

ISLAMIC PRESS IN SURAKARTA (1914-1926): A STUDY OF *MEDAN MOESLIMIN* AND *ISLAM BERGERAK*

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Abstract: This study describes the changing function of two Islamic presses, namely *Medan Moeslimin* and *Islam Bergerak*, in Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia, in the transition of the 19th and 20th centuries. By historical methods through newspaper archival sources, the study produced conclusions; first, these two media were initially used as a means to "defend Islam" from some articles in the media that blasphemed Islam and, at the same time, straightened it out. In addition, the two Islamic media became an alternative source of Islamic scholarship, especially among reformist-modernist Muslims. Second, the two media were loaded with ideological interests. In their development, they had shifted their orientation from "defenders of Islam" to defenders of the spirit of nationality and universal humanity. Third, the change in orientation was inseparable from the critical role of Hadji Mohammad Misbach (1876-1926), the owner and manager of the two media, who experienced an ideological shift from orthodox Muslim towards socialist and nationalist one at once.

Keywords: Islamic Press; *Medan Moeslimin*; *Islam Bergerak*; Hadji Misbach.

Introduction

The press is vital in shaping opinions and transmitting renewal ideas to the public domain. The press has two roles that are fixed and changeable. The fixed role of the press is to inform, communicate, educate, and influence public opinion. Meanwhile, the chang-

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ing role of the press follows the development and change of society where the press works.¹ In addition, printed media is, in essence, a par-excellent communication medium. When displayed through the press or mass media, something initially personal will change form into a social nature. According to Ignas Kleden, what was announced through the mass media has come out of the private space and entered the *publicum forum*. For example, personal communication becomes social communication, personal association becomes social association, personal criticism becomes social criticism, and personal warning becomes social control. Therefore, the mass media cannot be separated from society. The two are fundamentally fused. What is reported by the mass media is everything that happens inside society.²

Various circles also realized the critical position of the print media during the colonial period. The subsequent publication of print media was carried out by almost all movement organizations, socio-cultural, religious, and political in Indonesia; print media flourished in the early 20th century.³ At this time, the press was one of the powerful means of voicing its aspirations. Pers served as the “mouthpiece” of the movement’s organizations. Thus, for example, the Budi Utomo organization (1908) had several newspapers such as *Retnodhoemilah*, *Darmokondo*, and *Goeroe Desa*. Sarekat Islam (1912) had newspapers: *Oetoesan Hindia*, *Kaoem Moeda*, *Pantjaran Warta*, *Sinar Djawa*, *Medan Moeslimin*, and *Sarotomo*. Indische Partij (1912) had newspapers: *De Expres*, *Het Tijdschrift*, *Tjahaja Timoer*, and *Persatoean Hindia*. Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah (1912) had newspapers: *Pandji Islam*, *Penaboer*, and *Adil*. The selection of the names of the newspapers reflects the views, ideals, and stances of its administrators (editors) and is also adapted to the spirit of the times.⁴

¹ Jakob Oetama, *Pers Indonesia: Berkomunikasi dalam Masyarakat Tidak Tulus* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2001), 430.

² M. Deden Ridwan, “Tempo dan Gerakan Neo-Modernisme Islam Indonesia,” in *Artikulasi Islam Kultural: Dari Tabapan Moral ke Periode Sejarah*, ed. Asep Gunawan (Jakarta: Srigunting, 2004), 537.

³ Sosrokoernio has reported on the role of the press and its benefits to society. By this time the press had grown so widespread, that he referred to those times as the “age of rumors.” See Sr. K. [Sosroekoernio], “Scenery,” *Sarotomo*, no. 7/IV (Thursday, September 23, 1915), 154-6.

⁴ Andi Suwirta, “Zaman Pergerakan, Pers, dan Nasionalisme di Indonesia,” *Mimbar Pendidikan*, no. 04 (1999): 87.

This short paper will outline the role of *Medan Moeslimin* (MM) and *Islam Bergerak* (IB) in seeding Islamic ideas and national ideologies. The existence of these two print media cannot be separated from the efforts of Hadji Mohammad Misbach (1876-1926),⁵ one of the figures of the national movement who tried to “harmonize” Islam and communism. The development of these two print media follows the evolution of the ideology of its founders and managers, particularly Hadji Misbach.

The difference from this study is an explanation of the critical role of these two media in providing broader access to Muslims in Indonesia. So far, the primary reference to religious sources is classical Arabic books that certain Muslims can only access. In addition, these two media also became a means to arouse the struggle against Dutch colonialism. These two media are the pioneers of the emergence of left-style Islamic media that had not previously been found.

This research uses historical methods. According to Kuntowijoyo, historical research consists of collecting sources (heuristics), criticism of source (verification), interpretation (interpretation), and historical writing (historiography). In the process, historians need a foundation in the form of historical sources to validate the truth of the event.⁶ The truth of historical sources must be accountable because history is part of scientific study. The interpretation technique translates information from a specific object (which is not written) into written or oral information. This study uses primary sources such as newspaper archives MM and IB, owned by Hadji Misbach.

The frame of mind used in this study is media ideology. Implicitly, media ideology is closely related to the concept of belief (*belief system*), principles of ideas (*basic way of thinking*), worldview (*worldviews*), and values that are carried by the media concerned. It appears in the system of meaning contained in systems of symbols

⁵ Regarding the biography of Hadji Mohammad Misbach, among others, see Nor Huda Ali, “Wacana Islamisme dan Komunisme: Melacak Genealogi Intelektual Hadji Mohammad Misbach (1876-1926)” (Ph.D Thesis--Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2012); Nor Hiqmah, *H.M. Misbach: Sosok dan Kontroversi Pemikirannya* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Litera Indonesia, 2000).

⁶ Kuntowijoyo, *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2013), 70-78.

that can explain reality - although sometimes biased, and provide a reference for the public to think, behave, and respond.⁷

Previously, some writings have offended MM and IB. One of the classic books that explore the development of the press in Indonesia is the work of Amat B. Adam entitled *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)*.⁸ It is considered a classic because, to date, no new studies have discussed the press's history that argues or continues the mission of this book. Broadly speaking, this book describes the following chapters of press development in pre-independence Indonesia, first, from the time of the arrival of the VOC until 1855. In this era, all newspapers in the Dutch East Indies were in Dutch. Second, the period from 1855 to the end of the 19th century. This period was marked by the birth of a Javanese-language newspaper, followed by a Malay-language newspaper.

