

YAMIN'S SOCIOCULTURAL AND MYTHICAL CREATION OF COLONIZED INDONESIA BY THE DUTCH FOR 350 YEARS

A CRIAÇÃO SÓCIO-CULTURAL E MÍTICA DE YAMIN DA INDONÉSIA COLONIZADA PELOS HOLANDESES POR 350 ANOS

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Resumo: O objetivo desta pesquisa é conhecer os aspectos socioculturais de Muhammad Yamin no processo de construção do mito de 350 anos de colonização da Indonésia pelos holandeses. Esta pesquisa utiliza uma abordagem qualitativa descritiva e também uma abordagem sociocultural de Kuntowijoyo. Os dados foram coletados por meio do estudo de literatura, análise de documentos, dos resultados do primeiro congresso nacional de história em 1957 e de perfis e manuscritos acadêmicos de M. Yamin. Os resultados mostram que o mito de 350 anos de colonização da Indonésia pelos colonialistas holandeses foi deliberadamente criado em 1936, com o objetivo de enfraquecer o espírito de luta e a unidade do povo indonésio. Em seguida, o mito foi adotado por M. Yamin, com um objetivo diferente, ou seja, fomentar um espírito combativo de nacionalismo, patriotismo e unidade do povo indonésio durante o período colonial. Ao cabo, a versão de Yamin da filosofia da história começou a ser revisada por historiadores críticos. O mito de 350 anos de colonização holandesa da Indonésia foi estudado por G.J Resink em 1968, sendo dissipado com sucesso e finalmente aceito como um novo fato histórico em 2012.

Palavras-chave: Muhammad Yamin; colonialistas holandeses; mitos históricos; historiografia indonésia

Abstract: This research aims to assess Muhammad Yamin's sociocultural aspects in the process of developing the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia myth. Descriptive qualitative research and Kuntowijoyo's socio-cultural approach were used. A bibliographic search, document analysis, and data from the 1957 first national history congress, and M. Yamin's profiles and academic manuscripts were used. Our results show that the myth of the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia was deliberately created in 1936 to weaken the fighting spirit and unity of the Indonesian people. Then, M. Yamin adopted the myth to foster a fighting spirit of nationalism, patriotism, and unity in the Indonesian people during the colonial period. Critical historians eventually began to challenge Yamin's version of philosophy of history. Moreover, G.J. Resink, in 1968, studied the myth of the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia, successfully dispelling it. Finally, Indonesia accepted Resink and other researchers' findings as a new historical fact in 2012.

Keywords: Muhammad Yamin; Dutch colonialists; historical myths; Indonesian historiography

Introduction

Currently, the literature shows new historical facts on the length of the Dutch colonization in Indonesia. All historians in Indonesia currently agree that Indonesia was not colonized by the Dutch for 350 years.³ However, for decades, Indonesian historiography

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³ The idea that the Dutch had colonized Indonesia for 350 years begins with Bonifacius Cornelis de Jonge, the 63rd Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies (from September 12, 1931 to September 16, 1936). He addressed the Batavian public in 1935, and said: "Als ik met nationalisten praat, begin ik altijd met de zin: Wij Nederlanders zijn hier al 300 jaar geweest en we zullen nóg minstens 300 jaar blijven. Daarna kunnen we praten." "When I talk to nationalists, I always start with the sentence: We, Dutch, have been here for 300 years and will be for at least another 300. Then, we can talk."

had stated that the Dutch had colonized Indonesia for 350 years (Anju Hasudungan, 2021). How did the process of forming historical myths about the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia occur?⁴ This became a historical fact which received relative acceptance for a long time, until historians began to rewrite the history of Indonesia after the Reformation on May 21, 1998, discovering new historical facts which showed that the length of Dutch colonization in Indonesia was a myth (Gertrudes Resink, 2012).

The syllabus for the Indonesian History course in grade XI of senior high schools contains topics on the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company - VOC) trade between 1602 and 1799 and on the Dutch Colonial rule between 1800 and 1942, contained in three Basic Competencies (KD, *Kompetensi Dasar*) at once (Asyrul Fikri & Hasudungan, 2021); namely, Basic Competence 3.1, analyzing changes and continuity in historical events from the foreign colonial period to the proclamation of Indonesian independence; Basic Competence 3.2, discussing the entry and development of Western colonialism (Portuguese, Dutch, and British) in Indonesia; and Basic Competence 3.3, assessing the strategy of the Indonesian people's resistance to Western colonialism before and after the 20th century.⁵

This means that the narrative of the VOC and Dutch Colonial eras is a serious topic which students must understand. However, they internalized the historical narrative of the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia, a historical lie (Hasudungan, 2021). Why did that happen? Who is the intellectual figure who deliberately raised and used this historical narrative? For what purpose? This study uses the Kuntowijoyo method to examine Muhammad Yamin's sociocultural in the emergence and use of narratives about 350 years of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia. Muhammad Yamin an intellectual figure (literature, history, culture, and law expert and former Minister of Education and Culture between July 30, 1953 and August 12, 1955) in the context of the emergence and use of narratives about the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia.

