Mosque, Tarekat, and Militia: KH Usman Dhomiri and the Local Infrastructure of Revolution in Cimahi, 1930-1950

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Abstract

This article examines how KH Usman Dhomiri converted religious authority into a local infrastructure of mobilization in Cimahi between 1930 and 1950. Rather than treating his Islamic preaching, leadership of the Tijaniyya Sufi order, establishment of the Baiturrohmah Mosque, and participation in armed struggle as separate activities, it examines their historical connections. The study employs the four stages of historical research: heuristics, external and internal source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The sources include a January 1946 certificate issued by the West Java Sabilillah headquarters, a later transcription of a letter dated 16 February 1946 from the Priangan Resident's Office, retrospective testimony compiled in *Prahara Cimahi*, family interviews, material remains, newspapers, and relevant scholarship. The sources suggest that Dhomiri's role in armed resistance drew on earlier institution building: adapting preaching to Cimahi's martial-arts culture, organizing study circles, establishing a mosque, and producing disciplined relations between teacher and followers. Retrospective accounts describe their use after 1945 for recruitment, arms storage, training, care of the wounded, and combat. Source criticism, however, requires caution. The certificate identifies Sabilillah, and the transcribed letter reports an attack on Dhomiri's residence on 16 February 1946, whereas later narratives variously use Hizbullah and Sabilillah and place a major engagement on 20 February. The article therefore argues for Dhomiri's importance as a religious broker and local organizer without collapsing institutional labels or converting retrospective memory into uncontested fact.

Keywords: KH Usman Dhomiri; Cimahi; Indonesian Revolution; Tijaniyya; Sabilillah; local history

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Introduction

The Indonesian Revolution was fought not only through republican ministries, regular army commands, and celebrated urban battlefronts, but also through small institutions whose ordinary functions could be redirected under conditions of war. Mosques, religious study circles, Sufi networks, martial-arts associations, kinship groups, and neighborhood ties supplied forms of trust that a new state could not immediately produce. In the Bandung region, the return of Allied forces accompanied by the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) transformed such networks into channels of recruitment, intelligence, logistics, and armed defense. Hizbullah units formed part of this wider revolutionary field, but their organization outside Bandung was neither uniform nor neatly subordinated to a single command.[1] Cimahi is especially revealing because colonial rule had made it a garrison town. Military barracks, training facilities, transport routes, and arms depots concentrated coercive power there; after Japan's victory in 1942 and the collapse of Japanese authority in 1945, the same landscape generated weapons, abandoned matériel, and contested strategic space.[2]

KH Usman Dhomiri occupied an unusual position within this setting. He was remembered as a scholar, a Tijaniyya guide, a teacher of martial arts, the founder of the Baiturrohmah Mosque, and the leader of a local fighting body. Those designations are often assembled into a heroic biography, yet their causal relationship is rarely demonstrated. Religious charisma alone does not explain military mobilization. Nor does the later existence of a militia prove that every earlier sermon constituted nationalist agitation. The historical problem is therefore not simply whether Dhomiri "played a role" in independence, but how distinct roles acquired material and organizational connections over time. The period beginning around 1930 matters chiefly as the phase in which he consolidated a religious constituency in Cimahi; direct armed engagement became concentrated in the revolutionary crisis of 1945-1946. Treating the whole period as continuous combat would obscure the institutional preparation that made later mobilization possible.

Earlier scholarship has illuminated parts of this history. Deden Wahyudin reconstructed Dhomiri's biography and his expansion of the Tijaniyya order between 1930 and 1955. Yulfiana Fatimah examined the Baiturrohmah Mosque as a center of Islamic propagation, while Lida Hida Umimi Thusadiyah studied the mosque's later socio-religious activities. Febri Nugraha and Tarpin connected Dhomiri's preaching to the history of the mosque. Hendro Kartika Juniawan, Asep Achmad Hidayat, and Usman Supendi provided a more direct account of his independence-era struggle, and Sulasman's study placed Bandung-area Hizbullah within the broader military formation of the Revolution.[3] These works address Sufi expansion, mosque history,

[1] Sulasman, "The Role of Hizbullah in the Time of Indonesian Revolution in Bandung, 1945-1946," *SOSIOHUMANIKA: Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan* 7, no. 1 (2014): 65-78.

[2] Dian Eka Fitriani, *Citra Kota Cimahi dalam Arsip*, ed. R. Suryagung Sudibyo Putro (Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2023), 32; Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946*, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 128-131.

[3] Deden Wahyudin, "Peranan KH. Usman Dhomiri dalam Pengembangan Tarekat Tijaniyah di Cimahi Jawa Barat (1930-1955)" (Universitas Padjadjaran, 2010); Yulfiana Fatimah, "Masjid

and armed struggle from different perspectives. Their differing organizational names and dates require comparison with the surviving records.

The relationship between religious institutions and armed mobilization must be examined by considering the origins and degree of independence of each source. The Indonesian-language text published in *Priangan* is part of a series of publications linked to the same writing project; consequently, it cannot yet serve as an independent point of comparison for the evidence presented. A key issue to investigate is how Dhomiri's religious network provided the personnel, operational space, discipline, and social trust that subsequently underpinned revolutionary mobilization. Understanding this relationship also requires distinguishing it from narratives shaped by processes of commemoration and historical revision. Therefore, the connections between Hizbullah and Sabilillah, as well as the sequence of battles in February, need to be analyzed using sources with a solid documentary basis.