Along with privatization, in 1860-1880, the press slowly changed orientation from missionary to commercial. This privatization of the press also changed the meaning of the press from merely an official means of mass communication of the government to a means of exchanging public discourse. Third, the early days of the 20th century, namely the emergence of the Bumiputera press. R.M. Tirto Adhisoerjo (1880-1918) was the first Bumiputera to establish a press company and founded a modern organization. The spirit of Tirto Adhisoerjo was inherited by the generation of Mas Marco Kartodikromo (1890-1932). In 1913 Mas Marco founded *Inlandsche Journalisten Bond* (IJB), an organization of Bumiputera journalists, which Adam said marked the end of the early history of the press in the Dutch East Indies. 1913, according to Shiraishi, was an era of "sound warfare." At this time, the Bumiputera press grew unstoppable. The Bumiputera press fought the voices of Europeans and "fought voice wars" among themselves. Therefore, in this era, the press changed orientation from a means of communication for modern people to a tool of ideological warfare between modern individuals and organizations. MM and IB in Surakarta once played this vital role.

⁷ Pawito, "Meneliti Ideologi Media: Catatan Singkat," *Jurnal Komunikasi Profetik* 7, no. 1 (April 2014): 6.

⁸ Ahmat B. Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995).

Siginifikansi Adam's work lies in reasonably detailed information about the newspaper, who is driving it, the main themes of its editorial, the ethnicity and religion of its journalists and readers, and their political lines. In addition, this book traced the roots of Indonesian Nationalism in the 19th century. Adam opposed Indonesian Nationalism originated in modern organizations such as Boedi Oetomo or Sarekat Islam. For him, the rise of the Indonesian feeling is also the result of the dynamic interaction of Bumiputera circles with European officials due to the "Politics of Association," which is based on "Etische Politiek." Thus, for Adam, the sense of Indonesian nationality was not born suddenly in the Bumiputera people. This national consciousness was born from the interaction of Bumiputera with modern technology, in this case, printing technology and newspaper language.

Another article that discusses the press and its relationship with the rise of Islam in Indonesia is *The Fragmentation of Religious Authority: Islamic Print Media in Early 20th Century Indonesia*, written by Jajat Burhanuddin.⁹ This article discusses the shifting role of clerics as "translators of Islamic teachings" in the late 19th century. The rise of the modern Islamic movement, along with the rampant development of print media in Indonesia, has expanded the access of Muslims to religious references. Print media in books, journals, and books have shifted traditional book such as *kitab kuning* (yellow book) as a reference to Islamic learning. The authors of journals or newspapers naturally match the role of the clergy as monopoly holders in creating religious meanings. Print media publishing became commonplace by almost every Islamic organization in the early 20th century, such as Sarekat Islam and Muhammadiyah.

In addition to modern educational institutions, print media plays an essential role in seeding Islamic ideas. In turn, print media shaped a new pattern of diversity based on the free reading of texts (*print culture*). Through the print media carried by figures of Islamic renewal, it further hit the joints of the traditional authority buildings of the ulama. Thus, the print media has opened up a wide enough space for Muslims to study and translate Islam more loose-

⁹ Jajat Burhanudin, "The Fragmentation of Religious Authority: Islamic Print Media in Early 20th Century Indonesia," *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004).

ly and free from the domination of clerics with its *kitab kuning*. For example, MM and IB also open religious (Islamic) rubrics.

The Development of Islamic Print Media in Colonial Period

In the second half of the 19th century, newspapers and journals published in Indonesian, mainly Malay, began to appear in the cities of the Dutch East Indies. Indeed, in this period, the publications were still small in number and reached only a limited readership. However, this effort has provided information about the ins and outs of the Dutch East Indies and the wider world; and had a significant role in introducing indigenous peoples to the ideas of modernity.¹⁰

Encouraged by similar activities by the new elite of modern school upbringing, Islamic reformers have made print media one of their primary agendas. Sarekat Islam, for example, has its own newspaper, *Sarotomo* (named after the weapon of the puppet figure Arjuna). This newspaper was an organ for members of the Sarekat Islam from Java. Therefore, *Sarotomo* uses Malay with Romance letters and Javanese with Javanese letters. Tirtoadisoerjo acted as chief editor. Martodharsono was appointed co-editor since Tirtoadisoerjo lived far outside Surakarta and could not contact the central committee daily. *Sarotomo* was printed at Firma H. Buning Yogyakarta because Sarekat Islam did not have its own printing house and Mas Wigjoardjo as its proofreader. However, *Sarotomo* was never considered necessary during the first phase of Sarekat Islam to develop Sarekat Islam outside Surakarta, such as Yogyakarta, Madiun, Kediri, and Surabaya.¹¹

Sarotomo improved its quality after the emergence of Mas Marco Kartodikromo. The role of *Oetoesan Hindia*, an organ of the Sarekat Islam Surabaya branch, is also prominent in improving the quality of *Sarotomo*. *Oetoesan Hindia* was born after Sarekat Islam held the first congress in Surabaya on 26 July 1913 under the leadership of Tjokroaminoto, Sosrobroto, and Tirtodanudjo. Figures such as Agoes Salim, Abdoel Moeis, Samsi, Wigjadisastra, Tjokroaminoto and Tirtodanudjo himself often appeared in this

¹⁰ Robert Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesian* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), 145.

¹¹ Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912-1926* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 45.

newspaper with his writings that attracted public attention. After almost ten years of circulation, in the first quarter of 1923, *Oetoesan Hindia* was no longer published. This media, among other things, is due to the lack of advertiser sponsorship, so operational funds only come from insufficient subscriptions. Another reason is the large number of administrators of Sarekat Islam who are involved in political matters, so *Oetoesan Hindia* receives less attention.¹²

In 1916, together with Abdullah Ahmad of *al-Munir* Padang as co-editor, Tjokroaminoto published and became editor of a monthly journal, *al-Islam*. Published in Solo, this journal became an official channel of the Solo branch of Sarekat Islam. First published on 15 June 1916, *al-Islam* was designed to represent the Islamic political movement Sarekat Islam, namely as *tempat soeara anak Hindia jang tjinta on agama and tanah aiernja*. In addition, *al-Islam* also emphasizes the importance of creating encourages for Indonesian Muslims and elaborates on the teachings of Islam as the basis of a movement that encourages progress.¹³ This kind of cooperation and the spirit of al-Munir's modernism was taken as *al-Islam's* primary concerns. However, this spirit translated into the framework of the Bumiputera political movement, which fostered Tjokroaminoto's radical stance.¹⁴ An indication is the emergence of a new trend of Sarekat Islam in 1916, namely that Sarekat Islam became increasingly involved in political affairs.¹⁵

Other Sarekat Islam newspapers are *Medan Bergerak* in Solo, *Sinar Djawa*, which later became *Sinar Hindia* in Semarang and *Pantjaran Warta* in Betawi. *Medan Bergerak* was a newspaper or

¹² Tim Penulis Kompas, *Beberapa Segi Perkembangan Sejarah Pers di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2002), 86.

¹³ Michael F. Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds* (London and New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2003), 178-9.

