

Teaching Values of Islamic Communism in Surakarta: Issues in the First Quarter of the 20th Century

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Abstract

This study explores teaching values of Islamic Communism in the colonial era in Surakarta Indonesia in the 20th century. As Islam and communism are generally viewed as being incompatible, this looked at the distinctive and uncommon fusion of these two ideologies and the main ideas behind Islamic communism. Using content analysis this study examined three popular magazines in this era whose news affected political and social changes in the overall Java. Four steps of historical methods were applied including: heuristic, source critic, interpretation, and historiography. Results show that the history of the Indonesian movement and its ideologies included a blend of ideas from Islam and communism, which later led to the notion of Islamic communism. To achieve this, its proponents sought to find the matching points between the two ideologies and erase any notion that might disassociate them allowing syncretism ideology. The two ideologies, when combined, were employed in the struggle against capitalism and colonialism. Islam was perceived as defending the rights of the indigenous people being oppressed by colonialism. The emergent of communists then claimed that their doctrine, which rejected colonialism and capitalism, was wholly in line with Islamic Jihadism idea in terms of fighting the negative effects of the above two ideologies.

Keywords: *Islamic communism, ideology of resistance, theology of liberation, revolution, anti-capitalism*

Introduction

Mainstream Muslims view Islam and communism from a polarized point of view. Much like Christianity and liberalism, communism is largely viewed as an enemy of Islam. The integration of Islam and communism is therefore unusual, because communism is perceived as an anti-religious ideology (Marx and Engels, 2009). However, in certain historical epochs, such as the movement period in Surakarta, the integration of communism and Islam became a popular notion. Indeed, the actions of the leftist scholars in Surakarta during the colonial era of the early 20th century were viewed as a radical movement.

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Islamic communism once flourished in Surakarta in the early 20th century. This school of thought was driven by pious scholars, such as Hadji Misbach, Achmad Dasoeki and Haroenrasjid, as well as the religious teachers at Moe'allimin Mardi Boesono Surakarta (Misbach, 2000; Hongxuan, 2018). They criticized capitalism, colonialism, and the establishment through their speeches (*Redaksi KBBI*, 2002). These peasant-based activists viewed communism as being compatible with basic Islamic principles (Ricklefs, 2007), something that is considered unconventional among mainstream Muslims.

This research was inspired by several previous studies, including Shiraishi's (1997) study entitled *Zaman Bergerak: Radikalisme Rakyat di Jawa, 1912–1926* (An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912-1926). This study explored the political movement of the early 20th century that became a source of inspiration for modern Indonesian politics and the forerunner of Indonesian nationalism and Islamic communism as a political movement. Other research by Huda (2013), entitled *Discourse on Islamism and Communism: Tracking Intellectual Genealogy of Hadji Mohammad Misbach 1876-1926*, tracks the intellectual roots of Hadji Misbach, and early communist figure who raised the idea of Islam and communism.

Recent research conducted by Hongxuan (2018) examined the confluence of Islam and communism in the Netherlands East Indies from 1915 to 1927. It examined the nature of the discourses linking communism with Islam by exploring the profusion of anti-colonial printed works from the period. It also includes a brief examination of Dutch reports and oral testimonies about the role of Islam and communism in motivating participants in the 1926–1927 communist uprisings. However, none of those studies specifically discussed Islamic communist thinking, which resulted from a unique blend that existed only in the Dutch East Indies in the early quarter of the 20th century.

We outline this research to figure out the integration of communism and Islam and the character of Islamic communism, namely its basic nature (*Penyusun*, 1990). In terms of its thinking, the character of Islamic communism considered in this study differed from other schools of thought at the time. Indeed, a different interpretation of Islam emerged through the combination of Islam and communism (Ranuwihardjo, 2000), resulting in a revolutionary new religious outlook that opposed colonial government and sided with the oppressed. Specifically, we focus two issues on syncretism thoughts and characteristic of Islamic communism doctrines. The Islamic communism doctrines are elaborated into (a) Islam as the foundation of Islamic struggle

progressiveness, (b) radicalism in anti-Capitalism, (c) commitment to social advocacy, (d) Islamic anti-formalism, and (e) the “equally equal” principle.

