From MIAI's Voice to Masyumi's Voice: Islamic Print Media and the Reconfiguration of Japanese Propaganda in Java, 1943–1944

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Abstract

This article examines how the Japanese military administration in occupied Java refashioned its propaganda toward Indonesian Muslims through two successive Islamic magazines, Madjallah Islam Soeara MIAI (1943) and its successor, Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia (1943–1944). Rather than treating the change of title as a mere administrative formality, the article argues that the transformation of the magazine accompanied, and helped consummate, a deliberate reorganization of Indonesian Islam under occupation: the dissolution of the federative Majelis Islam A'laa Indonesia (MIAI) and its replacement by the more centralized Madjlis Sjoero Moeslimin Indonesia (Masyumi) at the end of 1943. Drawing on a systematic content analysis of twenty-five magazine issues as primary sources, corroborated with Indonesian and international secondary scholarship, the article traces a shift from propaganda oriented toward securing initial legitimacy—Japan as liberator and protector of Islam—toward a more comprehensive and structured mobilization of ulama, youth, women, and labor for the Greater East Asia War. It shows that religious language and Islamic symbolism became progressively more instrumental to this mobilization, while the magazines simultaneously preserved a genuine devotional and educational function for their Muslim readership. The article contributes a media-centered periodization of Japanese religious propaganda in Java and argues that the ambivalent legacy of this press—as both an instrument of occupation and an unintended incubator of nationalist consciousness—complicates any straightforward reading of Islamic collaboration during the occupation.

Keywords: *Japanese occupation, Islamic press, propaganda, Madjallah Soeara MIAI, Masyumi, Java, 1943–1944*

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Introduction

Japan's emergence as a modern power between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reshaped the political horizon of colonized Asia, including the Netherlands East Indies.[1] The Meiji Restoration of 1868 dismantled the Tokugawa feudal order and, through comprehensive reform in politics, education, industry, and the military, allowed Japan to defeat China in 1894–1895 and Russia in 1904–1905, victories that shattered the presumption of European invincibility and positioned Japan as the only Asian power treated as an equal by the Western states.[2] Japan's expanding commercial and diplomatic presence in the Indies through the early twentieth century was accompanied, from the 1930s, by an increasingly assertive imperial ideology; the doctrine of Hakko Ichiu and, subsequently, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (Dai Tōa Kyōeiken) supplied Tokyo with an ideological warrant for regional expansion that presented itself as pan-Asian liberation rather than conquest.[3] Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Japanese forces moved rapidly through Southeast Asia; the Netherlands East Indies, valuable above all for its petroleum, fell after a brief campaign, and the Dutch colonial government surrendered unconditionally at Kalijati, West Java, on 8 March 1942.[4] What followed was a military occupation of some three and a half years that, notwithstanding its brevity, permanently altered the political trajectory of the archipelago.[5]

Among the many instruments through which the occupation authorities sought to secure Indonesian cooperation, none proved more consequential than their approach to organized Islam. Japanese planners recognized early that Muslims constituted the demographic majority of Java and possessed, through the ulama, the pesantren network, and federative organizations, a capacity to shape public opinion that no purely military apparatus could replicate.[6] Where the Dutch colonial government had regarded Islamic political mobilization with structural suspicion, the Japanese military administration calculated that cultivating rather than suppressing Muslim organizational life would yield a more durable and more legitimate channel of control.[7] The chief beneficiary of this calculation was the Majelis Islam A'laa Indonesia (MIAI), a federative body uniting Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and other Islamic organizations that had been founded at the Surabaya Islamic Congress of 21

[1]Eman Suherman, "Dinamika Masyarakat Jepang dari Masa Edo hingga Pascaperang Dunia II," Humaniora 16, no. 2 (2004).

[2]Eman Suherman, "Dinamika Masyarakat Jepang dari Masa Edo hingga Pascaperang Dunia II," Humaniora 16, no. 2 (2004).

[3]Michał A. Piegzik, "The Japanese Plan to Dominate East Asia—The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość 34, no. 2 (2019), 234.

[4]Marwati Djoened Poesponegoro and Nugroho Notosusanto, Sejarah Nasional Indonesia VI: Zaman Jepang dan Zaman Republik (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2008), 22.

[5]Miftahuddin, Danar Widiyanta, and Hasbi Mawardi, "Dinamika Perjuangan Badan Federasi Umat Islam Menuju Kemerdekaan Indonesia, 1937–1945," Istoria: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Ilmu Sejarah 17, no. 2 (2021), 9.

[6]Alvin Noor Sahab Rizal, "Pergerakan Islam Indonesia Masa Jepang (1942–1945)," Indo-Islamika 4, no. 2 (2014), 180.

[7]Hamka, Sejarah Umat Islam, Jilid IV (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1981), 245.

September 1937.[8] Rather than dissolving MIAI as it dissolved the secular nationalist parties, the occupation administration retained it, relocated its administrative center from Surabaya to Batavia for closer supervision, and granted it a relative latitude to pursue religious education, charitable finance, and da'wah that had been more circumscribed under Dutch rule.[9]

It was within this framework that MIAI, in January 1943, began publishing an official magazine, Madjallah Islam Soeara MIAI, to serve as the organization's principal instrument of internal communication and public address.[10] Ten months later, at the close of 1943, the occupation government dissolved MIAI outright and replaced it with a more centralized body, the Madjlis Sjoero Moeslimin Indonesia, universally known by the acronym Masyumi.[11] The magazine did not disappear with its parent organization; instead, it resumed publication under a new title, Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, explicitly announced in its inaugural issue as a "landjoetan" (continuation) of Soeara MIAI Nos. 22–23, now speaking in the name of Masyumi.[12] This continuity of format alongside discontinuity of institutional sponsorship makes the two magazines an unusually well-bounded case for observing how Japanese religious propaganda evolved in response to a specific act of organizational restructuring, rather than through vague and undifferentiated drift.

