

The Role of Mohammad Ichsan in Indonesian Foreign Diplomacy 1945-1960

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran Mohammad Ichsan dalam diplomasi luar negeri Indonesia pada masa awal kemerdekaan. Kajian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh kecenderungan historiografi diplomasi Indonesia yang lebih banyak menyoroti tokoh utama seperti Soekarno dan Mohammad Hatta, sementara kontribusi diplomat lain seperti Mohammad Ichsan belum banyak dikaji. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode historis dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui tahapan heuristik, verifikasi, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Sumber penelitian meliputi arsip dokumen, arsip foto, serta literatur sekunder yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Mohammad Ichsan tidak hanya menjalankan fungsi administratif sebagai diplomat, tetapi juga berperan sebagai representasi simbolis negara, aktor dalam diplomasi sosial-budaya, serta bagian dari konsolidasi kelembagaan perwakilan Indonesia di luar negeri. Melalui berbagai kegiatan diplomatik dan seremonial di Bangkok, ia turut menegaskan keberadaan dan legitimasi Republik Indonesia di ranah internasional. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya peran diplomat pendukung dalam praktik diplomasi Indonesia pasca-kemerdekaan.

Kata kunci: mohammad ichsan, diplomasi Indonesia, sejarah diplomasi.

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of Mohammad Ichsan in Indonesia's foreign diplomacy during the early years of independence. The study is motivated by the tendency of Indonesian diplomatic historiography to focus primarily on major figures such as Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta, while the contributions of other diplomats like Mohammad Ichsan have received far less scholarly attention. This research employs the historical method with a descriptive qualitative approach, following the stages of heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. The sources used in this study include archival documents, photographic archives, and relevant secondary literature. The findings indicate that Mohammad Ichsan did not merely perform administrative duties as a diplomat but also served as a symbolic representative of the state, an actor in socio-cultural diplomacy, and part of the institutional consolidation of Indonesian diplomatic missions abroad. Through various diplomatic and ceremonial activities in Bangkok, he contributed to affirming the presence and legitimacy of the Republic of Indonesia in the international arena. This study highlights the importance of supporting diplomats in the practice of Indonesian diplomacy in the post-independence period.

Keywords: mohammad ichsan, indonesian diplomacy, history of diplomacy.

INTRODUCTION

This research will describe Moh Ichsan's role as a diplomat. The conception of roles includes certain expectations, in which we are required to act in a specific way. Individual actions in daily life in the social environment are closely related to

roles, since roles include rights and obligations that must be fulfilled by each person in interacting with society. A role must be carried out in accordance with the norms that exist in the community. The social status of an individual can be seen from the role he or she plays in daily

life. This is in line with Soerjono's opinion which states that role is a variable element of a position (status). When a person exercises his rights and responsibilities according to his position, he is performing a role. Meanwhile, Veitzal Rivai defines a role as the expected and regulated behavior of an individual in a particular position. Furthermore, there is also a statement that role refers to something that is a vital component that plays an important role in the occurrence of an event or event.

Indonesia after independence in 1945 experienced a very complex and challenging foreign policy context. This nascent country had to struggle for international recognition amid great power rivalries such as the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc during the cold war. In addition, there were also other challenges at that time such as resolving conflicts with the Netherlands through Military Aggression (1945-1949), efforts to maintain the integrity of regions such as West Irian, and facing confrontations with Malaysia. Thus, in this era, diplomacy is very important for Indonesia to build strategic alliances, such as through the Asian-African Conference and non-aligned movements, to maintain national sovereignty in the midst of global geopolitical pressures. The importance of the role of diplomacy in defending Indonesia's sovereignty and image cannot be underestimated. Based on the book

"Diplomacy and Negotiation" by Melyana R. Pugu, diplomacy functions as the main foreign policy instrument to achieve national interests through peaceful communication and negotiations. This book highlights diplomacy as a tool for conflict prevention. In post-independence Indonesia, diplomacy was used to deal with Dutch aggression (1947-1949), where the Indonesian government, through figures such as Mohammad Hatta and Sjahrir, conducted international negotiations to gain support from countries such as India and Australia. This helped prevent a total escalation of war and forced the Netherlands to accept the Round Table Conference (1949), which ended the conflict and recognized Indonesia's sovereignty. Pugu emphasized diplomacy as a tool to open up access to trade and investment. Post-independence, Indonesia, which is experiencing hyperinflation and infrastructure damage, needs external assistance. Indonesia's diplomacy managed to gain recognition from the United Nations and Western countries, facilitated similar (albeit indirect) assistance to the Marshall Plan, and established early trade relations with Asian and European countries. This supports economic recovery and national development.