Methods

This study was a content analysis from which corpora were analyzed. Thematic content analysis that emphasized on qualitative content approach was applied. Definitely, this research assigned a historical method, which consisted of four stages, namely heuristic, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The primary data source for this research was three popular magazines published in Surakarta from the early quarter of the 20th century, the so-called *movement period*. These magazines were *Medan Moeslimin* (published 1915–1926), *Islam Bergerak* (published 1917–1923), and *Ra'jat Bergerak* (published 1923). In the heuristic stage, we searched for material on which to work to acquire sources of information and focus on the magazines available. In the criticism, we made appraisal of the material or sources from the viewpoint of evidential values that pertained to Islamic values, Communism and social phenomena. We conducted evaluation and criticism to find the accurate data and verify to achieve a fixed data. Having the data accurate, we made synthesis and exposition by defining formal statement of the findings of heuristic and criticism, and writing the historical data (Spinning Clino, 2005). In the last step, we wrote systematically in logical view about the people, meanings, events, and ideas, and themes of the past that shaped the present (ECU University Australia, 2019).

Findings and Discussion

Syncretism Ideological Thoughts

The first section of the findings is syncretism of Islamic thoughts. This study found that Islamic communism was a blend of ideas that later transformed into a social movement. Syncretism is a new idea formed from an amalgamation of two or more different ideas to make something that is harmonious and balanced (*Redaksi*, 2002), and the anti-capitalist movement of Islamic communism is an example of this. Communism is a political ideology that embraces the teachings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as written in their *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (Manifesto of the Communist Party) (Marx & Engels, 2007), which was first published on February 21, 1848 in London and soon reached Paris. This manifesto covered communist theory

and an analysis of the class struggle, and it later became the basis of one of the most influential political movements in the world of international politics (Misbach, 1925a; Turner, 1981).

Communism teaches that social improvement needs to begin with the workers (the proletariat). The proletariat's struggle against the hegemony of the bourgeoisie (i.e., the capitalists) has affected the emergence of communism as a political movement in various parts of the world. From the perspective of communism, the history and dynamics of society is essentially a history of class inequality (Turner, 1981). Communism attempts to mobilize the proletariat in the struggle against the bourgeoisie to eliminate social divides. The term proletariat, which derives from the Latin word *proletarius* for the lowest class of Roman citizens, was used by Marx and Engels to refer to paid laborers, who, having no means of independent production, sell their labor to continue surviving (Hunt, 1957). The term *bourgeoisie*, meanwhile, refers to the capitalists that own the means of production and capital and thus employ laborers for their economic activities.

Communism is actually not just a political dogma. Following Karl Marx's death, communism developed into a comprehensive worldwide view as a political doctrine (Outhwaite, 2008). Based on the magazine *Archives de Philosophie*, which was published in France before World War II, Njoto (1962) describes how the teachings of Karl Marx were not merely related to the procedures and the design of government. They represented not just a technical solution to an economic problem, an alternative stance, or a catchy slogan in a moving speech but rather a vast interpretation of humanity's history, of beings and society, and of nature and God. In short, it is a comprehensive system. As such a comprehensive system, communism is built upon three interrelated concepts of political economics, philosophy, and history. The material dialectic that became one of its philosophies distanced it from religion (Communism, n.d.).

Communism is, in essence, a revolutionary movement presuming that the entire structure of society must be improved (Hunt, 1957). It is therefore classified as leftist. However, there is a distinction between a leftist and a communist, although there is some overlap. Soekarno (1966) claimed that a communist is a leftist, but a leftist is not necessarily a communist. Indeed, any desire to enhance social justice can be said to be leftist.

Socialism, meanwhile, refers to providing welfare for the economically vulnerable people in order to achieve social and political stability (*Islam Bergerak*, September 1, 1919, 1). To achieve social welfare in a political and economic system, it is necessary to make some capital public

property. Some movements perceive socialism as apolitical and economic system that expects the results of production to become public property by removing the property and capital of individuals. Such a socialist doctrine is part of the larger leftist ideology (socialism), but while every communist is also a socialist, not every socialist is a communist (*Islam Bergerak*, August 1, 1922 p. 2.) Communism is a socialist ideology that has its own distinctive philosophical model that includes political radicalism, proletarian revolution, revolutionary social movement, and militant action against capitalism (Schwartz, 2009; Soekarno, 1963).

