

# Forging A New Nation: The Role of Youth Radicalism in Semarang's Revolutionary Struggle, 1945-1947

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**Abstract:** This study examines the youth resistance movement in Semarang in the early days of the Indonesian Revolution, especially between 1945 and 1947, against the Japanese and Allied armies. The youth resistance movement is characterized by a militant and radical nature, which is influenced by various factors from the past experiences of the youth. In addition to the impact of the Japanese occupation, ideological factors such as Socialism, Communism, Islam, and Nationalism also played an important role in encouraging youth radicalism in Semarang. Research on the radical youth movement in Semarang during the Indonesian Revolution is still limited, with some studies highlighting events such as the 'Five-Day Battle'. This research contributes to the understanding of the youth militant movement in Semarang through a literature review from contemporary newspaper sources published in Jakarta and Semarang as well as other related literature collections. These sources are obtained from the National Library and libraries in the local area. The results of the study show that several factors affect radicalism and youth militancy in Semarang. First, their strong motivation and purpose to resist the occupation of the Japanese army and the return of the Allies. Second, the results of Japanese education for youth through military and semi-military organizations during the Japanese occupation that strengthened the military mentality. Third, the influence of the socialist-Marxist youth group organization that developed since the time of the national movement, thus making the city of Semarang known as a "red" city.

**Abstrak:** Studi ini menelaah gerakan perlawanan pemuda di Semarang pada masa awal Revolusi Indonesia, khususnya antara tahun 1945 hingga 1947, terhadap tentara Jepang dan Sekutu. Gerakan perlawanan pemuda tersebut ditandai dengan sifat militan dan radikal, yang dipengaruhi oleh berbagai faktor dari pengalaman masa lalu para pemuda. Selain dampak pendudukan Jepang, faktor ideologis seperti Sosialisme, Komunisme, Islam, dan Nasionalisme juga berperan penting dalam mendorong radikalisme pemuda di Semarang. Penelitian tentang gerakan radikal pemuda di Semarang pada masa Revolusi Indonesia masih terbatas, dengan sebagian studi hanya menyoroti peristiwa seperti 'Pertempuran Lima Hari'. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang gerakan militan pemuda di Semarang melalui kajian literatur dari sumber surat kabar kontemporer yang terbit di Jakarta dan Semarang serta koleksi pustaka terkait lainnya. Sumber-sumber tersebut diperoleh dari Perpustakaan Nasional dan perpustakaan di daerah setempat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa beberapa faktor memengaruhi radikalisme dan militansi pemuda di Semarang. Pertama, motivasi dan tujuan kuat mereka untuk melawan pendudukan tentara Jepang dan kembalinya Sekutu. Kedua, hasil pendidikan Jepang bagi pemuda melalui organisasi militer dan semi-militer selama pendudukan Jepang yang memperkuat mentalitas militer. Ketiga, pengaruh organisasi kelompok pemuda sosialis-Marxis yang berkembang sejak masa pergerakan nasional, sehingga membuat Kota Semarang dikenal sebagai kota "merah".



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## INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Revolution gave rise to the role of youth with its radical strength, both in the national and local scope. The role of these young men became a decisive historical fact. In fact, according to Anderson, the word "youth" during the revolu-

tion had a cruel and frightening image for the Dutch because, in the early days of the Indonesian independence struggle, the awareness and awakening of youth became very revolutionary (Anderson, 1988, p. 21).

The youth who fight militantly and radically are on average 15-25 years old; some are even 35. The average age of young people involved in the early days of the national revolution, including those in Semarang. At the age of 15-25, that is the average age of young people recruited and trained by the Japanese Occupation Government, in various military and semi-military organisations. For example, Seinendan, who are between 14-25 years old, the pioneer/suishintai line, who are at least 20 years old, and the TA Defence Army, who are 16-35 years old. (Notosusanto 1975, p. 45-47, 79) NN stated that young people aged 15-25 were considered to have reached a certain level of militancy, so they were ready to face the early period of the revolution and became an important driver of the Indonesian revolution. (Nugroho Notosusanto, t peta, 1975, p. 47) Anderson also stated that these young people were driven by traditional Javanese cultural factors, raised by the national movement, and strengthened by the Japanese occupation, so they were considered "mature" to play an important role during the national revolution. (Anderson 1988, p. 9 and 21) In the battle in Semarang, the youth at that time were heavily influenced by youth groups from socialist-Marxist political organisations, which were initially influenced by the "red" Islamic Sarekat Movement that grew during the national movement. Thus, Semarang is known as a "red" city. This is strengthened by the influence of underground youth organisations during the Japanese occupation (Moehkardi, 2021).