Existing historiography has established the broad contours of Japanese policy toward Indonesian Islam during the occupation but has left the print culture of that policy comparatively underexamined as a coherent object of analysis in its own right. Harry J. Benda's foundational study of Islam under Japanese rule demonstrated that the occupation authorities pursued a strategy of selective accommodation toward Muslim organizations distinct from Dutch policy, using MIAI, and later Masyumi, as instruments for securing wartime legitimacy while keeping religious politics within tolerable bounds.[13] Aiko Kurasawa's study of social mobilization in rural Java showed that Japanese control depended as much on the management of collective consciousness as on coercive force, and that print media formed one strand within a wider apparatus of mobilization spanning education, mass organization, and propaganda agencies such as the Sendenbu.[14] Alvin Noor Sahab Rizal's study of the Islamic movement under occupation situated the 1943 dissolution of MIAI and its replacement by Masyumi within a broader narrative of tightening Japanese control, and briefly noted the accompanying change in the movement's print organ.[15] The most

[8]Tutik Mulyani, "Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI) dalam Pergerakan Nasional Tahun 1937–1942" (Skripsi, Universitas Sebelas Maret, 1995), 18.

[9]Harry J. Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit: Islam Indonesia Masa Pendudukan Jepang (Bandung: Pustaka Jaya, 1985), 143.

[10]W. Wondoamiseno, "Kata Pengantar," Madjallah Islam Soeara MIAI, Tahun I, No. 1 (1 Djanoeari 2603/1 January 1943).

[11]Insan Fahmi Siregar, "Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan Partai Masyumi 1945–1960," Thaqafiyyat 6, no. 1 (2005), 63.

[12]"Berita Redaksi," Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun I, No. 1 (1 December 1943).

[13]Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit, 143.

[14]Aiko Kurasawa, Mobilisasi dan Kontrol: Studi tentang Perubahan Sosial di Pedesaan Jawa 1942–1945 (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1993), 170.

[15]Rizal, "Pergerakan Islam Indonesia Masa Jepang", 180.

directly relevant study is Rika Kamila's research on Masyumi's propaganda through *Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia*, which examined the successor magazine's content in isolation, and studies such as Yayuk Indrayani and Artono's analysis of propaganda in Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia for 1944–1945, which likewise treated that publication as a self-contained corpus.[16][17]

What remains absent from this literature is a systematic, comparative reading of Soeara MIAI and Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia as two phases of a single publishing project, undertaken with an eye to how the change of magazine mirrored, and in some respects anticipated, the change of sponsoring organization. Existing studies tend either to treat the earlier magazine in passing, as background to the better-documented Masyumi period, or to examine the later magazine without adequately situating it against its own antecedent. This article addresses that gap by reconstructing, on an issue-by-issue basis, the propagandistic content of twenty-one numbers of Soeara MIAI (January–November 1943) and four representative numbers of Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia (June–November 1944), in order to establish how the Japanese administration's message to Indonesian Muslims evolved across the moment of institutional rupture. Its central objectives are, first, to reconstruct the historical process by which Soeara MIAI and Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia came into being, and second, to trace the substantive shift in Japanese propaganda that accompanied the transition from the one magazine to the other between 1943 and 1944.

The article's contribution is threefold. Empirically, it offers a systematic content analysis of primary Islamic magazine sources from the occupation period that have received only fragmentary scholarly attention, reconstructing an issue-level periodization of propaganda themes that has not previously been assembled in this form. Analytically, it demonstrates that the shift from MIAI to Masyumi was not merely an organizational reshuffling imposed from above but a process actively mediated through print media, in which religious language, Qur'anic citation, and the vocabulary of jihad and sacrifice were progressively harnessed to purposes of wartime mobilization. Historiographically, it complicates a simple binary reading of Islamic collaboration or resistance under occupation by showing that the same magazines that carried Japanese propaganda also sustained a continuous current of devotional and educational content, and that the increasingly explicit talk of eventual Indonesian independence—first as a distant promise, then, after Prime Minister Koiso's September 1944 declaration, as an urgent theme—generated a nationalist consciousness that ultimately exceeded what Japanese strategists had intended to cultivate.

Method

This study employs the historical method, comprising the four conventional stages of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.[18]

[16]Rika Kamila, "Propaganda Masyumi melalui Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia 1943–1945" (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2019), 51.

[17]Yayuk Indrayani and Artono, "Propaganda Jepang dalam Majalah Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia Tahun 1944–1945," Avatara: e-Journal Pendidikan Sejarah 4, no. 2 (2016), 258.

[18]Kuntowijoyo, Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2013), 90.

Heuristics

The heuristic stage consisted of assembling primary and secondary sources bearing directly on the emergence and transformation of the two magazines. The principal primary sources are the surviving digitized issues of Madjallah Islam Soeara MIAI, Tahun I, Nos. 1 through 21 (January–November 1943), and of Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun II, Nos. 11, 17, 19, and 21 (June–November 1944), together with the commemorative Edisi Choesoes Peringatan M.I.A.I. of 8 December 1942.[1920212223][24] These were supplemented by contemporary newspaper material referenced in the wider source survey, including the Delpher-digitized De Locomotief of 12 October 1939. Secondary sources comprised monographs on the occupation and on the history of Indonesian Islamic organizations—principally Benda, Kurasawa, Deliar Noer, Taufik Abdullah, and the official Sejarah Nasional Indonesia—together with a body of Indonesian and international journal literature on Japanese propaganda methods, media, and policy toward Islam, and prior undergraduate theses addressing MIAI and Masyumi specifically.[25][26][27][28][29]

Source Criticism

Source criticism in historical method is conventionally divided into external criticism, which examines a source's physical authenticity, and internal criticism, which examines the credibility of its content.[30] External criticism was applied to the magazines through examination of masthead identity, issue numbering, dates of publication (rendered in the Japanese calendar year 2603/2604 alongside the Indonesian equivalent), the publisher and editorial board, orthography and typography consistent with wartime Malay/Indonesian usage, and page layout. Because the sources used were digitized reproductions of the original periodicals, particular attention was paid to establishing that the digitized text and accompanying photographs—including documentary images such as the address of Lieutenant General Okazaki—corresponded to their surrounding articles and were not later insertions. Examination of the identity of the publisher, the physical characteristics, provenance, orthographic conventions, page composition, and consistency with the historical context of 1943 indicated that Madjallah Islam Soeara MIAI, Tahun I, No. 1, and the succeeding issues examined, satisfy the criteria of authenticity and may be regarded as integral historical sources for this study.

