

State Repression Towards the Press in the Guided Democracy Era: The Case of *Pandji Masjarakat* and *Gema Islam* (1959-1966)

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ABSTRACT

Pandji Masjarakat and *Gema Islam* are two Islamic cultural magazines published during the Guided Democracy era (1959-1966) in Indonesia. Both magazines were closely related to Hamka, a prominent figure from the opposition party at that time, namely Masyumi. Even though both are strictly cultural magazines, they are considered dangerous by the government. *Pandji Masjarakat* only lasted for thirty-two editions before being banned, and Hamka was later arrested while working at *Gema Islam* on charges of treason. This research seeks to reveal why and how the State suppressed these magazines, so as to reveal one side of the Guided Democracy, which was rarely discussed, namely its repressive attitude against cultural opposition. The research was conducted using historical methods in the form of heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. It was carried out to develop better understanding on the phenomena of cultural opposition in Indonesia and the government's response to it. Several findings indicate that the two magazines were considered dangerous because some articles published there contained ideas that were contrary to the government's political views. Therefore, both received repressive treatment from the State. This study also indicates that cultural opposition had long existed in Indonesia.

Keywords: Guided Democracy, Culture, Opposition, Islam, Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

Pandji Masjarakat and *Gema Islam* are two Islamic cultural magazines published during the Guided Democracy era in Indonesia. *Pandji Masjarakat* was first published in 1959 and only lasted for thirty-two editions, while *Gema Islam* operated from 1962 to 1967. Both magazines were well-received by Muslims in Indonesia, as evidenced by their distribution which were not affected by several inflations in Indonesia at the time. H. Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, better known as Hamka, was the central figure behind these two magazines.

Since 1957, repressive acts against the press have occurred quite frequently. No less than 38 printed media were banned in 1959, 34 more banning occurred in 1960 and 14 in 1961 [1]. Permittance for publishing companies tended to be more complicated, and publishers can only operate after accepting the nineteen points given by the government [2]. *Pandji Masjarakat* was one of the printed media that were banned at this period.

Unlike the short-lived *Pandji Masjarakat*, *Gema Islam* had never experienced banning. However, in 1964, the magazine took a strong blow as Hamka was being arrested on charges of treason and conspiring with Malaysia. After his release two years later, when the

Guided Democracy had already collapsed, Hamka revived the *Pandji Masjarakat*.

The government's repressive acts against both Islamic cultural magazines proves that *Pandji Masjarakat* and *Gema Islam* were perceived as instrumental for the opposition to launch sharp criticism, therefore both are considered as a threat to the authority of the government. This research, therefore, seeks to reveal two things. Firstly, to explain the reasons that led the government to view the two magazines as dangerous. Secondly, to reveal ways taken by the government or dominating political groups at that time to exert pressure on these two magazines.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a historical methodology consisting of heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. Attention shall be paid to the content of some articles in both magazines that appear to be conflicted with the government's policies, as well as to matters that directly affect the magazine and its managers, especially Hamka as the main actor.

The concept of opposition is derived from the study of political science. In simple terms, opposition can be understood as a 'dialectic counterpart' for power. Nathalie Brack and Sharon Weinblum, after criticizing

the overly simple and narrow definitions used for the opposition, proposed a new definition, namely: “A disagreement with the government of its policies, the political elite, or the political regime as a whole, expressed in public sphere, by an organized actor through different modes of action” [3].

This definition provides sufficient space for various forms of opposition, including the non-parliamentary. This means that the concept still emphasizes attitudes that are opposing the government, but no longer discriminate actors, functions and places. Therefore, it is not limited to political parties or limits the space for opposition to parliament only.

Hamka, who had always been affiliated with Masyumi politically, could be considered as an opposition figure. While he did not have the power, he still had political significance in the form of influence. In contrast to the coercive power, influence is persuasive, but no less effective in influencing public opinion. A brief review of Hamka shall be given to show how he developed his influence in the society.