This argument makes three contributions. First, it joins religious history to the local social history of revolution. Dhomiri's Tijaniyya leadership is analyzed neither as an apolitical spiritual sphere nor as an intrinsically militant order, but as one source of durable social relations. Second, it restores temporal sequence. Martial-arts teaching, the Gunung Bohong study circle, and the construction of the Baiturrohmah Mosque preceded armed mobilization and created its social conditions. Third, it treats documentary inconsistency as a result rather than an inconvenience. A January 1946 certificate bearing the stamp of the West Java Sabilillah headquarters provides direct evidence for a Sabilillah presence in Cisangkan Hilir. An undated later transcription of a letter from the Priangan Resident's Office, bearing the date 16 February 1946, refers to a NICA assault on Dhomiri's residence that day. By contrast, a retrospective narrative published in 2021 dates a major attack to 20 February and supplies a much fuller battle story.[4] Read alongside the retrospective accounts, these records support an interpretation of Dhomiri's local leadership and participation, but they do not justify treating every later institutional label, casualty total, or combat date as equally certain.

The article asks two connected questions. How did Dhomiri's education, preaching, and institutional work establish authority in Cimahi? How was that authority translated into practical participation in the defense of Indonesian independence? The reconstruction considers Dhomiri's decisions, the loyalty of

Baiturrohmah sebagai Wadah Syi'ar Islam di Cimahi Tahun 2014-2019" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2021); Lida Hida Umimi Thusadiyah, "Aktivitas Sosial Keagamaan Tarekat Tijaniyah di Masjid Baiturrohmah Cimahi Tahun 1985-2019" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2024); Febri Nugraha and Tarpin, "Sejarah Perjuangan Pendiri Masjid Baiturrokhmah Cimahi dalam Penyebaran Ajaran Islam Abad Ke-20 M," *Priangan* 2, no. 1 (2023): 52-71, https://doi.org/10.15575/priangan.v2i1.27978; Hendro Kartika Juniawan, Asep Achmad Hidayat, and Usman Supendi, "Perjuangan KH. Usman Dhomiri dalam Mempertahankan Kemerdekaan Indonesia di Cimahi Tahun 1938-1955," *Reslaj: Religion Education Social Laa Roiba Journal* 6, no. 7 (2024): 3352-3361, https://doi.org/10.47467/reslaj.v6i7.3776; Sulasman, "The Role of Hizbullah in the Time of Indonesian Revolution in Bandung, 1945-1946," SOSIOHUMANIKA: Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan 7, no. 1 (2014): 65-78.

[4] Markas Sabilillah Djawa Barat, membership certificate (Cimahi, January 1946), private/family collection.

students and followers, the labor of women who sustained the defended household, and the choices of local officials, alongside the opportunities created by the disintegration of successive colonial military regimes. Local history here does not miniaturize a national story. It reveals the intermediate institutions through which revolution became socially possible.

Method

This study follows the historical method: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. During the heuristic stage, the researcher collected written, oral, visual, and material sources. The principal written evidence includes an undated LVRI transcription made from a photocopy of a letter bearing the date 16 February 1946 and addressed by the Priangan Resident's Office in Bandung to KH Usman Dhomiri; a photographed membership certificate issued by the West Java Sabilillah headquarters in January 1946; Sukro Muhammad Arief's *Prahara Cimahi: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946*; newspaper reports; municipal archival publications; and relevant theses, books, and journal articles.[5] Oral material consists of interviews conducted with Raden Efendi, Dhomiri's grandson, on 6 December 2022, and Raden Singgih, his great-grandson, on 9 April 2024.[6] The material and visual sources used in the reconstruction include the Baiturrohmah Mosque, Dhomiri's grave, a Steyr-pattern rifle (associated in local memory with an arms cache), a robe linked to Dhomiri, family records, and reproductions of two documents from 1946. The reconstruction is limited to events and documentation that can be verified through available sources. While the investigation of various sources remains part of the research process, a distinction is made between the time a source was consulted and the time it was originally created. Testimonies obtained through interviews are understood as forms of family memory; furthermore, accessing a source during the research phase does not in itself prove that a digital reproduction of that source was previously available. Related articles published subsequently are treated as part of the publication history rather than as independent evidence for establishing historical facts.

External criticism addressed provenance, form, date, and physical condition. The Resident's letter survives here as a later typed LVRI transcription made from a photocopy, with an annotation explaining that the source was difficult to read. The transcription reproduces the date, addressee, and administrative wording attributed to the earlier letter; its own production date is unspecified. These features permit analysis of the transmitted text but cannot authenticate the original letter or make the transcription a physical document from 1946. The Sabilillah certificate survives in a photograph showing yellowed paper, republican-era orthography, an organizational stamp, a place and date, and an Arabic-script signature attributed to Usman Dhomiri. These characteristics are consistent with its stated date, although paper, ink,

[5] Nina Herlina, *Metode Sejarah*, rev. ed. (Bandung: Satya Historika, 2020), 1-30; Sulasman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah: Teori, Metode, dan Contoh Aplikasi* (2014).

[6] Fahim Mufti Lutfi, interview with Raden Efendi, grandson of KH Usman Dhomiri, December 6, 2022; Fahim Mufti Lutfi, interview with Raden Singgih, great-grandson of KH Usman Dhomiri, April 9, 2024.

handwriting, and provenance cannot be fully examined from a photograph alone. Arief's 2021 book is classified separately as an edited retrospective account drawing on participant testimony; the dates of the underlying recollections are not established by the edition's publication date.

Internal criticism compared what each source could actually establish. The Sabilillah certificate attests an individual's Sabilillah membership and records an address in Cisangkan Hilir, but it does not prove the militia's size, complete command structure, or battlefield activity. The transcribed letter reports administrative recognition of an assault on Dhomiri's house and expressions of condolence, but its uncertain transmission and incomplete text prevent a secure casualty total. Arief provides names, tactical movement, weapon descriptions, and a battle sequence, but the 2021 edition appeared about seventy-five years after the February 1946 events. This publication interval does not establish when the testimony was first recorded, but editorial mediation and uncertain recording dates require comparison rather than automatic acceptance. The interviews are indispensable for family memory and for acknowledging genealogical uncertainty; they cannot, by themselves, resolve events that occurred before the interviewees' direct experience. Secondary accounts are used to contextualize Tijaniyya transmission, mosque history, and Bandung's revolutionary organizations, not to override the certificate and the transmitted text of the letter.

