMORIAM:  
KI SARINO MANGUNPRANOTO

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While preparing these notes, I have been listening, for the first time since 1971, to the tape I made (almost accidentally) of my first encounter with Pak Sarino. We met in Semarang on August 30, 1971, at the home of Soeyono, who had been government veterinary officer in Pekalongan residency during the Japanese Occupation and the early Revolution. Soeyono suggested I meet a guest of his who was coming to Semarang in a few days, who knew a lot about the Pekalongan area. In the course of my research on the revolutionary period in the Tiga Daerah region of Pekalongan, I had collected quite a few stories from local officials of the time, and I assumed that this guest would be another former *ambtenaar* (Dutch-trained official from the prewar colonial bureaucracy). Thus, I was completely unprepared for the visitor. It was Sarino Mangunpranoto.

Listening again to our discussion, I realize that Pak Sarino was the first Indonesian I met who started his account of factual events (of the Japanese Occupation and early Revolution) with an analysis of the social relationships of the society in which he lived--the *kabupaten* town of Pemalang in Pekalongan residency. It was no use trying to explain the political disruption of 1945 by what happened during the Japanese period, he said; one had to return to the social situation at the end of colonial rule. For him any understanding of the social and political upheaval in 1945 came back to the basic economic reality of village society in 1940. "Villages were in a miserable condition [*keadaan di desa keadaan melarat*]," he said, at the beginning of the interview, "there was an enormous social conflict between the 'haves and the have nots,'" an English phrase Pak Sarino liked to use. The local economy was in the hands of rich *haji* in the rural areas and the Chinese and Arab moneylenders in the towns. Thus, the fury of the anti-Chinese riots in Pemalang at the end of Dutch rule in March 1942, which he experienced firsthand, did not surprise him. He knew that "the people were angry about the exploitation by the Chinese." Pak Sarino was not primarily interested in the leadership of this and other revolts that broke out in Java during the twentieth century (the 1926 Communist rebellion, the anti-Chinese riots of 1942, or the social revolution of 1945). He had no conspiracy theory. Social unrest was the result of the growing gap between "the haves and the have nots," and he saw the upheavals basically as "movements which tried to bring improvement for the people [*gerakan yang ingin membawa kemajuan rakyat*]."

Sarino Mangunpranoto was born in Bagelen, Purworejo regency (in the residency of Kedu) on January 15, 1910. After HIS (Dutch language primary school) in Purworejo and Kebumen, he finished his teacher training in Taman Siswa in Yogyakarta in 1929. The next thirteen years of his life were spent on the north coast of Java, mostly as the head teacher of the Taman Siswa school in Pemalang. Before becoming head teacher Sarino joined Partindo and ran political courses for the movement in Slawi where Taman Siswa's regional headquarters were located. Sarino's nationalist sympathies made the Taman Siswa school in Pemalang a safe



**Ki Sarino Mangunpranoto**  
**(1910-1983)**

meeting place for various nationalist groups. Many of his former students became prominent during the Revolution.

The Japanese administration closed the Taman Siswa school system in March 1943, and Pak Sarino then moved to Pati, east of Semarang, where he spent the rest of the Occupation and where he founded a sea-fisheries cooperative. In the early Revolution he became deputy Resident of Pati, and later (in 1947) Resident, playing an important role in the establishment of a Republican government in the region.<sup>1</sup> After the First Clash (in July 1947) he joined the evacuation of Republican administrations from Java's north coast and, when he arrived at Wonosobo, helped set up a residency government "in exile" there.

During the Revolution, he was active in the PNI, founding a branch in Pati, and at the party's third national congress in Yogyakarta in June 1948 he was elected to its central leadership. By 1956 he was chairman of the influential Central Java branch.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting a habit from his PNI days, Sarino continued throughout his life to address ministers, ambassadors, governors, military commanders, university presidents, and his own students, in public (and probably in private) simply as "saudara." The term "Bapak" he used only for the President of Indonesia. In 1956 he was appointed Minister of Education in Ali Sastroamidjojo's second cabinet (1956-57), a post he was to hold again ten years later in President Suharto's Ampera cabinet.

Although politics and foreign affairs occupied much of Sarino's formal career, he considered his foremost work to be in education. Indeed, as someone who knew him said, "he was a natural educator [jiwanya pendidik]." He talked and wrote about education all his life. His first articles on the subject were published in *Pandji Pustaka* and *Bintang Timoer* in 1932-33. He wrote on the educative value of children's games for the Taman Siswa journal *Madjalah Pusara*. He considered *Sosio-Nasional Demokrasi* (Yogyakarta: Taman Siswa, 1946), *Pokok Pikiran Politik Pendidikan Indonesia* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1975), and *Setahun Cabinet Ampera* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1967) among his more important writings. But there were many other articles, speeches, and seminar papers on such subjects as the ideas of Ki Hadjar Dewantara (founder of the Taman Siswa educational movement), the development of a national education system, the philosophy of education, and on ideas of nonformal education.<sup>3</sup>

Sarino not only wrote about, but also applied, his philosophy of education over a broad field of endeavor throughout his life. In the early 1950s<sup>4</sup> he reestablished

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1. Pak Sarino's career from the early Revolution has been recorded in a series of taped interviews by members of the history department of the University of Gadjah Mada, for the Indonesian National Archives Oral History Project. See also Kementerian Penerangan Indonesia, *Republik Indonesia Propinsi Djawa Tengah* (Jakarta: n.p., n.d.), p. 24.

2. Pak Sarino's involvement with the PNI is documented in J. Eliseo Rocamora, *Nationalism in Search of Ideology: The Indonesian Nationalist Party 1946-1965* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, Center for Advanced Studies, 1975).