What is the main purpose behind teaching and disseminating, from early independence to the present, thoughts/knowledge revolving around the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia? Even when Indonesian historians agree that the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia is a myth, we still find people who use it a historical fact.⁶

⁴ For the Dutch, the arrival of Cornelis De Houtman on June 27, 1596 in Banten and the founding of the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (the Dutch East India Company - VOC) on March 20, 1602 were the beginning of their colonialism. It ended in 1949, when the Dutch-Indonesian Round Table Conference was signed. If calculated, it is true that the Dutch have colonized Indonesia for 353 years.

⁵ Before the Reformation on May 21, 1998, which overthrew dictator Suharto (who had been in power since 1967), Indonesian historiography was still militaristic, uncritical, and, in some aspects, far from scientific evidence. This is evident in military figures and physical struggle against invaders dominating school history textbooks. Glorifying this struggle and eliminating the role of other figures became a habit in historical textbooks during the Suharto regime (*New Order*).

⁶ The arrival of the Dutch in 1596, led by Cornelis De Houtman, at the port of Banten began the attrition between the Dutch and the people in the archipelago. However, the coastal residents of Banten eventually expelled the Dutch for their rude and arrogant attitude. Meanwhile, the VOC was only a trading partnership and not a state.

It seems that the political elites in Indonesia still maintain what is ingrained in the minds of the Indonesian people for political purposes, narrow nationalism, identity politics, and populism. We can trace the first mention of ‘Indonesia was colonized for 350 years’ to a 1950 speech by first President of the Republic of Indonesia, Sukarno. He was the most shrewd and clever figure using history as part of the construction of political nationalism, commonly called the national myth.

However, Sukarno realized that the ‘350-year’ national myth was bound to be limited to facing the Dutch return with the Allies after the World War II. However, it also features in the current era, namely, in former Indonesian Minister of Defense Ryamizard Ryacudu (2014-2019) and former Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM, *Energi dan Sumber Daya Mineral*) Sudirman Said’s addresses during the inauguration of a wind power plant (PLTB, *Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Bayu*) in Bantul, Yogyakarta, on May 4, 2015.

Kuntowijoyo, in his book entitled *Budaya dan Masyarakat* (Culture and Society), published by *Tiara Wacana* (2006) in Yogyakarta, understands that, among the producers of symbolic forms, intellectuals are at the forefront of forming the knowledge system of a society (Kuntowijoyo, 2006). Muhammad Yamin became the main intellectual figure behind the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia narrative, aiming to form a system of public knowledge which lasted for a relatively long time and even became a topic in history courses until many other historians rejected the notion, such as G.J. Resink, in his book *Bukan 350 Tahun Indonesia Dijajah* (Not 350 Years of Colonial Indonesia) (Gani Jaelani, 2018).

According to Abell (in Kuntowijoyo, 2006), psychology constitutes a link connecting economic conditions and cultural superstructure. Psychological complexities are involved in image formation and the avoidance of a tendency to equal certain types of cultural expression with the mentality of a class or economic system. Furthermore, Abell’s theory of the psycho-historical basis of culture at a given time, namely, claims that an image type embodies the social tensions beneath it (Kuntowijoyo, 2006). In this context, M. Yamin’s psycho-history of the Indonesian people as a result of Dutch colonial rule quickly and easily creates a narrative that the Dutch had colonized Indonesia for 350 years. The psychology of the Indonesian people under Dutch colonialism affected this mental complexity and formed an image that the Dutch had colonized Indonesia for 350 years, which became stronger with the institutionalization of the production and distribution of symbols in the superstructure (values, ideals, and expressive symbols).

The 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia historical narrative has a specific purpose: increasing the Indonesian people’s sense of nationalism. This agreed with their psychological condition in a country newly independent from Dutch colonialism. M. Yamin, a technocratic historian who wrote philosophy of history and historiography after Indonesia’s independence under government support, reinforced this notion. When he became Minister of Education in the early 1950s, he made all sorts of justifications for “national history”

(Farabi Fakhri, 2020; Bagus Abrianto et al., 2020; Purwanta et al., 2021).⁷ These fictional and mythical stories are then included in history lessons at school. This means that the 'strangeness' of Yamin's thoughts has been included in school history lessons and propaganda, such as the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia (Andreas Harsono, 2010). Therefore, this study seeks to determine Muhammad Yamin's sociocultural aspects in the process of forming and utilizing the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia myth via Kuntowijoyo's socio-cultural approach.