According to Crane Brinton, there were usually "preliminary signs" before the advent of revolution. In the context of the Indonesian revolution, there are three markers for the emergence of a revolution: the increase in the prices of goods, the scarcity of goods supplies, and the conflict between the ruling class and the people. Furthermore, Brinton explained that protests, pushes, propaganda, and terrorism arise from the lower classes against the ruling class to achieve their goals and increasingly aim to radically overhaul the government. (Brinton, 1952, p. 29-70) The result of the revolutionary movement will change institutions, regulations, and even values embraced in society, and then form a new independent self-identity. This situation makes them hope to radically abandon the old rules' values and build new ones. It is acknowledged by

Anderson (1988, p. 21) that the rise of the spirit of youth nationalism cannot be separated from the policy of the Japanese military government, which mobilizes youth, both semi-military and military, an educational system that teaches warrior mentality, sports, and any Japanese propaganda has created a revolutionary force ready to fight against the Allies or the Dutch. In addition to the positive impact of youth mobilisation during the Japanese occupation, it also had a negative impact that triggered the anger of the youth, which led to resistance to the Japanese army when it was declared defeated in the war. (Brinton, 1952, p. 30-35) Likewise, the youth revolutionary movement that occurred in Semarang.

Similarly, the youth revolutionary movement in Semarang was influenced by the city's historical role as a 'Red' city during the Indonesian national movement. This context fostered a radical and militant youth culture. The arrival of renowned communist figure H.J.F.M. Sneevliet to Java in 1913 and the subsequent formation of the ISDV (*Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereniging*) in 1914 significantly impacted Semarang's youth. Figures like S. Karna and Ibnu Parna, who were influential in the Angkatan Muda Republik Indonesia (AMRI), the precursor to Pesindo (*Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia*), were among those influenced by the ISDV. Another crucial factor was the emergence of prominent *peasant* leaders in Semarang during the early revolutionary period. These Kyai provided unwavering support and guidance, willingly taking on leadership roles in various youth-led Islamic resistance movements.

The militancy that emerged cannot be divorced from the rhetorical style adopted by communist socialists in their appeal to youth. Newspapers and educational platforms effectively disseminated the spirit of militancy through socialist mobilisation techniques, emphasising the legacy of communist activism while simultaneously proclaiming a distinct Islamic identity. Lin Lin Hongxuan observes that articles featuring rhetorical styles such as Daulat Ra'jat, Api Ra'jat, and Medan Moeslimin are pivotal in uplifting the spirit of popular militancy (Hongxuan, 2022, p. 33-37).

Following the defeat of Japan by the Allies, the revolutionary movement in Semarang intensified as local youth-initiated actions that prompted conflicts with Japanese soldiers seeking to maintain order. This resistance grew as they confronted the Kido Butai and Kido Yagi troops, veterans of the Papua campaign, ultimately leading to confrontations with Allied and Dutch forces. A significant

reference for this research is Ben Anderson's book, *Revolusi Pemoeda: Pendudukan Jepang dan Perlawanan di Jawa 1944-1946* (Anderson, 1988), which underscores the role of youth as a driving force in the 20th-century Indonesian revolution. Following independence, these young individuals played a crucial role in resisting the Japanese occupation and uniting to establish the Republic of Indonesia, embodying Anderson's concept of Imagined Communities.

Furthermore, Thomas Kestler (Kestler, 2023, p. 257-258) highlights how the ideals of revolutionary youth can transform power through collective action. He proposes two mechanisms that explain individual motivation for action within collective contexts: imagination and plural self-awareness. Through the lens of imagination, Kestler argues that the structure of intentionality can transition to the collective level, fostering a communal intentional subject that enhances individual self-efficacy in collective actions. Plural self-awareness is described as a mechanism that detaches intentional control from the physical body, allowing intentions-in-action to adopt a collective structure. For instance, in the German environmental movement, collective action arose from a robust imaginary combined with external conditions that facilitated a state of plural self-awareness among activists. Anderson's notion of simultaneity provides valuable insights into the conditions necessary for this phenomenon, emphasising the importance of shared perceptions and attention among group members, which can be shaped by external factors such as spatial concentration, communication, or significant events to stimulate collective action orientations.

Numerous studies have examined the complexities of the Japanese occupation, the early days of the Indonesian revolution, and the five-day battle in Semarang, each contributing to a nuanced understanding of this turbulent period in history. Aiko Kurasawa's work, *"The Dark Side of the Greater East Asian War"* (2019), stands out for its exploration of issues related to Japanese repatriation and war compensation in Indonesia. Kurasawa systematically investigates the long-lasting impacts of the Japanese occupation, highlighting unresolved challenges that arose from wartime policies. This work's strength lies in its foundation on previously undisclosed archival sources; however, it does not sufficiently address the effects of militancy and youth radicalisation that emerged from military and semi-military training during this time. In addition to Kurasawa's research, her earlier publication, *"Masyarakat dan*

*Guerra Timur Raya"* (2016), offers a broader overview of societal conditions and wartime experiences across Greater East Asia. While it includes rare photographs as part of its resources, the work often lacks the detailed analysis necessary for a deeper understanding of its themes. On the other hand, Benedict Anderson's influential *"Revolusi Pemuda"* (1988) focuses on the evolution of youth shaped by Javanese cultural factors amid the chaos of the Japanese occupation. This work is particularly significant for its relevance to the rise of youth militancy and its critical role in revolutionary battles, yet it tends to discuss these topics in general terms, failing to dissect the specific elements of youth radicalism in Semarang.

