Between Archive and Screen: A Historiographical Critique of the Representation of the 22 October 1945 Jihad Resolution in *Sang Kiai* (2013)

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Abstract

This article examines the representation of the 22 October 1945 Jihad Resolution in *Sang Kiai* (2013) by treating the film as a public historical narrative to be read alongside its production context, cinematic conventions, and historical evidence. The study employs the historical method through heuristics, external and internal criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Primary sources include *Sang Kiai*, the *Resoloesi Djihad fi-Sabilillah* document, Rapi Films' production materials, and contemporary newspapers; secondary sources are used to reconstruct the Japanese occupation, Nahdlatul Ulama's position, and the Surabaya Revolution. The findings show that the film preserves a factual core: KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's refusal of *seikerei*, the consolidation of ulama, the obligation to defend the Republic, and the mobilization of santri. Yet this substantive fidelity is accompanied by dramatized torture, the invention of the composite character Harun, compression of a two-day deliberation, simplification of the jurisprudential reasoning of *fardhu 'ain–fardhu kifayah*, omission of the MIAI–Masyumi phase, and a reduced role for the TKR, youth groups, workers, and non-santri fighters. The discussion shows that these deviations are not all factual errors, but strategies for creating "cinematic truth" that return ulama and pesantren to the center of revolutionary memory. The article's novelty lies in distinguishing event accuracy, juridical-theological completeness, causality, and the proportion of actors. This framework shows that *Sang Kiai* both corrects military-centered historiography and produces a new narrowing when a multisectoral revolution is represented primarily as santri heroism.

Keywords: historical film; historiography; collective memory; Jihad Resolution; *Sang Kiai*

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Introduction

Historical film occupies a paradoxical position in the production of knowledge about the past. It can turn archives, decision texts, and complex sequences of events into memorable audiovisual experiences, yet it always works through selection, condensation, characterization, and dramatization. Film is therefore no transparent window onto the past. It is a form of public history writing that constructs a particular relationship among fact, imagination, and the needs of society at the time of production. Pierre Nora shows that memory emerges through media and sites that make the past present again, while Robert A. Rosenstone stresses that historical film makes claims about the past through a visual and dramatic logic different from that of an academic monograph.[1][2]

In the history of Indonesian cinema, this issue is closely tied to the politics of representation. At certain times, films about the struggle made the state, military, and national heroes the center of the narrative, while social networks, civilian groups, ulama, pesantren, and local militias often appeared as background. Misbach Yusa Biran shows that the development of Indonesian film has never been separate from political change and cultural structures, while Ariel Heryanto places the screen within contests over identity and political-cultural pleasure.[3][4] After the 1998 Reformasi, greater freedom of expression allowed alternative narratives featuring groups previously less visible in popular memory. One such work is *Sang Kiai*, Rako Prijanto's film produced by Rapi Films and released in 2013.[5][6]

The film tells the story of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari from the Japanese occupation to the early revolution. Pesantren Tebuireng is placed at the moral, social, and political center; resistance to *seikerei* symbolizes steadfast faith; and the Jihad Resolution connects the religious authority of the ulama to mobilization in defense of the Republic. This choice matters because the 22 October 1945 Jihad Resolution was more than a biographical episode. The decision of the Hoofdbestuur Nahdlatul Ulama arose as the newly proclaimed state faced the arrival of the Allies and NICA, limited state forces, and questions about the religious basis for defending the republic. By visualizing it, *Sang Kiai* helps shape how the public imagines the relationship between Islam, nationalism, and the Battle of Surabaya.

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[1] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (Spring 1989): 7–9.

[2] Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History* (London: Pearson Education, 2006), 32–35.

[3] Misbach Yusa Biran, *Sejarah Film 1900–1950: Bikin Film di Jawa* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2009), 23–25.

[4] Ariel Heryanto, *Identitas dan Kenikmatan: Politik Budaya Layar Indonesia* (Jakarta: KPG, 2015), 45–48.

[5] *Sang Kiai*, directed by Rako Prijanto (Jakarta: Rapi Films, 2013), film.

[6] Rapi Films, *Press Release Resmi dan Catatan Produksi Film Sang Kiai* (Jakarta: Rapi Films, 2013), 3–5.

Several studies have discussed the film, but pursue different analytical aims. Existing research has also approached the film through educational analysis.[7] Haris Supiandi uses semiotics to read messages about faith, Islamic law, and morals in the film.[8] Ageng Indra Sumarah's study of Sukarno's character in two biographical films does not discuss *Sang Kiai*, but is relevant to showing how dramatic function shapes a historical character.[9] Meanwhile, Zainul Milal Bizawie's historiography describes ulama-santri networks and the intellectual-political background of the Jihad Resolution, while Saifuddin Zuhri's memoir records the atmosphere of pesantren and the experience of santri during the revolution.[10][11]

These studies reveal three tendencies. First, the film is more often treated as an educational or communicative text than as a historiographical claim. Second, historical research on the Jihad Resolution generally reconstructs events and ulama networks, but does not always examine how that evidence changes when translated into cinematic language. Third, assessments of historical film tend to stop at the opposition between "accurate" and "inaccurate." This binary is inadequate because a scene can be accurate in its central event yet incomplete in legal structure, causality, chronology, or the proportion of its actors.

