

## Kusni Kasdut in the Flow of Indonesian History (1929-1980)

Muhammad Aqib Nur Habibi<sup>1\*</sup>, Ari Sapto<sup>2</sup>, Hariyono<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>History Education, Faculty of Social Science, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia  
\*correspondence email: muhammad.aqib.2207318@students.um.ac.id

Received 3 January 2024; Received in revised form 3 July 2024; Accepted 4 July 2024

### Abstrak

Kusni Kasdut, namanya yang terkenal karena sepak terjangnya dalam dunia hitam Indonesia. Kusni Kasdut yang pernah ikut menyumbangkan tenaganya dalam perjuangan mempertahankan kemerdekaan dengan menjadi bandit. Tugas Kusni di wilayah garis belakang musuh mengumpulkan dana perjuangan. Namun, setelah perang usai rasa kecewa merubah Kusni Kasdut menjadi penjahat. Tujuan penulisan artikel ini adalah menjabarkan perjalanan Kusni Kasdut dari pejuang hingga dijatuhi hukuman mati dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan dibantu dengan teori konflik, genealogi sosial, dan struktur sosial sebagai kerangka analisis. Hasil yang diperoleh dari penelitian ini adalah terdapat pengaruh dari dinamika sosial pascakemerdekaan terhadap individu seperti Kusni Kasdut, yang pada akhirnya memilih jalan berbeda karena kekecewaannya terhadap negara.

**Kata kunci:** kusni kasdut, pejuang, hukuman mati.

### Abstract

*Kusni Kasdut, his name is famous for his actions in the “dunia hitam” of Indonesia. Kusni Kasdut who once contributed his energy in the struggle to defend independence by becoming a bandit. Kusni’s task in the enemy’s rear-line territory was to raise funds for the struggle. However, after the war was over, disappointment turned Kusni Kasdut into a criminal. The purpose of writing this article is to describe Kusni Kasdut’s journey from a “pejuang” to being sentenced to death using the literature research method assisted by conflict theory, social genealogy, and social structure as an analytical framework. The result of this research is that post-independence social dynamics influenced individuals like Kusni Kasdut, who eventually chose a different path due to his disappointment against the state.*

**Keywords:** kusni kasdut, pejuang, sentence death.

## INTRODUCTION

This research aims to explore and describe Kusni Kasdut's life journey by using conflict theory, social genealogy and social structure as an analytical framework. The background of the research is because Kusni Kasdut is one of the figures who has contributed in the effort to maintain Indonesian independence, but his services seem to be forgotten. He was involved in several important events in Indonesia's history, including the struggle to defend

Indonesia's independence from invaders and the various social conflicts that occurred afterwards. The *state of the art of the* previous literature review highlighted the lack of conflict theory studies that occurred in Kusni Kasdut. The limitations of previous research provide room to explore the value of novelty from a more in-depth perspective on the life of this character.

Kusni Kasdut had a lot of guts, but his life journey was full of controversy and conflict. Kusni Kasdut's life journey

reflects the complexity and dynamics of Indonesian socio-politics, so learning about his life story can provide greater insight into the social and political conditions of Indonesia in the early days of independence until afterwards. Kusni Kasdut's life journey came to a close when on November 10, 1979, President Suharto rejected Kusni Kasdut's application for clemency. Kusni's life journey really ended in the hands of the state firing squad on February 6, 1980 (Tempo, 16 Februari 1980:49).

The contribution of this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of social dynamics, conflict and interaction in the context of the lives of historical actors such as Kusni Kasdut. This research is also expected to provide a stronger foundation for the development of science in the field of history and conflict theory. The main objective of this research is to provide an overview of Kusni Kasdut's life journey that can be a valuable contribution in the context of historical knowledge and understanding of social conflict.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research is the library research method. Zed (2018:1-2), argues that library research limits research activities to library collection materials only without the need for field research in other words, library research is a series of activities related to library

data collection methods, reading and recording then processing the research material, while to obtain these materials, researchers visited several places in Malang and outside Malang. The places that are the main objectives of the research include the Kodam V/Brawijaya Museum Library, the Central Library of the State University of Malang, the East Java Library and Archives Office, the Regional Daily Council 45 of East Java Province and the Medayu Agung Library, where according to Syahza, (2021:19) utilizing the library means searching for literature and reviewing it.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Bandits in East Java**

According to Sapto (2018:131), bandits are a group of people who are familiar with violence, their existence is often disliked, but certain parties are needed. His expertise was very helpful in the guerrilla war against the Dutch. Cribb (in Sapto, 2018:130) calls these bandits "Jago". In East Java during the war, the military tried to embrace and utilize the jago by giving them military positions (Sapto, 2018:131). One of them was Matosin.