¹⁴ The notion of "radical" here is the opposite of that of "moderate," that is, a group of people who firmly oppose the use of force and violations of public order. This group wants to achieve the goal of independence or freedom gradually, by cooperating with the government and taking part in the houses of representatives such as *Volksraad*. They also did not hold mass demonstrations or strikes, and only occasionally took part in such actions. See Hans van Miert, *Dengan Semangat Berkeobar: Nasionalisme dan Gerakan Pemuda di Indonesia, 1918-1930*, translated by Sudewo Satiman from *Een Koel Hoofd En Een Warm Hart: Nationalisme, Javanisme en Jongbeweging in Nederlands-Indië, 1918-1930* (Jakarta: KITLV dan Hasta Mitra, 2003), xix.

¹⁵ Burhanudin, "The Fragmentation of Religious Authority," 50.

organ of Sarekat Islam in Surakarta for a while. *Medan Bergerak* is published once a week, namely on Thursdays, in two languages, Javanese and Malay. This newspaper is managed by R. Ng. Wiromardjono and R. Ng. Djiwopradoto, with the editorial board of S. Joeneoes (Semarang), Mas Marco (Semarang), Sosro Soebroto (Semarang), S. Partoatmodjo (Semarang), Troenosasmito (Solo), and Tjitrosoebono (Malang).¹⁶ Meanwhile, the Sarekat Islam Yogyakarta branch published *Sri-Diponegoro* in 1918, published every Monday.¹⁷

In 1913, Sarekat Islam Semarang managed the *Sinar Djawa* newspaper after buying a newspaper printing company from a Chinese businessman in Semarang, Si Hian Ling.¹⁸ Raden Moehammad Joesoef, vice chairman of the Sarekat Islam Semarang branch, became this newspaper's editor. However, in 1918 *Sinar Djawa* ceased publication and then changed to *Sinar Hindia* until 1924.¹⁹ *Sinar Hindia* is a daily newspaper other than Fridays, Sundays, and holidays. *Sinar Hindia*, the first daily newspaper in Semarang, is based in Kauman, Semarang. The editorial board is Semaoen (Editor-in-Chief) with members: Mas Marco, S. Partoatmodjo, and Darsono in Surabaya. Tjokroaminoto acts as Administrative Director. N. V. Handel Maatschapaij and Drukkerij Sarekat Dagang Islam Semarang printed this newspaper.

The presence of the vernacular press, especially that of the natives, provided symbolic constructions and vehicles of expression of collective identity and a forum for exchanging ideas among idealistic new intellectuals. The vernacular press is also a torch of inspiration from the outside world that can bring new desires and actions to life. They are impossible not to know each other personally. It's just that, through the press, they learned of the existence of others in Batavia, Bandung, Semarang, Surakarta, Surabaya, and all places throughout the Dutch East Indies. They can share experiences, ideas, and views about the world, the Dutch East Indies, and its times through the press.²⁰

¹⁶ See *Medan Bergerak*, no. 17/II (Thursday, April 24), 1924.

¹⁷ See *Sri-Diponegoro*, no. 16 (Monday, April 29), 1919.

¹⁸ Liem Thian Joe, *Riwayat Semarang*, Second Edition (Jakarta: Hasta Wahana, 2004), 243.

¹⁹ Adam, *The Vernacular Press*, 172.

²⁰ Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, 31-2.

Developing the newspapers or journals above is closely related to publishing or printing efforts. The development of printing as a commodity can be seen as the key to seeding ideas. Until 1800, the Islamic world was unfamiliar with the printing press and was still a world of oral and manuscript communication. The interest of Muslims in the Dutch East Indies in printing technologies was caused by the introduction of printing activities by the colonial government and the arrival of printing capitalism from the liberal economy around the middle of the 19th century. Another thing is the adoption of printing presses in other parts of the Muslim world.²¹

Before the 1820s, printing presses were only concentrated in Batavia and were only used to meet the needs of the rulers and a small group of European people. After that year, some private printing houses were opened, which were often managed by non-Dutch people (primarily Chinese), and with the publication of various works, newspapers in various regional languages. The first person to print outside Batavia, where he carried out his duties, was Resident H.J. Domis, whose native secretary, Tjokrodiwirjo, assisted.²² First printed in Semarang in 1827, then in Pasuruan in 1829, and finally in Surabaya in 1834. After 1840, many private printing houses were established in major cities, such as Oliphant and van Dorp in Semarang, Rusche in Surakarta, Ogilvie, Lange, and Kolff in Batavia, and the Gimberg brothers in Surabaya. Several Chinese printing entrepreneurs followed this movement and developed many Malay-language libraries.

At the beginning of the 20th century, printing no longer belonged to European society in particular but already belonged to society in general. Between 1855 and 1900, several publications in Java can be mentioned, namely: Hertevelt Brothers & Company, De Groot-Kolff & Co., Vogel van der Heyde & Co., Jonas Portier & Co., J. A. Schultz Jr., and Albert Rusche & Co. (Surakarta); G. C. T. Van Dorp, A. Bisschop, Jansz Bros, Hong Thay & Co., N. V.

²¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Komunitas-komunitas Terbayang*, translated by Omi Intan Naomi from *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Yogyakarta: Insist dan Pustaka Pelajar, 2002), 55.

²² Dennys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa Silang Budaya, Kajian Sejarah Terpadu, Bagian I: Batas-batas Pembaratan*, translated by Winarsih Partaningrat Arifin et al. from *Le Carrefour Javanais, Essai d'Histoire Globale; I. Lelimited de l'Occidentalisation* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2000), 151.

Semarang Courant (Semarang); E. Fuhri, Le Roy & Co., Gimberg Bross & Co., Thies & Umbgrove, and Tan Kim Siong (Surabaya); and H. Buning (Yogyakarta).²³ Publishing in Surakarta between 1912 and 1922 increased again to 10 printing houses. The ten printing houses are Shie Dian Ho, Albert Rusche & Co., Siang Hok In Kwan, Tan Kiong Tjwan, Khoe Jan Sin, Liem Ing Tjoen, Tan Kiong Biau, Javaansche, N. V. Drukkerij, and Hadjib Moh. Saleh.²⁴ In 1914, there were 78 printing houses throughout Java and only some thirties in other archipelago regions.²⁵

At first, Muslim printing in the Dutch East Indies used a new lithographic printing technique. This printing follows the successful use of the same techniques adopted by Muslims in India and the Middle East. At an early stage, Muslims' preference for lithography was based on the consideration that this technique could capture the beautiful Arabic style and writing of Muslim manuscripts. The beautiful Qur'an edition was the first Indo-Malayan Muslim book printed with this technique, published in Palembang in 1848. A few years later, the publication of the book of *Sharaf al-Anam* appeared in 1853, a Malay version of the text of praise to the Prophet Muhammad, which was popular in Surabaya. Since then, Muslim publishers have expanded their activities by mass-producing religious books and other literature, such as *bikayat* and verses published by individually run cottage printing industries. Several similar Islamic religious textbooks were printed in Java between the late 1850s and early 1860s. The most crucial development in the Muslim printing world in the latter part of the 19th century took place in Singapore, which, since about 1860, has been the centre of Muslim publishing activity in the Southeast Asian region and the world's first centre of Malay-language Muslim printing activity.²⁶

²³ Adam, *The Vernacular Press*, 184-7.