This book also describes diplomacy as a means of fighting for the rights of the nation. Indonesia, which had just gained independence, had to protect its

territorial integrity from the Dutch claim to West Irian and the threat of disintegration. Through diplomacy, Indonesia managed to obtain recognition of sovereignty from the United States (1949) and joined the United Nations (1950), which protected it from foreign intervention and strengthened its position in international negotiations. Pugu explained that diplomacy builds a nation's reputation. At that time, Indonesia, as a new nation, needed to build an image as an independent actor in the midst of the Cold War. Indonesian diplomacy, including Sukarno's role in the Asian-African Conference (1955), increased Indonesia's global influence and made Indonesia the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, which strengthened its position in international forums.

In this context, diplomacy figures play an important role as foreign policy pioneers. Figures such as Mohammad Hatta, Sukarno, and Adam Malik have been widely studied as the main leaders in Indonesian diplomacy. However, Mohammad Ichsan as a diplomat who was active in the 1950s occupied an important position even though he had not received much attention. He was involved in various diplomatic missions including roles in international negotiations and foreign policy formation that contributed to efforts to defend Indonesia's sovereignty in the post-independence era. Although the study of Indonesian diplomacy after

independence has developed, there is a significant research gap regarding the role of individuals such as Mohammad Ichsan. Many studies have focused more on key figures such as Soekarno or Hatta, so Mohammad Ichsan's specific contribution to diplomacy has not been studied in depth. This creates a gap in understanding the internal dynamics of Indonesian diplomacy, where the role of accompanying figures is often poorly revealed. Thus, this study aims to trace how Mohammad Ichsan's diplomatic role in the context of Indonesian diplomacy from the 1950s. His main focus is to analyze his contributions to foreign diplomatic missions and their impact on Indonesia's image and sovereignty. Through a historical approach and document analysis, this research is expected to fill these gaps and provide new insights into the role of diplomacy actors behind Indonesia's success in the international arena.

METHODS

This study uses historical research methods with a descriptive qualitative approach. Historical methods are used to trace Mohammad Ichsan's career journey based on the primary and secondary sources available, as well as to understand the socio-political context behind his activities as an Indonesian government official and diplomat. This historical

research method consists of several stages including:

The first step is heuristic. Heuristic is the stage of tracing and also collecting data such as archives or relevant documents. In this study, I used primary sources in the form of Moh Ichsan's appointment letter as the Mayor of Semarang and also several photo archives showing his activities as an Indonesian diplomatic official abroad. In addition, I also use secondary sources in the form of books and articles. The next step is verification, which is the stage of assessing the authenticity and credibility of the source. External criticism is done to ensure the authenticity of documents and photographs (for example, by identifying the date, signature, or context of publication), while internal criticism is done to assess the content and meaning of the information contained in it. After that, there is the interpretation stage, which is the stage of interpreting the meaning of the source that has been verified. At this stage, the appointment letter is analyzed as a representation of the administrative and political legitimacy of the regional bureaucracy in the early days of the Republic of Indonesia, while the photo archive is analyzed using a visual historical approach to reveal the symbolic meaning and representation of the image of state officials in the context of diplomacy. The last stage is historiography, which is the stage of

compiling research results into a systematic historical narrative. This narrative is arranged chronologically with the aim of showing the transformation of Mohammad Ichsan's career from a regional official to a diplomat, as well as interpreting Moh Ichsan's role in the context of Indonesian political history. Through a combination of document analysis and visual analysis, this study not only seeks to reconstruct the biographical facts of Mohammad Ichsan, but also to understand how the legitimacy and political image of a state official were constructed in the early days of Indonesian independence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Career Journey