[19]Madjallah Islam Soeara M.I.A.I., Tahoen I, No. 1 (1 Djanoeari 2603/1 January 1943).

[20]Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahoen II, No. 11 (1 Joeni 2604/1 June 1944).

[21]Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahoen II, No. 17 (1 September 2604/1 September 1944).

[22]Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahoen II, No. 19 (1 Oktober 2604/1 October 1944).

[23]Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahoen II, No. 21 (1 November 2604/1 November 1944).

[24]Madjallah Soeara M.I.A.I., Edisi Choesoes Peringatan M.I.A.I. (8 Desember 2602/8 December 1942).

[25]Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit.

[26]Kurasawa, Mobilisasi dan Kontrol.

[27]Deliar Noer, Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1991).

[28]Taufik Abdullah, Sejarah Umat Islam Indonesia (Jakarta: Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 1991).

[29]Marwati Djoened Poesponegoro and Nugroho Notosusanto, Sejarah Nasional Indonesia VI: Zaman Jepang dan Zaman Republik (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1993).

[30]Kuntowijoyo, Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah, 95.

Internal criticism proceeded by comparing the substantive claims found in the magazines—reports of MIAI and Masyumi activity, the content of official addresses, and editorial commentary—against the secondary literature on occupation policy, in particular Benda, Kurasawa, Noer, and Poesponegoro and Notosusanto.[31][32][33][34] This comparison established that, notwithstanding the magazines' function as instruments of a censored and supervised press, the descriptive information they convey concerning MIAI's and Masyumi's organizational activity, the content of official pronouncements, and the general trajectory of occupation social policy toward Islam is corroborated by independent scholarship and may be used as historical evidence, provided such evidence is read critically as an expression of the propagandistic intent of its publishers rather than as a neutral record of Muslim opinion.

Interpretation

Historical interpretation requires the analysis of established facts through an explicit conceptual framework rather than through unaided narrative description.[35] This study interprets its findings through the concept of propaganda as elaborated in classical communication theory. Harold Lasswell's foundational definition treats propaganda as the management of collective attitudes through the manipulation of significant symbols, oriented toward regulating a public's behavior independent of the physical proximity of its members.[36] Jacques Ellul extended this framework by emphasizing that propaganda operates on both active supporters and a passive public that absorbs its messages without organized resistance, while James E. Combs and Dan Nimmo characterized propaganda as deliberate, planned communication designed to elicit predetermined responses in opinion, attitude, and behavior.[37] These formulations converge on an understanding of propaganda as an instrument of collective control deployed by an interested party to secure mass compliance with objectives that are not necessarily rational or freely embraced by their audience—an understanding this article applies to read the content of Soeara MIAI and Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia as artifacts of Japanese and, secondarily, Islamic organizational interest, rather than as disinterested reportage.

A second interpretive resource is agenda-setting theory, as formulated by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, which holds that the press exercises influence less by dictating what audiences should think than by determining which issues merit their attention.[38] Applied to the occupation press, this framework illuminates how editorial control over rubrics, themes, and vocabulary allowed the Japanese administration to fix the boundaries of legitimate public concern for Muslim readers—directing attention toward support for the Greater East Asia War, opposition to Western

[31]Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit.

[32]Kurasawa, Mobilisasi dan Kontrol.

[33]Noer, Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia (1991).

[34]Poesponegoro and Notosusanto, Sejarah Nasional Indonesia VI (1993).

[35]Kuntowijoyo, Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah, 100.

[36]Andi Youna Bachtiar, Didin Hikmah Perkasa, and Mochamad Rizki Sadikun, "Peran Media dalam Propaganda," Jurnal Komunikologi 13, no. 2 (September 2016), 79.

[37]Bachtiar, Perkasa, and Sadikun, "Peran Media dalam Propaganda", 79.

[38]Bachtiar, Perkasa, and Sadikun, "Peran Media dalam Propaganda", 83.

domination, and the linkage of political participation to religious duty—while marginalizing dissenting or critical perspectives from the printed record altogether. Read together, propaganda theory and agenda-setting theory account respectively for how messages were shaped and for how the field of permissible discourse was bounded, providing the interpretive scaffolding for the periodization developed in Sections 3 and 4.

Historiography

The historiographic stage translates the results of criticism and interpretation into an integrated narrative organized chronologically and thematically.[39] This article follows that logic by first reconstructing, in Section 3, the institutional origins of the two magazines within the wider structure of Japanese propaganda administration in Java, before presenting, in Section 4, a systematic periodization of the propaganda content of Soeara MIAI and Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia and its bearing on Indonesian Muslims between 1943 and 1944.