The literature addressing youth radicalism in Semarang is scant, with one notable exception being Moehkardi's *"The 1945 National Revolution in Semarang"* (2021). This work effectively illustrates the fierce resistance spirit of Semarang's youth against both Japanese forces and the returning Dutch supported by their Allies. Moehkardi's insights provide valuable context for understanding the motivations and factors that fueled youth militancy during this pivotal time.

The current research aims to shed light on how youth militancy and radicalism shaped the actions and attitudes of young individuals during the five-day battle, a topic that has been largely absent from prior studies. By exploring the causes of the significant casualties and violence during this brief but intense conflict—in which the brutality might rival that of Surabaya in 1945—the study will examine the backgrounds of supporters, their motivations, the formation of youth movements, and the broader implications of youth radicalism, deepening our understanding of this critical moment in Indonesia's history.

## **METHOD**

Revolution is an act of resistance carried out collectively and revolutionarily. According to the theory developed by Charles Tilly (1978), collective action can be divided into two types: action that uses violence and action that does not use violence. In the context of youth resistance in Semarang, using violence as the first action is more appropriate. The cause of this act of violence, according to Tilly, can be injustice and the intensity of violence. Kestler also explained this theory's development, explaining the preliminary signs so that the collective shadow of action by the masses in achieving their goals emerges (Kestler, 2023, p. 258).

The city of Semarang is a strong choice in

determining this topic, considering that the battles that occurred in this city in the early days of the revolution were one of the bloody battles and took many victims, both from the youth, residents, and the Japanese themselves. The 5-day battle at Semarang was relatively brief, shortly after the end of Japanese military rule due to defeat by the Allies. The deployment of the Kido Battalion (Kido Butai), which had just returned from the front lines of the Japanese war against the Allies in the Pacific, namely Irian Jaya (it has known as Papua nowadays), was a force known to be very brutal because of the situation and battlefield they faced before. The Kido Butai troops received courageous resistance from militant Semarang youths with radical actions. This makes the 5-day battle in Semarang no less bloody and takes many victims, like the battles that occur in other cities, such as Surabaya. The militancy and radicalism of the youth, imbued with the ideology of socialist-Marxism, led to the Japanese army facing more resistance than they had expected. However, unfortunately, in the writing of the History of the Indonesian Revolution, the battle in the city of Semarang at the beginning of the revolution seems to be less discussed in more depth, especially in seeing where radicalism and youth militancy in fighting the Japanese came from. This research raises the topic of the group.

Historical research follows a scientific methodology consisting of four primary stages: the identification and collection of sources (heuristics), followed sequentially by source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. This research relies on literary sources as the foundation of its inquiry, particularly on contemporary newspapers published in Jakarta, Semarang, and their surrounding regions between 1945 and 1949. Among the newspapers consulted are *Berita Indonesia* (1945–1946), *Kan Po* (1945), *Kedaulatan Rakyat* (1947), *Masjarakat* (1945–1946), *Min Pao* (1945–1946), *Sinar Baroe* (1943–1945), and *Warta Indonesia* (1945).

In addition to newspapers from the period under study, this investigation also incorporates various manuscripts authored by key figures, notably Bambang Soeprapto's *Kisah Pertempuran Lima Hari Digali dari Lubuk Ingatan* (1976) and Moehkardi's *Pertempuran Lima Hari Semarang 14 Oktober—19 Oktober 1945* (1975), among other sources. Furthermore, documentary materials such as private collections documenting the Five-Day Battle in Semarang, held by Bambang Soeprapto, an influential youth leader from Semarang, whose tes-

timony was recorded in an interview in 1989, are utilised.

The data extracted from these diverse sources are subjected to rigorous critical analysis to determine the documents and newspaper articles' authenticity, accuracy, and consistency. This process involves systematically comparing similar reports or writings disseminated or archived by multiple credible institutions, including the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI), the collections of the Fadli Zon Library, and the National Library of Indonesia (Perpusnas RI). Similarly, documentary evidence is examined for consistency, such as verifying whether materials from Bambang Soeprapto's family archives correspond with official accounts published by the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Indonesia (Kementerian Penerangan RI) during the 1950s, or military office records about battles in the vicinity of Semarang during the revolutionary period.

Through a comparative evaluation of these sources, this verification process yields meaningful facts that can then be reconstructed and articulated into historical writings that are academically responsible and verifiable.

## SEMARANG AT THE END OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

The conquest of the Dutch East Indies by the Japanese Army did not provide satisfaction and freedom for the Indonesian people. The presence of Japan raises a wrong prejudice, especially among young people, that Japan is nothing but a new coloniser. The policy of the Japanese occupation government only prioritised the victory of the East Asian war, resulting in increasingly severe socio-economic turmoil in Semarang. The Japanese government fully exploited agricultural products in Indonesia for the sake of the war. For example, planting castor trees encouraged the people of Semarang on March 6, 1944, to plant castor trees en masse (Sinar Baroe, 1944). This policy resulted in rice and *palawija* being a staple food source for the population, leading to decreased production, and the people began to lack food. In early 1945, the Japanese occupation government forced the people to hand over rice products. The Jawa Hokokai Residency of Semarang tried to pressure the people to sell half of their rice crops to the Japanese Occupation government. (Kan Po, 1945) The prices, quantities, and types of goods are listed and closely monitored, and the government buys at meager prices. It is also regulated in *Shucokan's* proclamation. For example, *Semarang Shu* Information No. 3 and 4,

about prices such as kidney beans, green beans, peanuts, soybeans, *gaplek*, and many more (Kan Po, 1945).