Method

A descriptive qualitative research and Kuntowijoyo's socio-cultural (historical) approach were used to assess Muhammad Yamin's figure in the formation and use of the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia myth. Qualitative research can be understood as procedure which uses descriptive data (in the form of written or spoken words from observable individuals and actors). John Creswell (2016) says that qualitative research explores and understands meaning in a number of individuals or groups of people in face of social problems. In this context, qualitative research was used to research Muhammad Yamin's history, culture, behavior, and thought concepts. A qualitative approach was chosen (among other reasons) since it can help us find and understand what is hidden behind the creation and development of the historical myth of the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia, which is often difficult to assess. A bibliographic search and document analysis were performed and data, collected, from the first national history congress in 1957 and Muhammad Yamin's profiles and academic manuscripts.

Kuntowijoyo's sociocultural (Historical) Approach

The literature evinces several ways to seek the relation between symbols and society. Mannheim (in Al Makin, 2019) tries to find such a relation between a particular social interest group and the thoughts and modes of thinking which underlie sociology of knowledge in its variations. Discussions about the relation between society, value systems, thoughts, and symbols were initially driven by Marx's thoughts on structure and superstructure, which still strongly influence both Marxist and non-Marxist scientists. However, socioeconomic conditions are indirectly related to the superstructure via a complex network of autonomy and dependence degrees of different spiritual products and their nature.

So, for example, artistic products enjoy a greater autonomy than political ideals (Casey Haskins, 1989; Lambert Zuidervart, 1990) since historical categories, although under a

⁷ In 1950, Gertrudes Johannes Resink had dismantled this myth in his essays, later published as the book 'Indonesia Between Myths' and translated by the Djambatan publishing company as 'Negara dan kerajaan yang merdeka di Indonesia' (An independent state and kingdom in Indonesia). It was republished by *Komunitas Bambu* as 'Bukan 350 tahun Indonesia dijajah' (Not 350 Years of Colonial Indonesia).

basic chronological order (Kuntowijoyo, 2006), may often overlap (rather than always alternate). Kuntowijoyo claims that the sociohistorical approach he introduced was used to examine a symbolic process (superstructure) — in this case, Muhammad Yamin's academic and philosophical historical texts. It also analyzes historical categories and symbols and the basic structures influencing them. Kuntowijoyo, who was also a humanist and writer (Izza Rohman, 2007), had worked as a history professor at Gadjah Mada University (Pradana ZTF, 2015), passing away on February 22, 2005 in Yogyakarta.

First of all, we should show the key terms in Kuntowijoyo's sociohistorical method.⁸ The first one is a basic understanding of the evaluated structure, which, in this study, refers to norms, modes of social organization, and social resources, rather than only social and economic conditions. The second term is the symbolic process, namely, human activity in constructing meaning for other realities from daily experience. Philosophy, myth, language, literature, and religious matters constitute examples of symbolic processes. In this study, the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia narrative, developed and disseminated by Muhammad Yamin via his intellectual activities during the Indonesian independence (and after it), is addressed. Symbolic processes are inseparable from the basic structure which influences them. Each symbolic process contains a superstructure which includes values, ideals, and expressive symbols. The basic structure is only indirectly linked to the superstructure via a complex network of intermediate steps. Thus, humans consciously and unconsciously live within the basic structure. Results from their interaction with it are mentally digested; combined; harmonized with their points of view, daily habits, thought patterns, and ideological orientations; and reflected in the values, ideals, and expressive symbols of their actions. This is the basis of Kuntowijoyo's sociohistorical analysis method of symbolic processes. It consists of three main components: cultural institutions, content, and effects or norms. Kuntowijoyo mapped his framework into a number of historical categories, including tradition-patrimony, capitalism, and technocracy (Ni Aswarini, 2016).

Results and Discussion

Muhammad Yamin Brief Profile

Muhammad Yamin was born on August 24, 1903, in Sawah Lunto, West Sumatra, during the Dutch colonization of Indonesia. His educational background shows that he often changed schools since the education he received failed to suit his personality. He eventually decided to stay at *Algemeene Middelbare School* (General Secondary School

⁸ Kuntowijoyo was a humanist, writer, and historian from Yogyakarta. He was a history professor at Gadjah Mada University, one of the best universities in Indonesia according to the 2022 Times Higher Education World University Ranking (THE WUR). Kuntowijoyo received his PhD in history from Columbia University in 1980. He died on February 22, 2005 due to an illness.

- AMS) *Yogyakarta*, in which he began to study ancient history and various languages such as Greek, Latin, and Kei.