Results

The Press Apparatus of the Occupation and the Genesis of Soeara MIAI

Japanese propaganda in occupied Java operated through a dedicated administrative apparatus rather than through improvisation. In August 1942 the military government established the Sendenbu, or Propaganda Department, charged with what Japanese planners termed minshin ha'aku (grasping popular sentiment) and senbu kōsaku (pacification work), oriented toward mobilizing Indonesian energy and opinion behind the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.[40] This was followed, on 1 April 1943, by the Keimin Bunka Shidōsho (Cultural Centre), which extended propagandistic supervision into the arts, ensuring that literature, music, and performance likewise served occupation objectives.[41] An early instrument of mass persuasion, the Tiga A (Triple-A) Movement, promoted the slogans "Japan the Leader of Asia," "Japan the Protector of Asia," and "Japan the Light of Asia" under nominal Indonesian leadership, but its credibility eroded rapidly once romusha conscription, compulsory crop deliveries, and tightening economic controls exposed the gap between the rhetoric of liberation and the practice of exploitation.[42][43] The occupation government accordingly diversified its propaganda channels—newspapers, magazines, radio, film, posters, song, oratory, traditional theatre, and kamishibai (picture-story theatre)—calibrating each medium to the literacy and social position of

[39]Sulasman, Metode Penelitian Sejarah (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2014), 25.

[40]Dewi Yuliati, "Mewaspadai Propaganda melalui Kajian Sejarah: Studi atas Sistem Propaganda Jepang di Jawa 1942–1945," Humanika 15, no. 9 (2012), 2.

[41]Dewi Yuliati, "Mewaspadai Propaganda melalui Kajian Sejarah: Studi atas Sistem Propaganda Jepang di Jawa 1942–1945," Humanika 15, no. 9 (2012), 2.

[42]Gema Budiarto, Dewi Yuliati, and Dhanang Respati Puguh, "Kamishibai dan Propaganda Jepang di Jawa pada Masa Perang Asia Timur Raya," Jurnal Sejarah Citra Lekha 8, no. 1 (2023), 56.

[43]Harry J. Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit: Islam Indonesia Masa Pendudukan Jepang (Bandung: Pustaka Jaya, 1985), 143.

a particular audience segment.[44] Magazines occupied a distinctive niche within this apparatus: unlike newspapers, which conveyed rapid news in compressed form, magazines afforded space for extended argument, illustration, and narrative, reaching an educated readership of teachers, students, officials, organizational leaders, and religious scholars whose social influence made them valuable secondary transmitters of the messages they absorbed.[45][46]

It was within this apparatus that religious print media assumed a specialized function. Japanese planners judged Indonesian Muslims the country's largest and most organizationally cohesive population bloc and consequently declined to dissolve MIAI as they had dissolved secular nationalist bodies, opting instead to preserve it as a channel of communication and, eventually, of mobilization.[47] MIAI itself was not a Japanese creation; it had been founded on 21 September 1937 at the Islamic Congress in Surabaya as a federative body coordinating Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and other Islamic organizations that had previously operated independently of one another, addressing shared concerns of religious education, social welfare, and colonial policy without displacing the autonomy of its member organizations.[48][49] During the final years of Dutch rule, MIAI's communications with its member bodies depended on correspondence and on the media of individual affiliates, a slow and uneven arrangement that left the federation without a unified public voice.[50]

This changed decisively after the Japanese occupation began in March 1942. The occupation authorities relocated MIAI's headquarters from Surabaya to Batavia, a move that tightened administrative oversight even as it placed the organization closer to the machinery of government and thereby facilitated its institutional expansion.[51] As MIAI's activity broadened into social welfare, education, and religious service delivery across an increasing number of branches, correspondence alone proved inadequate to the task of coordinating a geographically dispersed organization under wartime conditions of restricted transport and communication.[52] The result, following the requisite licensing procedure administered by the occupation's information office (Hodokan), was the launch in January 1943 of Madjallah Islam Soeara MIAI as MIAI's official semi-monthly organ.[53] Its inaugural editorial, written by W. Wondoamiseno, announced explicitly that the magazine was published "atas idzin Kantor HODOKA" (under license from the Hodokan office) with the declared aim of "menjoembang tjita-

[44]Gema Budiarto, Dewi Yuliati, and Dhanang Respati Puguh, "Kamishibai dan Propaganda Jepang di Jawa pada Masa Perang Asia Timur Raya," Jurnal Sejarah Citra Lekha 8, no. 1 (2023), 56.

[45]Raisa Hashina Rosalini and Desi Dwi Prianti, "Propaganda Jepang melalui Majalah Djawa Baroe pada Masa Kependudukannya di Indonesia," Jurnal Komunikasi 16, no. 2 (2022), 223.

[46]Putut Widjanarko, "Messages from the 'Older Brother': Djawa Baroe Magazine and the Japanese Propaganda in Indonesia in 1943–1945," Jurnal Komunikasi Ikatan Sarjana Komunikasi Indonesia 5, no. 1 (2020), 63.

[47]Miftahuddin, Widiyanta, and Mawardi, "Dinamika Perjuangan Badan Federasi Umat Islam", 8.

[48]Mulyani, "Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia dalam Pergerakan Nasional", 18.

[49]Noer, Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia (1991), 319.

[50]Noer, Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia (1991), 319.

[51]Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit, 143.

[52]Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit, 143.

[53]Wondoamiseno, "Kata Pengantar".

tjita Pemerintah Balatentara Dai Nippon" (contributing to the aspirations of the Dai Nippon military government)—a formulation that situated the magazine's religious and organizational purposes within an explicit framework of support for occupation policy from its very first issue.[54] The editorial enumerated five founding objectives: awakening the people to true faith and to collective prosperity; publishing Qur'anic exegesis in every issue; disseminating the sermons of prominent ulama; explaining Dai Nippon's efforts on behalf of Greater East Asia; and gradually introducing Japanese culture to readers.[55] The juxtaposition of the second and third objectives—unmistakably devotional—with the fourth and fifth—unmistakably propagandistic—captures in miniature the dual character that would define the magazine throughout its run.