²⁴ *Colonial Verslag* (1913, appendix R.R.), 11; *Colonial Verslag* (1920, appendix GG), 14; *Colonial Verslag* (1923, appendix GG), 22; Beny Yuwono, "Ethnic Chinese in Surakarta, 1890-1927," *History Sheet* 2, no. 1 (1999): 74, as quoted by Sariyatun, "Chinese Community Batik Business in Surakarta 1900-1930" (Master's Thesis--Gadjah Mada University, 2001), 72.

²⁵ Lombard, *Nusa Jawa Silang Budaya*, 152.

²⁶ Yudi Latif, *Inteligensia Muslim dan Kuasa: Genealogi Inteligensia Muslim Indonesia Abad ke-19* (Bandung: Mizan, 2005), 177.

Outside the Dutch East Indies, in the early 1880s, Malay-language Islamic literature was also published in the cities of other Muslim lands, such as Bombay, Cairo, and Makkah. This development has contributed to many reproductions of old manuscripts and the multiplication of religious works, which, together with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, increased the influx of religious books to the Dutch East Indies.²⁷

Regarding the presence of Islamic books, Ockeleon (1939) stated that Islamic books at the beginning of the 20th century in Indonesia were not only large in number, but the religious books were related to almost all Islamic scientific disciplines contained in the *kitab kuning* of traditional Islamic institutions, *pesantren*, and *surau*.²⁸ In *kitab kuning*, some examples of Islamic books from Ockeleon's studies are classified based on various Islamic scientific disciplines. In the field of Arabic, for example, there are the writings of Achmad bin Abdullah Assagaf, *Kitab akan beladjar membatja dan menoelis toelisan Arab diterangkan dengan bahasa Melajoe hoeroef Woelanda* (Soerabaia: Perkoempoelan al-Islamijah, 1918), and the writings of Fadloe'llah Moehammad and B. Th. Brondgeest's, *Kamoes Arab-Melajoe* (Batavia: Volkslectuur, without years). In the fiqh book category is the writing of Abu Dardiri, *Kitab al- salat* (Purbalingga: Persatuan Moehammadijah, 1926); writings of Sajid Oemar bin Aloe'i Alatas, *Zakatoel Fitr* (Batavia: Drukkerij Boro-Budur, 1925); and the writings of A. Karim Amroellah, *al-Qawloesh Shabih* (Jogdjakarta: Persatoean Moehammadijah, 1920). In the category of theology and Sufism, Abdoellah Achmad wrote three books: *Ilmoe Sedjati*, Vol. 1-4 (Padang: al-Moenir, 1910); *Pemboeka Pintoe Soerga*, Vol. 1 (Padang: al-Moenir, 1914); and *Titian ke soerga, Kitab oetsoeloe'ddin* (Padang: al-Moenir, 1916). Sjarafoe'ddin Maneri wrote a book related to Sufism entitled *Tasaoef in Islam* (Batavia: Indon. Drukkerij, 1916). Related to hadith, there is the writing of Abi Haiban, *Boekoe Ahadith al-Nabawijah* (Jogdjakarta: Moehammadijah Poestaka Park Section, 1922/23); and the writings of Abdoellatif Soekoer, *Ahadith Nabawijah Perkoempoelan seribu hadis-hadis Nabi s.a.w. mengandoeng beberapa hadis yang baik-baik teratoer*

²⁷ Ibid., 178.

²⁸ Jajat Burhanudin, "The Fragmentation of Religious Authority: Islamic Print Media in Early 20th Century Indonesia," *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004): 51.

menoeroet hoeroep edjaan, Vol. 1 (Bukit Tinggi: Drukkerij Tsamarotel-Ichwan, 1926).

Some of the books listed by Ockeleon, in addition to several other books on different subjects, including newspapers and journals-provide sufficient evidence of the increasing role of publications in presenting Islam to audiences in urban areas of the Dutch East Indies. These publications emerged as significant information sources in urban Muslims' religious life. They played a similar role as *kitab kuning* in *pesantren*, *surau*, and traditional Muslim communities. With these developments, the modern Islamic movement has contributed to developing a way of embers in religious thought based on these publications. For urban Muslims, the oral traditions truly established in transmitting Islamic scholarship began to be replaced by written texts. Books, journals, newspapers, and pamphlets, not merely sermons delivered by clerics in *pesantren*, have contributed to the meaning of religion. In other words, printing culture, not just oral culture, began to be found in the main elements of learning and understanding Islamic teachings in Muslim circles.

In addition, publications have given rise to the reestablishment (reform) of Islamic religious authorities. The honorable position of 'ulama, which came from the authority of learning in *pesantren*, began to erode in the urban Muslim community. The new source of religious authority is based on the publication of newspapers, books, journals, or pamphlets, not solely on Islamic boarding school clerics. In turn, this condition gave rise to Muslim intellectuals whose thinking was hybrid, a crossover of various sources of Islamic information. They not only get their scientific information from a scholar but also from broader sources of information.²⁹

The print media also played an important role in seeding ideas and forming a new pattern of diversity based on the free reading of the text. At this point, the Islamic modernization movement hit

²⁹ At the beginning of the emergence of the print media concerning religious issues, there was a kind of shock from religious circles if Muslims do not learn religion from *kyai* or from *pesantren*. It was unusual for Muslims to learn religion from magazines, journals, or newspapers. Religious elites who still held traditional views consider heretical (*dalalah*) for Muslims not studying religion in *pesantren*, *surau*, and not to *kyai*. See the rubric "Soal Djawab," *Medan Moeslimin*, no. 13/X (July 1, 1924), 203.

the joints of the traditional authority buildings of the clergy. Thus, the presence of print media has opened vast space for Muslims in general to study Islam and finally translate the teachings of Islam relatively free from the domination of scholars with its *kitab kuning*. This process became more robust with the publication of religious books covering the fields of Islamic studies, as provided in the *kitab kuning*. From here, diversity in the understanding and practice of Islam grew among the Muslims of the Dutch East Indies. The Islamic renewal movement has also made significant contributions to it.

The influence of foreign dynamics on the condition of local communities cannot be separated from the growing role of publications. The role of print media, such as books, journals, and newspapers, cannot be ignored in transmitting developing issues, both from the Islamic and Western worlds. For Indonesian Muslims, the emergence of schools of thought or movements partly impacts the development of the global world, both from the West and the East. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that the phenomena that have developed in the world have helped to expand and deepen the field of action and thinking of the Indonesian nation.³⁰ This influence from the outside world has inspired and supported the development of the ideals of emancipation of colonized countries.³¹ There are at least two inspirations from abroad towards Indonesian Muslims, namely religious reform and modernization and a growing awareness of Nationalism.³²

³⁰ See A.K. Pringgodigdo, *Sejarah Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia* (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1991), vii.