After graduating from AMS, Iamin intended to continue his education in Leiden, Netherlands, but had to change his plans because his father died. He then studied at the *Rechtshoogeschool te Batavia* (a law higher education institution in Jakarta, which later became the Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia), and obtained the title of *Meester in de Rechten* in 1932. In his youth, Muhammad Yamin was active in youth associations, such as Youth Congress I and II, and organizations, such as Pasundan, Jong Java, Jong Sumatranen Bond, Jong Minahasa, Jong Batak, Jong Ambon, Jong Celebes (Sulawesi), Timorees Verbond, etc. He was very influential in the independence of Indonesia (Teguh Andrew, 2018). These youth organizations and associations aimed to advance their respective cultures and regions and achieve the unity of Indonesian youth for independence. Muhammad Yamin's contribution, before the independence, to the Youth Pledge at the Second Youth Congress, shows us that the event acknowledges Indonesian youth who pledged one homeland, nation, and language. Muhammad Yamin's contribution, as secretary of the Second Youth Pledge Congress, was recognized as the text representing the Youth Pledge, commemorated on October 28, 1945 (Leo Suryadinata, 1978). The association aimed to make Indonesia a strong and independent nation.

After the independence, Muhammad Yamin formulated its basic state, influencing the independence of the Indonesian nation⁹. Yamin belonged to a group of nine committees named the Jakarta Charter (Elson, 2009). Their task was to discuss and formulate the basis of an independent Indonesian state. Yamin's formulation of the Indonesian state created the basis for the foundational philosophical theory of Indonesia, namely Pancasila, ratified on August 18, 1945 (Marojahan Panjaitan, 2020; Sinung Hangabei et al., 2021). Pancasila also advises all Indonesian people, especially young ones, to always hold fast to Pancasila and keep the Indonesian State free of colonialists. Yamin also wrote the motto of the Indonesian state, namely *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, derived from historical sources from the Majapahit kingdom, in 1945. Yamin is known as the figure who has united ethnic groups for Indonesian independence. On the other hand, the method he used to unite ethnic groups via history is in some ways mythical and unscientific.

⁹ Pancasila is the basis and ideology of the Indonesian state to this day. Muhammad Yamin contributed to its formulation, expressing his opinion on May 29, 1945, in the first Dokuritsu Junbi Cosakai/*Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan* (Independence Preparatory Investigative Agency) session. Apart from Muhammad Yamin, two other Indonesian figures gave their opinions in the same session, namely, Sukarno (the first President of Indonesia) on June 1, 1945, and Soepomo on May 31, 1945.

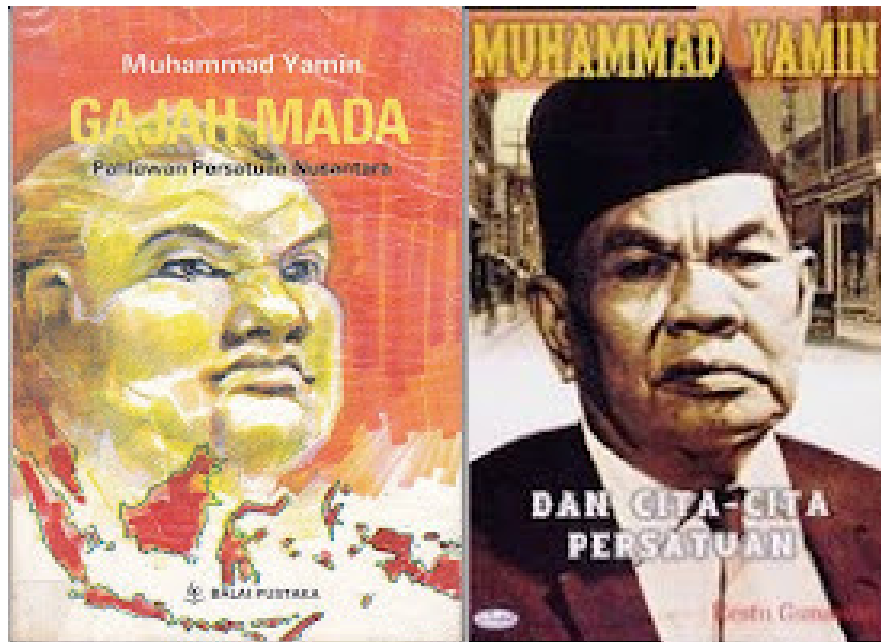


Fig. 1. Gajah Mada and Yamin are considered similar

Gajah Mada was the commander of the Majapahit kingdom who succeeded in uniting all *Nusantara* (the name of Indonesia before independence) under Majapahit rule in 1357. He is considered the figure and hero who united Indonesia. He legitimized Muhammad Yamin's claim that Indonesia had been unified since its feudal days. However, critical historians currently doubt the reconstruction of Gajah Mada's face (which resembles Muhammad Yamin —Fig. 1). The latest research from Baha' Uddin states that Gajah Mada's painting is the work of Muhammad Yamin's imagination, i.e., only an illustration (Danu Damarjati, 2015).