This is where the article's research gap lies. It remains insufficiently explained how *Sang Kiai* can be faithful to the central meaning of the Jihad Resolution while simplifying the historical process that produced it. This article therefore aims, first, to reconstruct the Resolution's context and process from documents, contemporary press, and authoritative historiography; second, to examine its representation in the film at the levels of events, substance, chronology, causality, and actors; and third, to explain the historiographical function of these cinematic deviations. Its novelty is a layered reading that neither equates dramatization with falsification nor allows artistic freedom to conceal omitted context. In this way, *Sang Kiai* is assessed simultaneously as a cinematic artifact of 2013, a counter-narrative after Reformasi, and a producer of memory about 1945.

[7] Haris Supiandi, "Dakwah Melalui Film: Analisis Semiotika Pesan Dakwah dalam Film 'Sang Kiai' Karya Rako Prijanto," Deskovi: Art and Design Journal 3, no. 2 (2020): 109–115, https://doi.org/10.51804/deskovi.v3i2.805.

[8] Haris Supiandi, "Dakwah Melalui Film: Analisis Semiotika Pesan Dakwah dalam Film 'Sang Kiai' Karya Rako Prijanto," *Deskovi: Art and Design Journal* 3, no. 2 (2020): 109–115, https://doi.org/10.51804/deskovi.v3i2.805.

[9] Ageng Indra Sumarah, "Analisis Karakter dan Fungsi Karakter Sukarno dalam Film 'Soekarno' dan 'Ketika Bung di Ende' dengan Teori Vladimir Propp" (Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta, 2021), https://digilib.isi.ac.id/9550/.

[10] Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Masterpiece Islam Nusantara: Sanad dan Jejaring Ulama-Santri (1830–1945)* (Ciputat: Pustaka Compass, 2016), 221–230.

[11] K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri, *Berangkat dari Pesantren* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2013), 233–240.

Method

.The method was chosen because the object of study has two temporal layers: the Jihad Resolution of 1945 and its representation in a 2013 film. It allows the film to be treated as an audiovisual source produced in a particular context, and as a narrative whose contents can be compared with records and remains of the past. This understanding follows Louis Gottschalk on critically testing records of the past and the stages of historical research explained by Kuntowijoyo and Dudung Abdurrahman.[12][13][14]

At the heuristic stage, sources were gathered into three groups. First are textual primary sources, especially the digital copy of *Resoloesi Djihad fi-Sabilillah* issued by the Hoofdbestuur Nahdlatul Ulama in Surabaya on 22 October 1945 and the letter convening a meeting of NU consuls from Java and Madura.[15] Second is the contemporary press, especially the 27 October 1945 issue of *Kedaulatan Rakjat* and the 28 October 1945 issue of *Soeara Asia*, used to trace the dissemination of the call and public mobilization.[16][17] Information from *Berita Indonesia*, *Merdeka*, and *Soerabayasch Handelsblad* is not treated as directly examined, as cited in the works of Agus Sunyoto, Zainul Milal Bizawie, and William H. Frederick.[18] Third, audiovisual sources include *Sang Kiai*, promotional material, and Rapi Films' production notes. Secondary literature on the Japanese occupation, NU, pesantren, and the Surabaya Revolution serves as a comparison.

External criticism addresses the identity and material condition of sources. The Jihad Resolution document is examined through its form, date, creator, and collection of origin; newspapers are distinguished by direct access and indirect quotation; and the film is examined through its release year, production company, director, copy format, and promotional materials. For the film, external examination also covers costumes, military insignia, settings, and props as indications of efforts to evoke 1942–

[12] Louis Gottschalk, *Mengerti Sejarah*, translated by Nugroho Notosusanto (Jakarta: UI Press, 1985), 32.
[13] Kuntowijoyo, *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2013), 69–80.
[14] Dudung Abdurrahman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah Islam* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2011), 103–110.
[15] Hoofdbestuur Nahdlatul Ulama, "Resoloesi Djihad fi-Sabilillah," decision letter of the major meeting of Nahdlatul Ulama regional representatives from Java and Madura, Surabaya, 22 October 1945, PBNU Digital Archive Collection.
[16] *Kedaulatan Rakjat* (Yogyakarta), "Seruan Oelama Surabaya," 27 October 1945, 1, Original Physical Bound Collection, National Press Monument, Surakarta.
[17] *Soeara Asia* (Surabaya), "Geloombang Pemoeda dari Daerah Menoedjoe Soerabaja," 28 October 1945, 2, Microfilm Collection, National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta.
[18] *Berita Indonesia* (Jakarta), 25 October 1945, 1, cited in Agus Sunyoto, *Fatwa dan Resolusi Jihad: Sejarah Perang Rakyat Semesta di Surabaya 10 November 1945* (Jakarta: Pustaka IIMaN, 2017), 98; *Merdeka* (Jakarta), 5 November 1945, 1, cited in Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Masterpiece Islam Nusantara: Sanad dan Jejaring Ulama-Santri (1830–1945)* (Ciputat: Pustaka Compass, 2016), 345; *Soerabayasch Handelsblad* (Surabaya), 18 September 1945, cited in William H. Frederick, *Visions and Heat: The Making of the Indonesian Revolution* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989), 205.