On the Malang Front, there is also a "Barisan Maling", which is tasked with finding needed items and information about the city. According to Suhario Padmodiwiryo (1995:316) the Chief of *Security* Staff of the Kawi Selatan (South Kawi) Comando Unit (KCKS), a group from

Battalion T (Terror) was tasked with finding typewriters in Malang City by any means. The assigned group returned and reported that they had succeeded. It turns out that what the "Barisan Maling" troops brought was an electric calculating machine, a tool that was considered sophisticated for that era.

### **Kusni Kasdut in the Revolutionary Flow of Indonesian History**

The editor of *Tempo* (1981:285) mentions that Kusni Kasdut's childhood was mostly spent at the Malang City bus terminal. Little Kusni peddled cigarettes and candy to the passengers of the incoming bus (Rahim, 1980:9). Together with his mother, Kusni lived in poverty. Kusni lived in the poor area of Gang Jangkrik, Wetan Pasar Malang City.

According to Rahim (1980:10), Kusni could not bear to live at home without doing some work. If at home, Kusni felt crushed about her own origins which she did not know. Regarding her family members, Kusni felt she only had her mother in this world. Her father and other siblings, Kusni was initially unclear about.

Kusni, who was born around 1929, completed her primary schooling in 1940 when she was 11 years old (Rahim, 1980:17). By three years later, he had completed his education at the First Technical School. At the age of sixteen, at the end of the Japanese army's rule, Kusni enlisted as a member of the *Heiho*.

Together with his friend Kusni was placed in Matsumura *Butai* which was based at Bugis Airfield (now Abdul Rachman Saleh Air Base) east of Malang City (Rahim, 1980:30; Simbolon, 1979:22).

As a *Heiho* member at Matsumura *Butai* Malang, Kusni was trained a lot in the science of war. For example, in operating weapons, learning the science of disguise, fighting at close range, sabotage and knowledge in guerrilla warfare. His last rank was *Jokotei* with a salary of Rp. 35, which at that time was a lot (Rahim, 1980:30; Simbolon, 1979:22). During the Japanese occupation, being a *Heiho* was a great fortune. Kusni could eat rice while others ate forest tubers. Kusni used cloth for clothes, while others protected their bodies with burlap (Simbolon, 1979:23).

When Japan surrendered, Kusni and his friends were "mutilated" until an unknown time. Kusni did not know that two days before he was exiled from Matsumura *Butai* the proclamation of Indonesian independence had been proclaimed (Rahim, 1980:34). According to Rahim (1980:34) Kusni was invited to join the ranks of the People's Security Agency (BKR) fighters, the forerunner of the Indonesian National Army.

Kusni held the rank of sergeant and became Commander of Squad IV, Company I, Battalion I BKR based in Rampal, Bunul, Malang City (Rahim, 1980:34). As a squad commander, Kusni did not do much,

because generally the fighters in Malang at that time only gathered information and were on standby.

The atmosphere gradually heated up when the people were impatient to disarm the Japanese. According to Hadi & Sutopo (1997:44) the takeover of Japanese weapons in Malang City started from *Kenpei Tai's* headquarters at *Christelijke MULO*, Semeru 42. Muchlas Rowi (2000:25) who was once a member of BKR Malang, said that the location of *Kenpei Tai's* office in the *Christelijke MULO* school building was very close to the houses of PETA officers on Jalan Tennis (Tennis Street). The protesters who had surrounded *Kenpei Tai's* headquarters asked the Japanese soldiers inside the building to leave their weapons. After waiting for about two hours, the Japanese soldiers were willing to leave the building and hand over their weapons to BKR Malang.

After successfully taking weapons at *Kenpei Tai* Headquarters, the next target was the Katagiri *Butai* Regiment headquarters in Rampal. Initial explorations regarding the surrender of weapons at Katagiri Butai have been carried out since early September 1945. The Indonesian government delegation in Malang was met by Colonel Katagiri, Captain Yanagawa and Captain Suzuki. The meeting, which lasted for approximately one hour, resulted in an agreement in principle and a decision to

hold a second meeting (Hadi & Sutopo, 1997:44-45).