3. HAMKA

Born and raised in the environment of strong Islamic and Minangkabau tradition, Hamka is widely known as a prolific writer, humanist, Muhammadiyah cadre, journalist, politician, author of the *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, receiver of the honorary doctorate from Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt, Masyumi politician, the first Chairman of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) and had been declared as a National Hero of the Republic of Indonesia in 2011. His father, Haji Rasul, was also a prominent Minangkabau ulama who came from the lineage of the ulama from the Paderi War period [4].

Studied directly under Haji Rasul who was a central figure in the history of the Sumatera Thawalib network and Muhammadiyah in Sumatra, Hamka had always been familiar with Islamic reform issues and the Islamic press. His father was the founder of *Al-Munir* Magazine which pioneered the Islamic press in Indonesia. Hamka himself, in 1936-1942, served as the chief editor for the *Pedoman Masjarakat*, a quite influential Medan-based Islamic cultural magazine at its time.

During the Revolution after the independence, Hamka received a mandate from the Vice President, Moh. Hatta, to lead the National Defense Front (FPN) which was ordered to unite all paramilitary groups available to face the Dutch military aggression. When the Trilateral Commission (KTN) visited Bukittinggi, Hamka mobilized tens of thousands of West Sumatran people to welcome them and give a speech in front of the delegacies to convince them that the Indonesians desired independence for their own nation [5]. During the Revolution, Hamka went in and out of the jungle in West Sumatra to provide spiritual support for the guerilla fighters [6].

Always reluctant to regard himself as a politician, Hamka did not refuse when he was asked to help the Masyumi prior to the 1955 general elections. Hamka was elected as a member of the Konstituante representing Masyumi and became one of its main spokespersons there. In the Konstituante, Hamka was involved in heated debates, mainly against the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Hamka's stance against communism was not only political, but also religious and personal. Long before his days in the Konstituante, Hamka had witnessed how communism turned many of the students of Sumatra Thawalib against their own teacher, Haji Rasul [7].

When several Masyumi leaders fled to West Sumatra due to provocations in Jakarta and later joined the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI) movement, Hamka remained in the capital city and worked at the Ministry of Religion. In 1958, Hamka visited Egypt and delivered a lecture on the influence of Muhammad Abduh's teachings to the Indonesians and the Malays in front of the Al-Azhar University scholars. A year later, Hamka obtained an honorary doctorate title from the university. The Great Mosque of Kebayoran Baru, where he worked as the Imam, was renamed as The Great Al-Azhar Mosque after the Grand Shaykh of Al-Azhar, Shaykh Mahmud Syaltut, visited Jakarta in 1960.

Following the dissolution of the Konstituante in 1959 and Masyumi in the 1960, Hamka never pursued his political career again. Apart from concentrating on the *Pandji Masjarakat*, Hamka continued to work in his capacity as an ulama, either at the Al-Azhar Mosque or serving in Muhammadiyah.

After the banning of *Pandji Masjarakat* in 1960, it was only in early 1962 that he reappeared with the *Gema Islam* Magazine. His activities at *Gema Islam* were stopped on January 27, 1964, after teaching at the Al-Azhar Mosque, when Hamka was picked up by four officers and then served two years in detention.

4. PANDJI MASJARAKAT

Hamka's plan to publish an Islamic magazine as a successor to the *Pedoman Masjarakat* had been discussed since 1950 with M. Joesoef Ahmad, M. Yunan Nasution, M. Zain Djambek and some other figures. However, the plan was postponed because Hamka was asked in that same year directly by the Minister of Religion at that time, namely K.H. Wahid Hasyim, to lead the hajj pilgrims. Afterwards, he was also asked to serve in the Ministry of Religion [8].

The first edition of *Pandji Masjarakat* was published on June 15, 1959, and continuously on the 1st and 15th day in every month. This was done almost consistently before the banning in 1960. The top management structure of *Pandji Masjarakat* was rather simple, consisting of Moh. Faqih Usman as the General Manager, Hamka and Jusuf Abdullah Puar as Chief

Editors, while M. Joesoef Ahmad worked as its Business Manager. This arrangement hardly ever changed until the last edition of *Pandji Masjarakat* in its first period of life (that is, until the banning in 1960).