Islam, meanwhile, is one of the Abrahamic religions that teaches monotheistic principles. Islam has an ideology of change, as well as a culture in social life. It occupies the same position as previous religions, such as Judaism and Christianity (Saikal, 2007). From a theological perspective, Islam and communism are often perceived as being diametrically opposed. In a socio-political context, movements rooted in religious principles are often viewed as being right wing, while communism is left wing. Communism is also seen as anti-religious, because Marx and Engels (2009, p.8–9) called religion “the opium of the people.” However, not all people feel a need to alienate communism from religion, as seen in various regions, including the East Indies, where communism began to support the movement of Muslims (Soekarno, 1963).

The integration of Islam and communism occurred because both have a corresponding social doctrine, namely an attitude of responsibility toward the weak. What is more, the universal nature of Islam has implications for the emergence of the interpretive variants of this religion. In this context, Islamic communism is viewed as a model of Islam for the world of anti-capitalist movements. The communist movement, which aims to fight for the workers, is considered by anti-capitalist Islamists as being in line with Islam (Ricklefs, 2007). In addition, communism and leftist movements tend to flourish in societies where people’s quality of life is deteriorating (Gie, 1999). In the colonial era, most of the affected indigenous people were marginalized. They were poor and oppressed, and they were often referred to as *krama* (Materu, 1970; HM Nasruddin Anshoriy, 2008). To liberate themselves from the grip of the capitalist colonial rulers, the *krama* embarked on a socialist revolution (Islamic Communism, 2004).

In the history of the national movement, efforts to integrate socialism and Islam were widely pursued. Tan Malaka, who was well aware of the contradiction between Islam and communism, presented a view for merging Pan-Islamism and communism (Schwartz, 2009). Marco also initiated the integration of socialism and Islam, while Misbach presented the case of communism

as a form of Islamic struggle (Gie, 1999). Tjokroaminoto (2003) also presented a concept for harmonizing the ideals of socialism and Islam, one that explains Islam from the perspective of the people's struggle against the evil of capitalism.

The integration of Islam and communism was intended to bring about a just social order under a religious command and thus prevent capitalism from exploiting people. Both conform to ideals of equality, and they echoed the struggle of the oppressed Indonesian people (Soekarno, 1963). By ignoring the element of atheism, it became possible to combine communism with Islam. This led to the thoughts and movements that came to be referred to as Islamic communism (Ricklefs, 2007; McVey, 2006). Misbach (1925d, 1926a), however, referred to the movement as revolutionary Islam or the Islamic Communist Party of Indonesia. Islamic communism is therefore regarded as a variant of Islam (*Tim Syarikat*, 2003), but this understanding is flawed because the noun in the phrase is "communism" rather than "Islam." The term Islamic communism therefore implies an Islamic tone in a communist movement, thus emphasizing a concern for the plight of oppressed people (*Islam Bergerak*, August 20, 1922 p. 2). This movement was intended to address the challenges of the socio-political dynamics of the early 20th century in the East Indies.

Islamic communism differs from the Islamic socialism of modern intellectuals like Agoes Salim and Tjokroaminoto. It is defined as a movement to implement the teachings of Islam using the case of communism. The term Islamic communism is considered more appropriate than the term communist Muslim or communist Islam (Effendi, 2010). The term communist Muslim would refer to a communist-minded Muslim, but this would be far from unique because most Indonesian communists were Muslims. This study also avoids the term communist Islam to avoid confusing it as an Islamic sect.

Instead, Islamic communism is an Islamic movement that uses the perspective of communism as a tool for its struggle. It is a movement to realize the ideals of Islam through communism, namely by freeing people from the oppression and misery caused by capitalism and colonialism. From this perspective, Islamic communism can be viewed as an ideology of resistance (Syari'ati, 1994). As Syari'ati (1994) argues, Islam needs to be viewed as an ideological and political superstructure in order to shape human nature and create just societies. It is a revolutionary ideology that transforms the status quo into a humanistic social order. In a more concrete form, Islam needs to be regarded as a protest religion and the ideology of resistance to oppression.