After Indonesia's proclamation of independence in 1945, the country began to face major challenges in defending its independence. One of the great challenges is to rebuild a country damaged by war. In addition, some regions in Indonesia are still trapped in a government vacuum, so they need reliable and experienced leaders to overcome the problem. The city of Semarang, as one of the big cities in Central Java, is one of the areas directly affected by the independence struggle. After the proclamation of independence, the city of Semarang had experienced a government vacuum that caused the city to become

uncontrollable, so it needed a leader who could overcome the problem.

Moh Ichsan was born into a family with a strong educational background. His father, R.M.A. Notohamidjojo, was a colonial employee who served as an assistant to the wedana in Srandol, Semarang, before being appointed as the regent of Kendal in 1914. His paternal grandfather, R.M.A.A. Notonegoro, was the regent of Kendal from 1891 to 1911, while his maternal grandfather, R.A. Djodirono, was the regent of Lamongan from 1885 to 1908. With such a family background, Moh Ichsan had the opportunity to receive a Dutch education in Semarang. Moh Ichsan's education began with the completion of ELS (Europeesche Lagere School) in 1917, then continued with HBS (Hoogere Burgerschool) in 1923. After graduating from HBS, Moh Ichsan sailed to the Netherlands to study. In the Netherlands, he studied law at Leiden University. However, Moh Ichsan's educational journey did not go smoothly. He was involved in movement activities with the Indonesian Association, which put him under the supervision of Dutch law enforcement officials. The political pressure exerted on his family made him have to focus on his studies. It was not until 1933 that Moh Ichsan refocused on his studies and a year later graduated as a Meester in de Rechten (Bachelor of Law).

Moh Ichsan's education in the Netherlands provided a solid foundation in

the field of law and politics. He had the opportunity to study legal and political theories that were later used in his struggle for Indonesian independence. In addition, the experience of living in the Netherlands also gave Moh Ichsan the opportunity to understand Western culture and society, which was then used in his struggle to build a modern and democratic Indonesia. After completing his education in the Netherlands, Ichsan returned to Indonesia and began his career in the colonial bureaucracy. He started his career as a volunteer at the resident office in Pati in 1935, then served as a commies redacteur in the Kedu Resident office until he occupied the position of hoofdcommies. During the Japanese occupation, Ichsan continued to act as a bureaucrat and was seconded to the court office in Semarang. Then during the Japanese occupation, he served as the High Prosecutor at the Semarang High Prosecutor's Office.

In 1945, the condition of Semarang and its surroundings was quite uncontrollable. This happened because of the outbreak of the war as a result of the arrival of British allies. At that time, the British representative held negotiations in Jakarta together with the Indonesian representative. The British at that time questioned the whereabouts of the Semarang leader. In such a situation, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia (RI) decided to send an envoy to Semarang

to solve the problem of government vacancies. At that moment, Moh Ichsan was appointed as the First Mayor of Semarang by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, namely in 1945. The appointment of Moh Ichsan as Mayor of Semarang was carried out to confront the British in Semarang and to affirm the legitimate structure of the state.

The figure of Moh Ichsan is not only known as the first Mayor of Semarang, but also as an accommodating leader who is close to the community. His background from a family of *projo* priests provides a strong foundation in the values of service to the community. In the context of a simple society at that time, Moh Ichsan showed a high dedication to serving the needs and aspirations of his people. He understands very well that good leadership is leadership that is able to listen and respond to the needs of the community. Moh Ichsan's perseverance and consistency in carrying out his duties as Mayor are one of the factors that make him gain the trust of the community and his colleagues. He is known as a figure who not only speaks, but also acts. In many ways, he was directly involved in various activities and programs aimed at improving the condition of the city of Semarang post-war. This creates a positive image in the eyes of the public, who see him as a leader who not only holds office, but is also committed to advancing the city and its citizens.

