

Islamic Education in the Shadow of Nipponization Policy (1942-1945): a Historical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Japan came to Indonesia and ruled for about three years. Although the period of occupation was relatively short compared to the Netherlands which ruled for hundreds of years, Japan succeeded in issuing and implementing its political policies. One of the most important of these policies was nipponization. Using historical methods, this paper traces the influence of the nipponization policy on the existence of Islamic education. It was found that during the Japanese occupation, Islamic education became increasingly vibrant in various regions. Religious education was also included in the curriculum of government schools from elementary to tertiary levels. This was due to Japan's friendlier attitude towards Muslims. However, this policy was not accompanied by the availability of teachers, so religious subjects did not work properly.

INTRODUCTION

In the period from 1942-1945, Indonesia experienced Japanese occupation, which brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including education. One of the significant policies implemented was the Nipponization policy, an effort to integrate and spread Japanese culture in the occupied territories. This policy not only affected the general education system but also had a profound impact on Islamic education in Indonesia. Unlike the Dutch, who initially came to Indonesia for trading and later for political and religious purposes (Goksoy, 2002), the Japanese arrival was more politically driven, aiming to gain support and resources for their war efforts in the Greater East Asia War (Nata, 2011). Unlike the Dutch colonial government, which viewed Islam as an "enemy" that needed to be tamed (Jung, 2010), the Japanese approached with sympathy.

Ideologically, the world at that time was divided into two blocs: the Western Bloc, which included European and American countries and their allies, such as the USA, UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal, and the Eastern Bloc, led by Japan and China. Countries with significant Muslim populations like India, Egypt, Turkey, Persia, Malaysia, and Indonesia were under the hegemony of these two warring blocs.

To gain the sympathy of the Indonesian people, Japan positioned itself as the "older brother" who came to achieve "Prosperity Together in Greater East Asia," also known as "Hakko Ichiu." They studied the general characteristics of Islamic teachings by organizing Islamic festivals in Tokyo. Their interest in Islam began in the mid-1920s with the establishment of Islamic study institutions and the publication of magazines discussing Islam in Japan. In 1933, some circles began to agitate for Japan to become the protector of Islam. Two years later, the first group of four students was sent to Arabia and Egypt to prepare for propaganda work. At the same time, Japanese authorities increased the number of Islamic students and teachers from the Middle East and other Asian countries to come to Japan. An Arabic-language journal marked the initial step of the Japanese government to attract the sympathy of Muslim communities (Gunawan, 1986).

In 1935, the Japanese government built the first mosque in Kobe, followed by another mosque in the capital in 1938. The mosque in the capital was built more impressively and hosted many foreign guests, including Prince Hussein of Yemen. They also established the Japanese Islamic Association (Dai Nippon Kaikyo Kyokai) in May 1938, led by General Senjuro Hayashi, referred to as the "Father of Japanese Islam." In September 1939, this new organization officially began its activities by inviting foreign Muslims to attend the Islamic Exhibition in Tokyo and Osaka from November 5-29 of that year. For the first time in Indonesian Islamic history, the attention of Indonesian Muslims was diverted from the Middle East to the Land of the Rising Sun. A special conference was held by MIAI (Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia) in early October, where the invitation from Tokyo was approved and accepted (Benda, 1980) (Benda, n.d.).

Japan's sympathetic efforts towards Islam effectively garnered military support from Indonesian Muslims, particularly in Sumatra. In regions like Aceh and Minangkabau, where Islamic militancy was strong, Japan's arrival was welcomed. For instance, in Aceh, PUSA (Persatuan Ulama-ulama Aceh) was formed in 1939 under the leadership of Mohammad Daud Beureuh. PUSA became a center of resistance against uleebalang officials who supported the Dutch. Consequently, PUSA supported the Japanese in attacking the Dutch. Thus, Sumatra was seen as strategically important to Japan due to its resources and the support of local ulama (Ricklefs, 2005).