This policy raised the dissatisfaction of farmers, coupled with the prohibition of the sale of rice and other essential crops outside the Semarang area, except with a special permit under the *Semarang Shurei* regulation No. 9 of 1945. (Kan Po, 1945). Not only that, but the Japanese Military Occupation Government also took food in order to help the war; the Japanese occupation government forced the residents to collect diamonds and other valuables since December 20, 1944. (Disjarah, n.d.; Depdikbud, 1979, p. 44). The impact is that there is a shortage of food for the community when people replace rice staples with others such as banana tree humps, *iles-iles gogik*, starch, *gaplek*, cassava, leaves, and snails. There was even an issue circulating that in the south of Semarang, in Irakah and Mangkang, people were eating human flesh.

In the political field, although Prime Minister Koiso had promised independence in the future on September 7, 1944, the development of Semarang city governance did not change until the end of the Japanese occupation. Indonesians do not have the opportunity to hold high positions in local government. The change only occurred a few months before the Proclamation of Independence; there were Indonesians who were appointed as *Fuku Shucokan* (Deputy Resident) of Semarang, namely Mr. Wongsonegoro, and Mr. Kuntjoro Poerbopranoto was appointed as the Deputy Mayor (*Fuku Shico*) of the city of Semarang. When the Japanese position in Semarang was getting more complex, the mayor of Semarang was held by Mr. Iman Sudjahri. (Depdikbud, 1979, p. 44) The appointment was carried out after the issuance of Osamu Seirei No. 50/2604, which stated that *Fuku Shucokan* could be held for the Shu area and other offices. Similar regulations were issued (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1979, p. 44).

### FORGING NATIONALIST SPIRIT: SEMARANG YOUTH UNDER JAPANESE OCCUPATION

The Japanese Occupation government in Indonesia declared the region a war front in Greater East Asia as the situation in the Pacific deteriorated for Japan. To strengthen their defence, they recruited Indonesian youth into various organisations, including Barisan Pelajar (Gakutotai), Barisan Pelopor (Suishintai), Organisasi Wanita (Fujinkai), and Barisan Hizbullah. Local youth initiatives like Gasemse (Gabungan Sekolah-sekolah Menengah

Semarang) emerged, both openly and clandestinely. Gakutotai, an advanced school-level organisation, provided basic military training as an intra-curricular activity, encompassing drills like *kyoren* (marching) and *sento kyoren* (wars). The Japanese government aimed to cultivate potential recruits for various military institutions, including Heiho (Tentara Pembantu), Heiho Kaigun (auxiliary soldiers of the Japanese Navy), PETA (Pembela Tanah Air), and Jibakutai (Barisan Berani Mati), which was formed on December 8, 1944 (Notosusanto, 1979, p. 47; Asmadi, 1985, p. 37).

Nearly two million youth were mobilised and underwent military training designed to instil discipline, sacrifice, and an anti-Western fighting spirit, which became essential to their mental and physical outlook (Asselin, Pierre, and Henk, 2022, p. 73). The recruitment process aimed to channel the energies and aspirations of Japanese-occupied Indonesian youth toward the war effort.

Another notable youth organisation was Suishintai (Barisan Pelopor), which, while not military in nature, included members who received basic military training. Established in Jakarta on November 1, 1944, Suishintai was led by nationalist figures such as Soekarno and engaged youth aged 20 years and older who demonstrated a strong sense of nationalism (Disjarah, n.d.). The Hizbullah Front, formed in September 1944, targeted young people from religious circles, establishing a chapter in Semarang on December 4, 1944 (Disjarah, n.d.). Additionally, an Islamic Education Park initiative by the Semarang Islamic community aimed to inspire the ideals of an independent Indonesia, supported by both Islamic and nationalist figures like Arifiani, Soenaryo, Poedjotomo, Abdul Goffar, Winarno Danoeatmodjo, and Mr. Iman Sudjahri (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 58-59).

However, restrictions imposed by the Japanese occupation government on national movement organisations led to the emergence of underground groups by 1943. Three key underground youth group headquarters were established: one on Jalan Bojong 151 (now Jalan Pemuda 151), coordinated by Bambang Soeprapto; another on Jalan Bojong 89 at the Soldier Auxiliary Agency Building, managed by S. Broto and chaired by Winarno Danoeatmodjo; and a third at the Dr. Cipto Student Park Building (now Samudra Hotel) (Soeprapto, 1976).

The Semarang underground movement was significantly influenced by S. Broto's collaboration with Husein Mutahar (H. Mutahar). They camou-

flaged their activities as a musical orchestra comprised of youth railway employees to gather anti-Japanese young people. This movement underscored a political struggle aimed at igniting the spirit of an independent Indonesia, quickly expanding its network throughout Semarang (Soeprapto, 1976).