Regarding the origin of the *Pandji Masjarakat*'s name, Sidi Gazalba, one of the main contributors to the magazine, once revealed that the name was a combination of two Islamic magazines' names that were quite popular in the pre-independence era which were both based in Medan, North Sumatera. The two magazines are *Pandji Islam* and *Pedoman Masjarakat*; the first was led by Zainal Abidin Ahmad and M. Joesoef Ahmad, while the second was led by Hamka and M. Yunan Nasution [9].

Hamka and Jusuf Abdullah Puar, apart from working as the Chief Editors, also acted as contributors to the magazine. There are several other writers whose works were regularly published in *Pandji Masjarakat*, for example Arif Effendi with his analysis of the international issues, Sidi Gazalba with his philosophical discussions, S.S.B. Nan Sati on literary issues, and statesmen such as Moh. Hatta also contributed a few times. Other scholars such as Aboebakar Atjeh, Abdullah Arif Atjeh, H. Oemar Amin Husein, Osman Raliby, Ali Audah, Prof. Bahder Djohan and others also contributed. Due to its status as a cultural magazine, *Pandji Masjarakat* had always been fronted by writers and scholars, not reporters and journalists. Almost all the articles published in the magazine were essays, not reportages. *Pandji Masjarakat* also received works from readers, including short stories and poems.

Other than articles written by Indonesian intellectuals, there were also articles by foreign writers or translated works published in *Pandji Masjarakat*. In the second edition, for example, a translation of an article by Imam al-Ghazali, a great ulama who died in the early 12th century AD, were published. In another edition, an article by Muhammad Asad (previously known as Leopold Weiss) was published after being translated by Mansoer Arsjad. An article by one of the prominent icons of Al-Ikhwān Al-Muslimun from Egypt, Sayyid Qutb, had also been published. Poems written by Dr. Mohammad Mahmoud Ridwan, the Cultural Attaché of the United Arab Republic for Indonesia at that time, as well as the work of Palestinian poet Ali Hasjim Rasjid had also won a place in this magazine.

The sales circulation of *Pandji Masjarakat* was initially projected to be 5,000 copies, but the first edition was later printed for as many as 10,000 copies [10]. That sales projection turned out to be realistic for *Pandji Masjarakat*. In the third edition, the number was expanded to 15,000 copies and then grew to 21,000 copies. According to H. M. Joesoef Ahmad, if it weren't for the difficulty in obtaining paper, *Pandji Masjarakat* would have printed no less than 30,000 copies [11]. *Pandji Masjarakat* agents can be found not only in big cities such as Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Medan or Makassar,

but also in Sangkapura (a district on Bawean Island) and Barabai (about 165 km from Banjarmasin).

Pandji Masjarakat's slogan, visible in the front cover in each of its editions, is "The spreader of culture and knowledge in harmony with the struggle for reform and modernization of Islam". The article "Istiqamah" by Hamka which was published as the opening article in the first edition described what was meant by the name *Pandji Masjarakat* and how the editors view religion and culture. "Panji" means a flag or banner used as a marker, and in this context, it referred to is the Islamic banner planted amid society as a reminder of Islamic teachings. Thus, *Pandji Masjarakat* was indeed an Islamic magazine. The same article also explains that religion should enrich culture and science, and not the other way around [12].

Pandji Masjarakat supported the opinion that the local traditions in Indonesia had long been influenced by the majority religion, namely Islam. An article by Aminullah Lewa argues that religion teaches values, while culture determines how each society can manifest these values [13]. Another article by Sidi Gazalba emphasizes that a culture refers to a certain time and space. Majapahit culture, according to him, was indeed existed in the Nusantara archipelago, but it is no longer relevant today [14]. Other articles also discussed how Islam had influenced the Sekaten [15] and the wayang puppet [16] traditions in Java.