³¹ Among the symptoms of emancipation is the following. [1] The ideal of a grouping of certain people towards self-elaboration and inner development; [2] Seek to be recognized as part of society in full and, as such, have the same opportunities and rights as the more privileged classes in society; [3] Seeking severance of relations with the ruling class in society. Usually, the term "Nationalism" is used only to denote this last element in emancipation. See A. P. E. Korver, *Sarekat Islam Gerakan Ratu Adil?* (Jakarta: Grafitipers, 1985), 1.

³² The definition of "Nationalism" here is "modern Nationalism," which is different from "ancient Nationalism." The second so-called, as many people fear, is existence pa narrow and arbitrary tribalism or tribalism towards other tribes. In contrast, modern Nationalism is the right for a nation to determine its own destiny and, therefore, is anti-Imperialism, and is consistent with democratic principles. Nurcholish Madjid, *Indonesia Kita* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2004), 32.

This kind of idea, furthermore, is disseminated by local media, that have also increased. The spread of the idea of Islamic renewal and pan-Islamism, for example, is closely related to the development of mass media and other publications. This idea helped shape a modern Islamic political identity and ideology in the Dutch East Indies to achieve independence. Of course, the atmosphere of the 20th century has something to do with the atmosphere of the previous century, the 19th century. Suppose the beginning of the 20th century is seen as a momentum for the emergence of the idea of Nationalism, as the identity of the nation- in which Islam is involved. In that case, the 19th century is often called the century when the idea of Islamic renewal was raised. Thus, the active involvement of Muslims in the national movement is a logical consequence of the reinterpretation of Islamic teachings as one of the ideas of Islamic renewal.³³

Among Sarekat Islam, there are also some elements of thought about emancipation. In fact, within certain limits, such an Islamic reformism-modernism movement as the SI can be considered an ideal of emancipation in the religious sphere. SI elites, such as Hadji Samanhoedi, Tjokroaminoto, Abdul Muis, and Agus Salim, were heavily influenced by the ideas of Islamic modernist reformers. They widely talked about the idea of the reformism of Islamic modernism. For them, Islam is a means to advance and elevate the degree of the Indonesian nation. However, in later developments, due to the solid Islamic modernism in the SI, the idea of Pan-Islamism stood out more than the idea of Nationalism as proclaimed by secular groups. In the end, the ideological politics of Islamic modernist reformist groups are more concentrated and colored by the ideas of Pan-Islamism that have developed in Islamic countries.³⁴

The Work of *Medan Moeslimin* and *Islam Bergerak*

It should be explained here that the beginning of the XX century was a time of a flood of popular publications, whether in newspapers, magazines, journals, leaflets, or pamphlets.³⁵ Accord-

³³ Alfian, *Pemikiran dan Perubahan Politik Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1983), 97.

³⁴ Korver, *Sarekat Islam*, 43.

³⁵ Compared with the development of the press in the West, the national press is still small in number. Until 1900, Marco estimated that the number of national

ing to Ben Anderson, this communication medium is a powerful means of shaping a movement's language and fantasy or imagination. This media has its own revolutionary implications and consequences. Such a prominent role of the mass media is also fully realized by Hadji Misbach.³⁶ In 1914, Hadji Misbach also published a journal called *Medan Moeslimin*, abbreviated as MM. The primary purpose of publishing this journal is to voice the thoughts of Muslims. In the view of MM editors, at that time, Muslims were subjected to ridicule from several other groups, including non-Muslims. Therefore, MM is one of the media to ward off attacks that do not understand honest Islam.

In the article, *Medan Moeslimin dan Beberapa Faidahnja Soerachabar di Atas Pergahoelan Hidoep di dalam Doenia*, Misbach alluded to some of the benefits of a newspaper. According to him, the benefits of newspapers are: [1] as a means of conveying a regulation from the government to the general public and vice versa; [2] Cleansing the human mind of ignorance; [3] For a small fee, newspapers provide broad insight into the state of the other world; [4] became a lesson for the community; [5] serves as a warning to its readers; [6] became a medium of entertainment; [7] helping entrepreneurs offer their produce; [8] being magical binoculars for viewing other parts of the world; [9] became a tool for voicing the conditions of society; and [10] became a discussion companion for his readers.³⁷ However, Hadji Misbach warned that MM would not be practical for Muslims to maximize the breadth of Islam if its adherents did not properly practice the knowledge of Islamic teachings. Therefore, MM will become useless, and crime is increasingly rampant in the Dutch East Indies.³⁸

As a medium defender of Islam, in the early days of its publication, MM talked more about matters related to Islamic law,

presses published in the Indies-The Netherlands is about 50 newspapers alone. See "Verslag of the Indiers Journalisten Congress on Minggoe day of 9 Maart 1919 at the Societeit Mangkoenegaran Soerakarta," *Sinar Hindia*, no. 49 (Tahoen XX, Senen 11 Maart 1919), 1.

³⁶ Benedict Anderson, "Language, Fantasy, Revolution: Java 1900-1950," in *Making Indonesia: Essays on Modern Indonesia in Honor of George McT. Kahin*, ed. Daniel S. Lev and Ruth McVey (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University's Southeast Asia Program, 1996), 34.

³⁷ See *Medan Moeslimin*, no. 5/XI (March 5, 1925), 65.

³⁸ Hadji Misbach, "Seroean Kita," *Medan Moeslimin*, no. IV (1819), 281.

such as marriage, *farā'id* (a division of inheritance), and hajj. There is also opened a kind of question-and-answer rubric related to Islamic issues. MM explored issues related to politics and was more revolutionary after Misbach got out of prison. This change in MM's direction caused some of its editorial boards to leave. Eventually, MM became a mass medium for revolutionary Islamic and political ideas. *Naṣr min Allāh wa fath qarib wa bashshir al-mu'minīn* is the motto of MM.³⁹

³⁹ This motto is taken from the Qur'an, al-Ṣaff [61]: 13, which means: "Help from God and victory near, and bring glad tidings to the people of mu'min." Word "*Fath*" can be interpreted as "opening." The meaning of this word then develops into victory, because in an implied victory something that is fought against something that is blocked and closed. See M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Alqur'an*, Vol. 14 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2006), 208-9.