1945. This criticism does not assume that convincing visual details automatically guarantee the truth of the narrative.

Internal criticism compares the film's content with written sources. Dialogue and deliberation scenes are tested against the decision text; the depiction of *seikerei* is compared with studies of Japanese policy; santri mobilization is compared with contemporary press, memoirs, and Surabaya historiography; and the existence of characters is traced in organizational archives and historical works. The comparison does not apply a single accurate/inaccurate label, but five indicators: whether the event occurred, substantive correspondence, chronological order, plausibility of cause and effect, and the proportion of actors.

At the interpretation stage, differences between archive and film are read through the concepts of dramatization, compression, invention, alteration, and selective emphasis. These concepts serve only as devices for explaining how cinema works, not as an additional method. Interpretation then places the film's choices in the context of post-Reformasi cultural politics and the rise of historical narratives about santri. The historiographical stage organizes the findings chronologically and thematically: a reconstruction of 1945 comes first, followed by a mapping of the film's representation and an analysis of the relationship between factual and cinematic truth. Additional bibliographic verification was limited to the identity of earlier studies, article DOIs, official NU sources, ANRI archives, and the Presidential Decree on Santri Day; bibliographic corrections are listed through official links in the references.

Result

The Jihad Resolution in the Context of the 1945 Revolution

The Jihad Resolution emerged not from a single event but from a series of changes since the Japanese occupation. Japanese military rule restricted political life, exploited resources, and mobilized the population, while at the same time opening organizational space for Muslim elites through MIAI, Masyumi, Shumubu, and the formation of Hizbullah. This relationship was not linear: ulama could use organizational facilities for consolidation while continuing to reject policies contrary to their beliefs, especially *seikerei*. Harry J. Benda describes the relationship between Japan and Islam as a combination of control, mobilization, and negotiation; this background matters because networks formed under the occupation became organizational assets after the Proclamation.[19]

After Japan surrendered on 15 August and Indonesia proclaimed independence on 17 August 1945, the new state faced a vacuum and overlapping claims of authority.

[19] Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942–1945* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1958), 132–135.

The Republican government did not yet have an established administration or military force, while young people took over Japanese offices, facilities, and weapons. The arrival of AFNEI accompanied by NICA raised suspicions that the mission to disarm Japan would also enable Dutch colonial rule to return. In Surabaya, the Hotel Yamato Incident on 19 September, the seizure of weapons, and clashes at various locations hastened the emergence of a revolutionary atmosphere.[2021]

NU's network occupied a strategic position in this situation. The organization had not only a formal structure but also kiai–santri ties and a pesantren network reaching rural communities. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's authority as Rais Akbar gave the organization's decision legal and moral weight, while KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, KH. Bisri Syansuri, KH. Abbas Abdul Jamil, and other ulama connected the central organization to regional consuls. The transformation of pesantren into a force for mobilization did not mean that these institutions abandoned their educational function; rather, the social authority arising from education and patronage ties allowed the fatwa to spread rapidly.[2223]

A major meeting of NU regional representatives from Java and Madura took place on 21–22 October 1945 in Surabaya. The meeting responded to the threat of returning colonialism and the need to determine the law governing defense of the republican state. The resulting document made defending and upholding the Republic of Indonesia a religious obligation. Its decision called on the government to take concrete action against efforts endangering independence and religion and to "melandjutkan perdjuangan bersifat sabilillah" for the sake of the Republic and Islam.[24] The Jihad Resolution was thus both a religious and political intervention: it legitimized the Republic, linked state sovereignty with the protection of religion, and turned defense of the homeland into an obligation that could be mobilized through the community's networks.

The text of the available decision shows how the argument was formulated in writing. Its sections on hearing, considering, recalling, and deciding show that the decision was not composed as a spontaneous cry. It builds its reasoning from the aspirations of the faithful, the composition of the Muslim population, Japanese and NICA violence, threats to sovereignty, and the need for government action. This

[20] William H. Frederick, *Pandangan dan Gejolak: Masyarakat Kota dan Lahirnya Revolusi Indonesia Surabaya 1926–1946*, translated by Harry Tjan Silalahi (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1989), 301–305.