Moh Ichsan's extensive experience, both as a prosecutor during the Japanese occupation and as a movement activist in the Dutch East Indies, provides valuable perspective in his leadership. He had a strong network with friends who knew him since his student days in the Netherlands, including Soekarno, as well as other colleagues involved in the independence movement. This network not only strengthens its position, but also facilitates collaboration in the face of existing challenges. With all his advantages and experience, Moh Ichsan has managed to build a close relationship with the people of Semarang. It became a symbol of hope and change in the midst of post-war uncertainty. Through his leadership, he not only strives to overcome existing problems, but also builds a strong foundation for the future of Semarang City.

In the early period of independence, the challenges faced by local governments were not light. The city of Semarang as one of the important cities in Central Java, faces a situation full of uncertainty both in terms of politics, social, and security. It is in this context that Mohammad Ichsan was appointed as the first Mayor of Semarang. In general, a Mayor is expected to formulate and implement policies that are able to advance the city, improve infrastructure, and restore economic life that was slumped due to the Japanese occupation

and Dutch military aggression. But the reality is that what Mohammad Ichsan is facing is different. As a mayor who served in turbulent times, Mohammad Ichsan was more focused on carrying out his role just so that the legitimate government could continue to run. This decision was based on an emergency situation, where the threat from Dutch troops seeking to regain control of Indonesian territory, including Semarang, forced the local government to concentrate resources on defending independence.

Mohammad Ichsan's career then expanded to the central government level, serving as Secretary of State. This position puts him closer to the center of state decision-making and shows the high level of political trust of the leadership of the Republic of Indonesia. The position of the Secretary of State plays a strategic role in supporting government administration, especially in managing state affairs related to heads of state and central bureaucratic structures. Mohammad Ichsan's appointment to this position can be seen as a logical continuation of his previous experience at the local government level. It no longer only functions as a policy implementer in one region or representative post, but becomes a core part of the state bureaucracy. Thus, Mohammad Ichsan's career path shows a shift from a local administrative role to an international representative role, and finally to a

strategic role at the center of the government of the Republic of Indonesia.

Furthermore, Mohammad Ichsan was appointed as the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Thailand between 1953-1960. This assignment took place in the context of early independence diplomacy, when the Republic of Indonesia was still struggling to gain recognition and strengthen its position in the international arena. In this period, the role of foreign representatives was not only administrative-diplomatic, but also very political and symbolic, as they acted as the face of the Republic of Indonesia abroad. As ambassador, Mohammad Ichsan not only plays the role of the country's representative in international relations but is also involved in various activities that show efforts to consolidate the presence of the Republic of Indonesia abroad, both through official state activities and social and cultural activities. In this context, Mohammad Ichsan's position can be understood as part of an early generation of Indonesian diplomats who worked under limited conditions but assumed significant responsibility for asserting the existence and legitimacy of the newly established state. His domestic administrative experience was crucial in carrying out this role, as early Indonesian diplomacy required the ability to adapt to political, symbolic, and practical functions on the ground.

This career change shows that Mohammad Ichsan is a figure who moves across various levels in the state structure of the Republic of Indonesia, from local government, central government and foreign diplomacy. However, these roles and positions cannot be understood through formal positions alone. The photo archive documenting Mohammad Ichsan's activities during his diplomatic assignment provides an opportunity to observe how these roles are concretely implemented in daily practice. Therefore, the following section will discuss the representation of Mohammad Ichsan's role in the diplomatic photo archive of the Republic of Indonesia in the early days of independence.

1. The Role of Moh Ichsan in Indonesian Foreign Diplomacy in the Early Days of Independence

a. Mohammad Ichsan as Formal Diplomat

One of the photo archives from the Semarang City Archives Office that records Mohammad Ichsan's presence on a working visit to Manila with the Indonesian Ambassador to the Philippines and President Soekarno provides visual clues about his involvement in the formal diplomacy practices of the Republic of Indonesia in the early days of independence. This position shows that his role is not limited to administrative functions at a single foreign mission post, but also

includes involvement in the wider official diplomatic network of the Republic of Indonesia.