Yamin also received many awards, including the title of National Hero in 1973, in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Indonesia no. 088/TK/1973; the title of Bintang Maha Putra of the Republic of Indonesia; an award of Honor from the Military Police Corps as the creator of the Gajah Mada and Pancadarma Corps symbols; and the title of Commander of the Strategic Army Reserve Command (*Kostrad, Komando Cadangan Strategis Angkatan Darat*) for his services in creating the Strategic Army Disaster Command. In 1962, Muhammad Yamin died and was buried in his homeland, Sawah Lunto, West Sumatra.

Muhammad Yamin's Sociocultural and Mythical Tale of the 350-year Dutch Colonization of Indonesia

This state of affairs challenges the formation of a unitary state which would require the loyalty of every citizen since the true concept of a nation is an imaginary notion. Anderson (in Febri Nurrahmi, 2017) claims that the nation is an imagined community since its members are unable to personally know every other of its constituents. However, they can imagine and identify themselves as part of a group. Furthermore, the emergence of awareness as a

nation is closely related to the issue of nationalism (Jeffrey Olick, 1998; Jonathan Culler, 1999; Enric Castelló, 2016). Nationalism consists of the awareness of every Indonesian citizen as a nation (Singgih Sulistiyono, 2018; Anon Asmorojati & Avanti P, 2018), a system on which falls the expectation of transferring ethnic or religious loyalty to that for the Indonesian state.

The main elements of nationalism are three-fold, namely, traditions, interests, and ideals. Tradition relates to the past; interests, to the present; and aspirations, to the future. These greatly affect the formation of a sense of nationality. Therefore, fostering a sense of nationality requires very effective means, such as understanding the history of that nation. History can unite feelings and actions and can thus raise national awareness (Hedva Ben-Israel, 1992; James Fulcher, 2000). National history contains ideas that can unite a nation. According to Arthur Schopenhauer, “only by history does a nation become fully aware of itself.” (Friedrich Harms & Ella Morgan, 1875; Robert Wicks, 2002). National awareness actually arises mainly from understanding the past, i.e., national feelings for past events. A French historian, Fustel de Coulanges, said that true patriotism consists of love for the past, i.e., reverence for the generations that preceded us rather than love for the land (Paul, 1972; Arjan Zuiderhoek, 2017).

Thus, the writing of Indonesian history has a clear and important function in building its people’s awareness as a nation. According to Anderson, a person or group of people identify themselves as part of a nation by their similarities. The more similar they are, the stronger the feeling of a nation. Stories (myths) which appear later, associated with previous ones (which actually have no relation with them) is one such feeling. Some Indonesian people acquired such a sentiment because of Dutch colonialism. However, the length of Dutch colonial rule for 350 years (or 3.5 centuries) is an exaggeration and a myth.¹⁰

A pluralistic Indonesia (the common destiny of history) is a unifying factor amidst existing differences (Habib Zarbaliyev, 2017; Egi Baihaki, 2017). Thus, national history textbooks aim to form a complete and multicultural national personality. The reference for such a personality is respect for the national struggle. These historical textbooks use historical and personal struggles as a reference to form citizens. Therefore, history is one of the important factors to build Indonesian nationalism. Yamin shared this concern, attesting it via his philosophy of national history which he presented at the First National History Congress on December 14, 1957, in Yogyakarta, in which he claims that the inheritance of values transforms history. John White (1994) said that the school is a very important institution to inculcate historical values, planting historical values via school textbooks,

¹⁰ Demystifying this history not only values science but strengthens the identity of the Indonesian nation. In fact, re-correcting, i.e., reinterpreting the 350-year-colonization issue provides new insights and historical lessons. One such example is the lack of evidence that any area of Indonesia was under colonial rule for 350 years. Moreover, only two regions, Batavia and Ambon, were under such regime for 300 years. The 1905 Aceh, 1837 Minang, and 1907 Batak wars constitute examples of resistance. The country felt Javanization (in the 19th century) as cultural domination. This attests that the *Nusantara* people are stronger than the Dutch took them to be. They have strength and brains and are good at war and diplomacy. Indonesia is far from a weak nation.

historiographical works which reconstruct the past. Thus, chroniclers will interpret the facts they reconstruct. Facts are unable to speak for themselves. Historians can then make the facts “speak.” Historians’ ability to reconstruct these facts will closely relate to their cultural background and the sociopolitical conditions at that time.

Teachers must equip students to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, filter arguments, and develop perspectives and judgments. History helps students to understand the complexities of people’s lives, the processes of change, the diversity of societies, the relationships between different groups, their own identities, and the challenges of their times (Department for Education, 2013). Thus, government education policies influence historical writing (Agus Mulyana, 2013; Riyan Religian, 2018).