As agreed, the second meeting was held to discuss in detail the negotiation protocol on the transfer of power from Japan to the Republic of Indonesia in Malang. The meeting was followed by a meeting of each force to discuss the acquisition of weapons, foodstuffs, means of transportation, the establishment of command posts, the guarding of Japanese troops which would later be gathered in one place (Lebakroto-South Malang) (Hadi & Sutopo, 1997:45).

After the third round of negotiations within a week, it was agreed to formally take over power from the Japanese, while the transfer of arms was completed smoothly within three days. According to Rowi, (2000:25) the weapons received from Katagiri *Butai* were more than enough to form an army of one division.

Once the takeover of Katagiri Butai was complete, the next step was the takeover of Bugis Air Base. In October 1945, a similar exploration was carried out at Katagiri *Butai*. After several negotiations, an agreement was reached to hand over the weapons peacefully, although there was friction between the Japanese soldiers on guard and the people who stormed the air base. Kusni in the raid on the airbase got a Japanese weapon which he called a Japanese *Thompson*. (Hadi & Sutopo, 1997:46; Simbolon, 1979:44-47).

At the end of October 1945, Kusni and his colleagues from Malang left for Surabaya to fight against the British soldiers who landed. Kusni also fought in the Battle of November 10, 1945 in Surabaya (Rahim, 1980:35-42). After the battle in Surabaya, Kusni returned to Malang.

Kusni was separated from his main unit during the first Dutch Military Aggression in July 1947 (Simbolon, 1979:107). After separating from his unit in Malang, Kusni briefly joined the “Laskar Teratai”, which consisted of prostitutes and criminals. In this unit, Kusni joined the Staff of Economic Battle or SPE (Simbolon, 1979:124-131; Supto, 2018:139; Rahim, 1980:45-50).

One of Kusni's tasks as a member of SPE was to rob rich Chinese. Kusni's first robbery took place in the Gorang-Gareng area, Madiun with the proceeds of seven kilos of gold and diamonds. After the robbery, Kusni handed over the loot to his superiors. Kusni did not know and did not want to know about the loot. All he knew was that he had contributed his energy to the struggle for the republic and Kusni felt at home in his work. After his heroic experiences in various battles, being shot, detained, leading fellow prisoners out of Dutch jails, he fought for the last time in the Blitar area in mid-1949, before the ceasefire leading to the Round Table Conference (Simbolon, 1979:124-131; Rahim, 1980:45-50; Dhakidae, 2015:222).

### **Conflict: Kusni from Fighter to Death Row**

The war may be over, but not with its impact that still continues to be felt for life, both personally and communally (John Modell & Timothy Haggerty in Asmawati, 2023: 55). The war with the Netherlands, which ended in 1949, did not stop the negative impact of the war that had passed, but instead created a new conflict within Kusni. According to Pruitt (2007:1) the term conflict has two meanings, one referring to an argument, fight or struggle. The second refers to a subjective conflict in which the perception of one party to another has opposing beliefs or interests or the other party has deprived or disturbed the party in some way, while the second refers to a subjective conflict in which the perception of the other party is that the other party has an opposing belief or interest. Wahyudi (2021:17), defines social conflict as opposition, dispute and hostility between parties caused by the failure of the accommodation process over a series of differences in ideology, values, norms, other ideas and interests in social life. Thus, the trigger for social conflict is the failure of the accommodation process between parties over the differences that exist between them.

To be able to understand Max Weber's class conflict theory to explain the conflict in Kusni Kasdut, it will only be

understood if we have read or understood Karl Marx's class conflict theory. According to Karl Marx's theory, society consists of individuals, each of whom has an unlimited variety of needs and desires. However, the ability of individuals to get their needs is different, it is this difference in willingness that gives birth to conflict (Martono in Agung, 2015: 166). Then according to Max Weber, conflict has a central position in analyzing community life. For him, conflict is a basic element of human life. Conflict cannot be eliminated from human cultural life (Agung, 2015: 166).

Max Weber termed conflict as a system of "authority" or a system of "power". Power tends to put faith in strength, while authority is legitimized power. These two must be integrated between power and authority to find the needs of all systems. Human action is driven by interests, not only material interests as Marx said, but also by ideal interests (Agung, 2015:167).