The analysis draws on the concept of role to examine how social position shaped historically expected conduct.[7] The concept is used narrowly. Dhomiri's roles as *kiai*, Tijaniyya guide, teacher, household head, intermediary with officials, and militia leader are treated as situated practices, not as timeless personality traits. The sources suggest connections between these roles: spiritual authority sustained relations of trust; repeated gatherings enabled communication; religious and domestic spaces provided venues; and martial instruction offered discipline. Their contribution to defense is an interpretation of the reported activities, rather than a separately measured causal effect. This does not imply that the Tijaniyya order as a whole was a revolutionary army. It identifies how one local network was repurposed in a particular crisis.

Historiography, the final stage, organizes the compared source material chronologically and analytically. The Results section first reconstructs Dhomiri's formation and religious institution building, then follows the conversion of that infrastructure during the Japanese collapse and early Revolution, and finally traces the militia's dispersal and integration into republican forces. The Discussion separates evidentiary findings from interpretation, evaluates inconsistencies, and places the case within the historiography of *kiai*, Sufi networks, and local revolution. Where the sources conflict, the narrative preserves degrees of certainty rather than manufacturing a single seamless chronology.

[7] Sarlito Wirawan Sarwono, *Teori-Teori Psikologi Sosial* (Depok: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2019), 215.

Results

Religious Formation and the Construction of Local Authority

Family and local historiographical accounts place Usman Dhomiri's birth in Kampung Arab, Indramayu, in 1870. It identifies his father as Rubayya bin Allatas, also known as Mbah Rubayya, and describes his mother as descended from the Mataram line of Amangkurat. Raden Singgih's interview, however, acknowledges that a complete genealogy has not been found because family branches are geographically dispersed and documentation is limited.[8] The birthplace is also disputed: both Nugraha and Tarpin's 2023 article and Juniawan, Hidayat, and Supendi's 2024 article identify Hadramaut.[9] Repetition of Indramayu within accounts derived from the same project does not constitute independent corroboration. The birthplace and complete genealogy therefore remain unresolved on the available evidence.

Dhomiri's early religious education reportedly began within the family and expanded through study of Qur'anic recitation, Arabic grammar, jurisprudence, theology, exegesis, and Sufism. Later accounts place him in several pesantren, including Tebuireng, and describe journeys through Madura, Palembang, and the Hijaz. The available sources do not establish a reliable itinerary or exact dates for each institution. The defensible historical point is that his authority in Cimahi was remembered as grounded in wide learning rather than in a single school. A 2020 description of his written work provides a different form of evidence. It dates the composition of *Al-Siraj al-Munir fi Maslak al-I'tiqad* to 1344 AH/1926 and its printing in Garut to 1347 AH/1929, and describes its treatment of belief and Sufi moral instruction. This reported publication before the period of armed struggle suggests that Dhomiri's intellectual reputation had a textual as well as personal foundation.[10]

His association with the Tijaniyya order gave that authority a translocal structure. Sources identify Shaykh Ali ibn Abdullah al-Tayyib as the figure through whom Dhomiri received Tijaniyya authorization and describe a period of further study in the Hijaz. Details of the journey vary, including imprecise movement between Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, and should not be forced into a false itinerary. More firmly documented is the order's arrival in West Java by the late 1920s and its development through figures and centers in Cirebon, Garut,

[8] Fahim Mufti Lutfi, interview with Raden Singgih, great-grandson of KH Usman Dhomiri, April 9, 2024; Febri Nugraha and Tarpin, "Sejarah Perjuangan Pendiri Masjid Baiturrokhmah Cimahi dalam Penyebaran Ajaran Islam Abad Ke-20 M," Priangan 2, no. 1 (2023): 58. The latter source identifies Hadramaut, not Indramayu, as the birthplace.

[9] Hendro Kartika Juniawan, Asep Achmad Hidayat, and Usman Supendi, "Perjuangan KH. Usman Dhomiri dalam Mempertahankan Kemerdekaan Indonesia di Cimahi Tahun 1938-1955," Reslaj: Religion Education Social Laa Roiba Journal 6, no. 7 (2024): 3352-3354.

[10] Ahmad Ginanjar Sya'ban, "Kitab 'Al-Siraj al-Munir' Karya KH Utsman Dhomiri Cimahi," NU Online Jabar, October 28, 2020, https://jabar.nu.or.id/kelembagaan/kitab-al-sir-j-al-mun-r-karya-kh-utsman-dhomiri-cimahi-pE7Ko, accessed December 20, 2024, Deden Wahyudin, "Peranan KH. Usman Dhomiri dalam Pengembangan Tarekat Tijaniyah di Cimahi Jawa Barat (1930-1955)" (Universitas Padjadjaran, 2010), 23-27.

Tasikmalaya, Bandung, and Cimahi.[11] Dhomiri's position in this network enabled him to authorize or cultivate teachers and preachers whose reach exceeded his immediate neighborhood.

Settlement in Cimahi required adaptation to a specific social environment. According to Wahyudin's reconstruction, Dhomiri judged that a conventional residential pesantren would not be the most effective entry into a community strongly associated with *maen po*, Sundanese martial arts. He therefore taught martial skills learned during his travels and incorporated religious instruction into the opening and discipline of the lessons.[12] The claim rests largely on retrospective accounts, and suggests a possible connection between religious instruction and later recruitment, without providing a roster linking martial-arts students to militia members. In this reconstruction, martial instruction provided repeated embodied practice, a teacher-student hierarchy, and a pool of men accustomed to collective discipline. It also allowed religious teaching to enter through a respected local cultural form.