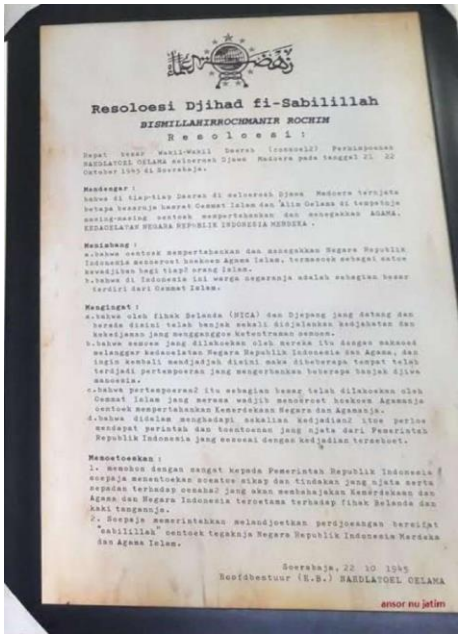
[21] George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), 165–168.

[22] Choirul Anam, *Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan Nahdlatul Ulama* (Jakarta: Duta Aksara Mulia, 2010), 154–158.

[23] Lathiful Khuluq, *Fajar Kebangunan Ulama: Biografi K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2000), 188–191.

[24] Hoofdbestuur Nahdlatul Ulama, "Resoloesi Djihad fi-Sabilillah," decision letter of the major meeting of Nahdlatul Ulama regional representatives from Java and Madura, Surabaya, 22 October 1945, PBNU Digital Archive Collection.

structure matters for assessing the film: fidelity cannot be judged merely by its use of the word "jihad," but also by whether viewers can understand the relationship among political facts, legal considerations, and the decision.



Resoloesi Djihad fi-Sabilillah

BISMILLAHIRROCHMANIR ROCHIM

Resoloesi !

Mendengar :

Menimbang :

Mengingat :

Memoetoeskan :

Soerabaja, 22 10 1945

Hoofdbestuur (H.B.) NAHDLATOEL OELAMA

ansor nu jatim

Figure 1. Text of "Resoloesi Djihad fi-Sabilillah," Surabaya, 22 October 1945.

The Resolution was then circulated through NU consuls, pesantren, mosques, religious study gatherings, the press, and radio. *Kedaulatan Rakjat* and *Soeara Asia* leave traces showing that the ulama's call and the youth movement had entered public communication.[25][26] These networks helped strengthen the mobilization of santri, Hizbullah, and Sabilillah toward Surabaya. Yet the relationship between the fatwa and the battle cannot be understood as a single cause. Mobilization occurred alongside military escalation and the activities of the TKR, struggle organizations, youth groups, workers, and urban communities. After the 49th Brigade under A.W.S. Mallaby landed on 25 October, fighting on 28–30 October and Mallaby's death intensified the escalation. E.C. Mansergh's ultimatum on 9 November was followed by a major assault on 10 November.[27]

The Indonesian Muslim Congress in Yogyakarta on 7–8 November 1945 also demonstrates the continuity of Islamic political responses. The forum broadened support for the obligation to resist the British and NICA as the military situation became increasingly urgent. The 22 October Resolution should therefore be read as part of a developing process, not as a decision that alone and immediately produced

[25] *Kedaulatan Rakjat* (Yogyakarta), "Seruan Oelama Surabaya," 27 October 1945, 1, Original Physical Bound Collection, National Press Monument, Surakarta.

[26] *Soeara Asia* (Surabaya), "Geloombang Pemoeda dari Daerah Menoedjoe Soerabaja," 28 October 1945, 2, Microfilm Collection, National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta.

[27] William H. Frederick, *Pandangan dan Gejolak: Masyarakat Kota dan Lahirnya Revolusi Indonesia Surabaya 1926–1946*, translated by Harry Tjan Silalahi (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1989), 301–318.

the Battle of Surabaya. This finding provides a benchmark for analyzing the film, especially its compression of time and simplification of causality.

The manner in which the decision circulated also determined its influence. NU's Hoofdbestuur did not operate through a single, uniform modern chain of command. Regional consuls, ties among pesantren, religious gatherings, mosques, kiai families, and militias became nodes that translated the organizational decision into local language and needs. Press records show that the ulama's call had become public news within days of the meeting. Reports in *Kedaulatan Rakjat* on 27 October and *Soeara Asia* on 28 October linked religious duty to security developments and the flow of young people toward Surabaya.[2829] Mobilization was thus a mediated outcome: the decision text acquired force because actors who already possessed social authority conveyed it.

The distinction between the decision text and popular memory needs to be noted. The 22 October text takes the form of an organizational decision calling on the government to act and to continue the *sabilillah* struggle. Formulations concerning an approximately 94-kilometer radius, *fardhu 'ain*, and *fardhu kifayah* are more prominent in historiographical explanations of the fatwa and the Jihad Resolution than in the wording of the decision reproduced in the appendix. This historiographical study links organizational decisions, KH's fatwa. Hasyim Asy'ari, and the accompanying fiqh explanation in one analytical framework.[30] This article therefore treats these layers not as one verbatim text but as a mutually reinforcing cluster of decisions and religious authority. The distinction matters so that comparison with the film's dialogue does not present words absent from the printed document as though they were direct quotations from it.