The Functions of Soeara MIAI

Beyond its propagandistic charge, Soeara MIAI performed three interlocking functions for its Muslim readership. First, it served devotional and educational ends, publishing Qur'anic exegesis, sermons, fatwas, and discussions of women's position in Islam, family life, and ethics; the table of contents of the inaugural issue alone included articles on tafsir, khutbah, fatwa, and the standing of women in Islamic law, alongside reportage on MIAI's activities.[56] Second, it functioned as MIAI's official channel of internal communication, publishing organizational decisions, branch reports, and meeting minutes that allowed member organizations scattered across Java to receive uniform information and thereby reinforced a collective identity as constituents of a single national Islamic federation.[57] Third, and increasingly prominently, it publicized MIAI's flagship welfare institution, the Baitul Mal, reporting on the collection and disbursement of zakat, infaq, and sadaqah and framing charitable obligation as a matter of social solidarity rather than of private piety alone.[58] According to Benda, MIAI's organizational reach expanded markedly over the course of 1943, a growth that the magazine both documented and actively facilitated by supplying branches with a shared point of reference and a shared vocabulary of organizational purpose.[59] Notably, this integrative function coexisted with the magazine's propagandistic charge without eclipsing it: while a majority of contemporary occupation media served propaganda ends more or less exclusively, Soeara MIAI retained a substantial devotional and pedagogical core even as its reportage of official pronouncements, imperial anniversaries, and war news expanded across successive issues.[60]

From MIAI to Masyumi: The Institutional Rupture of Late 1943

[54]Wondoamiseno, "Kata Pengantar".

[55]Wondoamiseno, "Kata Pengantar".

[56]Soeara MIAI, Tahun I, No. 1.

[57]Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit, 150.

[58]"Pendirian Baitoel-Mal, Masdjid Djami' Pengadjaran Islam," Madjallah Islam Soeara MIAI, Tahun I, No. 4 (15 February 1943).

[59]Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit, 150.

[60]Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit, 181.

MIAI's very success proved unsettling to its Japanese sponsors. As the federation's organizational reach and communicative capacity grew through 1943, occupation officials increasingly perceived it as a potential vehicle for an autonomous Islamic political force that might prove difficult to supervise.[61] At the close of 1943 the military administration accordingly dissolved MIAI and replaced it with a newly constituted body, the Madjlis Sjoero Moeslimin Indonesia (Masyumi), formally inaugurated in November 1943.[62] Where MIAI had been a federation of pre-existing organizations retaining considerable internal autonomy, Masyumi was deliberately designed as a more centralized structure, more readily directed and monitored by the occupation government.[63] The reorganization of the movement's institutional apex was immediately followed by a reorganization of its print organ: a new magazine, Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, replaced Soeara MIAI, its inaugural issue of 1 December 1943 explicitly identifying itself as a continuation of Soeara MIAI Nos. 22–23, notwithstanding changes to its name, publisher, chief editor, and administrative staff.[64] The choice of name carried its own symbolic charge: whereas "Soeara MIAI" designated the voice of a specific federative body, "Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia" ("The Voice of Indonesian Muslims") implied a claim to speak for Indonesian Islam in its entirety through the medium of a single, officially sanctioned organization.[65]

Considerable editorial continuity nonetheless accompanied this institutional rupture. Many contributors and editorial staff who had been active under Soeara MIAI continued their involvement in the successor publication, carrying forward accumulated editorial experience, established rubrics, and existing distribution networks even as the organizational letterhead changed.[66] Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia consequently preserved the devotional and educational character of its predecessor—Qur'anic exegesis, hadith commentary, ethical instruction, and reports on mosque construction and pesantren activity remained regular features—while operating under the same regime of pre-publication censorship administered by the Goen-Kenetsu-Han (Bureau of Censorship) and licensing by the Hoodoohan, a supervisory apparatus whose imprint appears explicitly on the magazines examined.[67][68]

The Trajectory of Propaganda in Soeara MIAI, Issue by Issue

A systematic content analysis of Soeara MIAI Nos. 1 through 21 (January–November 1943), summarized in Table 1, reveals that Japanese propaganda within the magazine was not static but developed through a discernible sequence of thematic emphases tracking the changing military and political circumstances of 1943.

[61] Miftahuddin, Widiyanta, and Mawardi, "Dinamika Perjuangan Badan Federasi Umat Islam", 11.
[62] Siregar, "Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan Partai Masyumi", 63.
[63] Miftahuddin, Widiyanta, and Mawardi, "Dinamika Perjuangan Badan Federasi Umat Islam", 10.
[64] "Berita Redaksi," Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, No. 1.
[65] Indrayani and Artono, "Propaganda Jepang dalam Majalah Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia", 258.
[66] Kamila, "Propaganda Masyumi melalui Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia", 51.
[67] Kamila, "Propaganda Masyumi melalui Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia", 51.
[68] Kamila, "Propaganda Masyumi melalui Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia", 54.

Table 1: Periodization of Propaganda Themes in Madjallah Soeara MIAI, Tahun I (1943)

Phase	Issues	Dominant Theme	Principal Vehicles
Establishing occupation legitimacy	Nos. 1–5	Japan as liberator of Indonesia and protector of Islam	Narratives of the end of Dutch colonialism, the building of "Indonesia Baroe," accounts of military victory, and pan-Asian solidarity
Legitimacy through religion and welfare	Nos. 6–7	Japanese interests linked to Mawlid, the ulama, zakat, and Baitul Mal	Addresses by Japanese officials, religious ceremonies, prayer, and zakat administration
Cultivating ideology and loyalty	Nos. 8–9	The character of the Japanese nation and loyalty to the Tenno	Articles on Japanese national character, celebration of Tenchōsetsu (the Emperor's birthday), anti-Western propaganda, and veneration of the Emperor
Organizing the ulama and the community	Nos. 10–12	Ulama, women, youth, and Islamic organizations directed toward the "New Age"	Ulama training, the "Fortress of Islam," education, discipline, and the "Age of Training" programme
Political and social mobilization	Nos. 13–14	Japanese political concessions used to demand popular support	Promises of governmental participation, Tojo's visit, Baitul Mal, anti-British and anti-American rhetoric
Spiritual mobilization and daily life	Nos. 15–17	Worship and social activity harnessed to wartime support	Spiritual exercises, prayers for victory, Ramadan, frugality, zakat, labour, and social resilience
Defense and military mobilization	Nos. 18/19–20	Homeland defense fused with Japanese military interest	Barisan Pembela Tanah Air, sacrifice of life and property, military training, and the formation of PETA
Political mobilization and institutional transition	No. 21	Advisory bodies and Islamic organizations as intermediaries between government and people	Tyuuoo Sangi-in, Tentara Pembela Tanah Air, addresses by MIAI leaders, and preparation for organizational change