Before the Second World War, Dhomiri led a non-residential study circle west of the Cimahi military camp, near what later became Lapangan Sriwijaya. Known as the Gunung Bohong study circle and located in Cisangkan Hilir, Babakan Sukasantri, it drew young people and adults from the neighborhood and beyond. Arief records contact between this circle and R.A.A. Wiranatakusumah, whom he identifies by the title Regent of Bandung.[13] The relationship would later matter because the request to form a fighting body after independence was also remembered as coming from the regent. This account presents the study circle as more than a congregation of disciples, linking local religious authority to a regional administrative figure and creating a place where messages, requests, and personnel could converge.

Later histories date the construction of the Baiturrohmah Mosque to 1938 and describe its land as *waqf*. The mosque gave these religious relationships a built institutional center. The site is recorded as covering approximately 2,210 square meters, with a building area of 375 square meters, although a later article provides a slightly different land measurement. The reported construction year is not independently established here as the date of administrative foundation or waqf registration. The differing land measurements cannot be resolved from the supplied records or projected onto the site's earlier dimensions. The accounts consistently associate the Padasuka mosque with Dhomiri's family and Tijaniyya activities.[14]

[11] Ikyan Badruzzaman, *Syeikh Ahmad Al-Tijani dan Thariqat Tijaniyah di Indonesia*, ed. Miftah S. (Garut: Zawiyah Thariqat Tijaniyah Garut, 2007), 111-139; Ahmad Faiz Rofi'i, "Perkembangan Tarekat Tijaniyah dan Kondisi Sosial Keagamaan di Bandung Tahun 1980-2004" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2018), 69-70; Yulfiana Fatimah, "Masjid Baiturrohmah sebagai Wadah Syi'ar Islam di Cimahi Tahun 2014-2019" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2021), 45-46.

[12] Deden Wahyudin, "Peranan KH. Usman Dhomiri dalam Pengembangan Tarekat Tijaniyah di Cimahi Jawa Barat (1930-1955)" (Universitas Padjadjaran, 2010), 18-20.

[13] Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 128-129.

[14] Lida Hida Umimi Thusadiyah, "Aktivitas Sosial Keagamaan Tarekat Tijaniyah di Masjid Baiturrohmah Cimahi Tahun 1985-2019" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2024), 51; Yulfiana Fatimah, "Masjid Baiturrohmah sebagai Wadah Syi'ar Islam di Cimahi Tahun 2014-2019" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2021), 42-43; Febri Nugraha and Tarpin, "Sejarah Perjuangan Pendiri Masjid

Friday gatherings reportedly continued after congregational prayer until the late afternoon and attracted participants from outside Cimahi. The mosque expanded the scale and regularity of interaction: it provided a recognized religious center, a venue for teaching, and a material focus for a community that could survive the absence of a boarding school.

The accounts of the prewar period thus emphasize institutional resources: a household and study-circle compound in Cisangkan Hilir; the Baiturrohmah Mosque; a reputation as an author and Sufi guide; relations with students and regional teachers; experience adapting instruction to martial culture; and contact with the Bandung regency's leadership. None of these elements proves a prewar plan for rebellion. Taken together, they suggest an infrastructure of trust capable of acquiring new functions when colonial military control fractured.

From Imperial Collapse to Revolutionary Mobilization

The Japanese invasion transformed Cimahi's military environment. After Dutch forces capitulated in March 1942, units associated with the colonial garrison disintegrated or abandoned equipment. Arief's account lists infantry, armored cavalry, horse cavalry, engineering troops, and an Australian battalion among forces connected to the Cimahi camp. Residents near Gunung Bohong reportedly recovered seven long Steyr carbines left near the western end of a field and delivered them to Dhomiri's study-circle compound, where they were hidden in a well.[15] The model designation varies between the text and image caption, while the surviving photograph alone cannot establish that the weapon shown was among the seven. The wider disorganization of the Dutch-Japanese transition makes abandoned equipment historically plausible, but does not independently corroborate the recovery of these particular weapons.[16]

The reported decision to conceal the weapons rather than display or immediately use them is historically significant. It suggests that the study-circle household was considered secure and that Dhomiri was trusted to control potentially dangerous matériel. The weapons' later recovery also connected the 1942 transition to the 1945 Revolution without implying continuous armed activity in the intervening years. In Arief's narrative, the religious household functioned as a place of custody; the account suggests trust in Dhomiri without independently documenting the storage episode.

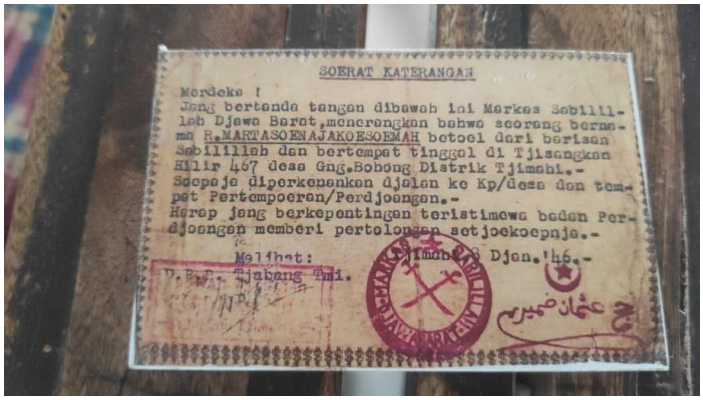
After the proclamation of 17 August 1945, the return of Allied and NICA forces sharpened the threat to Bandung and Cimahi. Arief states that Wiranatakusumah, identified in his account as the regent, urged Dhomiri to form a *Fisabilillah* fighting body. In the same account, Dhomiri established its headquarters at the study circle and residence, and recruits included his students from beyond Gunung Bohong,

Baiturrokhmah Cimahi dalam Penyebaran Ajaran Islam Abad Ke-20 M," Priangan 2, no. 1 (2023): 58, 61, 66.

[15] Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 130-131.