The importance of researching the Nipponization policy and its impact on Islamic education lies in understanding the dynamics of social and cultural changes during the Japanese occupation. Although this period was relatively short, its impact left significant marks in the history of Indonesian education. By examining these policies, we can understand how the interaction between colonial policies and local religious and educational practices occurred and how it shaped the development of Islamic education post-independence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several previous works have discussed the impact of Japanese occupation on various aspects of life in Indonesia. For example, Harry J. Benda in "The Crescent and the Rising Sun", "Indonesian Islam Under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945" and Aiko Kurasawa in "Propaganda Media on Java under the Japanese 1942-1945" provide a general overview of the strategies and impacts of Japanese occupation in Indonesia. However, specific studies on the influence of Nipponization policies on Islamic education are still relatively limited. This research aims to fill this gap by providing a more focused analysis of the interaction between Japanese policies and Islamic educational institutions.

By studying the Nipponization policy and its influence on Islamic education, we not only gain a comprehensive picture of the Japanese occupation era but also understand how colonial policies can influence and shape religious educational institutions. This will contribute valuably to the study of educational history in Indonesia and enrich our perspective on the dynamics of social and cultural changes during the colonial period.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses historical methods, a research method that aims to collect historical sources effectively and evaluate them critically to reconstruct past events (Abdurrahman, 2007). In historical research, four steps are undertaken as follows:

1. Heuristics: A technique for collecting historical sources believed to contain the necessary data related to the research focus. This study uses relevant previous research results.
2. Source Criticism: Verifying the authenticity of the collected sources. This involves testing the authenticity of the sources (authenticity) through external criticism and the validity of the sources (credibility) through internal criticism. External criticism questions the physical authenticity of

the found sources, asking when, where, who created it, from what material, and whether the source is in its original form. Internal criticism focuses on the content of the sources, questioning the evidence within the sources.

3. Interpretation: Conducting analysis and synthesis. Analysis means breaking down the information, while synthesis means combining it. In this step, the researcher synthesizes various facts obtained from historical sources to form a coherent picture of the historical events being studied.
4. Historiography: Writing, presenting, or reporting the results of historical research.

Based on these steps, this paper presents the Japanese policies of Nipponization over the Indonesian people, which in turn influenced particularly the aspect of Islamic education, which is the focus of this study.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Japanese Colonial Government's Nipponization Policy in Indonesia

Japanese policies towards the Indonesian people had two priorities: eliminating Western influences in Indonesia and mobilizing the Indonesian populace for Japan's victory (Ricklefs, 2005). To eradicate Western influence, the Japanese government prohibited the use of Dutch and English. Books in these languages were banned from circulation. Conversely, the Japanese calendar was used for official purposes, European statues were demolished, streets were renamed, and the name Batavia was changed back to Jakarta. The Japanese employed Indonesians for their propaganda purposes. Films, dramas, wayang, and radio were used to disseminate Japanese messages. However, due to the limited number of radios at that time, loudspeakers were installed in public places for this purpose.

This anti-Dutch campaign was highly effective in influencing the Indonesian people. This resulted in a unique advantage. Since very few people knew Japanese, Indonesian became the primary medium for delivering anti-Western propaganda. Consequently, Indonesian became the sole language that strengthened the sense of unity among the Indonesian people, with Japanese becoming the secondary language. During the Japanese occupation, Indonesian became the language of interaction and academia (Gunawan, 1986).

Japanese policies to mobilize the Indonesian people involved recruiting many Indonesians to fill government positions vacated by the captured Dutch officials. Most of these new Indonesian officials were former teachers. The transition from teaching to government roles led to a decline in the quality of education in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation (Ricklefs, 2005).

Compared to the education system during the Dutch East Indies period, education under Japanese rule saw a significant decline. The number of elementary schools decreased from 21,500 to 13,500. Secondary schools dropped from 850 to just 20. Similarly, the number of elementary school students decreased by 30%, and secondary school students dropped by 90%. The number of teachers also fell by 35% at the elementary level and 95% at the secondary level (Gunawan, 1986).