Islamic communism is, in essence, an interpretation of the religion from the perspective of communism (Gie, 1994). This perspective then becomes a form of thought based on religious beliefs (Islam), using communism as a way to struggle (*Tim Syarikat*, 2003). Islam is often associated with indigenous interests, thus acting as a unifying force against the “infidel” aggressors. This interpretive variant of Islam, in the history of thought and its aftermath, is often confronted by a dominant Islamic ideology that views Islam at one end of the spectrum and communism at the opposite end. Despite the constant resistance from the guardians of Islamic orthodoxy, however, the strong communists consistently showed their militancy in their struggle to defend the oppressed.

Characteristics of Islamic Communism Thought

The second findings describe Islamic communism doctrines by which integration of communism ideology and Islam is persuasively used as the tool of the struggles. The doctrines infuse five teachings whose values have been acculturated to the recent contexts of the struggle at that time. The doctrines are (a) Islam as the foundation of Islamic struggle progressiveness, (b) radicalism in anti-Capitalism, (c) commitment to social advocacy, (d) Islamic anti-formalism, and (e) the “equally equal” principle

The strong communist group intended to do what Casanova (1994) called religious de-privatization, which is an effort to bring religion into the public sphere. Islam is therefore used as the ideology of resistance in social and political thought. The character of Islamic communist thinking is depicted through six points: 1) Islam as the foundation of struggle, 2) progressive Islam, 3) radical anti-capitalism, 4) commitment to social advocacy, 5) Islamic anti-formalism, and 6) the “equally equal” principle.

Islam as the Foundation of Struggle

A common feature of Islamic communism is to use the holy verses of the Qur’an to show the compatibility between Islam and communism (Pringgodigdo, 1967). Misbach (1926a) meanwhile, made Islam a cornerstone of the struggle while at the same time fighting for Islam using the case of communism. Islamic communism uses the teachings of Islam as the basis for fighting the slander that stems from the existence of capitalism. Misbach (1926b) also called the struggle a war against the causes of people’s suffering. Islamic communist thinking, as S.

Hardjowijoto put it in the *vergadering* of Sarekat Islam (SI) in Pekalongan on December 23–24, 1923, was intended to fight capitalism as an obstacle to indigenous people exercising their religion (Verslag Pendek, 1923). Misbach, meanwhile, asked Muslims to review the Qur'an before undertaking various activities. In the *vergadering* of SI in Kebumen on May 14, 1920, he said that anyone who did not obey the Qur'an did not practice Islam correctly (Wongsodimedjo & Slamet, 1920). From this perspective, acting according to the Qur'an is compatible with a having a communist spirit and fighting capitalism.

Misbach therefore activated Islam as a religion of protest with the ideology of resistance to capitalism and colonialism. Islam is then implemented in the world of thought as follows: "I. B. views Islam not to be separated from politics, but I. B. views Islam not just as words and abase for the suppression of fellow human beings" (*Pembatja Kita*, November 10, 1922).

He also said that the effort to uphold justice is an obligation for every Muslimin order to achieve public salvation regardless of tribe and religion. The obligation for Muslims is not just to foster individual transition but also emphasize the importance of promoting social transition through the world of thought (Misbach, 1926a). From the perspective of Islamic communism, revolutionary thought wars against people who worship lust and spread corruption with oppression (capitalism and imperialism) (i.e., people only interested in self-pleasures, including foreign and domestic capitalists). The struggle of communists is viewed as a struggle to ground Islamic values in the context of social improvement and economic and political order to make society more just and civilized. The concept of Misbach's thinking can also be called a theology of liberation, which is a theology from the perspective of struggling to liberate society from colonialism.

Islam as practiced by communists is not merely intended to position Islam as a principle of legal, symbolic, and organizational formality—it may be better interpreted as a mindset that puts Islam at the base of thought, spirit, and morality, as well as a source of value. The presence of Islamic communism, from the perspective of the intellectuals, is seen as favoring Islam because the strong communists in Surakarta were able to play a role in a liberation that generally left behind the leaders of Islamic associations. In explaining the relationship between Islam and communism, Misbach quotes the Qur'an, specifically letter az-Zumar verse 18, about the necessity for a Muslim to be a true Muslim by way of communism (Misbach, 1925b). This

means that communism is viewed as an effort to bring salvation to people in the world, as well as in the hereafter. This thought is similar to the idea of Islamic teachings.