[16] M. C. Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2008* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2008).

among them Haji Zakaria from Buahbatu, Ustadz Emed from Gunung Halu, and Ustadz Anda from the Cililin area.[17] The formation is likewise identified as Hizbullah in the study and several subsequent publications. The precise date of this request and Wiranatakusumah's office at that time are not established here. The differing labels require comparison with the certificate rather than automatic identification of these formations.


SOERAT KETERANGAN

Merdeka !

Jang bertanda tangan dibawah ini Markas Sabilillah Djawa Barat, menerangkan bahwa seorang bernama R.MARTASOENAJAKOESOEMAH betoel dari bersan Sabilillah dan bertempat tinggal di Tjisangkan Hilir 467 desa Gng.Bohong Distrik Tjimahi.-

Soepaja diperkenankan djalan ke Kp/desa dan tempat Pertempoeran/Perdjoangan.-

Harap jang berkepentingan teristimewa badan Perdjoangan memberi pertolongan setjoekoepnja.-

Tjimahi, 8 Djan. '46.-

Meldhat:

P. P. T. Tjabang Tmi.

Figure 1 Membership certificate issued by the West Java Sabilillah Headquarters, Cimahi, January 1946.

The certificate reproduced as Figure 1 begins with "Merdeka!" and identifies its issuer as *Markas Sabilillah Djawa Barat*. It certifies an individual as belonging to the Sabilillah ranks and records an address in Cisangkan Hilir, Cimahi. Dated January 1946, it bears a round organizational stamp and a signature in Arabic script. The document does not settle how Dhomiri's group related to the better-known Hizbullah formations in Bandung, but it makes Sabilillah the most secure contemporaneous label for at least part of his local organization.[18] Sulasman's reconstruction shows that Bandung-area Hizbullah groups developed through multiple local initiatives before later consolidation; this context makes organizational overlap possible, but does not resolve whether the varying names in Dhomiri's case reflect actual affiliations or later conflation.[19] The two names may reflect affiliation, transition, overlapping membership, or later conflation. The surviving evidence does not permit a more definite conclusion.

Arief reports that the hidden weapons were recovered and repaired after independence and that Saring, a retired KNIL sergeant associated with Dhomiri's study circle, trained the fighters. According to Arief, one hunting rifle and the seven old carbines were used to teach aiming, firing theory, weapon mechanisms, attack, and defense. The carbines had deteriorated during storage but were eventually made usable.[20] This training reveals another conversion of roles. A former colonial soldier transferred technical knowledge to a religiously organized militia, while weapons

[17] Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 128-129.

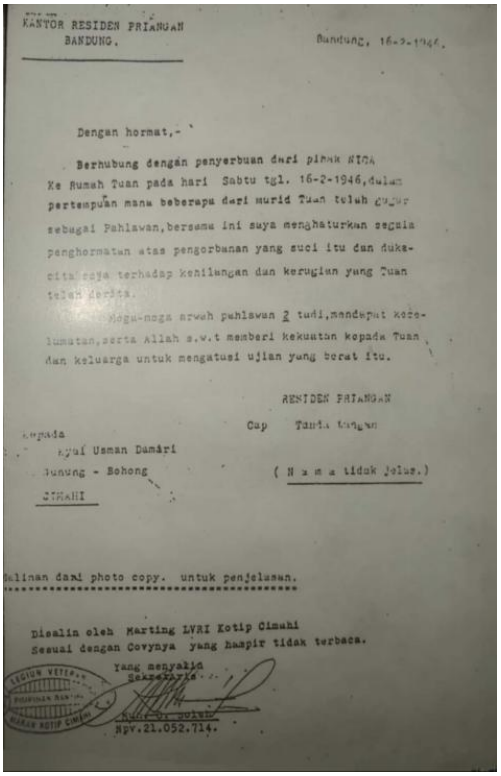
[18] Markas Sabilillah Djawa Barat, membership certificate (Cimahi, January 1946), private/family collection.

[19] Sulasman, "The Role of Hizbullah in the Time of Indonesian Revolution in Bandung, 1945-1946," SOSIOHUMANIKA: Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan 7, no. 1 (2014): 67-75.

[20] Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 131-132.

reportedly recovered during the collapse of colonial military control became tools of republican defense. The group remained poorly equipped, but its military capacity was not wholly improvised.

The precise chronology of the subsequent battle is contested. The later transcription of the Priangan Resident's letter bears the date 16 February 1946 and explicitly refers to a NICA assault on Dhomiri's house on Saturday, 16 February. It conveys condolence and respect for sacrifice and loss. The transmitted text leaves portions incomplete, so the letter cannot sustain a precise reconstruction of the number killed. Arief, by contrast, dates a large three-direction attack on the Cisangkan Hilir headquarters to 20 February at approximately 06:00.[21] Rather than changing one date to fit the other, both dates are retained as an unresolved source conflict. Separate engagements and a mistaken date remain possibilities, but neither is established; the original letter or another independently dated record is needed for confirmation.



KANTOR RESIDEN PRIANGAN
BANDUNG.

Bandung, 16-2-1946.

Dengan hormat,-

Berhubung dengan penyerbuan dari pihak NICA
Ke Rumah Tuan pada hari Sabtu tgl. 16-2-1946,dalam
pertempuran mana beberapa dari murid Tuan telah gugur
sebagai Pahlawan,bersama ini saya menghaturkan segala
penghormatan atas pengorbanan yang suci itu dan duka-
cita saya terhadap kehilangan dan kerugian yang Tuan
telah derita.
Moga-moga arwah pahlawan 2 tadi,mendapat kete-
lumutan,serta Allah s.w.t memberi kekuatan kepada Tuan
dan keluarga untuk mengatasi ujian yang berat itu.

RESIDEN PRIANGAN

Cap Tanda tangan

Kepada
Kjai Usman Dumiri
Dunung - Bohong
CIMAHI

(N a m a tidak jelas.)

Salinan dari photo copy. untuk penjelasan.