Conceptually, governments will include education policies in school curricula, outlining influent measures which may even serve as reference in writing history books. Indonesian historiography will inevitably follow and reflect changes in its culture. If the feudal agrarian culture, which worshipped the king, created a regiocentric or king-centric historiography and colonialism produced a neerlandocentric one, nationalism, after the national struggle and the formation of the Republic of Indonesia, demanded a historiography in accordance with the life of the national culture. This became an academic debate between Muhammad Yamin and Soedjatmoko at the First National History Congress in Yogyakarta.

The use of history books will especially refer to the national education curriculum set by the government. Preparing curricula requires two important foundations, which would serve as the basis toward the desired results: its philosophical basis and its political foundation. The former refers to essentialism (Shashidhar Belbase, 2011; Ida Megawati & Darmiyati Zuchdy, 2020). Schools believe that education is basically scientific education, which should constitute a concern of every generation since societies only develop via science (OECD, 2013). Schools must thus teach students via disciplines. The political basis of curriculum formation relates to government policies. Since the government usually has its own political interests, it includes its own messages in curriculum contents. Transmitting positive stories about the national past will instill a sense of loyalty to the country among its young people (Terry Haydn, 2012).

Thus, writing history is not merely reproducing the past or chronologically documenting historical events. Historical writing, as a form of cultural embodiment, is inseparable from cultural life (Yudi Prasetyo & Ahmad Abdullah, 2017). Historical writers who take part in it will actively face and understand historical facts and the views and problems from that culture. The debate on historical perspectives has taken place since 1928, in which Bung Hatta (First Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia) strongly criticized the history lessons ministered in government schools, which taught that Dutch heroes had built Indonesian cultural pride. In 1930, Bung Karno (First President of the Republic of Indonesia) introduced a romantic historical vision: a glorious past, a dark present, and a hopeful future (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2015).

Later, in the 1950s, Bung Karno's romanticism would gain scientific maturity in the hands of Muhammad Yamin and his *Pancawarsa* concept.¹¹

The dynamics of historical perspective also occur among foreign historians. De Graaf, in 1940, strongly criticized the neerlandocentric tendencies which still dominated the writing of history about what he called the Dutch East Indies. They forgot, said De Graaf, that Java had a history prior to foreigners' settlement. In 1951, Coolhaas revisited a problem Van Leur had criticized, namely the relation between colonial and Indonesian histories (Aryono, 2016). In current terms, Coolhaas is a historian who rejects sociological intervention, aiming to understand historical events and dynamics. For him, history is an independent discipline.

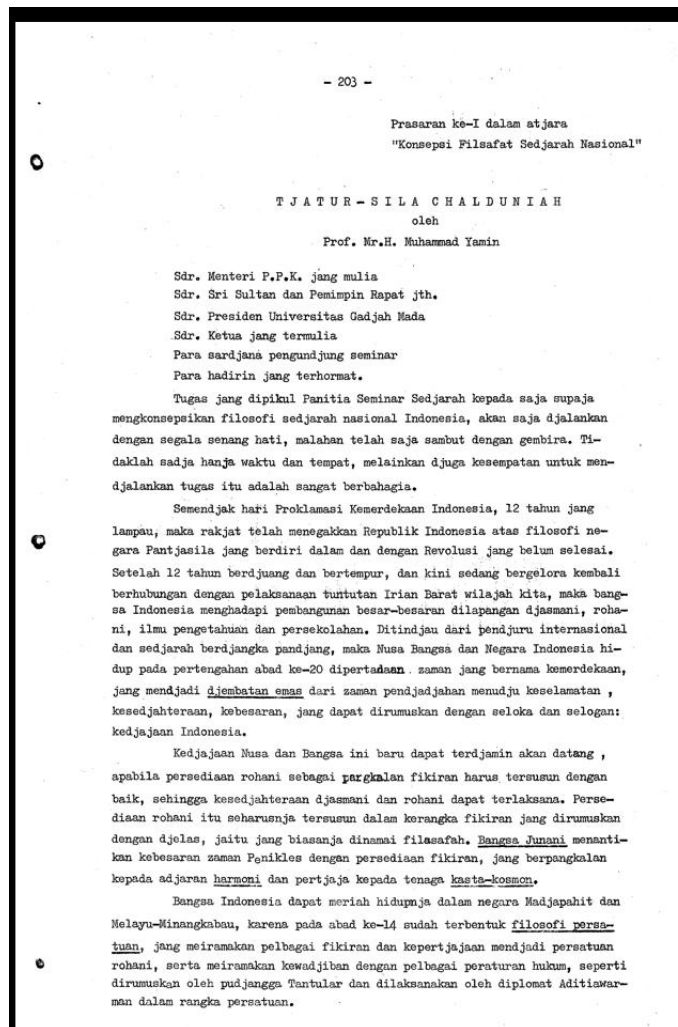


Fig. 2. Muhammad Yamin's Academic Manuscript at the 1st National History Congress in Yogyakarta (Yamin, 1957).