Connections formed between Semarang youth movements and those in Jakarta since 1943 further galvanised activism and aggressiveness in Semarang. Notable figures like Bambang Soeprapto became instrumental in uniting these movements, forming links to Sukarni's and Syahrir's networks through representatives like Dr. Soebandrio. Sent by Sukarni and Chairul Saleh, employees of the Jakarta Sendenbu (propaganda agency), Bambang sought to organise revolutionary youth forces in Semarang ahead of Indonesian independence. Upon his arrival, he contacted various youth factions in Semarang, such as the Surya Wirawan (Parindra youth group), Gerindro youth, and Laskar PAI (Partai Arab Indonesia), to disseminate information and recruit allies (Soeprapto, 1976).

The operational scope of the Sendenbu in Semarang covered three residency areas: Pekalongan, Pati, and Semarang. Under Bambang Soeprapto's leadership, these youth groups coordinated their efforts to advocate for independence, reflecting the complex interplay of military and political activism during the Japanese occupation. The initiatives fostered a sense of agency among Indonesian youth and laid the groundwork for the broader national movement toward independence.

In summary, mobilising Indonesian youth under Japanese occupation reveals a multifaceted approach to military training and political activism. The genesis of various organisations—ranging from formal military training outfits to underground movements—illustrates a complex response to the challenges posed by the occupation. This period is crucial for understanding the struggle for identity and autonomy among Indonesian youth, who adapted to their circumstances and actively sought to shape their future and that of their nation. These movements collectively reflect a significant historical moment as Indonesia transitioned toward independence amidst external pressures and internal aspirations.

#### **MAP OF THE YOUTH MOVEMENT IN SEMARANG**

The Semarang youth movement emerged as a coalition of socialist political party members, particularly Marxists and nationalists, influenced significantly

by figures like Sneevliet and other communist leaders in the Dutch East Indies. Key actors from the ISDV (*Indonesische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeniging*) actively recruited students and workers, establishing an educated base within the movement (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang 1977, 57). Influential figures such as S. Karna and Ibnu Parna from the AMRI (Angkatan Muda Republik Indonesia) were pivotal in mobilising youth against Japanese occupation, guided by revolutionary theories they studied (Moehkardi, 1975, p. 7; Moehkardi, 2021).

Ibnu Parna articulated a theory of revolution in *Workers' Magazine* No. 33, which underscored the necessity of mass mobilisation to seize power and thwart Japanese forces. He advocated for allowing people to express their grievances against Japan within defined limits (Moehkardi, 1975, p. 7; Moehkardi, 2021). This theoretical framework found practical application during the Five-Day Battle in Semarang, igniting a youth movement that included both socialist and Islamic youth from various local boarding schools. Although a faction of Islamic groups, influenced by Semaun, faced suppression, they actively resisted Japanese occupation across areas like Parakan, Weleri, and Kadilangu. The harsh measures by the Japanese military, including the torture of captured leaders in *kenpeitai* camps, effectively stifled these efforts (Soeprapto, 1976).

Following the proclamation of Indonesian independence, the role of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) became increasingly significant as youth sought spiritual protection during conflicts. The Japanese occupation further complicated these dynamics, with the government displaying a ruthless approach toward the underground resistance. Amidst preparation for the East Asian War, the Japanese Occupation Government in Semarang established semi-military and military youth organisations. On April 29, 1943, organisations like *Seinendan* (Barisan Pemuda) and *Keibodan* (Barisan Pemuda Kampung or Barisan Pembantu Polisi) were officially instituted, recruiting Indonesian youth aged 14-25, with Semarang contributing around 600 members (Sinar Baroe, 1943). These groups were classified by residency levels and fields of work, tasked with maintaining local order and security.

Furthermore, military organisations such as PETA (Pembela Tanah Air), Heiho (Pembantu Prajurit), and Kaigun Heiho (Naval Assistants) were formed to prepare for potential conflicts with the Allies during the Great Asian War. Established

on October 3, 1943, through Osamu Seirei Regulation No. 44/2603, the PETA organisation structured itself within the Semarang Residency area, subsequently divided into two Daidan: Dai Itji Daidan in Semarang and Dai Ni Daidan in Weleri (Depdikbud, 1978, p. 189). With the Heiho unit established on April 22, 1943, its members were military-trained personnel who served essential roles within Japanese military units (Notosusanto, 1979, p. 62-65). Despite being relegated to menial labour, they faced the same frontline combat risks as Japanese soldiers. However, the precise number of Heiho from Semarang or Central Java remains undocumented, alongside uncertainty about their leadership structure (Pusat Penelitian Sejarah dan Budaya 1979, p. 25).

Together, these elements showcase the multifaceted response of Semarang youth to both colonial and wartime pressures, highlighting their critical role in the region's resistance efforts.

### **SEMARANG YOUTH WELCOMES THE PROCLAMATION**

On August 14, 1945, the atmosphere in Semarang shifted dramatically as news of Japan's defeat by the Allies sparked a fervent spirit of independence among the local youth. A technician at Hosokyo, the Semarang radio station, clandestinely monitored broadcasts from Tokyo on August 13, heightening the sense of urgency and collective hope for freedom among the populace (Department of Commerce, 1952, p. 148). However, many leaders in Semarang remained sceptical about the validity of this news, prompting them to await official confirmation from Jakarta. In the interim, as the youth sought to clarify the situation, five envoys, including Bambang Soeprapto (former chairman of AMRI), Martadi, Indardjo, Soedjono, and Abdul Salam, were dispatched to Jakarta to verify these developments (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 89).