In *Medan Moeslimin*, there is a strict expression: “Muslims must involve themselves in the communist movement” (Verslaggever 1925). This expression arises from the fact that it is the communists who are squarely focused on the struggle against capitalism and colonialism, while other indigenous people have become accomplices of the invaders.

Achmad Dasoeki also used the verses of the Qur’an as the basis for the struggle. He and Sastrowidjono claimed that the way to Allah (*sabilillah*) lay in communism (Solo dan Pemikirannya, 1924). In the *vergadering* of the Sarekat Indies (*Insulinde*) in Surakarta on 21–22 March, 1920, Dasoeki described how the revolutionary struggle against the capitalists and the government was in accordance with Islam (Sastrosiswojo, 1920). Islam became the foundation of every activity for Misbach and the strong adherents of communism. When asked about public instigations against the policies of the colonial rulers, Misbach firmly replied that such attitudes arose because they were motivated by Islamic factors (Verslaggever, 1920).

Capitalism is regarded as the enemy of Islam, because it is considered the root cause of the collapse of morality, humanity, and religion (Misbach, 1925a). For the strong adherents of communism, capitalism is considered to have lured Muslims away from their religion because it only concerns itself with monetary gains, which is an affront to religion. In a meeting, the clerics of Surakarta shouted anti-capitalist slogans like “Insult religion! Get down! Get down!” while using a hammer as a symbol for the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI)” (Soekirno^{1923a}).

After Misbach left Java, Islam was still considered to be a source of value in the communist struggle. In the *SI vergadering* in Mangkuyudan, Surakarta on November 22–23, 1924, it was agreed that SI and PKI were true practices of Muslim expression (*Redaksi*, 1914). Islamic communism viewed itself as part of an Islamic social missionary endeavor, because Islam suggests a fight against evil (Gie, 1999). It is this Islamic spirit that makes the strong adherents of communism radical in the fight against capitalism and the government. Such an Islamic perspective was not found in the doctrines of the Comintern and the PKI, so it became a distinctive characteristic of Islamic communism.

Progressive Islam

As an ideology of resistance, Islamic communism also opposed fatalistic religious ideology (deterministic, predestination) (Glasse, 2002), such as the decrees of religious leaders who consider oppression as part of God's will. The fatalistic view of this era of thought was represented by a group that considered poverty and oppression to be rules and plans unrelated to capitalism and colonialism (Fakih, 2002). The condition is rather considered part of humanity's long journey from which people must gain wisdom, because it is a situation created by God. This fatalistic view of Islam is considered as weakening the anti-oppression spirit, so it opposes the ideology of resistance, where communists engaged in a progressive interpretation of Islam in response to a static Islamic understanding (*jumud*).

In addition to undermining the spirit of revolution, fatalistic ideals helped the oppressors to assert their control more (Sastrosiswojo, 1919). A student at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School asked Muslims to interpret patience progressively rather than as a passive doctrine (Djamsaren, 1920). This opinion came to be adopted by the people of Surakarta, especially those emerged in the world of thought. Misbach and his followers made efforts to ground Islam in the realm of thought, and they regarded fatalistic theology as poison for the people. The communists conflicted with the *Politieke Economische Bond* (Djama'atoel Chasanah) because this organization stressed the importance of a receptive attitude, passive (fatalistic) patience, and not resisting the oppressors (Choesen, 1923).

Although the strong communist group was anti-fatalistic and opposed traditional Islamists, this does not imply that they belonged to a modernist group. This group was actually in an opposite position to the modernist Islamic group (McVey, 2006), as represented by Muhammadiyah and Central *Sarekat Islam* (CSI), because the modernist group cooperated with the Dutch East Indies government and the capitalists, and they did not want a revolutionary struggle.

Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that the strong communists deliberately developed a progressive interpretation of Islam to counter the fatalistic orthodox understanding, as well as the modernists who did not view Islam as an ideology of resistance. At the same time, it became the spirit of the anti-government and anti-capitalism struggle.