Disalin oleh Marting LVRI Kotip Cimahi
Sesuai dengan Covynya yang hampir tidak terbaca.
Yang menyalin
Sekretaris

Nrp.21.052.714.

Figure 2 Undated later LVRI transcription of a letter from the Office of the Resident of Priangan, Bandung, to KH Usman Dhomiri, bearing the date 16 February 1946, expressing condolence after a NICA assault on his residence.

Arief's detailed battle narrative remains valuable when treated as retrospective testimony. He describes enemy movement from the north of Lapangan Sriwijaya and along the Cibeber road, attacks on forward posts, mortar fire, and close defense of the house. His account reports fighters killed at the posts and around the headquarters.

[21] Office of the Resident of Priangan, letter to KH Usman Dhomiri bearing the date February 16, 1946 (Bandung), transmitted in an undated later LVRI transcription made from a photocopy, private/family collection; Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 131-142. The letter's transmitted date is February 16; the battle account gives February 20.

The names reported include Emed, Anda, Uro, Amir, Engko, Sukria, Idjromi, Ahmad, Haji Zakaria, Moh. Toha, and an unidentified fighter from the Gedebage-Rancaekek area; other sources give totals of nine or ten and sometimes classify the men as Hizbullah rather than Sabilillah.[22] The divergence makes an aggregate number less secure than the evidence for multiple fatalities.

Arief describes a defended household that included women and children as well as fighters. Dhomiri's daughters, Ny. Rd. Titing and Ny. Rd. Entang, and other young women supplied ammunition when defenders ran short and treated the wounded. Titing herself was injured by a mortar fragment. Other women calmed children sheltering inside.[23] This evidence complicates a male-centered militia narrative. The household was simultaneously a command post, refuge, medical space, and family residence. Its defense depended on gendered labor that later commemorative descriptions often reduce to assistance, although ammunition supply and casualty care were indispensable to continued resistance.

One episode remembered in detail concerns a NICA soldier who entered through the kitchen carrying a Sten gun. Akhmad Sudiono reportedly shot him with a modified hunting cartridge; the soldier's weapon fell inside and was captured. A light machine gun carried by Memed Wiranatakusumah, described by Arief as the regent's son and an emissary of Bandung's fighter leadership, jammed during the encounter. The enemy withdrew later that day.[24] The story contains technical detail characteristic of participant memory, but it also acquired spiritual interpretation. Some residents attributed the withdrawal to the extraordinary sound of the modified cartridge, others to a bell recalling enemy troops, and others to Dhomiri's piety and supernatural protection. Arief records these explanations as post-battle discussion. Historically, their coexistence is more revealing than choosing one as fact: the retrospective narrative preserves competing tactical, administrative, and sacred explanations, without independently dating their emergence.

The transcribed Resident's letter reports an administrative response to the assault dated 16 February. It does not independently corroborate every episode in Arief's narrative of the engagement dated 20 February or establish that both sources describe the same encounter. The Wiranatakusumah family appears in Arief's recruitment and battle narratives, suggesting links with wider republican coordination; these references within one account are not separate corroborating sources.

[22] Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 131-142; Febri Nugraha and Tarpin, "Sejarah Perjuangan Pendiri Masjid Baiturrokhmah Cimahi dalam Penyebaran Ajaran Islam Abad Ke-20 M," Priangan 2, no. 1 (2023): 68-69; Yulfiana Fatimah, "Masjid Baiturrohmah sebagai Wadah Syi'ar Islam di Cimahi Tahun 2014-2019" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2021), 74-76.

[23] Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 137-140.

[24] Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 139-142.

Withdrawal, Military Integration, and the End of the Armed Phase

The February fighting did not end the Cimahi front. Sulasman places Dhomiri's unit among formations coordinating operations toward Andir, including the Pasukan Banteng Republik Indonesia, army battalions described in that source as TKR, and Hizbullah units. He dates the coordinated effort to disrupt enemy convoys from Cimahi toward the airfield to 20 March 1946; this does not establish Dhomiri's personal attendance at a meeting on that date.[25] By late March, mortar and artillery fire had damaged or burned neighborhoods across Cimahi, while republican fighters attempted a broader attack after the destruction of Bandung. Enemy tanks, automatic weapons, mortars, and artillery eventually made the local positions untenable. Fighters and civilians withdrew along several routes toward Cililin and Garut.

Members of Dhomiri's formation divided during the retreat. A group associated with Titing and Entang moved north through central Cimahi before continuing toward Cimareme, Cililin, and Garut. Armed members joined other troops through Cibeber and Cangkorah. Arief states that Dhomiri then relinquished direct command and urged his fighters to enter the Tentara Republik Indonesia (TRI), bringing their weapons with them.[26] This reported decision suggests a transition from local militia autonomy toward the centralization of republican armed force. The account does not supply a dated resignation order or a complete roster of transfers. The strongest narrative coverage concerns 1945-1946; it cannot establish an unchanged command through 1950.

Arief's account of Dhomiri's son Hasan Suyono illustrates the reported transition. Wounded in the right leg by a mortar fragment during the Cisangkan fighting, Hasan later entered the republican army and participated in the Siliwangi Division's movements, including the return journey widely remembered as the Long March. His retirement at the rank of sergeant major due to a persistent injury is dated to 1975, an event that falls outside the article's primary period of analysis.[27] The trajectory from a household-based militia to the regular army connected local religious mobilization to state military formation without erasing the distinctive network from which the fighters had emerged.

The sources describe Dhomiri's return to Tijaniyya teaching after relinquishing command, but do not provide a continuous chronology of his activities between the retreat and 1950. His death in 1955 is also documented, placing it within the

[25] Sulasman, "The Role of Hizbullah in the Time of Indonesian Revolution in Bandung, 1945-1946," SOSIOHUMANIKA: Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan 7, no. 1 (2014): 75; Sukro Muhammad Arief, Prahara Cimahi: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 143-144. Sulasman includes Usman Damiri's unit in coordinated operations and dates convoy disruption to March 20; this does not establish his personal attendance at a meeting on that day.