In the context of post-Proclamation international politics, diplomatic activities have high strategic significance for the Republic of Indonesia, which is still striving to assert its existence and gain international recognition. A working visit to Manila, involving President Sukarno and Indonesian diplomatic representatives, can be understood as part of this effort. Thus, Mohammad Ichsan's presence at the event, as recorded in a photo archive from the Semarang City Archives Office, can be interpreted as an indication of his role in the implementation of formal state diplomacy, namely diplomacy carried out through official meetings, state visits, and intergovernmental interactions.

Visually, these photographs not only serve as documentation of events but also provide a representation of the structure and hierarchy in the practice of diplomacy of the Republic of Indonesia in the early period of independence. Mohammad Ichsan's presence in official forums with important state figures shows his involvement in the diplomacy mechanism that operates at the

interstate level. From this perspective, the photo archive can be understood as a historical source that records not only who was present at an event but also how the position and role of each individual was positioned in the context of state diplomacy.

Furthermore, Mohammad Ichsan's presence at these official events reflected the representative function inherent in the diplomatic position at that time. A diplomat acts not only as an executor of foreign policy but also as a manifestation of the state's presence in the international arena. Therefore, Mohammad Ichsan's involvement in official working visits and state events, as seen in the photo archive, can be interpreted as part of the Republic of Indonesia's efforts to present itself as a sovereign and active political subject in international relations.

Thus, through an examination of the photo archives of Manila's visit and official state activities, Mohammad Ichsan's role can be understood as a formal diplomat who carries out state functions in international relations. These photographs not only record diplomatic events but also represent Mohammad Ichsan's position as one of the executors of the official

diplomacy of the Republic of Indonesia abroad in the early days of independence.

b. Mohammad Ichsan as a Symbolic Representation of the State

Judging from the photo archive of the Semarang City Archives Office, the celebration of Indonesian Independence Day on August 17 at the Indonesian Embassy in Bangkok in 1946 shows that Mohammad Ichsan played a central role in a series of state events, both as a ceremonial official and as a messenger. Visually, the placement of Mohammad Ichsan in the middle of the ceremony shows the symbolic function inherent in his position as the official representative of the Republic of Indonesia abroad. The independence commemoration ceremony in diplomatic missions is not only a routine ceremonial activity, but also serves as a means to affirm the existence, legitimacy, and sustainability of the Republic of Indonesia as a sovereign state in the international arena.

In the context of the early days of independence, when the position of the Republic of Indonesia in the international community was still in the process of being recognized, such symbolic practices had important political significance.

By holding independence ceremonies abroad, the state not only recreates the moment of proclamation in a different atmosphere, but also conveys a message about the sustainability of the authority and identity of the Republic of Indonesia. The presence of Mohammad Ichsan as a central figure in the ceremony, as recorded in the photo archive, can be read as a concrete manifestation of the state, represented through the body and actions of a diplomatic official.

Furthermore, the archive of photographs depicting Mohammad Ichsan and his wife at the Armed Forces Day reception at the Indonesian Embassy in Bangkok shows another dimension of the symbolic representation of the state, namely through ceremonial and social diplomacy. Such an official reception is part of the state's practice aimed at projecting the image of the state in a formal, orderly, and civilized atmosphere in accordance with the norms of international relations. The presence of diplomatic partners in this context shows that the representation of the state is not only manifested through political policies and statements, but also through presence, gestures, and participation in state ceremonies.

Thus, through an examination of the photo archive of the August 17 ceremony and reception, Mohammad Ichsan can be understood as a symbolic representation of the Republic of Indonesia abroad. These photographs not only record ceremonial activities but also show how the state was presented, displayed, and affirmed through the figure of diplomats in the early days of independence.

c. Mohammad Ichsan as an Actor in Cultural and Social Diplomacy

A photo archive documenting Mohammad Ichsan's involvement in various competitions and social events during the August 17 commemoration in Bangkok shows another dimension of the practice of diplomacy carried out by Indonesian representatives abroad. Visually, these activities show that the scope of diplomacy extends beyond formal intergovernmental meetings or state forums, but also includes social and cultural interactions with Indonesian people abroad.