While the Dutch colonial government's education policy included a Christianization mission, the Japanese occupation marked a drastic shift. The Japanese focus was not on Christianization but on Nipponization, meaning the process of cultural transfer from Indonesian roots to Japanese culture (Assegaf, 2007).

This Nipponization effort was evident in several movements initiated by the Japanese colonial government.

First, through the slogan "Three A's": Nippon, the leader of Asia; Nippon, the protector of Asia; and Nippon, the light of Asia. This slogan was campaigned from May to December 1942. The campaign was managed by Mr. Sjamsudin as chairman, assisted by K. Sutan Pamuntjak and Mohammad Saleh. This movement was disseminated to the public through mass media (Notosusanto, 1993).

The aim was for all societal groups to unite and maintain good relations between the government and the people. The theme of unity was central to the Japanese colonial government due to the Hakko Ichiu philosophy that inspired the Japanese nation. They viewed themselves as leaders destined to dominate the universe. Therefore, all inhabitants of the conquered territories were required to give daily reverence to the north, where the Japanese emperor resided. According to them, Japan is the land of the rising sun (Hino-motono-kuni). The symbol of the sun meant that "nothing can rival the sun. Whoever dares to oppose it will face the fate of snow melting under the sun's rays" (Assegaf, 2007).

However, the Three A movement failed to achieve its goals. Indonesian intellectual elites provided minimal support (Ricklefs, 2005). Consequently, a new organization was formed in December 1942. The Japanese realized that to mobilize the Indonesian people, they had to engage nationalist figures like Ir. Sukarno, Drs. Moh. Hatta, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, and K.H. Mansur. This new organization, replacing the Three A movement, was named Poesat Tenaga Rakyat (Poetra). According to Ir. Sukarno, Poetra's goal was to build and revive everything demolished by Dutch imperialism. For Japan, Poetra's objective was to concentrate all Indonesian society's potential to support its war efforts. Eleven activities were outlined in its fundamental regulations, with the primary task being to lead the people to feel obligated and responsible for eliminating American, British, and Dutch influences. Additionally, the new organization's mission was to strengthen the sense of brotherhood between Indonesia and Japan and intensify Japanese language lessons (Notosusanto, 1993).

Initially, this organization received warm welcomes from existing mass organizations. The Persatuan Guru Indonesia, with 15,000 members, declared its affiliation with Poetra. Other organizations followed suit, such as the Post, Telegraph, Telephone, and Radio Employees (PTTR) in Bandung, the Istri Indonesia Central Committee, Barisan Banteng, Ikatan Sport Indonesia, and the Badan Perantaraan Pelajar-pelajar Indonesia (Baperpi) (Notosusanto, 1993).

However, this organization eventually backfired on the Japanese colonial government. Poetra successfully prepared the Indonesian people mentally for their independence. Through mass rallies and using Japanese communication

media, Indonesian leaders could reach the people more broadly than ever experienced during the Dutch East Indies era. Poetra utilized the organization to direct the people's attention towards independence rather than Japan's war efforts. Over time, the Japanese realized their mistake in creating an organization led by Indonesian intellectual elites. Therefore, they planned to form a new organization encompassing all societal groups, including Chinese, Arabs, and others. In 1944, the Commander of the Sixteenth Army, General Kumaichi Harada, announced the establishment of the Jawa Hokokai (Javanese Public Service Association).

The reason for establishing this new organization, according to the Japanese colonial government, was the intensifying war, necessitating the unification and mobilization of the entire population's physical and spiritual resources. The Hokko seishin (public service spirit) had three principles: self-sacrifice, strengthening brotherhood, and proving actions. These three principles were demanded from all layers of Indonesian society due to the worsening war situation. The Japanese colonial government sought to integrate all socio-economic, cultural, and political forces to win the war using all available resources (Notosusanto, 1993).