¹¹ Muhammad Yamin' chapter of Indonesian History, known as the "Pancawarsa" includes:

1) Prehistoric Indonesia (...0 AD); 2) Protohistory of Indonesia (0-600 AD); 3) the National Chapter (Colonial Age 600-1525 AD); 4) the Chapter between Nations (International Age 1525-1900 AD); 5) The Age of Proclamation (1900-1945 AD). *Pancawarsa* also continued and strengthened scientific maturity to support the romantic historical vision of the First President of Indonesia, Sukarno, which was put forward in 1930, namely: a glorious past, a dark present, and a hopeful future.

Muhammad Yamin claimed that the narrowing of thoughts on all historical events in Indonesia formed a national philosophy of history with four precepts which supported the national philosophy of history: truth, history, synthesis, and nationalism (Yamin, 1957). According to Yamin, the writing of Indonesian history must agree with the morals of the struggle for independence, meet the ethical requirements of historical writing and psychology, and educate readers and listeners to refrain from offending the sense of independent nationalism as the pride of the nation. The history of Indonesia must be used as a source of inspiration and knowledge for the life of a nation which wants to be spiritually big and broad. Yamin emphasized again, that national history

....related to the birth of the struggle for independence, so that writers of Indonesian national history textbooks who have crossed over to the Dutch side in their life or have doubted Indonesia achieving independence, should avoid this national work. Writing Indonesian history must fulfill the requirements of believing in the struggle for independence. Because, if Indonesian historians ever crossed over to the Dutch side, it would undermine the values of the national history of Indonesia. The conception of national history will be of value and have a pure spiritual nature if it is placed in the hearts and hands of those who write books teaching Indonesian national history, which are spiritually clear to the wheels of national history in Southeast Asia (Yamin, 1957, 217-223).

Yamin's view emphasizes history as a philosophy or guide to Indonesian history, whose ideological aspect becomes important when it is used as a place to determine a common perception of national politics, namely, the elimination of forms of colonialism on Indonesian soil. We can see the political and ideological content of Yamin's thoughts in his works. They contain many myths and use bombastic language to draw readers' attention and instill a sense of nationalism in them (Restu Gunawan, 2005).

On the other hand, Soedjatmoko, who replaced Mohammad Hatta¹² at the First National History Seminar, criticized Yamin's conception and provided a critical perspective on philosophy of history. Soedjatmoko argues that historians should be able to clearly distinguish between political interests and the development of historical and historiographical knowledge (Sue Nichterlein, 1974). Soedjatmoko was aware that nationalism with certain political interests could have negative consequences (a tendency to scapegoat other people to strengthen nationality, for example). However, society accepted Yamin's conception at that time (Djono et al., 2021).

¹² Mohammad Hatta was the first vice president of Indonesia (August 18, 1945-December 1, 1956). Hatta is called the Founding Father of the Indonesian nation. He is also known as Bung Hatta and had been involved in political activities since he was in college at the Handels Hooze School in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Bung Hatta was chairman of Perhimpunan Indonesia (Indonesian Association) from 1926-1930. As a result of his activities, he was exiled in Hague in November 1927 and released in March 1928. Then, his involvement became the inspiration for the *Sumpah Pemuda* (The Youth Pledge) of October 28, 1928. Hatta had been exiled to Boven Digul, Papua on January 28, 1935, because he was considered a rebellious enemy to the Dutch colonial government. In 1936-1942, he was transferred to Banda Neira, Maluku, and Sukabumi, West Java. Hatta died on March 14, 1980 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Suharto government declared him a hero in 1986.



Fig.3. Opening of the First National History Seminar (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 1957)

Some of Yamin's written works containing myths include Sang Saka Merah Putih, Gajah Mada, Diponegoro, Sriwijaya, and Majapahit. With them, he wants to convey the message that Indonesian unity has existed since time immemorial, thus dissipating doubts. To realize these ideals, Muhammad Yamin used symbols and myths which could evoke national emotions and collective memories. In historical education, Muhammad Yamin tried to master the national collective memory by establishing a Teacher Education College (PTPG) (Asvi Adam, 2009). He succeeded in opening three: Bandung, Batu Sangkar, and Malang. Yamin tried to incorporate his ideas on Indonesian history by becoming a teacher at PTPG Bandung. During his time as a lecturer at PTPG Bandung, Yamin applied his ideas on Indonesian history by providing the basics of an Indonesian-centric history as he had conceived.