Figure 1: MM cover in 1915. Source: *Medan Moeslimin* (1915)

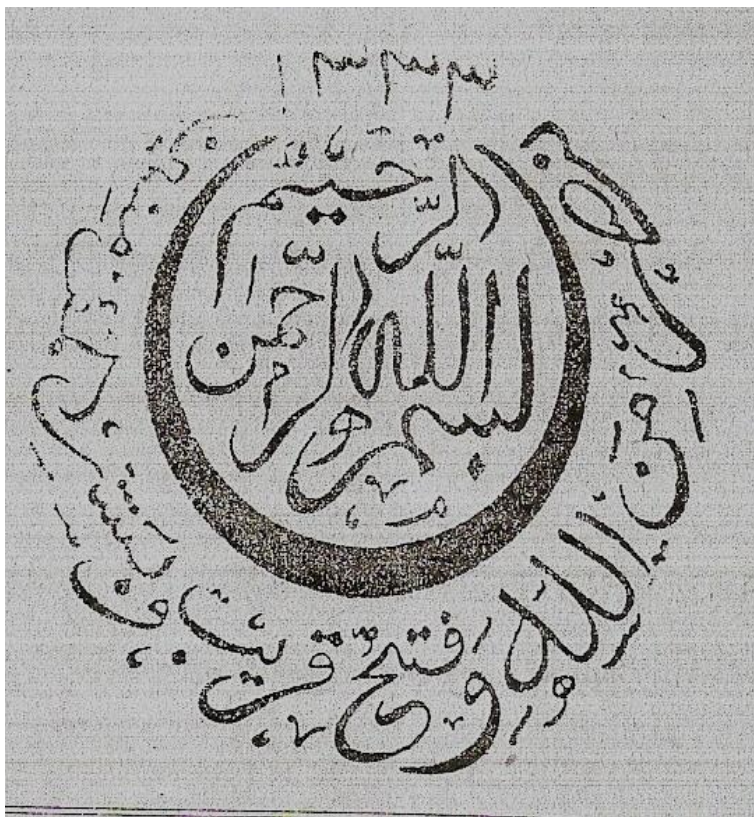


Figure 2. Logo and motto of MM. Source: *Medan Moeslimin*, no. 5/XI (March 5, 1925).

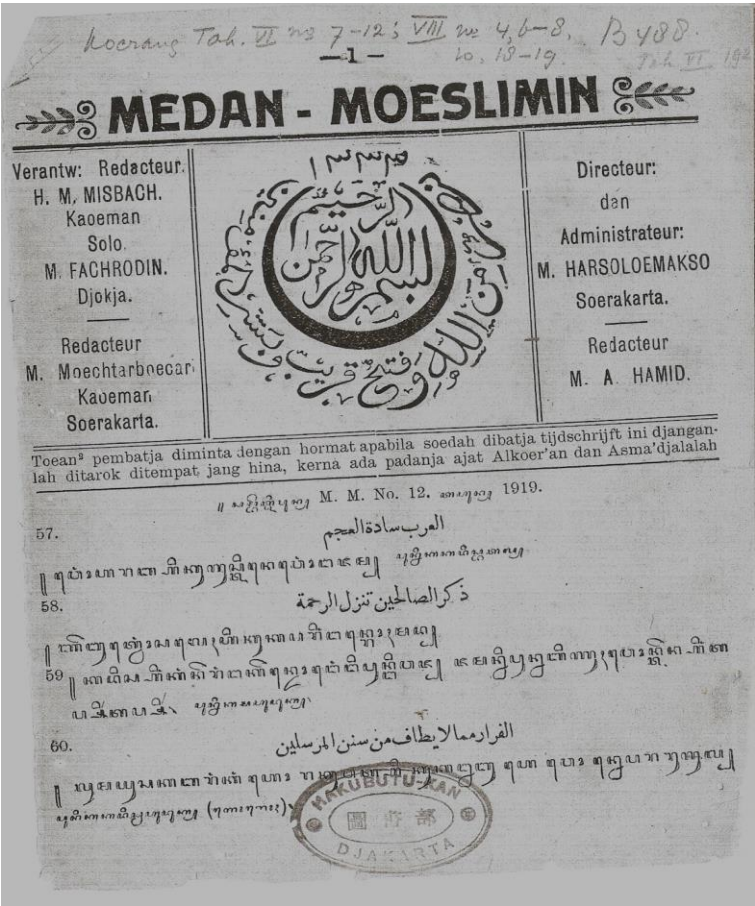


Figure 3. MM Cover in bilingual editions: Javanese and Malay. Source: *Medan Moeslimin*, no. 12 (1919).

Tahoen ke IX. No. 19. 19 Safar Djé 1342. 1 October 1923. — 289 —

MEDAN-MOESLIMIN.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Pengarang yang menangoeng jawab : HAROENRASJID Solo Java</p> <p>Pengarang : M. A. HAMID Djocja.</p> <p>R.S.MARAJA SAYUTHY LOEBIS Bandjermasin.</p> | <p>بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ نَحْمَدُكَ يَا رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَنُصَلِّ عَلَى رَسُولِكَ</p> | <p>Pembantoe jang has NASURDIN Goeroe Melajoe di Penang Saleh Balala Onderwijzer Islam School Bandjermasin.</p> <p>Ketoea : H. M. MISBACH Pengoeroes : SJARIEF</p> <p>Harga Advertentie haroes berem- boeg lebih dasloe kopda : ADMINISTRATIE.</p> |
|---|---|--|

Toean-toean pembatja di minta dengan hormat apabila soedah di batja tidschrijf ini, hendaklah disimpn
jang baik, agar toean-toean tidak menjia-sjakan keperluan jang penting.

ISLAM dan ATOERANNJA.

Berhoeboeng dengan toelisannya saudara Soemantri jang termoeat dalam Sinar Hindia no. 167, kami perloe sekali memberi keterangan pada pembatja, teroetama kepada saudara Soemantri. Kami rasa, keterangan jang diberikan oleh soedara Soemantri jang pandjang lebar, perloe boeat boekti² goena menendang kepada O. S. Tjokro, tendangan mana sampai meleset dari pokok wet - wet islam jang sebenar - benarnya.

Sebeloemnja kami terangkan tentang adanja kesalahan itoe, lebih doeloe kami akan ngasih boekti bagi kebenarannya saudara Soemantri olehnja memberikan tendangan kepada O. S. Tjokroaminoto.

Sebagai boekti, dan agar djadi terangnja bagai pembatja, kami koetip apa jang perloe: *Islam artinja selamat.*

Apabila orang akan mendatangkan keselamatan doenia atau mendatangkan islam, tetapi tiada mentjari sebab-sebab roesaknja keselamatan dan menggoenakan sebab-sebab itoe, tetapi hanya islam dan lagi islam . . . lagi islam sadja, itoelah namanja islam gadoengan

Inilah sifatnja Toean Tjokroaminoto.
Demikianlah adanja itoe toelian.

Dalam perasaan kami, apabila menoeroet toelian di atas, soenggoeh ada betoel-betoel penjalahi bagi atoeran agama islam, dan teranglah bagi Tjokroaminoto satoe pemimpin pergerakan dengan sengadja mengaboi mata ra'jat, karena ia tiada mempoenjai rasa hawa kemanoesiaän, atau tidak berfikiran djoedjoer, inilah lebih berbahaja poela bagi ra'jat, sebab Tjokro bertopeng agama islam, sedang wet² islam Tjokro melanggarnya, dan mengubah keadaan-keadaan jang baik dan benar dengan diplomatiek, awas saudara awas!