3. See his *Menuju ke Demokrasi Pendidikan di Indonesia* (Diucapkan pada penerimaan gelar Doktor Kehormatan dalam Ilmu Pendidikan pada Institut Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Malang pada tanggal 17 April 1976) (Malang: Badan Penerbit IKIP, 1976), p. 26, and *Pidato Promotor Prof. Dr. D. Dwidjoseputro pada pemberian gelar Doctor Honoris Causa Pendidikan kepada Bapak Sarino Mangunpranoto pada 17 April 1976* (Malang: IKIP, 1976), pp. 23-25 for more of Pak Sarino's writings.

4. In this period he was also active in journalism, and helped to edit the newspaper *Tanah Air*.

a Taman Siswa secondary school in Semarang, at which he taught. He helped found the Taman Wiyata, Taman Siswa's tertiary (teacher training) college in 1958 and became its rector in 1970, succeeding Ki Hadjar Dewantara's wife. Among his educational experiments which produced lasting results were the Farming High School or SFMA (*Sekolah Farming Mengengah Atas*) at Ungaran started in 1961; the Farming Academy in Semarang (1960); the Institute for Studies on Rural Education (*Lembaga Studi Pendidikan Kedesaan*) (1975); and the Institute for Cultural Studies (*Lembaga Pengkajian Kebudayaan*) (1980).

The Farming High School at Ungaran, which he named Suwakul,<sup>5</sup> was inspired partly by the ideas of Tagore and Gandhi, partly by Sarino's visits overseas to vocational schools in the 1950s (particularly farming schools in Denmark), and partly by his realization that formal schooling in state schools was not geared to more than educating people for jobs in the cities. "People are developed, not educated, by the government," he once told a visitor to Ungaran. At Ungaran, Sarino and his staff experimented with integrating formal and nonformal training, teaching useful skills but also trying to provide a broader education to encourage students at Suwakul to lead a satisfying cultural life (*hidup berseni*).<sup>6</sup>

Students at Ungaran originally built their own living quarters in a kind of adapted ashram style, simple huts similar in construction and materials to village dwellings. There is still no electricity. Members of the school support themselves from what they grow, and are considerably involved with local village projects. "The SFMA curriculum," I once heard Sarino tell a visitor at Suwakul, "is like a series of sloping rice terraces. Each year of study is a self-contained unit like one of these small terraces. After one year one small 'terrace' can be looked after by a student. This is to guard against 'drop-out-ism.' If a student is prevented from finishing the three-year course he will still have some applicable knowledge and experience."

The Institute for Studies on Rural Education was founded in response to the need for further development of the ideas of nonformal farming education. There are now seven SFMA in Central Java, run by the government as well as by Catholic and Protestant foundations, and there is one in Lampung, South Sumatra.<sup>7</sup> Pak Sarino believed that education had to assist in the attack on rural poverty--both material and intellectual poverty, as he termed it. But the SFMA movement did not try to idealize rural life. He admitted that in the context of the Suharto government's foreign investment-propelled, urban-based economic growth, most Indonesian young people preferred the attractions of the cities to the dreary boredom of the villages. In the twenty years of existence of his SFMA Suwakul at Ungaran (where the Semarang kabupaten administration is now located) he lived to see it threatened by Central Java's rapid urbanization.

Sarino accepted challenges as they came. After his wife died in 1947 leaving him with four children to raise, he never remarried but lived, simply, on his own. A recent tragedy was the death of his second son Unggul from leukemia in January

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5. Suwakul is the name of the hill around the base of which SFMA students live in simple huts. The hill looks like an upturned rice container or *wakul*. Suwakul became an acronym for the philosophy of the SFMA: *Sumbering Welasasih Kanggo Utamaning Lian* (*sumber cinta kasih untuk kebahagiaan bersama*), a source of love for mutual happiness.

6. These ideas about rural education were discussed in a paper "Risalah Latarbelakang Seminar Pendidikan Kedesaan Tingkat Nasional tanggal 25-30 Juli 1976 di Bogor."

7. "SFMA Sesudah Sarino," *Tempo*, February 5, 1983.

1982. Exactly a year later on January 17, 1983, Sarino died while delivering a speech to the National Consultation on Cooperatives in Jakarta.

In conversations Pak Sarino liked to talk about the philosophical ideas of the Taman Siswa movement and its founder (and Sarino's mentor), Ki Hadjar Dewantara. One of those he often quoted was "*tut wuri handayani* [to lead from behind]." Some who knew him felt he epitomized the high Javanese ideal of "*sepi ing pamrih, rame ing gawe* [working industriously without personal ambition]." "Life," he said, "is a search for continuing growth [*hidup adalah mencari kelestarian tumbuh*]." <sup>8</sup> Perhaps there is no better tribute to the kind of person Pak Sarino was than that given in the speech of support for his honorary doctorate in 1976:

The personification of the desire to fight for justice, protect the weak, and search for self-perfection and truth finds its highest expression in the personality of a *satrya pandita*. This is the personality of Pak Sarino. <sup>9</sup>

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8. Abdurrachman Surjomihardjo, "In Memoriam Ki Sarino Mangunpranoto, 15.1.1910-17.1.1983," *Kompas*, January 30, 1983.

9. *Pidato Promotor Prof. Dr. Dwidjoseputro*, pp. 11-12. Two qualities of a *satrya* are courage and a sense of responsibility. In Javanese *wayang* mythology a *pandita* distances himself from worldly things, such as ambition, riches, power, and possessions.