To engage religious elite figures, the Japanese colonial government allowed the continued existence of the Islamic organization formed during the Dutch East Indies era, Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI), founded in Surabaya in 1937 by K.H. Mas Mansur and colleagues. At the beginning of the Japanese occupation, MIAI received extraordinary sympathy from the Muslim community. However, as it developed, the Japanese government found MIAI's activities limited and unsatisfactory (Ricklefs, 2005). Consequently, MIAI was officially dissolved and replaced by a new organization named Majelis Sjuro Moeslimin Indonesia (Masjoemi). This organization was officially established on November 22, 1943, with the leadership of Chairman K.H. Hasyim As'j'ari, alongside representatives from Muhammadiyah, K.H. Mas Mansur, K.H. Farid Ma'ruf, K.H. Hasjim, Kartosudarmo, and from NU K.H. Nachrowi, Zainul Arifin, and K.H. Mochtar (Notosusanto, 1993).

It is clear that during the Japanese era, the Islamic groups had relatively more freedom than during the Dutch East Indies period. However, this does not mean that the Islamic groups always followed the Japanese government. Many Japanese practices conflicted with Islamic principles, causing Islamic leaders to withdraw from cooperation with the Japanese. Some even led rebellions, such as those in Singaparna, Indramayu, and Aceh.

Second, through the Nipponization of language. All European languages, including English, American, and Dutch, and at times even Arabic, were banned from being used as means of oral and written communication and daily social interactions. Only Indonesian and Japanese were permitted. Consequently, Japan sought to overcome the uncertainty of communication tools and teaching resources by: (a) refining the Indonesian language, (b) forming interpreters to assist teachers during lessons, and (c) popularizing Japanese or Nipponization of language as an alternative to Dutch.

The influence of Nipponization was strongly felt, as evidenced by the naming of newspapers, magazines, or publications printed by Indonesians, such as *Tjahaja* (Bandung), *Sinar Matahari* (Yogyakarta), which later changed its name to *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, *Soeara Asia* (Surabaya), *Sinar Baroe* (Semarang), and *al-Syu'lah* (Jakarta), a magazine or bulletin written in Arabic script but spelled in Indonesian. The use of names like *Tjahaja*, *Sinar Matahari*, *Soeara Asia*, *Sinar Baroe*, and *al-Syu'lah* seems influenced by Nipponization symbols, namely the rising sun or Greater Asia (Assegaf, 2007).

Third, Nipponization through propaganda. Aiko Kurasawa classified this propaganda into two categories: for rural people and urban people. For the former, who were mostly illiterate and less educated, the propaganda was delivered through entertainment like films, dramas, wayang kulit, dances, songs, and radio. For the latter, who were literate, the propaganda was delivered through print media, newspapers, and similar means, in addition to the first category's methods (Kurasawa, 1987).

Fourth, through indoctrination. Japan formed various training institutions, such as *Seindojo* (Military Training Center), *Seinekurensyo* (Youth Training Center), *Seindean* (Youth Corps), *Keibiodan* (Police Auxiliary Corps), *PETA* (Defenders of the Homeland), and *Hizbullah*, which were widely attended by santri and even kyai. They were housed in dormitories for cadre training, brainwashing, and indoctrination (Notosusanto, 1993).

For Japan, religious leaders were the most effective tools for conveying messages to rural communities. Therefore, Japan used them as instruments to spread Japanese culture in rural areas. The Japanese government held 30-day training sessions for them. Between July 1943 and May 1945, seventeen training sessions were conducted in Jakarta. Each session was attended by 60 kyai from 20 residencies in Java. The requirements for participating in these training sessions were: (a) having a wide influence; (b) being knowledgeable; (c) having a good social position; (d) having an unblemished character. During these sessions, the kyai were required to perform *seikerei*, bowing as a sign of respect to the Emperor in Tokyo (Shiddiqi, 1987).