According to Weber (in Wahyudi (2021:44), in a society that views the sanctity of the tradition of political legitimacy and social activity, the withdrawal of legitimacy for the tradition is a crucial condition of conflict (Proposition I). The question is, what causes Kusni Kasdut not to recognize existing political or legal legitimacy so that he dares to commit crimes?.

Max Weber (in Wahyudi 2021:44), argues that there is a high correlation between power, prosperity and prestige or in Weber's terms (Proposition II-A), with a position of political power (party), economic position (class) and membership in a high social ranking (status group). When a person or group becomes an economic elite, as well as a social and political elite, they will automatically gain power, prosperity and prestige. Obstacles or barriers to this kind of social process to other groups, of course, will make them angry and feel it is in their interest to choose an alternative path of social conflict.

Weber (in Wahyudi, 2021:44) also mentions another condition that can trigger social conflict is the existence of inequality or a wide gap in the social hierarchy, which on the one hand gives great *privileges* to some people, but on the other hand gives little to others (Proposition II-B). When there are only a few people who hold power, prosperity, and prestige, and the rest do not get these *rewards*, it will create tension and anger. This kind of anger will be the next stimulus for people who do not have power, prestige and prosperity to withdraw from the legitimacy of people who control resources, which is what happened to Kusni.

Conflict cannot disappear from society, the main factor of conflict that happened to Kusni so that he became a

criminal was because Kusni was disappointed with the situation. When the war ended, he was promised that he would be sent to Kalimantan by the National Reconstruction Bureau which channeled former fighters. At that time he was married and had one child. Unable to find a job, Kusni committed a crime (Titie, 1978: 11-12).

According to Hobsbawn (2018:37-38) one of the 'images' of a robber or what Hobsbawn calls a "Social Bandit" is that he did not start his career as a lawbreaker with a crime, but as a victim of injustice. Social bandits, in most recorded cases, begin their careers through non-criminal disputes, matters of honor or as victims of what they and their environment perceive as injustice.

All of Kusni's efforts during the war made him proud, but Kusni was disappointed when the war ended. After a time-consuming, administrative process and a one-year wait, Kusni only received a statement letter from a former fighter in Rampal and a small amount of recovery money (Dhakidae, 2015:223; Rahim, 1980:102). Like being hit by lightning in daylight, Kusni decided to take revenge on the country that betrayed him and chose a place opposite to the state, namely by becoming a criminal (Dhakidae, 2015:223).

Hobsbawn (2018:8) mentions that "stubbornness" tends to become an epidemic in times of poverty and economic crisis. After the war for

independence, economic conditions were generally poor. Poesponegoro & Notosusanto (2011:302) mentioned that in the economic field, the main problems were inflation and deficits in the budget. Another major problem was in the field of civilian and military employment. After the war ended, the number of troops had to be reduced because the state finances did not support it, in other words, they had to rationalize. According to Sutomo (1952:11), what made rationalization after the recognition of sovereignty complicated was the presence of new personnel in the War Force, especially those who participated in the military administration of the Republic of Indonesia during the second aggression. Then, the inclusion of KNIL units in the composition of the Republic of Indonesia's Armed Forces. According to Dhakidae (2015: 223), reorganization and rationalization means maintaining the core group of the TNI. For this purpose, there is no other way than to see who is officially registered. Kusni, since the first Dutch military aggression separated from his parent troops and then joined the "laskar" affected by rationalization.

The government tried to provide training so that ex-combatants would have skills, but the problem of labor could not be resolved, as an example is what Kusni experienced. According to Moestopo (Tempo, September 29, 1979:53) a former commander of "Laskar Teratai",

hanging out with bandits could have made Kusni interested in ways of committing crimes.

Kusni is back to robbing. If before 1950 he robbed for the sake of the republic, this time he became a robber to make a living (Matanasi, 2017). Kusni and his gang tried to kidnap a tycoon named Ali Badjened on August 11, 1953. The victim, who was about to fight back, was killed by Kusni's gang. Kusni's next horrendous gang action was the robbery of the National Museum of Indonesia, aka the "Elephant Museum", Jakarta. It is located not far from the Merdeka Palace, where the president lives. Disguised as police in a Jeep, Kusni and his gang entered the museum on May 31, 1961. According to Matanasi (2017) in an action that resembled a movie scene, the robbers took visitors hostage. An officer at the museum was shot and Kusni's gang then managed to escape with 11 diamonds. Kusni became a fugitive again.