Ketahoeilah saudara.

Bahwa igama islam itoe moedah dan benar sekali bagi seorang jang berdasar soeti dan berfikiran djoedjoer, dan sebab-sebabnja agama islam moedah didjalankan bagi orang jang berfikiran, karena agama islam tjotjek dengan akal dan fikiran.

Kita akan mentjahari keselamatan haroes mengetahoei sebab-sebab jang meroesakan keselamatan, sebab segala hal ada kedjadian moesti ada sebab. Sebagaimana terseboet dalam al qoe'an djoes 11 ajat 84, sebagai ini artinja :

Saban - saban ada satoe kedjadian mesti ada sebab.

Figure 4: One of the MM covers containing aspects of Islamic teachings. Source: *Medan Moeslimin*, no. 19/IX (October 1, 1923).

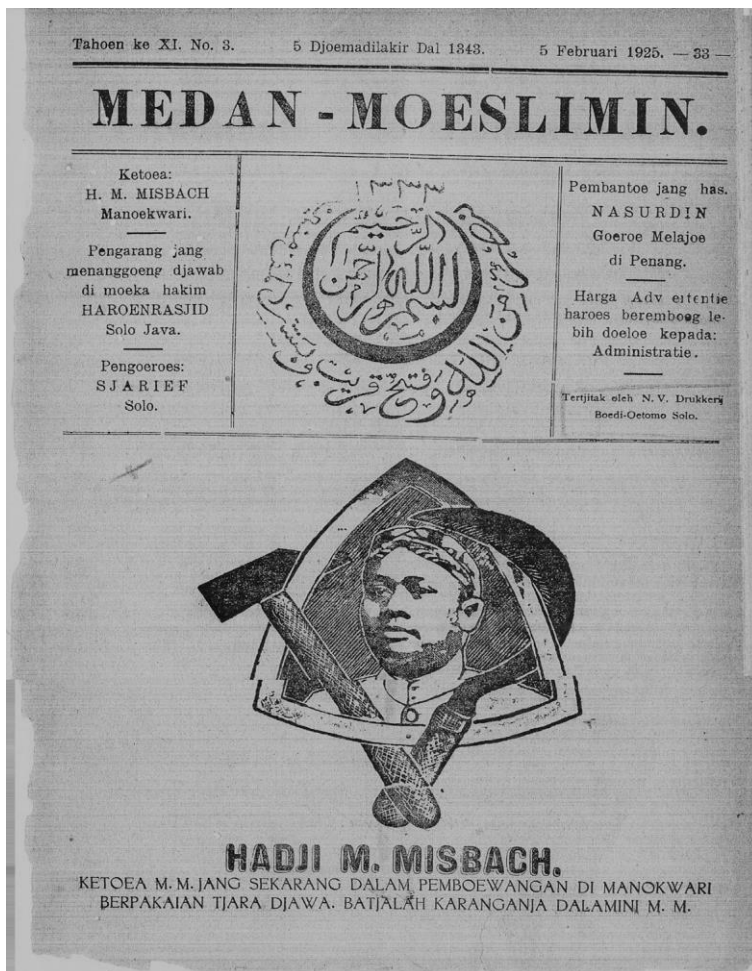


Figure 5. One of the MM covers when it became an SR/PKI organ.
Source: *Medan Moeslimin*, no. 3/XI (February 5, 1925).

In addition, at this time, *MM* can also be said to be a *transmitter* in disseminating news for the Islamic world. The journal contains news originating in Turkey and the Arab world and refuses to use news sources broadcast via the *ANETA* (*Algemeen Nieuws En Telegraaf-Agentschap*, 'General News Agency and Telegraph'), the telegram British-owned that are said to be liars.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *ANETA* was an official Dutch East Indies news agency who in 1924 received a concession to receive news from Europe by radio. Since that year, from six o'clock in the morning to one o'clock in the afternoon, *ANETA* radiating al-

The newspapers that are used as news sources are as follows. From Turkey are *Waqit* and *Rosyad*; from Egypt are al-Ahram and al-Akhbar; and from India are *al-Siyasah Medina*, and *Zaimidar*.⁴¹ MM also released much news from revolutionary Indonesian newspapers, such as *Sinar Hindia*, *Panggoegah*, and *Doenia Bergerak*. It is said that MM has been circulating in several places in Indonesia, such as Sabang, Aceh, Ternate, Manokwari, and Merauke. Several figures have been circulated in this journal in Singapore, Turkey, and America.

Considering that MM managers are the majority who have received education in Islamic boarding schools, such as Hadji Misbach, Haroenrasjid, and Achmad Dasoeki, then they can access Arabic-language news sources. Looking at the revolutionary developments of other Islamic worlds in Arabic-language newspapers, they seem to have gained legitimacy or support for this radical and revolutionary attitude. Thus, it can be said that the Arab world remains the mecca of the Dutch East Indies Muslims in terms that are not only concerned with religious issues but more broadly than that.

In the newspaper, Hadji Misbach voiced his thoughts on Islam and issues related to politics. In this case, he was assisted by journalists who understood religion and understood political issues. Among them were Mas Marco Kartodikromo and Hadji Fachroeddin (1890-1929), who later became important figures of Muhammadiyah. Since its establishment in 1926, MM has undergone several leadership changes. The first to lead this journal was, of course, Hadji Misbach. When Misbach was imprisoned for

most without stopping. His radio messages were received in Bandung, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, Makassar, Manado, Balikpapan, Banjarmasin, Medan, Palembang, Padang, and Kotaraja. See Rudolf Mrazek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Perkembangan Teknologi dan Nasionalisme di Sebuah Koloni*, translated by Hermojo from *Engineers of Happy Land: Technological Developments and Nationalism in a Colony* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2006), 224. *ANETA* established by D.W. Baretty on April 1, 1917. *ANETA* developed into a large news agency or press bureau, as a center for sending and receiving news from various quarters world. In 1920 *ANETA* has occupied a three-storey office -which is now occupied by the News Agency *BETWEEN-* and in 1924 opened its own radio station. See Tim Peneliti, *Beberapa Segi Perkembangan Sejarah Pers di Indonesia*, revised edition (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2002), 39.

⁴¹ *Medan Moeslimin*, no. 5/XI (March 5, 1925/9 Roewah Tahoen Dal 1343), 66.

six months, the leadership of MM was held by Ng. Darsosasmito. Fachroeddin had been the general leader of MM from 15 June 1919 to 1 December 1921, when Hadji Misbach was detained and went to prison in Klaten until he was transferred to Pekalongan prison.