Radicalism in Anti-Capitalism

Islamic communist thinking was radical and uncompromising toward capitalism (Choesen, 1923). This can be seen in the calls in *Islam Bergerak* to use radical thought against the arbitrary acts perpetrated by the usurper (*Perpemikiran di Hindia*, 1918).

In general, radical thinking often uses a distinctive idiom, such as revolution. The radical way of thinking was a central feature throughout Misbach's history and the communist struggle in Surakarta. Radical and revolutionary thought was seen as an effective way of resisting colonialism and capitalism (Rachmad, 1919). Revolution is therefore a religious command, just as Misbach expressed in the *Sarekat Islam* (SI) *vergadering* in Kebumen: "Brothers! The Muslims are God's warrior. They are obliged to sweep away any slander" (Wongsodimedjo & Slamet, 1920) and "Al-quran letter 2, verse 189 says fight all slanders until they are cleansed" (Misbach, 1923c). The call to fight against the enemies of Islam shows that Misbach's thinking was radical and uncompromising in upholding the truth.

The radicalism of the strong communists arose from cumulative events. The hatred culminating from tyranny was then systematically acquired in the form of Islamic teachings and the platform of communism, because there is a doctrine in both that fosters a radical attitude in the fight against injustice (*Islam Bergerak*, August 1, 1918 p. 1).

Politically speaking, the radical attitude of Islamic communism was influenced by Semaun's revolutionary thought. When he led the SI of Semarang, he undertook a paradigmatic revolution in politics and managed to influence half of the local *Sarekat Islam* associations. Misbach himself was mentioned as Semaun's cadre in influencing the SI in Solo to become revolutionary (Gie, 1999).

This radical style emerged when anti-oppressive action was rarely voiced by members of indigenous associations. Sjarief (1919), a student of a boarding school in Surakarta, criticized the Islamic leaders because they did not act decisively or play an active role in declaring Islam in this mode of thought.

The use of Islamic teachings against oppression is seen as a fundamental aspect of Islam. This radical style was an antithesis to capitalism and imperialism, as well as to the Islamic formalists who remained silent. This attitude, which characterized the thinking of Islamic communism, was very effective in mobilizing people. Indeed, radicalism, from the perspective of social thought, was a prerequisite for mobilizing mass action.

Commitment to Social Advocacy

The main similarity between the teachings of Islam and communism lies in the commitment to social advocacy, especially defending the rights of the oppressed. Applying the teachings of communism is therefore seen as practicing the teachings of Islam without intending to equate the two. In essence, communist thinking is then a form of Islamic practice (Sirodj, 1923).

Islamic communism strongly condemned those who are solely concerned with their own affairs and refuse to enter the world of thought. They were referred to as a sleeping fool who need to be awakened (Djalasoetra, 1923). The government of the Dutch East Indies fooled people in two ways, namely expanding the world of education and promoting moral decay through a culture of drinking liquor (*Redaksi*, 1924). The former made people more sympathetic to the government, while the latter made people lazy and impoverished, so they had little opportunity to sharpen their minds. Social advocacy is also achieved by rejecting the interest-based financial system that further adds to the suffering of the economically weak. This rejection is part of Islamic communist thinking (*Islam Bergerak*, August 20, 1922, 2) while Muhammadiyah strengthened the issue of economic practice with an interest-based financial system.

Based on this explanation, it can be inferred that the strong communist commitment to social advocacy is shown in populist thinking, namely that which directly touches upon the problem of poverty. This was characteristic of the communists when the bourgeoisie developed a discourse of indigenous progress through Western models of education and the orthodox guardians of Islam.

Islamic Anti-Formalism

The communists viewed themselves as opponents of the Islamic formalism from clerics, the leaders of Islamic societies, and Muslims who lacked any real political desire to oppose persecution. This attitude implies that the role of worship in cultivating social transgressions does not necessarily bring about political thought (Hurgronje, 1999). They were opposed by Misbach's group for not wanting to carry out their religious duty, namely to fight oppression, and Misbach called them hypocrites (Misbach, 1922; Red, 1919).

Misbach also dared to say that a true Islamist is not a formal Muslim but rather one who hones God's teachings for salvation. The formalist Islam group, in the opinion of the communists, was considered as too often feeling that it was always right, and it only thought about its own benefit,

especially for the leaders. On the other hand, true Muslims are those who view religion as a guide and path to salvation, both in the world and the hereafter (Misbach, 1925b).