Kusni was caught again, then moved from one prison to another. In 1969, while in prison, Kusni was baptized into Catholicism (Tempo, January 12, 1980:53). During his imprisonment, Kusni made eight attempts to escape from prison and police custody, failing three times. On November 10, 1979, President Suharto rejected Kusni Kasdut's application for clemency. Kusni's life journey ended at the hands of the state

firing squad on February 6, 1980 (Tempo, February 16, 1980:49).

## CONCLUSION

In order to reveal Kusni Kasdut's life journey through the lens of conflict theory, genealogy and social structure, this research seeks to fill the gap in historical studies. It is hoped that the results of this research can be a foothold for further research. Further research in order to broaden the insight into the life journeys of historical figures and their contributions in building an understanding of social conflict in society.

In an effort to continue the exploration of the life journey of historical figures such as Kusni Kasdut, future research can expand the focus on aspects of psychological conflict theory. Psychological aspects that can underlie individual social interactions. Exploring the psychological aspects of the conflicts experienced or faced by Kusni Kasdut can provide a deeper insight into how these conflicts affect the thoughts, emotions and actions of individuals in their historical and social contexts

## REFERENCES

- Agung, D. A. Gede. (2015). Pemahaman Awal Terhadap Anatomi Teori Sosial Dalam Perspektif Struktural Fungsional dan Struktural Konflik. *Jurnal Sejarah Dan Budaya: Jurnal Sejarah, Budaya Dan Pengajarannya*, 9(2), 162-170.

- Asmawati, R. Inggit. (2023). *Tunakarya di Negara Baru Merdeka: Pengangguran Revolusi di Yogyakarta Tahun 1950an*. Terang.
- Benarkah Ia Tentara Setan? (1979, September 29). *Tempo*, 53-54.
- Dhakidae, Daniel. (2015). *Menerjang Badai Kekuasaan Meneropong Tokoh-tokoh dari Sang Demonstran, Soe Hok Gie sampai Putra Sang Fajar, Bung Karno*. Kompas.
- Hadi, N., & Sutopo. (1997). *Perjuangan Total Brigade IV Pada Perang Kemerdekaan di Karesidenan Malang*. IKIP Malang.
- Hobsbawn, E. J. (2018). *Bandit Genealogi dan Struktur Sosial*. Antithesis.
- Matanasi, P. (2017, January 2). *Kusni Kasdut, Dari Pejuang Menjadi Perampok*. Tirto.id.
- Padmodiwiryo, S. (1995). *Memoar Hario Kecil: Autobiografi Seorang Mahasiswa Prajurit*. Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Perjamuan Terakhir Ignatius Waluyo. (1980, February 16). *Tempo*, 49-51.
- Poesponegoro, M. Djoened., & Notokusanto. Nugroho. (2011). *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia VI: Zaman Jepang dan Zaman Republik Indonesia*. Balai Pustaka.
- Pruitt, D. G. (2007). Social Conflict: Some Basic Principles. *Journal of Dispute Resolution*, 2007(1).
- Rahim, S. Saiful. (1980). *Perjalanan Hidup Kusni Kasdut: Dari Pejuang sampai Penjahat yang Dihukum Mati*. Antar Kota.
- Redaksi Tempo. (1981). *Apa dan Siapa Sejumlah Orang Indonesia 1981-1982*. Grafiti Pers.
- Rowi, M. Muchlas. (2000). *Catatan Perjalanan Hidup, Pemikiran dan Pemahaman M. Muchlas Rowi*.
- Sapto, A. (2018). Keterlibatan Bandit, Pelacur dan Seniman dalam Perjuangan Kemerdekaan di Jawa Timur (1945-1950). *Jurnal Sejarah Dan Budaya*, 12(2).
- Saya Ini Orang Masa Lalu, Kata Kusni. (1980, January 12). *Tempo*, 53-54.
- Simbolon, Parakritri. (1979). *Kusni Kasdut*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Sutomo. (1952). *Kemana Bekas Pedjuang Bersendjata*. Balapan.
- Syahza, A. (2021). *Metodologi Penelitian (Edisi Revisi)*. UNRI Press.
- Titie. (1978). Akibat Janji Membuat Kusni Kasdut Menderita Selama Hidupnya. *Kartini*, 10-12.
- Wahyudi. (2021). *Teori Konflik dan Penerapannya pada Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*. Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang.
- Zed, M. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.