At the time, attempts to write Indonesian-centric history mostly turned people the Dutch considered rebels into Indonesian heroes. This writing model with many heroic stories resulted in the concept of a national hero which is known to this day (Gunawan, 2005). Yamin's students, such as R. Moh. Ali, continued his efforts to provide the basics of historical development. He emphasized that the goal of Indonesian history is human history, i.e., the history of its people within its territory (Nirwan Yasin & Lagut Bakaruddin,

2020). Therefore, they must narrate the history of Indonesia, especially its national struggle. Therefore, the nature of the Indonesian history is none other than the national one, meaning that it includes the nation itself in its own homeland. The result of this national character is that Indonesian people are at the core of the history of their homeland. Thus, teachers aim to introduce humans who have struggled to those who are struggling.

Teachers can achieve this if they can revive the spirit of past and present human struggles (Rusli et al., 2021; Prihadi Hatmono, 2021) and can personally explore and experience them. Likewise, Teacher Education Colleges are a form of education which solely trains teachers who are aware of their duties as pedagogic patriots (Subaryana, 2016). Schools must provide students with an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of modern life due to the feudal nature of Indonesia so they can witness its remains in society and overcome personal difficulties arising due to it and the modern world.

Thus, *Balai Pendidikan Guru* (BPG, Teacher Education Center) history lessons have their own characteristics, i.e., maintaining a critical attitude; fostering independence via one's own efforts and teachers' help; offering business guidance; using their knowledge of history to express themselves about their surrounding environment; extending suggestions for achieving understanding and personal ideals; and meaningfully participating in national life as national teachers or pedagogic patriots (Ali in Subaryana, 2016). By looking at the mindset of PTPG alumni, we can understand why Muhammad Yamin and his successors' thoughts still dominate current history textbooks, which still attempt to maintain feudalism and Yamin's conceptions (Gunawan, 2005). Thus, we conclude that Yamin's thoughts heavily influenced the writing of Indonesian history. He aimed at nationalist and anti-colonial historiography. However, due to the conditions at the time, Yamin exceedingly emphasized nationalism, which encompassed more than writing a true Indonesian-centric historiography. In fact, the Indonesian-centric historiography Yamin desired failed to break away from Eurocentrism and even tended to deviate from scientific principles.¹³

Nationality, political beliefs, outlook on life, and contemporary circumstances influenced Muhammad Yamin's historical conception. Note that his expertise in law often shows its influence in history. Thus, one of its consequences is that political views dominate Muhammad Yamin's historical interpretation and social, economic, and cultural themes receive less attention. A legal expert (dealing with political problems), he places his historical attention on the relation between "nation" and "state." Likewise, the relation between the people and the state, interpersonal relationships, and those between the state and other countries became the focus of Muhammad Yamin's historical review.

¹³ That is, a trade relation between two equal parties. Although, later on, the VOC controlled the regional trade in the East Indies, it still failed to constitute a colonizing power. Up to the 19th and 20th centuries, many *Nusantara* areas had remained independent from the Dutch. G.J Resink states that the Dutch had colonized Indonesia for about 40 to 50 years. He began to calculate the length of colonialism a year after Aceh was forced to sign a short placard in 1904 stating that it recognized the sovereignty of the Dutch East Indies and that Aceh belonged to its territory.

Conclusion

The Eurocentric historiography of Indonesia has deepened the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia myth, which the Dutch government deliberately created to weaken the fighting spirit and unity of Indonesia (originally a 100-year dominance myth offered by Governor General B.C. de Jonge in 1936). Then, Indonesian figures such as Soekarno, Hamka, and Muhammad Yamin adopted the myth Dutch historians created. However, they did so with a different goal, i.e., to foster a fighting spirit of nationalism, patriotism, and unity in the Indonesian people. Then, these concepts were written in Indonesian history via Indonesian History Seminars I and II.

At first, he wanted to change the focus of historiography (from Eurocentric to Indonesian-centric). However, since the beginning of its development, Indonesian-centric historiography has been unable to separate itself from Eurocentrism since it emphasized nationalism, patriotism, and Indonesian unity. G.J Resink's historical research on past Dutch and Indigenous peoples' international laws and on independent Nusantara kingdoms between 1850 and 1910 refutes the notion that Indonesia was colonized for 350 years.

We still need to understand and reflect on many things, including the many Indonesian regions whose laws suffered no Dutch interference. So far, Indonesians' belief constitutes a myth since we find no evidence that the Dutch have colonized Indonesia for 350 years. According to Resink, the Dutch only colonized the entire archipelago for 40 to 50 years and that only considers temporal differences for each region, of which the island of Java was the longest colonized area. From some of the literature the author has obtained, the Dutch only colonized Indonesia for about 30 years. The myth of the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia, which Muhammad Yamin developed and preserved, actually has positive values, aiming to raise Indonesian people's spirit of nationalism and patriotism and legitimize their unity and integrity since their conditions were divided at that time. However, the 350-year Dutch colonization of Indonesia myth still impacts the writing of Indonesian history since is not a historical fact. Still, it gave the Indonesian people a provincial mentality, weakening them due to the extensive length of their colonization.

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