Pandji Masjarakat was a cultural magazine that avoids discussion that directly dives into the realm of practical politics. Nevertheless, there were times when the editors show their alignment with Islamic politics. Two of the magazine's leaders — namely K.H. Moh. Faqih Oesman and Hamka — had worked in the past as representatives for Masyumi in the Konstituante. In the unfortunate political atmosphere at that time, Masyumi, who initially recognized the special membership status of the founding Islamic organizations, decided to abolish this status. This means that every member of the Islamic organizations incorporated in Masyumi was no longer automatically a member of Masyumi unless he/she decided to become an individual member. This was done so that the activities of the respective organizations were not disturbed by Masyumi's position which was increasingly cornered due to the political situation at that time. In this case, the *Pandji Masjarakat*'s editors stated their full support for this decision while calling Masyumi as a hero in the history of Islam in Indonesia [17].

Anti-communism was another important feature of *Pandji Masjarakat* and this was shown explicitly in some articles. Arif Effendi's article regarded the Soviet Union and China as two countries representing the communist ideology and underlined the different strategies adopted by the two countries in expanding the influence of communism [18]. There was also an article that showed how difficult life was for Muslims under the rule of the communists in the Soviet Union [19],

while another article presents an opinion about the importance of building the power of Islamic literature movement as a counter to the People's Cultural Institute (Lekra) which was affiliated to PKI [20]. An article by S.S. Daeng Paesa used cultural arguments to explain why the Chinese had lost the competition to spread influence in Indonesia [21]. This total rejection of communism, in that era, was clearly at odds with the domestic political policy of the Guided Democracy.

In the 22nd edition, *Pandji Masjarakat* took an unusual turn by publishing an article written by the former Vice President, Moh. Hatta. This article was not only politically charged, but also contained very harsh criticism on the Guided Democracy, and even on Soekarno, personally. Soekarno, according to Hatta in this article, had deviated far from the constitution because he was unable to overcome the crisis that occurred during the Liberal Democracy era [22].

The article, entitled "Demokrasi Kita", had really caught the public attention that *Pandji Masjarakat* decided to republish it in the form of a brochure. Following the 32nd edition, *Pandji Masjarakat* had stopped publishing. Years later, Hamka explained that the publication of that particular article was indeed the reason for the banning of *Pandji Masjarakat* [23].

5. GEMA ISLAM

After the banning of *Pandji Masjarakat*, Hamka had not been involved in any press activity for the remainder of 1960 and the following year. It was only in 1962 that his name resurfaced in the management structure of the *Gema Islam* Magazine. The general manager of this magazine is Brigadier General Soedirman, with an Editorial Board consisting of H. Anwar Tjokroaminoto, Mukti Ali, Lt. Col. M. Isa Idris, and Mahbub Djunaidi. Rusydi, one of Hamka's sons, was listed as the Board Secretary, while Hamka was only listed as one of the staffs along with other names familiar to *Pandji Masjarakat* readers such as Jusuf Abdullah Puar, Sidi Gazalba, and Aboebakar Atjeh.

The magazine was published by the Central Islamic Library Foundation (YPIP) which was founded in November 1961. YPIP was based at the Al-Azhar Mosque, Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta, where Hamka worked daily. In this foundation, Hamka served as Deputy Chairman, while Brigadier General Soedirman served as the General Chairman and H. Anwar Tjokroaminoto as the Chairman. YPIP had three counselors who served as Ministers, namely K.H. A. Wahib Wahab (Minister of Religion), General A.H. Nasution (Minister of National Security) and R. Muljadi Djojomartono (Minister of National Welfare).

With the presence of a few military officers and the support of three ministers, it was obvious that *Gema Islam*'s position was much better than that of *Pandji Masjarakat*. It seems that this compromise was made so that *Gema Islam* would not have to experience a banning

like *Pandji Masjarakat*. The effect of this compromise could be seen in some articles of patriotic tone or news from the military that often appear, which were perhaps the only significant differences between *Gema Islam* and its predecessor. The first edition, for example, contained an article supporting the liberation of West Irian. Occasionally, remarks from General A.H. Nasution or profiles of several military officers can also be found in *Gema Islam*.

Commercially, *Gema Islam* was even more successful than its predecessor. In the period of 1962-1965, Indonesia experienced multiple inflations, so that the retail price of *Gema Islam* had multiplied several times, from IDR 12.00 to IDR 200.00. However, the sales circulation had almost always been stable at 30,000 copies.