The chronology of late October also shows that the Resolution's influence developed as conditions on the ground changed. British troops landed in Surabaya only on 25 October, three days after NU's decision. The major fighting of 28–30 October, negotiations involving Republican leaders, and Mallaby's death altered the scale of the threat. The 9 November ultimatum then created conditions different from those at the time of the ulama's meeting. In other words, subsequent events continually renewed the practical meaning of the 22 October decision. The call at the 7–8 November Muslim Congress shows an adjustment to this escalation, not a repetition without context.[31]

[28] *Kedaulatan Rakjat* (Yogyakarta), "Seruan Oelama Surabaya," 27 October 1945, 1, Original Physical Bound Collection, National Press Monument, Surakarta.

[29] *Soeara Asia* (Surabaya), "Geloombang Pemoeda dari Daerah Menoedjoe Soerabaja," 28 October 1945, 2, Microfilm Collection, National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta.

[30] Agus Sunyoto, *Fatwa dan Resolusi Jihad: Sejarah Perang Rakyat Semesta di Surabaya 10 November 1945* (Jakarta: Pustaka IIMaN, 2017), 88–95.

[31] William H. Frederick, *Pandangan dan Gejolak: Masyarakat Kota dan Lahirnya Revolusi Indonesia Surabaya 1926–1946*, translated by Harry Tjan Silalahi (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1989), 301–318.

This reconstruction also limits claims about impact. The sources support the conclusion that the Jihad Resolution supplied religious legitimacy, strengthened morale, and helped mobilize santri networks. They are insufficient to calculate precisely how many fighters acted solely because of the fatwa or to isolate its influence from radio speeches, military pressure, neighborhood solidarity, and youth organizations. "Catalyst" is therefore more apt than "sole cause." Such causal precision matters when the film turns many simultaneous processes into a sequence of scenes that appears direct.

The Architecture of Representation in *Sang Kiai*

The film constructs a plot moving from life at Pesantren Tebuireng, the *seikerei* conflict, and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's arrest to the Proclamation, the consolidation of ulama, the reading of the Jihad Resolution, santri mobilization, and the Battle of Surabaya. This arrangement makes one kiai's experience an entry point into national history. The pesantren is not a passive backdrop but a place where morals are formed and resistance is based. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari is the center of authority, while santri characters provide an emotional perspective for viewers.[32]

Three key scenes are the focus of the analysis. The first scene depicts KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's refusal to perform *seikerei* on the grounds of religious belief, an act followed by his arrest by the Kempeitai. Second, at around 95:30–101:00, government envoys and ulama discuss the law on defending the state, and the film then presents the Jihad Resolution as a decision binding the community. Third, at around 115:10–123:00, Bung Tomo's speech and the departure of santri militias connect the fatwa to resistance in Surabaya.[33] These three points turn religious conflict, legal decision, and armed action into a clear causal chain for viewers.

[32] *Sang Kiai*, directed by Rako Prijanto (Jakarta: Rapi Films, 2013), film.
[33] *Sang Kiai*, directed by Rako Prijanto (Jakarta: Rapi Films, 2013), film;

Table 1. Matrix Comparing the Archive and Film Representation

Aspect	Representation in the film	Findings from source comparison	Historiographical status
Refusal of *seikerei*	KH. Hasyim Asy'ari refuses to pay homage to the Emperor, is arrested, and tortured	The refusal and detention have a historical basis; the intensity of the visual torture cannot be verified to the same degree from the sources used	Core event corresponds; visual dramatization
Deliberations on 21–22 October 1945	The fatwa's formulation is concentrated in a brief, heroic scene	The meeting of NU consuls from Java and Madura, its date and city, and the obligation to defend the Republic correspond; the two-day process and jurisprudential debate are compressed	Substantive accuracy; chronological compression
Legal structure of the fatwa	Dialogue stresses the obligation to resist colonizers	The core of *fardhu 'ain* is conveyed, but the relationship between fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah, *masafatul qashr*, and the document's argumentative structure are not fully explained	Juridical-theological simplification/alteration

Harun	A young santri connects the pesantren, resistance, and personal experience	No direct counterpart was found in NU archives, the Jihad Resolution document, or the historiography used	Invention of a composite character
MIAI–Masyumi	The transition from Japan to the Revolution proceeds quickly without this organizational phase	MIAI, Masyumi, Shumubu, and Hizbullah were links in the community's political and military consolidation	Compression and omission of causal context
Surabaya mobilization	Santri and Islamic militias dominate after the fatwa	Santri mobilization has a historical basis, but the revolution also involved the TKR, youth groups, workers, and other struggle organizations	Selective emphasis and reduction in the proportion of actors

Fidelity to the Core Events

The first finding is that the *seikerei* conflict has a historical basis. The Japanese government did make homage to the Emperor part of imperial discipline, and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari rejected it as contrary to tawhid. Aiko Kurasawa records KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's detention by the Kempeitai in 1942; the film preserves the connection between refusal, arrest, and pressure on the pesantren.[34] Its accuracy lies in the central conflict, not in every visual detail. The scene of crushed fingers and the intensity of torture amplify the experience of suffering. The image thus conveys moral heroism through the character's body, while the evidence used does not allow every detail to be accepted as a literal reconstruction.