Despite the existence of fragmented youth organisations such as AMRI in Semarang, API (Indonesian Youth Force) in Jakarta, and the Youth of the Republic of Indonesia in Surabaya, a sense of dissatisfaction lingered regarding their separate movements. To unify their efforts towards the goal of independence, AMRI convened a pivotal meeting in Yogyakarta on November 9-10, 1945, even amidst escalating tensions with returning Dutch forces. This Youth Congress highlighted the proactive stance of youth in the face of impending change. On August 15, 1945, a meeting in Semarang brought together youth representatives, in-

cluding figures like Ibn Parna and S. Karna—who later participated in the FDR/PKI Movement in 1948. They urged immediate action to declare independence in Semarang, but government officials proved reluctant, hesitating due to Japan's ongoing military presence and control (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 89).

The enthusiasm of Semarang's youth surged on August 17, 1945, when news of the Indonesian Proclamation reached the city. Broadcast by the Jakarta Domei News Agency, the proclamation also echoed through Semarang and was facilitated by the operations of the local Domei News Agency. Sjarief Soelaiman, a journalist from Domei Semarang, quickly acted to disseminate this critical information after confirming it, joined by M.S. Mintardjo, who rushed to the Jawa Hokokai building to relay the news (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 22-23; Depdikbud, 1979, p. 45-46; Soekirno, 1956, p. 244). Concurrently, a meeting of the Preparatory Committee for an Independent Indonesia, led by Mr. Wongsonegoro, was taking place. He announced the proclamation to the assembly, which elicited an outpouring of mixed emotions: joy, pride, and unity. The atmosphere transformed into a celebratory frenzy, with attendees cheering "Hidup Bung Karno," "Hidup Bung Hatta," and "Hidup Bangsa Indonesia," culminating in the singing of "Indonesia Raya," the national anthem (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 22-23; Depdikbud, 1979, p. 45-46; Soekirno, 1956, p. 244).

In the aftermath of the proclamation, the youth of Semarang acted swiftly to facilitate the transfer of power. They sought to spread the news of independence widely, utilising local mosques for announcements preceding Friday sermons. This surge of grassroots activism caught Japanese authorities off guard and incited their wrath. Officials at Hosokyo were summoned for accountability, while the Japanese imposed stringent censorship measures on the Sinar Baroe newspaper, the only publication operating in the region at the time. Undeterred, the staff at Sinar Baroe initiated a special newsletter to announce the proclamation, under the direction of Hetami, the editor-in-chief. When Japanese authorities discovered these efforts, Hetami mobilised high school students to distribute the bulletin, effectively circumventing censorship and ensuring that the proclamation reached the broader population of Semarang (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p.

24-26). Remarkably, details of the proclamation were published in *Sinar Baroe* by August 18, 1945 (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 26).

Additionally, the dissemination of the proclamation leveraged innovative communication methods, such as telegrams sent by railway officials from the Semarang-Tawang Station to various locations throughout Central Java (Interview with Poernomo Soemarto, 1989). The youth reacted with unprecedented enthusiasm, instinctively mobilizing into action upon hearing the proclamation broadcast. On August 19, 1945, a group of young activists led by Ibn Parna approached Mr. Wongsonegoro, urging him to facilitate the takeover of the Semarang region, demonstrating their readiness to confront any barriers to independence.

The rise of a dynamic youth movement in Semarang during this critical juncture not only reflects their influential role in Indonesia's struggle for independence but also highlights the innovative approaches they employed to disseminate information and mobilise support. Their collective actions were essential in fostering a spirit of agency among the youth, who were determined to challenge colonial rule and assert their nation's autonomy. This historical episode serves as a vital reminder of the power of youth engagement in shaping national destinies.

#### **FORMATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA SEMARANG REGION**

The proclamation of independence on August 17, 1945, was a critical juncture in Indonesia's struggle for sovereignty. In the city of Semarang, both youth activists and nationalist government figures convened to discuss the implications of this landmark event. Notable attendees included Mr. Wongsonegoro, Dr. Soebandrio, Dr. Darmasetiawan, and Soetrisno Soedomo from the government sector, alongside key youth representatives such as Bambang Soeprapto, S. Karna, Ibnu Parna, and Martadi. The discussions revealed a stark contrast in perspectives, with the youth group urging immediate power transfer from the Japanese occupiers, while older officials urged caution (Sumantri, 1960, p. 82; Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 30-31). Ultimately, this meeting resulted in the issuance of Proclamation I by Mr. Wongsonegoro, the deputy resident, affirming that as of August 19, 1945, at 13:00, the Regional Government of the Republic of Indonesia would take effect in Semarang (Panitia Penyusunan Se-

jarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 30-31; *Sinar Baru*, 1945). The announcement was rapidly disseminated through the second special broadcast, reaching a wide audience of Semarang residents and effectively informing them of the establishment of the Regional Government.