The earliest issues concentrated on securing basic legitimacy for the occupation. Lieutenant General Okazaki's inaugural address, reproduced in No. 1, explicitly constructed a contrast between Dutch and Japanese policy toward Islam: "Maksoednja lain tidak lain daripada membinasakan pengaroeh agama Islam dan hendak melindas agama Islam... maksoed Balatentara Dai Nippon menjelidiki agama Islam ialah boekan oentoek menindas rakjat" (their intention was none other than to destroy the influence of Islam and suppress it... the intention of the Dai Nippon forces in examining Islam is not to oppress the people).[69] The rhetorical strategy is unmistakable: by attributing to Dutch rule an intent to "destroy" and "suppress" Islam, the address constructs a dichotomy of oppressor and protector that positions Japan, by contrast, as Islam's benefactor, while simultaneously urging Muslims to set aside sectarian difference and cooperate uniformly with the occupation administration.[70] As the year progressed, propaganda extended into religious observance (Mawlid, zakat), then into ideological content celebrating Japanese national character and the Emperor, then into the systematic organization of ulama, youth, and women's activity under the rubric of the "Djaman Baroe" (New Age), and finally, from the autumn of 1943, into explicitly military mobilization through the Barisan Pembela Tanah Air and the formation of PETA (Pembela Tanah Air), the volunteer defense corps. By the final issue of the year, No. 21, coverage of new advisory institutions such as the Tyuuoo Sangi-in stood alongside explicit preparation for the organizational transition that would shortly produce Masyumi.

A recurrent structural device across the entire run was the construction of a common enemy. The Netherlands was consistently framed as a discredited colonial past, while Britain and the United States were presented as Western powers bent on restoring imperial domination over Asia; articles recounting the suffering of colonized peoples in India and Palestine, alongside war reportage that emphasized Allied casualties while minimizing or omitting Japanese losses, reinforced a rhetorical boundary between "us" and "the enemy" that implicitly aligned Indonesian and Japanese interests. Visual and typographic devices—the Japanese calendar year 2603, the Hodokan censorship notice, photographs of Japanese officials alongside Islamic leaders, images of mass assemblies, and tables of enemy losses—lent this narrative an appearance of documentary objectivity, while a regularly published Japanese-language lesson (Pelajaran Dasar Bahasa Nippon Oemoem) habituated readers to Japanese vocabulary and culture through repeated, low-key exposure rather than overt exhortation.

The Trajectory of Propaganda in Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia

The successor magazine displayed a more centralized and structurally elaborate pattern of propaganda, summarized in Table 2, corresponding to Masyumi's more centralized institutional design.

[69]Letnan Djenderal Okazaki, "Sabda Goenseikan P.J.M. Letnan Djenderal Okazaki," Madjallah Islam Soeara MIAI, Tahun I, No. 1 (1 January 1943).

[70]Okazaki, "Sabda Goenseikan".

Table 2: Development of Propaganda in Madjallah Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun II (1944)

Stage	Representative Issues	Salient Theme	Principal Vehicles
Establishing organizational identity and legitimacy	No. 1 and early issues	Masyumi introduced as the unifying center of Indonesian Islam and liaison with the occupation government	Welcoming addresses by Japanese officials, explanation of Masyumi's founding, its charter, and editorial statements
Organizing religious elites and society	Mid-year issues, especially No. 11	Penghulu, ulama, and Islamic organizations directed to assist government and preserve order	Assemblies of penghulu, official addresses, ulama training, discussion of social-religious duties
Economic and labor mobilization	Mid-1944 issues	Labor, production, land clearance, frugality, and savings framed as forms of struggle	Articles on work ethics, development reportage, savings campaigns, agriculture, the term "worker-soldier"
Spiritual and defense mobilization	No. 17	Fasting, sincerity, sacrifice, and the history of Islamic warfare linked to wartime needs	Ramadan articles, PETA, Barisan Pelopor, prayer, and labor mobilization
Independence propaganda	Nos. 19 and 21	The promise of independence used to elicit continued dedication	Mass assemblies, articles on "Indonesia Merdeka," youth mobilization, war savings campaigns, victory prayers

Where Soeara MIAI had needed to establish Japan's legitimacy from a position of relative novelty, Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia inherited an already legitimized relationship and instead concentrated on consolidating a more systematically organized structure of religious mobilization. No. 11 (June 1944) reported a province-wide gathering of penghulu (religious officials) in Java, whose duties were expanded beyond marriage, divorce, and mosque administration to encompass the maintenance

of public order and the explanation of government policy to local communities.[71] Religious language was deployed with particular intensity in No. 17 (September 1944), where Ramadan fasting was likened to the physical and spiritual training of a warrior, and the battles of Badr and the conquest of Mecca were invoked to demonstrate that fasting Muslims had historically remained capable of combat, an analogy explicitly extended to the training regimen of the Tentara Pembela Tanah Air.[72] No. 21 (November 1944), published as a special "Nomor Istimewa Menjongsong Indonesia Merdeka" (Special Number Anticipating Indonesian Independence), incorporated a "Do'a Kemenangan Achir" (Prayer for Final Victory) petitioning divine favor for Japanese forces and the destruction of their enemies, and drew on Surah al-Saff to underscore obligations of unity, obedience to leadership, and sacrifice of wealth and life.[73] Economic mobilization ran alongside these spiritual appeals: articles urging frugality, land cultivation, and savings recast manual labor in the idiom of religious duty, while workers were reframed rhetorically as "prajurit pekerja" (worker-soldiers), a terminological shift that imbued economic production with the disciplinary connotations of military service.[74]