In the context of the early years of independence, the presence of Indonesian people abroad was very important as part of the social base that supported the existence of the Republic of Indonesia. Independence commemoration

activities involving entertainment and competitions can be understood as a way to strengthen emotional bonds and national identity among Indonesians living abroad. Mohammad Ichsan's involvement in these activities, as recorded in the photographic archive, shows that his role was not only as a political representative but also included a social and cultural function as a unifying figure for society.

From this perspective, seemingly simple activities such as competitions and community celebrations can be interpreted as part of cultural diplomacy, an attempt to present an image of the Republic of Indonesia that relies not only on formal political symbols but also on the cultural and social practices prevalent in society. The photo archive documenting Mohammad Ichsan's presence at these events illustrates that diplomacy at the beginning of independence was also carried out through a social and participatory approach, based on the strengthening of collective identity.

Thus, Mohammad Ichsan can be understood as an actor in cultural and social diplomacy that bridges the interests of the state with the daily life of Indonesian people abroad. These photographs not only

depict the festive atmosphere but also represent how the country builds closeness with its citizens and affirms national identity in a cross-border context.

d. Mohammad Ichsan as Part of the Consolidation of Indonesian Institutions Abroad

This photo archive of the inauguration of the tennis court building at the Indonesian Embassy complex in Bangkok shows Mohammad Ichsan's involvement in activities related to the construction and arrangement of facilities for Indonesian representatives abroad. Visually, this event shows that the practice of diplomacy does not only take place in the form of political meetings or ceremonial activities, but also through efforts to build and manage physical facilities that support the presence of state institutions abroad.

In the early context of independence, when the state structure and apparatus were still in the formation stage, the construction of representative facilities abroad had a broader meaning than simply providing operational facilities. This can be understood as part of the process of institutional consolidation, which is an effort to affirm the existence of

the Republic of Indonesia as a country with a functioning bureaucratic structure, workspace, and institutional symbols. The inauguration of the facility, as recorded in the photo archive, represents the process of institutionalizing the state's presence beyond its territorial boundaries.

Mohammad Ichsan's involvement in these activities shows that his role as a diplomat is not only related to foreign relations in a narrow sense, but also includes the responsibility of building and maintaining the institutional base of representatives of the Republic of Indonesia abroad. Thus, the photo archive of the inauguration of the Indonesian Embassy in Bangkok can be read as visual evidence of the process of consolidating state institutions, where Mohammad Ichsan emerged as one of the actors who played a role in strengthening the administrative and symbolic presence of the Republic of Indonesia in Thailand.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of archival sources and visual documentation, this study concludes that Mohammad Ichsan's role in Indonesia's foreign diplomacy in the early years of independence was not limited to

administrative functions alone, but included representative, symbolic, socio-cultural, and institutional dimensions. His career journey, from the first mayor of Semarang, through central government officials, to ambassador, shows that he was part of an early generation of bureaucrats-diplomats who played a role in affirming the presence and legitimacy of the Republic of Indonesia abroad. By examining the photo archives, it can be ascertained that Mohammad Ichsan carried out formal diplomatic functions in state activities with prominent figures, including official visits involving President Sukarno. Furthermore, his involvement in independence ceremonies, official receptions, and social activities in Bangkok demonstrates his role as a symbolic representative of the state and an actor in cultural and social diplomacy. In addition, his participation in the construction and inauguration of representative facilities shows his contribution to the institutional consolidation of the Republic of Indonesia abroad.

Thus, this study confirms that Mohammad Ichsan was an important figure in Indonesia's early diplomacy practice, not only as a policy implementer but also as a manifestation of the state's presence in various fields including political, symbolic, social, and administrative. This research enriches our understanding of the internal dynamics of post-independence

Indonesian diplomacy and shows that the success of diplomacy is determined not only by prominent figures at the top of power, but also by the role of supporting actors working on the ground. In the future, similar studies of other diplomatic figures are expected to complement the historical picture of Indonesian diplomacy in a more comprehensive and balanced manner.

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