In the following days, supporters of Indonesian independence acted swiftly to align with directives from the central government in Jakarta, which called for the formation of the Indonesian National Committee (KNI), following the decisions made during the PPKI session on August 22. By August 28, KNI Semarang Residency was established at the Jawa Hookokai Building, comprising 32 members, among them Mr. Soejoedi, Winarno Danoeatmodjo, Dr. Darmasetiawan, and Mr. Iman Sudjahri, with Mr. Wongsonegoro taking the chairmanship (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 80). Following this, the Semarang City KNI was formed on August 30, 1945, with Mr. Koentjoro Poerbipranoto as chair. This committee was designed to be representative of various sectors of the city's population, including movement circles, civil servants, educators, traders, police officers, and community leaders, thus encompassing a wide spectrum of community interests (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 80).

On August 18, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia announced the 1945 Constitution alongside the appointment of regional heads across the country, including Mr. Wongsonegoro as the Governor of Central Java. Armed with this authority, Mr. Wongsonegoro, as the head of government for the Semarang Region, issued his first proclamation, which was broadcast via radio. This proclamation outlined the establishment of the Regional Government of the Republic of Indonesia and emphasised the importance of maintaining public order, imposing strict penalties for those who violated the established authority (*Sinar Baroe*, 1945; Depdikbud, 1978, p. 22; *The Organising Committee of the Five-Day Battle in Semarang*, 1977, p. 32). The day after this proclamation, a further announcement was made, referred to as Proclamation III. This communication included directives prohibiting the export of food and clothing items from warehouses managed by the Keizabu (Economic Affairs Office) without prior authorisation from the Regional Government of Semarang (*The Organising Committee of the Five-Day Battle in Semarang*, 1977, p. 32).

As the government took shape, Mr. Wongsonegoro transitioned from his previous po-



sition as deputy resident to the newly appointed Resident of Semarang, succeeding K. Yamanuchi. Concurrently, Mr. Iman Soedjahri was appointed as the mayor of Semarang, replacing Nikokichi Arima. Iman Soedjahri had previously led the Labour Office and overseen religious affairs within the Semarang Residency government (The Organising Committee of the Five-Day Battle in Semarang, 1977, p. 36-37; Sinar Baroe, 1945). A functional government was formalised in early October 1945, as the "Semarang Regional Government Regulation" No. I came into effect on October 10, 1945 (Sinar Baroe 1945). The movement to seize Japanese control was led by youth groups, who mobilised through a meeting at the Semarang Cinema Building (Sumantri, 1960, p. 83).

The shift in power dynamics, however, elicited varied reactions from the local Chinese community, which constituted a significant demographic in Semarang. Historically, the Chinese community in the region had been well-established and stable (Suryadinata, 1981, p. 89-90). Even in the early days of the Indonesian revolution, many Chinese organisations, such as Chung Hua Hui, continued to operate under principles reminiscent of the Dutch East Indies era. Nevertheless, there were also members of the Chinese community who expressed support for the Republic of Indonesia, with some having harboured aspirations for Indonesian independence since the Dutch colonial period. These individuals were often affiliated with organisations advocating for Indonesian nationalism.

The implications of these developments in Semarang were multifaceted. The youth-led initiatives reflected a strong desire for immediate change and a break from colonial legacies. Their proactive stance exemplified the fervent nationalist sentiments that were sweeping the nation. Similarly, the establishment of a representative KNI illustrated an effort to include diverse voices in the governance of the new Republic. Conversely, the cautious approach of the older generation showcased the complexities inherent in navigating a transition of power from colonisers to a fledgling government. As the new authorities sought to establish legitimacy and order, the various tensions present in Semarang's social fabric came to the fore. Ethnic relations, particularly with the Chinese community, became increasingly significant as the divide between collaboration and resistance defined responses to Indonesia's independence movement. The youth's actions to seize control facilitated greater autonomy over local governance but also highlighted the challenges of achieving consensus amid diverse community

interests.

The early formation of the Republic in Semarang not only played a pivotal role in Indonesia's national narrative but also served as a case study of localised revolution, illustrating the interplay between different ethnic groups and the role of grassroots activism in shaping a new political landscape. In conclusion, the historical events of August and September 1945 in Semarang offer valuable insight into the broader Indonesian independence movement, highlighting the urgency, enthusiasm, and complexity of the fight for nationhood as a diverse array of actors emerged to claim their stake in a newly independent Indonesia.

#### **THE FORMATION OF RADICAL REVOLUTIONARY FORCES**

After hearing of Japan's defeat, Angkatan Muda Republik Indonesia (AMRI) began to gather to negotiate and prepare for the possibilities that arose. They agreed that Indonesia's independence was a right and a problem for the Indonesian people. On the evening of August 15, the Jakarta youth envoy, Anwir from the Jakarta Railway Youth Force (Angkatan Muda Kereta Api/AMKA), became a member of the Menteng 31 Dormitory. He spread the news of Japan's defeat and instructed them to prepare for the struggle, which was in line with the one held in Jakarta. (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 88)

The Semarang youth group called for the implementation of unity of action; all the people's forces must be gathered and deployed with the spearhead of the youth. S. Karna was elected as the chairman of the Youth Force, and the organisation was perfected. (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 88) On August 19-20, a lightning conference was held, resulting in S. Karna, a Japanese, being arrested as the leader. In addition, they immediately surrounded the building and arrested several youth figures, namely Ibn Parna, Sitorus, and I. Djaja (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 88).