The most consequential development in the later issues was the increasingly explicit discussion of Indonesian independence following Japanese Prime Minister Kuniaki Koiso's declaration of September 1944, after which Nos. 19 and 21 devoted substantial space to themes of national readiness, leadership, education, and the responsibilities of eventual self-government.[75][76] Independence was consistently qualified as a future gift contingent on Japanese victory—rendered through the recurring vocabulary of "perkenan," "pemberian," and "djandji" (sanction, gift, promise)—rather than as an unconditional entitlement, and no issue examined specified a concrete timetable, constitutional form, or mechanism of transfer.[77] Nevertheless, the sheer frequency and public prominence of the term "Indonesia Merdeka" in a mass-circulation Islamic magazine expanded the currency of nationalist vocabulary well beyond the circles of the secular political movement, a consequence explored further in Section 4.

Discussion

A Single Propaganda Trajectory across Two Magazines

Read together rather than in isolation, Tables 1 and 2 disclose a trajectory that neither magazine displays fully on its own: a movement from propaganda oriented toward establishing basic legitimacy toward propaganda oriented toward the comprehensive and structural mobilization of an entire religious community. Soeara MIAI began in January 1943 by working to secure Muslim acceptance of Japanese rule through the rhetoric of liberation and religious protection; by its final issues in the

[71] Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun II, No. 11.
[72] Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun II, No. 17.
[73] Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun II, No. 21.
[74] Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun II, No. 21.
[75] Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun II, No. 19.
[76] Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun II, No. 21.
[77] Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun II, No. 19.

autumn of that year, it had extended its reach into economic behavior, youth organization, and paramilitary training. Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, launched at precisely the moment this earlier propaganda apparatus reached its most elaborate phase, did not need to relitigate questions of basic legitimacy; instead, it built on the foundation already established to formalize a more systematic and hierarchical structure of mobilization, in which ulama and penghulu were assigned specific administrative functions as intermediaries between government and community rather than being addressed merely as objects of persuasion. This progression corresponds closely to what Lasswell, Ellul, and Combs and Nimmo describe as the operational logic of propaganda: an initial phase of symbolic legitimation designed to secure the passive acquiescence Ellul identifies as no less significant than active support, followed by a phase of deliberate behavioral direction toward predetermined ends.[78]

The mechanism by which this mobilization was achieved deserves particular emphasis: across both magazines, wartime obligation was rarely presented as a bare political demand. Instead, it was consistently translated into the vocabulary of Islamic devotion. Fasting became military training; charitable giving became a contribution to national strength; labor became worship; prayer was redirected toward the victory of a foreign army; and communal solidarity, grounded in the Qur'anic injunction to unity found in Surah al-Saff, was reoriented toward loyalty to occupation policy.[79] This translation exemplifies what agenda-setting theory identifies as the press's capacity to determine not what readers must conclude but which questions are worth their attention: by consistently pairing devotional themes with wartime obligation, the magazines normalized the assumption that religious duty and support for the occupation were coextensive, without ever needing to argue the point directly.[80] At the same time, this fusion of registers was never complete. Articles on tafsir, hadith, family ethics, and the education of the young appeared throughout both publications with no explicit reference to Japan or the war, evidence that the magazines' religious function was not simply propaganda's alibi but retained an autonomous devotional purpose for their editors and readers alike.[81]

The Shift from Federation to Instrument: Institutional and Discursive Parallels

The transition from MIAI to Masyumi and from Soeara MIAI to Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia should be read as two faces of a single process of centralization rather than as coincidental developments. MIAI's federative structure, precisely because it respected the autonomy of its member organizations, generated an increasingly dense communicative network that occupation officials came to view as a potential locus of independent Islamic political agency—an outcome the propaganda apparatus of Soeara MIAI had itself inadvertently accelerated by strengthening MIAI's organizational cohesion and public profile.[82] Masyumi's more centralized structure

[78]Bachtiar, Perkasa, and Sadikun, "Peran Media dalam Propaganda", 79.
[79]Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia, Tahun II, No. 21.
[80]Bachtiar, Perkasa, and Sadikun, "Peran Media dalam Propaganda", 83.
[81]Kamila, "Propaganda Masyumi melalui Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia", 54.
[82]Miftahuddin, Widiyanta, and Mawardi, "Dinamika Perjuangan Badan Federasi Umat Islam", 11.

resolved this problem of governability from the occupation's perspective, and the name of its magazine reflected the same logic of centralization: "Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia" claimed to represent Indonesian Islam as an undifferentiated whole, in place of the more modest federative claim embodied in "Soeara MIAI."[83] This naming shift cannot be reduced to marketing; it corresponds to what the occupation administration required organizationally—a single, clearly identifiable interlocutor capable of being held accountable for the compliance of Indonesian Muslims as a collective, in place of a loose federation whose internal diversity complicated supervision.

Table 3 synthesizes the consequences of this reorganization for the position of Indonesian Muslims across six institutional domains.

Table 3: Consequences of the Shift from Madjallah Soeara MIAI to Madjallah Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia

Domain Affected	Nature of the Change	Consequence for the Muslim Community
Institutional	MIAI replaced by Masyumi	Islamic organization increasingly centralized within a single officially sanctioned body
Representation	Magazine renamed Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia	Publication projected a claim to represent Indonesian Islam more broadly
Leadership	Editorial leadership and structure passed to Masyumi figures	Ulama and penghulu gained greater prominence, but under closer government supervision
Religious content	Religious material persisted, increasingly linked to the war	Islamic values redirected to construct discipline, sacrifice, labor, and loyalty
Socioeconomic activity	Baitul Mal, savings, production, and labor increasingly emphasized	Communal networks strengthened, but directed toward wartime needs
Political consciousness	Government participation and the promise of independence increasingly reported	Political awareness expanded, though still framed within Japan's own interests

Two domains merit closer interpretation. Institutionally and representationally, the centralization that made Masyumi more governable from Japan's perspective simultaneously made it a more coherent and more visible national platform than the federative MIAI had been—an irony the occupation administration appears not to

[83]Indrayani and Artono, "Propaganda Jepang dalam Majalah Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia", 258.

have fully anticipated. Politically, the progressive normalization of the vocabulary of "Indonesia Merdeka" within an officially sanctioned Islamic organ, however qualified by conditional promises, could not be contained within the boundaries the propaganda apparatus had intended for it: readers accustomed to encountering the phrase in a magazine legitimated by government license were being trained, whatever the intention behind the training, to conceive of Indonesian nationhood as an imaginable and nameable political future.