Hamka appeared regularly in every issue, writing mainly for the Tafsir Al-Azhar Rubric and several others. Issues on Islamic culture would also dominate the space of *Gema Islam*. In the first edition, Hamka's speech as Chairman of the Board of Islamic Humanist Artists (MASBI) on the closing night of the council of the Islamic Cultural Arts Association (HSBI) at the end of 1961 in Jakarta was published. HSBI was founded by Muslim humanists to counter Lekra. While Islamic groups and the military (especially the Army) both disliked communisms, it seems that anti-communism content was not found much in *Gema Islam*. The value that seems to be highlighted often, it seems, was the cohesiveness between the Islamic groups and the military.

Personal attacks against Hamka by the communists were launched for the first time in the latter half of 1962. On September 7, 1962, the *Bintang Timur* daily published two articles attacking Hamka, and the author names listed in both articles (namely Abdullah Sp. And AS) were most likely fake. Both articles were published in a special page for the *Bintang Timur*'s Cultural Page (LENTERA) in which Pramoedya Ananta Toer and S. Rukiah acted as the person in charge. In the article entitled "Hamka, Benarkah Dia Manfaluthi Indonesia?", the author accused Hamka of being a plagiarist, namely by plagiarized the work of Manfaluthi, an Arabic author, to create his most famous novel, *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* [24]. A week later, in the same segment, another article by the same author appeared with a more detailed accusation. Two weeks later, *Bintang Timur* even provided a special section entitled *Warta Hamka* to review articles in other newspapers that also accused Hamka with the same allegation.

This accusation was finally responded in the 17th edition of *Gema Islam* dated October 1, 1962. According to Rusydi, what Hamka did was not an act of plagiarism at all, because it was clear that the novel in question had a background of Minangkabau's tradition. Rusydi also mentioned that the accusation only came from people who don't like authors whose works were

enlightened with Islamic values like Hamka [25]. Hamka himself, in that same edition, gave a rather cold response to these accusations. In a small column, Hamka invited his accusers to bring this issue to scholars of a Faculty of Literature, preferably of the University of Indonesia, for an open discussion [26]. Furthermore, several important figures such as H.B. Jassin, Ali Audah and Junus Amir Hamzah came to defend Hamka, while the accusation gradually disappeared on its own.

The development of issues about Malaysia in *Gema Islam* was quite interesting to observe. Hamka, as a prominent figure in the Malay community, had a special affinity for Malaysia. While Indonesia was neutral towards the independence of the Federation of Malaya, this was not the case when the idea of its unification with Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei, and Singapore — to form the Malaysian State — was proposed. The reason formally put forward was that Indonesia viewed Malaysia as an extension of the British, and thus also a form of neo-colonialism. However, many scholars were skeptical of this and some think that Indonesia rejected Malaysia because they consider it as a threat of domination in Southeast Asia or even a mere Soekarno's attempt to divert his fellow Indonesians' attention from the economic crisis at the time. In the Malaysian issue, what was clear was that the 'power triangle' at that time, namely Soekarno, PKI and the Army, strongly supported the Confrontation [27].

While *Gema Islam* had effectively connected Islamic groups and the military, in responding to the Malaysian issue, at some point it seems that this magazine had chosen its own path. In the April 15, 1962 edition, Hamka shared the impressions he got from the country of Brunei that he had visited in 1960. In this article, Hamka praised the prosperity of Brunei, the beauty of the grand mosque and also the Sultan's competence. Hamka also expressed his support on the plan to merge Brunei with Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore, and even seemed to persuade the Sultan of Brunei to accept that plan [28].

The 15th edition of *Gema Islam*, which front cover features the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman, published another article sympathetic to the establishment plan of the Malaysian State. The article even implies that what needs to be considered was not just the idea of the forming of Malaysia, but also the amalgamation of all Malay countries which include Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippine [29]. All this happened when the Indonesian government was campaigning the politics of Confrontation, months before the clash between the two countries happened in early 1963.