[34] Aiko Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan Kontrol: Studi tentang Perubahan Sosial di Pedesaan Jawa 1942–1945* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 1993), 120.

The second finding concerns the formulation of the Jihad Resolution. The film correctly places the Allied–NICA threat, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's authority, and the ulama's deliberations at the center. It also preserves the idea that defending independence is a religious obligation. The document of 22 October 1945 clearly calls on the government to act against efforts endangering the Republic and to continue the *sabilillah* struggle.[35] The film therefore does not change the decision's political direction: support for the republican state and opposition to the return of colonial rule remain central to the narrative.

The third finding is the correspondence of the atmosphere of mobilization. The film depicts santri, Hizbullah, Sabilillah, and members of the public moving toward Surabaya after the ulama's call. Historiography and the contemporary press confirm the ability of pesantren networks to disseminate the decision and mobilize assistance across regions.[3637] Saifuddin Zuhri's memoir also shows how the obligation to defend the homeland was understood in pesantren circles.[38] The film thus captures the fatwa's social energy: a kiai's authority turns an organizational decision into an action with religious meaning for the community.

Distortion, Omission, and Imbalance

Fidelity to the core events does not mean that the representation is complete. The first form of distortion is the creation of Harun. He is depicted as a Tebuireng santri whose life encompasses the pesantren, resistance to Japan, personal relationships, and armed struggle. The body of sources used provides no evidence that Harun was a historical participant directly involved in formulating the Jihad Resolution. He is better understood as a composite character who combines the experiences of many santri into one emotional journey.[39] This works cinematically, but risks turning a collective struggle into individual heroism if viewers are given too little indication to distinguish symbol from biography.

The second form is the simplification of jurisprudential substance. The document and historiography explain the difference between individual and collective obligations and the use of *masafatul qashr* as a spatial boundary. The film conveys the obligation to defend the Republic, but does not give comparable space to the process of istinbat, legal terms, and the ulama's arguments. Zainul Milal Bizawie shows that

[35] Hoofdbestuur Nahdlatul Ulama, "Resoloesi Djihad fi-Sabilillah," decision letter of the major meeting of Nahdlatul Ulama regional representatives from Java and Madura, Surabaya, 22 October 1945, PBNU Digital Archive Collection.

[36] Martin van Bruinessen, *NU: Tradisi, Relasi-relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana Baru* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1994), 62–65.

[37] William H. Frederick, *Visions and Heat: The Making of the Indonesian Revolution* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989), 232–235.

[38] K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri, *Berangkat dari Pesantren* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2013), 275–278.

[39] Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History* (London: Pearson Education, 2006), 32–35.

this formulation reflects intellectual work and strategic calculation within ulama networks, not merely an emotional response.[40] Omitting these details makes it easier for viewers to remember the call to jihad than the architecture of reasoning that made the call operational.

The assessment presented reveals a seeming contradiction: the table categorizes the substance of the fatwa as consistent with the reference sources, while its close reading says that the 94-kilometer radius and the relationship between fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah are not fully presented. The contradiction can be resolved by distinguishing substantive accuracy from juridical-theological completeness. The film is accurate because it preserves the duty to defend the state and the ulama's legitimacy; it is incomplete because it reduces the legal parameters and intellectual process. This distinction prevents both an overly permissive and an overly harsh assessment.

The third form is chronological compression. The film moves quickly from Japanese repression to the Proclamation and the Jihad Resolution, leaving insufficient room for the formation of MIAI, its dissolution, the birth of Masyumi, the role of Shumubu, and the establishment of Hizbullah. Yet this phase explains how the ulama developed experience in organization, negotiation, bureaucracy, and mobilization before October 1945.[41][42] Without that context, the Jihad Resolution looks like a spontaneous eruption in an emergency rather than the culmination of a longer process of political-religious consolidation.

The fourth form is the simplification of the Battle of Surabaya's causality. The film makes a visual transition from fatwa to speech, santri mobilization, and then battle. The sequence has a basis, but can suggest that the Jihad Resolution was the sole trigger. William H. Frederick's study presents the Surabaya revolution as an interaction among Allied pressure, youth dynamics, the TKR, militias, urban society, and mobilization from the countryside.[43] The fatwa mattered because it provided legitimacy and broadened participation, but its effect operated within an already developing ecosystem of conflict.

The fifth form is the reduction of non-santri actors. The camera follows KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, the pesantren, Hizbullah, Sabilillah, and santri; this choice accords with the film's biographical focus. Yet the TKR, youth groups of other orientations, railway and port workers, and nonreligious struggle organizations receive no comparable weight. As a result, the multisectoral nature of the revolution contracts into an opposition

[40] Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Masterpiece Islam Nusantara: Sanad dan Jejaring Ulama-Santri (1830–1945)* (Ciputat: Pustaka Compass, 2016), 355–358.

[41] Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942–1945* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1958), 132–135.