In the *vergadering* of the SI of Pekalongan, Misbach opposed discussing the problem of religious formalism, which was not related to the expression of thought. Theoretical discussion was considered to be an unproductive, non-transformative way of liberating the oppressed nation. Misbach actually led the idea of Islamic communism while criticizing the religious leaders and the bourgeoisie in the *vergadering* (*Verslag Pendek dari Open bare Open lucht Vergadering SI Pekalongan pada Tanggal 23-24 Desember 1922, 1923*). The orthodox guardian leaders of Islam were accused of making Islam a theory rather than practicing it (Loebis, 1923). True Islam, from the perspective of the communists, was a form of Islam manifested in the world of political thought (Dasoeki, 1923). Islamic groups who withdrew from the world of political thought, such as Muhammadiyah and Djama'atoel Chasanah, were considered to be organizations that reduced Islam to a theory. The same was put to Al-Irsyad in Betawi, which he called an opportunistic *Wahhabist* who refused to enter the world of thought (Jufrij, 1923).

For the communists, religion had to be used as an inspiration for the anti-capitalism struggle. The Islam practiced by the silent clerics was therefore questionable. Islam in that era of thought in Surakarta was dynamically activated by the strong communists as an ideology of change. The Muhammadiyah leaders were also criticized as sycophants (Troenodjojo, 1921). Misbach and the strong communists considered Muhammadiyah, Djama'atoel Chasanah, and the *Politieke Economische Bond* (PEB) as hypocritical and untrue Islamic groups (*Islam Bergerak*, January 20, 1922). The discourse of true Islamists and the mild (i.e., pseudo, hypocritical) Islamists became a distinctive feature of *Islam Bergerak* after the split between the SATV revolutionary group and the SATV Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah and PEB were accused of being mild Islamist groups that sold religion for personal and group interests (*Islam Bergerak*, April 10, 1923, 2). The PEB was considered a slave to the capitalists and a colonial spy (Soekirno, 1923a). In turn, the Muhammadiyah group accused Misbach's group of being traitors to Muhammadiyah, Sarekat Islam, and Muslims in general (Oetoesan Hindia, 1922).

From the perspective of Islamic communism, Islamic associations such as Muhammadiyah, Central *Sarekat Islam* (CSI), and Djama'atoel Chasanah were more engaged in Islamic thought in a symbolic sense, especially for typical formal Islamic issues (e.g., mahdloh worship, morals, Islam, etc.). They did not discuss matters of injustice, oppression, and exploitation, and they

were perceived as being trapped in the world of colonialism and capitalism, thus preventing religion from plunging into the world of thought.

The PEB group accused Misbach of creating an atheistic form of thinking that went against Islamic principles (Soekirno, 1923a). The CSI, under the leadership of Tjokroaminoto, also viewed communism as a danger that could mislead Muslims. The *Book of Islam and Socialism*, written in 1924, was intended to ensure that Muslims acted consistently with religion-based socialism, and rejected Marxism, which was thought to diminish the importance of religion (Tjokroaminoto, 2003). CSI and Muhammadiyah were representative Islamic associations that consistently advocated socialism based on Islam, namely the progress of manners and virtue in society according to the teachings of Muhammad (Tjokroaminoto, 2003). The PKI itself, however, claimed it did not diminish religious beliefs. Communist thinking in the East Indies was so strict that the PKI maintained the sanctity of religion, but it opposed any group that used religion as a mask (Soekirno, 1923b).

The Islamic associations representing the status quo were referred to as masked Moslems, because they talked about religion but never sought to resist capitalism, which was the major cause of public suffering (Soetera, 1923b). For Misbach, Islam had to manifest in the form of reflection by seeking the causes of people's suffering and removing them (Misbach, 1923a). Through this way of thinking, Misbach and the communists of Surakarta assumed that the mild Islamic associations refused to entertain anti-capitalism thinking (Misbach, 1925a). Misbach's harsh attitude in attacking Muhammadiyah and the PEB actually triggered a negative response from some Muslims. The attack was seen as a clumsy attempt, one likened to burning down a house to kill the rats, to cleanse Islam of hypocrites by destroying Islam itself (Choesen, 1923). In response to such criticism, the editor of *Islam Bergerak* claimed that Muhammadiyah was just an association and not a religion, so criticizing Muhammadiyah did not constitute attacking Islam (Red, 1923).