The Standardization Policy of the Japanese Colonial Government's Education System

During the Japanese occupation, many changes occurred in the school system due to the abolition of the classification system based on ethnicity and social status (Gunawan, 1986). Some of these fundamental changes are as follows:

1. Elementary School Level or People's School (*Kekkumin Gakko*): Open to all population groups without social status discrimination. The duration of education was standardized to six years. These schools existed in all villages and cities or in places that formerly had Elementary Schools, First Class Schools, Second Class Schools, and ELS (*Eeropesche Lagere School*).
2. Junior Secondary School Level (*Shoto Chu Gakko*): Equivalent to today's junior high school, open to all population groups who had an SR diploma. The existing vocational middle schools included Technical Schools (*Kogyo*

- Gakko), Agricultural Schools (Nogyo Gakko), and Maritime Schools. The duration of education was three years.
3. Senior Secondary General School Level (Koto Chu Gakko): The duration of education was three years, and this school provided general education aimed at preparing students for higher education.
 4. Higher Education Level: At this level, almost all higher education institutions were closed, except for the Higher Medical School (Ika Dai Gakko) in Jakarta, which reopened in 1943, the Dental School in Surabaya (Shika Gakko), the School of Pharmacy (Yaku Gakko), the Higher Technical School (Kagyo Dai Gakko) which opened in 1944 in Bandung, the Higher Veterinary School in Bogor, and the Academy of Government (Kenkoku Gakko In) which opened in early 1945 in Jakarta as a replacement for MOSVIA during the Dutch era.
 5. Teacher Training Schools: There were three types: the 2-year Teacher Training School (Shoto Sihan Gakko), the 4-year Teacher Training School (Guto Sihan Gakko), and the 6-year Teacher Training School (Koyo Sihan Gakko) (Mestoko, 1985).

Changes were also found in the subjects taught in the schools mentioned above. The curriculum was directed to support Japan's war efforts. Students were often required to do community service (*kinrohooshi*) such as cleaning workshops and dormitories and collecting materials to build defenses. They were required to participate in physical training, military exercises, and strict indoctrination. Every morning, they had to sing the Japanese national anthem, raise the Japanese flag "Hinomaru", salute the Japanese Emperor (Tenno Heika), pledge allegiance to the ideals of Indonesia within the context of Greater East Asia (Dai Toa), and do exercises (*Taiso*) to maintain the Japanese spirit before lessons began.

For teachers, there were special training or indoctrination sessions held in Jakarta. During this training, teachers received mental and ideological indoctrination about *Hakko Ichiu* in the context of shared prosperity in Greater East Asia, military training and Japanese spirit (*Nippon Seishin*), Japanese language and history along with its customs, geography from a geopolitical perspective, and Japanese sports and songs. All this training had to be completed by the teachers within three months (Ahmadi, 1987).

An unintended side effect of these policies by the Japanese colonial government was the widespread development of the Indonesian language throughout Indonesia. Martial arts and military training instilled self-confidence in Indonesian youths, a longing for Indonesian culture and independence emerged, and community leaders, fighters, and religious leaders were entrusted with important leadership positions. Additionally, the unification of several Islamic organizations into one entity strengthened the bonds of national unity (Assegaf, 2007).

The Japanese Government's Attitude Towards Islamic Education

According to Mahmud Yunus, Islamic education during the Japanese occupation was relatively more liberated compared to the Dutch colonial

period. One of the pieces of evidence of the Japanese government's attention to Islamic education is the approval of Mahmud Yunus's proposal to incorporate Islamic religious education into government schools, starting from Village Schools or People's Schools up to the highest levels. However, according to Mahmud Yunus, this policy seemed to be half-hearted. Although the proposal to include Islamic religious studies in the government school curricula was accepted, the government did not allocate any budget to pay the Islamic religious teachers. As a result, many Islamic religious teachers were unable to teach the subject (Yunus, 1995).