[42] Deliar Noer, *Partai Islam di Pentas Nasional 1945–1965* (Jakarta: Grafiti Pers, 1987), 43–48.

[43] William H. Frederick, *Pandangan dan Gejolak: Masyarakat Kota dan Lahirnya Revolusi Indonesia Surabaya 1926–1946*, translated by Harry Tjan Silalahi (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1989), 301–318.

between santri and colonizers. This reduction does not negate the truth of the pesantren's contribution, but changes the proportion of other groups' contributions in viewers' memories.

Discussion

From Factual Truth to Cinematic Truth

The findings above show that the main question is not whether *Sang Kiai* is "right" or "wrong," but at what level a representation operates. Factually, the film retains verifiable points: the *seikerei* policy, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's refusal, the consolidation of ulama, the 22 October decision, the legitimation of defending the Republic, and the involvement of santri militias. Formally, it alters spans of time, combines social experiences in characters, constructs dialogue for which no transcript exists, and concentrates causality in a few scenes. This difference accords with Rosenstone's argument that film produces historical knowledge through images, bodies, atmosphere, and dramatic sequence rather than through the apparatus of footnotes.[44]

The concept of cinematic truth is useful as long as it is not used as an unlimited justification. Dramatized torture, for example, may convey the experience of Japanese violence and a character's steadfastness, but its details must not automatically be treated as evidence. Harun can embody the experience of a generation of santri, but his composite status must be recognized so that a symbol does not become a false biography. Compressing a two-day meeting can sustain the film's pace, but omitting the jurisprudential structure shifts the image of ulama from methodical makers of legal decisions to heroic orators. Each artistic license therefore has epistemic consequences.

Robert Burgoyne explains that historical films shape the experience of nationhood through genre conventions and emotion.[45] In *Sang Kiai*, that experience is built through three movements: the suffering of the kiai's body, the ulama's moral decision, and the santri's sacrifice. These movements make religious nationalism readily recognizable. Yet they also favor the most visual and emotional moments, while legal deliberation, network-building, the distribution of information, and coordination among groups struggle to gain comparable appeal. The film's distortions therefore do not always stem from a lack of research; some arise from the imbalance between what is important historiographically and what works cinematically.

[44] Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History* (London: Pearson Education, 2006), 45–50.
[45] Robert Burgoyne, *The Hollywood Historical Film* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 11–14.

Sang Kiai as a Post-Reformasi Counter-Narrative

The film was produced in 2013, when narratives of Islam, pesantren, and santri identity gained greater space in popular culture. In the post-Reformasi context, placing ulama at the center of the revolution corrected a memory that had long more readily recognized soldiers, state elites, and secular national figures. Heryanto shows that changes to screen culture after the New Order opened opportunities for previously restricted identities and social experiences.[46] *Sang Kiai* takes this opportunity by making Pesantren Tebuireng its focal point and the Jihad Resolution a source of national legitimacy.

The film's corrective function appears in how it links religion to the Republic. The Resolution is presented not as an agenda to establish a religious state, but as a decision to defend the state already proclaimed. This relationship rejects a simple dichotomy between Islam and nationalism. It also restores the ulama's agency: they are not a following that acts only after state orders, but actors who interpret the situation, formulate law, and mobilize social networks. Within critical historiography, recovering previously marginalized actors is an important contribution because it broadens the subjects of history.[47]

The influence of this narrative does not end at the cinema. The designation of 22 October as Santri Day by Presidential Decree No. 22 of 2015 shows that the memory of the Jihad Resolution received institutional recognition in a nearby period.[48] This article does not claim that the film caused the decree; the available evidence does not support a direct causal link. Both, however, belong to the same landscape of memory, marked by growing public attention to the contributions of ulama and santri. The film also supplies images, characters, and scenes that help that memory circulate.

Historiographical Correction and the Risk of a Replacement Bias

A counter-narrative is not automatically free of exclusion. In correcting military-centered historiography by foregrounding santri, the film risks producing a replacement bias: the TKR, youth groups, workers, and non-santri militias move to the margins. This is where selective emphasis needs to be distinguished from falsehood. The film does not say that other actors were absent, but its distribution of screen time makes viewers experience santri as though they were the single dominant

[46] Ariel Heryanto, *Identitas dan Kenikmatan: Politik Budaya Layar Indonesia* (Jakarta: KPG, 2015), 120–124.

[47] Kuntowijoyo, *Metodologi Sejarah*, 2nd ed. (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2003), 17–19.

[48] Republik Indonesia, *Keputusan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 22 Tahun 2015 tentang Hari Santri*, 15 October 2015, https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Download/270687/Keppres%20Nomor%2022%20Tahun%202015.pdf.

actor. In a visual medium, absence can be as powerful as an explicit statement because what is unseen tends not to be remembered.