[26] Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 143-144; Dian Eka Fitriani, *Citra Kota Cimahi dalam Arsip*, ed. R. Suryagung Sudibyo Putro (Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2023), 32.

[27] Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 143-144. this later biographical episode is outside the period 1930-1950.

biographical epilogue rather than the period examined in this analysis. The reported reorientation toward religious and social work suggests continuity of public influence, while leaving the timing and extent of each institution's postwar activities incompletely documented.

Discussion

Religious Infrastructure as Revolutionary Capacity

The compared accounts support a sequential interpretation of Dhomiri's role. His armed leadership cannot be understood independently of the institutions built before 1945. The martial-arts circle translated religious instruction into a culturally legible practice; the Gunung Bohong study circle generated repeated contact; the Baiturrohmah Mosque stabilized gatherings in a recognized place; Tijaniyya relations extended loyalty beyond the immediate neighborhood; and contact with the Bandung regent connected this social base to regional politics. In the retrospective reconstruction, the network provided personnel, communication, discipline, shelter, and authority. This interpretation locates mobilization in social relationships as well as doctrine. It does not establish that the Padasuka mosque and the Cisangkan Hilir household occupied one physical compound.

This interpretation refines scholarship on the *kiai* as both religious and social leader. Hiroko Horikoshi emphasized that a *kiai* could mediate social change rather than merely preserve tradition, while Zamakhsyari Dhofier and Martin van Bruinessen demonstrated how pesantren and Sufi relations formed durable communities of learning and allegiance.[28] Dhomiri's case adds two qualifications. First, the sources emphasize a non-residential study circle and mosque rather than a conventional pesantren. Second, Tijaniyya affiliation did not automatically create militancy. Political capacity arose because spiritual relationships intersected with martial culture, local administration, military collapse, and the emergency of NICA's return.

Role theory helps specify the mechanism. Social actors expected Dhomiri to teach, guide, protect, and arbitrate. In 1945 those expectations expanded: a trusted guide could be asked to form a fighting body, hold weapons, and command defense. The roles were compatible because they rested on the same recognized authority, yet they were not identical. His reported decision to relinquish command and direct followers into the TRI illustrates another adjustment to institutional change. The narrative thus suggests a partial transfer of authority toward republican military structures, whose extent is not independently established by personnel records.

The periodization from 1930 to 1950 frames three phases reconstructed with unequal levels of evidence. The 1930s were dominated by religious consolidation and spatial institution building. The crisis from 1942 to 1945 created access to abandoned

[28] Hiroko Horikoshi, *Kyai dan Perubahan Sosial* (Jakarta: P3M, 1987); Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011); Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, dan Tarekat: Tradisi-Tradisi Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995).

military resources and transformed the political meaning of local trust. The Revolution of 1945-1946 converted the network into a militia and logistical base, followed in Arief's account by the transfer of armed functions toward the TRI. This chronology avoids the teleological claim that every prewar activity was secretly preparation for independence. It also avoids the opposite mistake of treating the militia as a spontaneous reaction with no organizational prehistory. The sources are considerably thinner for 1946-1950, and the endpoint denotes the scope of analysis rather than a documented date of dissolution or completion.

What the Sources Permit, and What They Do Not

The most important historiographical result is not a new heroic detail but a disciplined limit on certainty. Table 1 summarizes the central evidence and its constraints.

Table 1. Evidentiary hierarchy for Dhomiri's revolutionary organization and the February 1946 fighting

Evidence	Historically supported proposition	Evidentiary limitation
West Java Sabilillah Headquarters certificate, January 1946	The certificate attests an individual's Sabilillah membership and an address in Cisangkan Hilir, with a signature attributed to Dhomiri.	Does not establish total membership, full command hierarchy, or identity with Hizbullah. Authentication is based on a photograph, not forensic examination.
Undated LVRI transcription of a Priangan Resident's Office letter bearing the date 16 February 1946	The transmitted text reports administrative recognition of an assault on Dhomiri's residence and expressions of condolence.	Original letter not examined; the later transcription is incomplete and its production date unspecified. It cannot securely establish casualty totals or resolve the battle dates.
Arief, *Prahara Cimahi* (2021)	Supplies a detailed narrative of weapons, training, a three-direction assault dated 20 February, named participants, casualties, retreat, and integration into republican forces.	Retrospective and editorially mediated; date and totals diverge from other evidence.
Later theses, articles, newspapers, and family memory	Preserve the significance of the mosque, religious network, militia, and local commemoration.	These sources differ in date and provenance. Family recollection and later publication do not independently verify events

		before the informants' experience; the related 2025 article provides publication history only.

The organizational problem is especially consequential. Calling Dhomiri commander of "Hizbullah and Sabilillah" may be a convenient summary, but it implies a settled dual structure that the documents do not demonstrate. The January certificate securely supports Sabilillah. Secondary accounts use Hizbullah, and the broader Bandung context makes interaction with Hizbullah formations plausible. Sulasman's study indicates that local Hizbullah initiatives could arise with limited central direction before later consolidation.[29] Read together, the certificate and retrospective accounts are consistent with local Sabilillah involvement under Dhomiri's leadership, while later sources also associate him with Hizbullah. They do not establish the precise organizational relationship between these labels. The available evidence does not substantiate the claim that he commanded all Hizbullah forces in West Java.

The date problem requires the same restraint. The text transmitted in Figure 2 reports an assault on 16 February 1946; Arief narrates a major attack on 20 February. Whether these were separate actions or differently dated accounts of one encounter remains unverified. The article therefore retains both. This method is preferable to harmonization because the disagreement itself reveals how administrative record, participant narrative, and commemorative memory were produced for different purposes.