An Ambivalent Legacy

The consequences of this transformation for Indonesian Muslims resist reduction to a single verdict of either benefit or harm, and Table 4 makes this ambivalence explicit by juxtaposing the reinforcing and constraining dimensions of the same set of changes.

Table 4: The Dual Impact of the Shift from Soeara MIAI to Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia on Indonesian Muslims

Reinforcing Impact	Constraining Impact
Expanded the network of Islamic organizations	Centralized organizations for easier Japanese supervision
Provided space for religious education	Fused religious teaching with wartime interest
Strengthened the standing of ulama and penghulu	Positioned religious figures as conduits for government policy
Developed zakat administration and social welfare	Directed communal labor and funds toward wartime needs
Increased the involvement of youth and women	Mobilized them within organizations of Japanese design
Opened public discussion of independence	Framed independence as a gift bestowed by Dai Nippon
Provided organizational and leadership experience	Reduced press freedom and political autonomy

This ambivalence is best understood, following Benda's characterization of occupation-era Islamic politics, as the product of a pragmatic but structurally unequal relationship between Japanese authority and Muslim elites.[84] Japan required the ulama, the mosque network, and Islamic organizational infrastructure to secure legitimacy, preserve order, and mobilize the population; conversely, Islamic leaders exploited the space this dependency afforded to sustain da'wah, religious education, zakat administration, and organizational development that would otherwise have been foreclosed under a purely coercive occupation regime.[85] Neither party held

[84]Benda, Bulan Sabit Matahari Terbit, 143.

[85]Kamila, "Propaganda Masyumi melalui Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia", 54.

unchecked power over the relationship. The occupation authorities retained ultimate power to censor, supervise, and dissolve organizations, as the fate of MIAI itself demonstrates; yet Islamic elites were not merely passive instruments of Japanese design, and the organizational networks, administrative experience, and rhetorical resources developed under wartime pressure supplied Masyumi's postwar successor party with a foundation it could not otherwise readily have acquired.[86]

This reading complicates historiography that would treat wartime Islamic organizational cooperation with Japan in straightforwardly collaborationist terms. The magazines analyzed here functioned neither purely as instruments of occupation propaganda nor as an autonomous and unconstrained Islamic press; they constituted, rather, a contested discursive space in which occupation interest, organizational self-interest, religious value, and an emergent national consciousness were continuously negotiated against one another under conditions of severe political constraint. The expanding discourse of independence documented in Nos. 19 and 21 of Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia is the clearest evidence that this negotiation produced outcomes the occupying power had not fully intended: propaganda designed to extract wartime sacrifice in exchange for a conditional, deferred promise of self-rule instead habituated a mass Islamic readership to the very idea of Indonesian nationhood as an articulable political horizon, a habituation whose consequences would outlast the occupation itself.

Conclusion

This article set out to reconstruct the historical process by which Madjallah Islam Soeara MIAI and Madjallah Islam Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia came into being, and to trace how Japanese propaganda directed at Indonesian Muslims shifted across the transition from one magazine to the other between 1943 and 1944. The findings show that neither magazine can be adequately understood in isolation. Soeara MIAI emerged in January 1943 as the official organ of a federative Islamic body that Japan chose to preserve rather than dissolve, and its content evolved across the year from establishing basic occupation legitimacy through the rhetoric of liberation and religious protection toward an increasingly comprehensive mobilization of ulama, youth, and economic resources. When Japanese authorities judged MIAI's growing organizational cohesion a governability risk at the close of 1943, they dissolved it and replaced it with the more centralized Masyumi, and the magazine was correspondingly relaunched as Soeara Moeslimin Indonesia—formally a continuation of its predecessor, yet substantively an instrument of a more systematic and hierarchical structure of religious mobilization, in which ulama and penghulu were assigned explicit administrative roles and religious vocabulary was harnessed still more deliberately to the demands of the Greater East Asia War.

The article's principal contribution lies in demonstrating, through a systematic and chronologically disaggregated content analysis, that the change of magazine title in December 1943 was not an incidental administrative adjustment but the discursive counterpart of a deliberate reorganization of Indonesian Islam under occupation—a

[86]Miftahuddin, Widiyanta, and Mawardi, "Dinamika Perjuangan Badan Federasi Umat Islam", 11.

media-centered periodization that has not previously been assembled from these two publications read comparatively. Its further contribution is to show that this propaganda apparatus, for all its sophistication, generated an ambivalent and only partially controllable legacy: the same magazines that recruited religious vocabulary to the service of Japanese war aims also preserved a genuine devotional and educational function, and the same conditional promises of independence deployed to extract continued wartime sacrifice ultimately helped normalize the vocabulary and imagination of Indonesian nationhood among a mass Muslim readership. This ambivalence—organizational cooperation and communal strengthening advancing hand in hand with tightened supervision and, eventually, with an appropriated but consequential nationalist idiom—stands as this study's central finding, and it is the organizational and rhetorical experience accumulated through this contested press, rather than any straightforward verdict of collaboration or resistance, that Islamic political leadership carried forward into the struggle for independence that followed Japan's defeat in 1945.

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