The fresh breeze from Japan's policy towards Islamic education was also utilized by the High Islamic Council in West Sumatra to establish elementary madrasahs. Almost in every village, there were elementary madrasahs visited by many boys and girls. These madrasahs conducted their teaching process in the afternoon. The main subjects were Quran recitation, worship, morals, and faith.

Although education during the Japanese occupation was generally neglected as students were only instructed to perform physical exercises, marching, labor service (*romusha*), singing, and so on, madrasahs within the boarding school environment were exempt from direct government supervision. Education within these boarding schools could still proceed somewhat normally (Benda, 1980).

Japan apparently did not prioritize religious interests because their main focus was to win the war. Thus, Islamic religious leaders were given the freedom to develop Islamic education. To win the hearts of the predominantly Muslim Indonesian society, Japan pursued several policies, including:

1. The Office of Religious Affairs, which during the Dutch era was known as *Kantoor voor Inlandsche Zaken* led by Dutch orientalist, was transformed by Japan into *Shumubu* (Provincial Office of Religious Affairs) and *Shumuka* (Central Office of Religious Affairs). With the establishment of *Shumubu* and *Shumuka*, Japan aimed to show the Muslim community that besides giving attention and freedom to practice religion, they also regulated various religious matters. This situation attracted the favor and trust of the Muslim community towards the Japanese government (Ricklefs, 2005).
2. Large-scale boarding schools often received visits and assistance from Japanese officials (Benda, 1980).
3. The Japanese government permitted the establishment of the Islamic High School in Jakarta led by K.H. Wahid Hasyim, Kahar Muzakir, and Bung Hatta (Zuhairini, 2010).
4. Japan introduced to the Muslim community good organizational methods and how to use modern weapons through the formation of the Hizbullah army (Army of God) and the Homeland Defense Army (PETA).

With such policies, Japan, to some extent, provided fond memories, enlightenment, and awareness to the Muslim community to fight for their political and social rights. Through these various policies, Japan successfully

implemented a strategy to embrace and seek support from the Indonesian nation.

However, it turned out that all the friendly policies towards the Muslim community were mere deception. Japan began to show its colonial and fascist nature to the Indonesian people. As a result of successive defeats in the war with the Allies (America, Britain, France, and Australia), Japan desperately needed human resources and logistics support for its war efforts. Japan implemented forced labor policies. If Indonesian people disobeyed their orders, they were mercilessly punished and tortured to death. Moreover, Japan enforced mandatory military service for every Indonesian citizen. As for their sexual desires, Japanese soldiers forced women to serve them, who were then used as "comfort women" (*jugun ianfu*) (Nata, 2011).

Such Japanese policies undoubtedly caused physical and psychological suffering to the predominantly Muslim Indonesian people. This situation only ended after Japan was devastated by America and its allies with atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the two largest cities in Japan. The first bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945, killing 78,000 Japanese citizens. Meanwhile, the second bomb in Nagasaki on August 9 led Japan to surrender unconditionally to the Allied forces on August 15 (Ricklefs, 2005).

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Japan's educational policy towards Indonesia with a Nipponization agenda for education has been utilized by Islamic education figures to establish educational institutions and propose the inclusion of Islamic education in government schools. In contrast to the discriminative Dutch colonial period, Japan embraced and provided opportunities for Muslims to develop their Islamic education. Consequently, Islamic educational institutions flourished and grew until the independence era.

Islamic education during the independence era continued to develop rapidly. The Nipponization policy of the Japanese occupation government was adapted to the policies of the newly established Republic of Indonesia. Islamic education was recognized and further received funding from the government. The types of education then expanded not only at the basic Islamic education level but also at the Islamic higher education level.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This article must be acknowledged as merely proving that the Japanese occupation government's policy of Nipponization has influenced the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, as stated above. However, this research does not reveal the Muslim community's response to Nipponization in the field of Islamic education. Therefore, further research on the response of the Muslim community to Nipponization is worth conducting.

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