Casualty figures are still less stable. The later transcription of the Resident's letter is incomplete, Arief provides a list whose implied total differs from secondary summaries, and later accounts refer to nine, ten, or more dead. The compared accounts report multiple defenders killed. Arief's list preserves reported names, but does not resolve the differing totals. The same principle applies to militia strength. One secondary account estimates approximately sixty-five fighters, while Arief speaks more generally of dozens. These estimates suggest a local formation, but cannot establish its precise strength or complete membership.

Agency Beyond the Leader

An exclusive focus on Dhomiri risks reproducing charismatic memory at the expense of collective action. Arief's narrative attributes the network's operation to several actors, rather than to Dhomiri alone. Saring converted KNIL expertise into militia training. Local residents recovered and entrusted weapons. Named students traveled from Buahbatu, Gunung Halu, Cililin, Gedebage, and other places. Memed Wiranatakusumah linked the defended compound to Bandung's fighter leadership. Dhomiri's daughters and other women carried ammunition, treated wounds, and maintained shelter under fire. Hasan Suyono carried the network's military

[29] Sulasman, "The Role of Hizbullah in the Time of Indonesian Revolution in Bandung, 1945-1946," SOSIOHUMANIKA: Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan 7, no. 1 (2014): 67-75.

participation into the republican army. These reported activities suggest how participants extended Dhomiri's authority in practice, without representing the responses of the entire community.

The women's participation is particularly important for interpreting the study-circle household. Conventional categories divide "combat" from "support," but in a besieged residence the distinction was porous. Ammunition supply determined whether defenders could continue firing; first aid determined whether wounded fighters survived; care for children allowed the household to remain functional. The source does not allow reconstruction of every woman's biography, but Arief's account places women within the remembered event rather than outside it. Local revolutionary history becomes more accurate when the defended household is analyzed as an operational unit, not merely as the commander's private background.

Nor should sacred memory be dismissed as evidence of irrationality. Stories that enemy shells failed to explode near the mosque or that Dhomiri's spiritual power caused a retreat cannot be verified as battlefield mechanisms.[30] They preserve interpretations attributed to followers in later narratives. Fighters with old carbines facing mortars, automatic weapons, and trained troops required a moral language that made sacrifice intelligible. The stories link spiritual authority to endurance in local memory, without measuring its effect on battlefield conduct or supplying a tactical explanation.

Local History and the Historiography of Independence

Dhomiri's case places Cimahi within, rather than at the margin of, the Revolution. The town's colonial garrison produced both danger and opportunity: it made Cimahi a target for Allied-NICA control, left military matériel within reach, and positioned local fighters along the route between Cimahi and Andir. The microhistory of seven damaged rifles, a well, a study-circle household, and a stamped membership card illuminates processes often hidden by national narratives. In this case, the reported transfer of weapons, personnel, and legitimacy from improvised local formations into the republican army connects local mobilization with state formation.

At the same time, the case limits romantic accounts of seamless unity. The sources preserve varying organizational labels within a wider process of republican military consolidation; these differences may reflect changing affiliations, retrospective conflation, or both. The formation around Dhomiri was neither simply "traditional" nor fully "modern." The reconstruction brings together Sufi hierarchy, Sundanese martial practice, a mosque, a former KNIL instructor, an administrative patron, family labor, and republican military integration. That hybridity was not a weakness. It suggests how several forms of authority could intersect in local revolutionary mobilization.

[30] Febri Nugraha and Tarpin, "Sejarah Perjuangan Pendiri Masjid Baiturrokhmah Cimahi dalam Penyebaran Ajaran Islam Abad Ke-20 M," Priangan 2, no. 1 (2023): 61-62; Sukro Muhammad Arief, *Prahara Cimahi*: Pelaku dan Peristiwa 30 Oktober 1945-28 Maret 1946, ed. Andrias Arifin (Bandung: Katarsis Book, 2021), 140-142.

The article's novelty consequently lies less in asserting that a *kiai* fought colonialism, a well-established theme, than in explaining the conversion of religious relations into wartime capacity and in ranking the evidence for that conversion. Dhomiri's importance becomes clearer, not smaller, when exaggerated claims are removed. The certificate attests an individual's Sabilillah membership; the transcribed letter reports an attack on Dhomiri's house and loss among its defenders. The accounts of weapons storage, repair, retreat, and military integration derive chiefly from Arief's retrospective narrative and carry a different evidentiary weight. They do not require the historian to transform him into the uncontested commander of every Islamic militia in West Java.

Conclusion

KH Usman Dhomiri's contribution to Indonesian independence in Cimahi developed through an accumulation of roles rather than a single act of armed heroism. His learning, authorship, Tijaniyya leadership, martial-arts teaching, Gunung Bohong study circle, and establishment of the Baiturrohmah Mosque are interpreted here as foundations of a local infrastructure of trust. Retrospective accounts describe its use after 1945 for recruitment, storage, training, shelter, care, and command for local resistance. The surviving accounts concentrate the armed phase in the crisis of 1945-1946 and describe its narrowing when Dhomiri encouraged his followers to join the TRI, without establishing a complete chronology through 1950.

The source-critical reconstruction also changes the terms of the claim. A January 1946 certificate directly supports the presence of Sabilillah in Cisangkan Hilir, while later sources frequently use Hizbullah. The later transcription of the Priangan Resident's letter reports a NICA assault on Dhomiri's residence on 16 February, whereas Arief's retrospective account dates a major engagement to 20 February. These differences cannot be responsibly erased. Preserving them distinguishes the certificate, the transmitted administrative text, and retrospective testimony and makes the article's contribution to local historiography more credible.

Dhomiri is best understood as a religious broker who translated moral authority into collective capacity at a moment of institutional collapse. His agency was inseparable from the students, family members, former soldiers, officials, women, and neighborhood residents who activated the network. The case suggests how one local religious network built before the emergency could be repurposed for resistance. Cimahi's history thus broadens the national narrative: independence was defended not only by formal armies and national leaders, but also by religious communities capable of converting everyday association into organized resistance.

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