The "Equally Equal" Principle

The term "equally equal" was first used by Marco Kartodikromo (1918a) in the *Sinar Djawa* newspaper (*Sinar Djawa*, number 81 on 10 April 10, 1918). On April 16, 1918, Kartodikromo (1918b) wrote another article entitled *Equally Equal* in the same newspaper. This article sought to ask the indigenous people to get along well and think about the condition of oppression and

occupation being imposed by foreign nations. The term then became popular among the mindset and was adopted as a communist idiom (*Islam Bergerak* August 1, 1922 and Red (1919) This was not surprising given how this term resonated with popular thought, which was antithetical to capitalism (Soedjopranoto, 1921).

By the end of 1919, the formation of a democratic “equally equal” government was an aspiration of various indigenous groups in Vorstenlanden (S. H., 1919). This ideal was a typical manifestation of the struggle to create a classless society, as evidenced in the political doctrine of Karl Marx. This idea is also considered compatible with Islamic teaching, which views that all human beings have the same value (Pakoealaman, 1922; Rachmad, 1919). From an Islamic perspective, this principle could be interpreted as *al-musawah* (egalitarianism) (Boeroeh, 1918), and it became the forerunner to the struggle to create a rule based on togetherness and public interest, which is an important part of Islamic teaching (Misbach, 1923b). The basic idea behind Islamic communism is achieving egalitarianism by creating a classless society (i.e. an “equally equal” society) (Misbach, 1926).

Like Misbach, Dasoeki (1921) also claimed that being “equally equal” was the utopian ideal of a classless society achieved by upholding justice. Indeed, justice is part of Islamic teaching and a prerequisite for achieving an egalitarian society (Hidajat, 1918).

The doctrine of “equally equal” can be interpreted as religious egalitarianism in that God alone is greater, with all others having the same value. The notion was not just theoretical, because it had the practical effect of evoking the indigenous people’s attitude against the oppressors (Prawirowinoto, 1919).

The emergent Islamic communist thinking was actually intended as a protest against Muslim leaders who promoted Islam as merely formal worship. They judged them as liking to question amoral behavior but preferring to be silent about anti-social behavior (Ranuwihardjo, 2000). The communists thus came to oppose religious formalism because it was seen as diminishing religious thought. Islamic communism emphasized an effort to bring religion into the public sphere, while the proponents of the status quo desired to lead religion into the private sphere.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implication

Our study has described syncretism in the Islamic communism and doctrines of Islamic communism as the main ideology of Surakarta communism. In summary, the integration of communism and Islam in Surakarta in the early quarter of the 20th century was a syncretism fusion, one where communist thinking could not be separated from the perspective of Islam. In other words, Islam was interpreted through the lens of communism. This demonstrates how Islamic thought grows and evolves according to the historical dynamics surrounding it. The basic idea behind Islamic communism doctrine is achieving egalitarianism by creating an “equally equal” of society apparently appears in capitalism. The early quarter of the 20th century was a time of movement for the indigenous people of Indonesia, specifically in terms of a growing desire to resist colonialism and capitalism. At the same time, this popular movement grew in tandem with both Moslems and communists. Due to having similar views about the causes of the indigenous people’s oppression, the ideologies within Islam and communism were considered compatible, so Islamic communism became established.

This fact asserts that Islamic communism has a revolutionary style with a religious spirit, and it can be viewed as an ideology of resistance. It gained strong support in Surakarta in the first quarter of the twentieth century, because Islamic communism begins with the assumption that the poverty and suffering of people are caused by injustices in the economic systems and structures, culture, and social and political systems. From the perspective of Islamic communism, Islam is viewed as a religion that should encourage resistance to various forms of oppression.

The findings of the study evidently identify that recent phenomena that address Islam and radicalism addressed and polarization of destructive Islamic values are misleading issues. This implies that teaching history should define distinctive historical value between communism and Islam. Future researches are suggested to focus on recent development of the doctrines viewing Islamic teaching that are now growing in the society in harmony.

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