A significant change of tone in *Gema Islam* on the Malaysian issue began to appear in the latter half of 1963. In the early September edition, several resolutions from the Congress of the Nahdlatul Ulama Student Association (IPNU) and the Nahdlatul Ulama Female

Student Association (IPPNU) were published, one of which was to support the Confrontation. The next edition would contain an article which stated that the establishment of the State of Malaysia is a neo-colonialism project, and that Tun Abdul Rahman is a very ambitious person who aspires to become a great leader in Asia, whereas he cannot achieve this without leading a large country.

A small column that does not list the author's name, in the 46th edition of *Gema Islam*, published on January 15, 1964, mentioned General A.H. Nasution's views towards the British, which according to him, had intervened a lot in Muslim affairs in Southeast Asia. This was also the last edition involving Hamka before he was detained in that same month. *Gema Islam* then went on a hiatus for three months. The next edition was embellished with a caricature mocking Tun Abdul Rachman, a short and provocative article on the inside of the front cover, and two articles calling for the crushing of Malaysia from General A.H. Nasution and Colonel Sutjipto.

Following the 46th edition, the news about Malaysia died down again. Although Hamka was in custody and the Tafsir Al-Azhar had no longer appeared, his name remained on the list of the *Gema Islam* staff member. The magazine never reported Hamka's arrest.

Following the 81st edition in September 1965, *Gema Islam* went into a long hiatus for almost a year, and the 82nd edition finally appeared in August 1966. Hamka, who had been released from detention in April 1966, reappeared in this edition in an article written by the *Gema Islam*'s Editors. In that article, it was said that *Gema Islam* had deliberately stayed quiet and did not give any answers to readers who questioned the disappearance of the Tafsir Al-Azhar. However, after several months of detention, Hamka had contributed again for *Gema Islam*, either anonymously or by using the name Abu'l Irfan as his pseudonym [30].

In the 83rd edition, another significant change occurred in *Gema Islam*. The politics of Confrontation carried out by the Soekarno's administration were openly criticized, and it was said that the Confrontation was used by the communists for their own interests. While the Confrontation was thought to be an attempt to fight imperialism, it in fact had perpetuated another form of imperialism, namely of the 'communist empire' [31].

Since 1966, in addition to contributing to *Gema Islam*, Hamka had also revived *Pandji Masyarakat*. While *Gema Islam* finally stopped operating in 1967, *Pandji Masyarakat* continued to publish, even after Hamka's death in 1981.

6. CONCLUSION

There was never a doubt that Hamka had many opposing views with the Guided Democracy. His affiliation to Masyumi, even though the party had been

dissolved, coupled with his activities in the Konstituante and the views he had expressed at the forum made him particularly apt to be described as an opposition figure.

While many Masyumi important figures were perceived as traitors because of their involvement with PRRI, Hamka succeeded in building his own reputation as an ulama who was not against the government and an intellectual who received an honorary doctorate from the Al-Azhar University, Egypt. Even though he was not openly offensive to the government, Hamka's ability to maintain and develop his social and cultural capital made him an opposition figure who was considered to threaten the dominant political forces during the Guided Democracy era. His career in journalism as well as his activities as a humanist gave him a unique position as a central figure of cultural opposition.

Although *Pandji Masjarakat* and *Gema Islam* would always use cultural arguments, the discourses they raised had serious political implications. Therefore, both magazines are seen as political tools of the opposition, especially from Islamic groups.

The government's repressive actions were clearly seen in the case of the banning of the *Pandji Masjarakat*, which at that time had just entered its second year. However, Hamka's joining forces with the military group prevented the same from happening to *Gema Islam*. Losing Hamka was able to shock *Gema Islam*, nevertheless, it had been able to survive until the Guided Democracy era ended.

Difficulties in overcoming *Gema Islam* seemed to push the political opponents to divert their attacks on Hamka with accusations of plagiarism. The nature of the personal attack in the form of character assassination was evident from the reluctance of the accusers to bring this issue to an academic level as proposed by Hamka.

The difference in views between Hamka and the government (including the military) on the Malaysian issue became a gap which was then used to get rid of Hamka. However, during the two years of his detention, Hamka's case was never properly tried, and therefore, all charges against him were never proven.

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