This risk is clearest in the representation of the Battle of Surabaya. Historically, pesantren networks did contribute legitimacy, personnel, and morale to the struggle. Yet the battle resulted from the meeting of diverse networks: Republican forces, former PETA members, religious militias, radical youth, workers, neighborhood communities, radio, and local leadership. Frederick depicts Surabaya as a revolutionary space of conflict, competition, and coordination that cannot easily be summarized.[49] If the film is read solely as a source of knowledge, this plurality disappears. If it is read as an intervention in memory, its chosen focus can be understood but must still be criticized.

The same applies to causality. The Jihad Resolution was not the sole cause of the Battle of Surabaya, but neither was it a dispensable addition. A more accurate position is to see it as a mechanism of legitimation and mobilization amid already revolutionary conditions. The fatwa turned a political threat into a religious obligation for particular communities, linked pesantren networks to defense needs, and increased the public's readiness to act. Its effect was catalytic and relational rather than mechanical. This interpretation preserves the ulama's contribution without erasing military, social, and urban factors.

The Reduced Intellectual Tradition of the Ulama

The article's most important finding lies in the difference between conveying content and conveying a way of thinking. The film conveys the content: Muslims must defend independence. But it does not sufficiently convey how the ulama connected threat, distance, types of obligation, the community's capacity, and the government's position. The document's structure of hearing–considering–recalling–deciding shows layered reasoning. The categories of *fardhu 'ain* and *fardhu kifayah* also organize the burden of obligation rather than merely stirring emotion.

The reduction of this dimension has historiographical consequences. The public may recognize the kiai's courage while seeing less of their intellectual and organizational capacity. The Resolution is then remembered as a heroic slogan rather than a product of political ijtihad combining jurisprudence, information from the field, and calculations about mobilization. Ajid Thohir describes historical interpretation as an effort to connect facts in contexts of space, time, and cause and effect; in this case, such a reading requires returning the 22 October decision to the organizational process and reasoning that produced it.[50]

[49] William H. Frederick, *Visions and Heat: The Making of the Indonesian Revolution* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989), 232–235.

[50] Ajid Thohir, *Filsafat Sejarah: Profetik, Spekulatif, dan Kritis* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2019), 13–22.

The critique of simplified jurisprudence therefore does not demand that the film show a lengthy meeting like an academic documentary. What is needed is recognition that condensation comes at a cost. One or two visual cues—a map of distances, a brief debate on types of obligation, or an explanation that the meeting lasted two days—could preserve complexity without stopping the narrative. This alternative shows that accuracy and dramatization are not always mutually exclusive choices.

A Place in Indonesian Film Historiography

In Indonesian historiography, *Sang Kiai* can be placed among works that move the memory of the Jihad Resolution from pesantren communities into the national public sphere. It is not a monograph, an archive, or a documentary, but it nonetheless makes an argument: ulama and santri were participants in the revolution; Islam provided a moral language for defending the Republic; and pesantren were political-social institutions, not only educational ones. This argument challenges the old division between "national history" and "community history."

The film's contribution and limits can both be seen in the relationship between restoration and reduction. Restoration occurs when the roles of ulama and santri reappear. Reduction occurs when the complexity of MIAI–Masyumi organization, the Resolution's jurisprudence, the continuity between 22 October and 7–8 November, and the plurality of Surabaya's actors are diminished. By distinguishing event accuracy, substantive completeness, chronology, causality, and the proportion of actors, this article offers a more measured position than a black-and-white assessment. A film can be right at one level and deviate at another.

The implication is that *Sang Kiai* is suitable for use in history education only when paired with documents and critical questions. Viewers should be encouraged to identify which events have evidence, which dialogue is reconstructed, which characters are composite, what context has been omitted, and which groups receive no screen time. With this approach, the film is treated not as a replacement for archives but as an entry point for understanding how society today selects, revives, and debates the past. Here historiographical criticism performs its main function: not extinguishing cinema's vitality, but making its force accountable.

Conclusion

The Jihad Resolution of 22 October 1945 emerged from threats to the Republic, organizational and pesantren networks formed before the Proclamation, and the ulama's need to establish a religious basis for defending independence. The Resolution document demonstrates political support for the republican state and the organization of the obligation to struggle through legal consideration. Its influence

operated through networks of ulama, pesantren, the press, and militias amid a revolutionary situation that also involved many social and military groups.

Sang Kiai succeeds in preserving this historical core: resistance to *seikerei*, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's authority, the consolidation of ulama, the obligation to defend independence, and the mobilization of santri. Yet the film builds its dramatic effectiveness through visually intensified torture, the composite character Harun, compressed time, invented dialogue, simplified *fardhu 'ain–fardhu kifayah*, omission of the MIAI–Masyumi phase, and a diminished role for non-santri fighters. Its correspondence is therefore substantive, not a complete literal reproduction.

The research contribution lies in distinguishing five levels of assessment—events, substance, chronology, causality, and the proportion of actors—and placing the film within post-Reformasi politics of memory. This framework shows that *Sang Kiai* is an important counter-narrative to military-centered historiography, but may also create a new bias when a multisectoral revolution is centered on one community. The article's novelty is thus not merely a list of accuracies and distortions, but an explanation of how cinematic truth corrects older memory while rearranging who is visible and who is left out of public history.

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