Furthermore, Moechtar Boechary (Chairman of Muhammadiyah Solo) had also led MM when Misbach was detained for nine months, ending his exile in Manokwari. MM underwent development after being held by Haroenrasjid. However, given his declining health, Haroenrasjid handed over control of MM to Sjabiloerrasjad and Mashoedoeelhaq in 1926. Meanwhile, Haroenrasjid served as an advisor to MM.⁴²

The journal received a response from religious leaders from several Islamic organizations because it was seen as a medium that defended and voiced Islamic thoughts. However, Misbach's revolutionary attitude and choosing the communist path after his release from prison in late 1922 led many Islamic leaders to resign from MM. Many Muhammadiyah figures emerged from the two media that Misbach founded, including Fachroeddin, because of Misbach's attitude of disagreeing with Muhammadiyah's direction.⁴³ With the help of Sosrokoernio, secretary of the Surakarta branch of Sarekat Islam, Misbach continued his harsh propaganda among the people of Sarekat Islam. Misbach's issues shifted from purely religious issues to economic and social issues, the loss of human rights, and the elimination of prevalent oppression on the part of the Dutch kingdom and private companies. These issues show the color of Marxism in the journal.

In addition, Hadji Misbach also published the IB newspaper in 1916. The newspaper, published three times a month—the 1st, 10th, and 20th—is in Javanese and Indonesian. The newspaper's motto is *Tempat goena menerangkan hal kebenaran Agama Islam dan lain-lainnja* (in 1919) or *Tempat goena membentangkan sikapnja kaoem moeslimin dan moeat kabar-kabar oemoem* (in 1922). The aims and objectives of the IB are described by its editor, Koesen, as follows:

Islam Bergerak diterbitkan oentoek melawan dengan sekoekat tenaga segala tjatjian dan hina'an jang menoedjoe kepada agama kita Islam dan boemi-

⁴² M. Junus Anis, *Riwayat Hidup H. Fachroedin* (Jogjakarta: Persatuan, 1969), 18.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19.

*poetera; kerana sesoenggoehnja telah bertaboen-taboen kita kaoem moeslimin dan boemipoetera tinggal sabar sebagai tiada ferdoelikan tentang tjatjian dan hina'an jang timboel dari anti Islam. Akan tetapi makin lama kita tinggal sabar, makin bertambah sangatlah perboeatan anti Islam mentjatji kepada agama Islam.*⁴⁴

Islam Bergerak is published to fight with all its might against all insults and insults directed at our religion Islam and native peoples; because in fact, for many years we Muslims and natives have lived patiently without caring about the insults and insults that arise from anti-Islam. However, the longer we remain patient, the more anti-Islamic acts of insulting Islam will increase.

However, like MM, the newspaper also shifted from mere “defenders of Islam” to issues of revolutionary liberation of the people. In later developments, the newspaper merged with *Doenia-Baroe* and was later renamed *Ra'jat-Bergerak*, when it turned into the mouthpiece of a communist group. The circulation of this newspaper stopped altogether after Hadji Misbach, and several of his comrades were arrested and imprisoned.⁴⁵ Now, the direction of *Ra'jat-Bergerak* is “membela ra'jat jang mencari keadilan doenia.”⁴⁶ This information also shows that this newspaper defends the interests of Muslims and all the Dutch East Indies who have experienced oppression. Of course, this depends on the shift in the ideology of its managers, who lean more towards communism.

Misbach's revolutionary stance was also shaped and strengthened by communist publications that published socialist literature. The publication and dissemination of these writings was a follow-up to the PKI Congress of 1924, which established the *PKI Hoofdbestuur Batjaan* Commission. The purpose of publishing and disseminating “literature socialism” is so that the people of the movement can understand this term as readings to oppose the publication and dissemination of the readings of the capitalist (capitalist). The person who first introduced the notion of “literature socialism” was Semaon.

⁴⁴ See *Islam Bergerak*, no. 4 (Thursday, February 1, 1917) and no. 5 (Saturday, February 10, 1917).

⁴⁵ Rangsang, “Tjatatan,” *Sinar Hindia*, no. 139, Djoemaat edition (July 4, 1924).

⁴⁶ “Persatoean Islam-Bergerak dan Doenia-Baroe djadi Ra'jat-Bergerak,” *Medan Moeslimin*, no. 18/IX (September 15, 1923), 319-20.

The purpose of selecting, publishing, and disseminating writings that teach Socialism is as follows: [1] to abolish old social relations –which have been obsolete but retained by a colonial power- such as squatting when meeting with colonial officials or authorities; [2] “Literature socialism” was an opposition against the dominance of the publication of printed goods produced by Balai Poestaka as a mouthpiece of the government.⁴⁷ With the production of this kind of reading, the colonized people were introduced and invited into new modern minds. Because of this, the “literature of socialism” had to be written in a language understood by the *chromos*. In other words, on the political stage of the movement, “socialism literature” was the “brain” of the mass movement at that time.

⁴⁷ Edi Cahyono, *Jaman Bergerak di Hindia Belanda: Mosaik Bacaan Kaoem Pergerakan Tempo Doeloe* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pancur Siwah, 2003), xxviii.

The development of the Malay language and Dutch East Indies news, journals, and magazines developed in line with the growth of educational institutions and the development of public facilities and infrastructure, such as telegraph, telephone, and postal, as well as other infrastructures. Public facilities and infrastructure emerged following the birth of Liberal Politics, which occurred at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The regional language of the Dutch East Indies newspaper is a product of a cosmopolitan urban cultural environment. Therefore, it can be said that the modernization process, including intellectual growth and

the development of newspapers, is a direct legacy of the presence of Europeans in Indonesia.

Conclusion

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that: First, with the presence of these two media, the Islamic media at that time was polarized into left and right (followed by mainstream Islamic organizations). These two media have become media that voice the common ground (affinity) between the teachings of Islam and communism. Second, the presence of the print media impacts shifting the discourse of Islamic understanding from traditionalist reformers to modernist reformers. In the atmosphere of Islamic traditionalism, the cleric and his *kitab kuning* became the primary source of Islam. However, when Muslims use the mass media, they access much of this knowledge from modern publications, such as journals, newspapers, religious books, and pamphlets written by modern Muslim intellectuals. Here there is also a shift from the role of scholars to Islamic religious scholarship. Third, not only that, the print media or the press is also used as an affirmation of the identity of an ideology. This press can be seen from the original purpose of the publication of MM by Hadji Misbach in 1914. This media was born as a means to explain the nature of Islam to a general audience. Some people often portray Islam negatively, so it needs to be responded to wisely through the mass media.

Therefore, MM was initially called a media “defender of Islam.” However, its development underwent a turnaround in a socialistic direction. In the end, MM became the “mouthpiece” of Marxism when Hadji Misbach made communism the cornerstone of struggle in the world of movement. The same case also occurred in the IB founded by Hadji Misbach in 1916. The media was also established to fend off writings attacking Islam. However, this newspaper has shifted from merely defending Islam to a medium that voices communist ideas. In fact, in the end, this newspaper joined the communist print media. Thus, a mass media’s spirit and ideology follow its managers’ ideological background, change of orthodox Islam from orthodox Islam (*santri*) transformation into leftist Islamic media (communists).

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