The arrest of the Youth leaders caused the Semarang Youth Force to be divided into two; the first was the revolutionary one, taking the name Angkatan Muda, led by Soegiono, Taroeno, Wibowo, Abubakar, and others. While others are moderate under the name of the Youth of the Republic of Indonesia (AMRI), led by Bambang Soeprapto, Cipto, Patah, Soeroso, and others. (Departemen Pendidikan, 1951, p. 109) On August 22, the arrested figures were successfully expelled,

and they tried to unite the two youth groups above under the name of AMRI, led by S. Karna, I. Djaja, and Patah. (Departemen Pendidikan, 1951, p. 109) The goal is to put aside the struggle, unite in action, and facilitate movement and coordination.

AMRI immediately organised actions, expanded the organisation throughout Central Java, and took an essential part in the struggle. The steps taken were to take power from Japan into the hands of the Republic of Indonesia and AMRI, with all levels of society trying to disarm the Japanese Army. (Warta Indonesia 1945; Deppen 1952, p. 108-109; Soekirno 1956, p. 88) AMRI continued to strive to improve the organisation; in early October 1945, the AMRI conference throughout Central Java was held at the Jomblang Stadium in Semarang (now the Pentecostal Church). (Warta Indonesia 1945; Deppen 1952, p. 108-109; Soekirno 1956, p. 88).

Youth groups at the beginning of the revolution did not yet have a unified organisational forum. They are still unsatisfied with those standing alone, such as AMRI in Semarang, API (*Angkatan Pemuda Indonesia*) in Jakarta, Youth of the Republic of Indonesia in Surabaya, etc. AMRI wanted a youth meeting to unite the interests of the proclamation, so on November 9-10, 1945, amid the heated resistance against the return of the Dutch Army, the Youth Congress was held in Jogjakarta. Important results, among others, the merger of like-minded youth organisations, for example, Pesindo (Pemuda Sosial Indonesia), where seven youth organisations joined, namely, API (Angkatan Perang Indonesia), AMRI (Angkatan Muda Republik Indonesia), PRI (Pemuda Republik Indonesia), GERPRI (Gerakan Pemuda Republik Indonesia), AMKA (Angkatan Muda Kereta Api), AM (Angkatan Muda), AMPTT (Angkatan Muda Pos, Tilpon dan Tilgrap), AMGL (Angkatan Muda Gas dan Listrik) (Departemen Penerangan, 1952, p. 111). There is also a combination of 23 organisations with different patterns in one federation, namely the Youth Congress of the Republic of Indonesia. Some of these organisations are affiliated with class bodies such as Barisan Banteng, Hisbullah Sabilillah, Lasykar Rakyat, and so on, all of which have branches in Semarang. (Departemen Penerangan, 1952, p. 111).

The government immediately established the People's Security Agency to handle the security problems of the Indonesian people based on the decision of the PPKI (Indonesian Independence Preparatory Committee) meeting in Jakarta on August 22, 1945. President Soekarno's appeal encour-

aged former members of PETA, *Heiho*, sailors, and other young people to register as members of the BKR. BKR was formed from the Shu (Residency) level to the Tonari Gumi (Neighbourhood Circle) level. (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 34-35; Pusat Penelitian Sejarah dan Budaya 1979, p. 78).

The armed forces in Semarang, particularly the Special Police Unit (*Tokubetsu Kaisatsutai*), had about 60 to 150 personnel. Additionally, a group of former *Kaigun* (Navy) and *Heiho* members from Malang, totalling approximately 50, escaped from their dormitory after being disarmed by the Japanese. They arrived in Semarang on August 25, 1945, carrying weapons and vehicles. In Semarang, youth leaders like S. Broto proposed forming the Barisan Serobot to seize power from the Japanese and arrest collaborators. The *Barisan Serobot*, led by Mardjuki, consisted of four branches covering various areas, with *Barisan Serobot I* headquartered at Bojong 89 under Commander Ahmad Yadau. (A.W. Sardjono). (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 95).

*Barisan Serobot* greatly helped AMRI in the struggle, including sealing and taking over buildings and offices that Japan still controlled. Then they confiscated cars and disarmed Japanese weapons both on the road and in companies, such as in Peterongan (East Semarang), Citarum (North Semarang), in several areas of Candi Baru (South Semarang), and even at Japanese guard posts, such as at Kalibanteng Airport (West Semarang), Bugangan (North Semarang), and so on. (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 95) *Barisan Serobot* became an influential movement and was able to take over government buildings and weapons belonging to the Japanese. The first step taken was through an envoy to negotiate with the Japanese side; if facing a stalemate in negotiations, the masses of the people could storm into the concentration of Japanese troops and seize them so that physical battles could no longer be avoided. (Soekirno 1956, p. 88) In a short time, the youth managed to control all positions, offices, and companies that the Japanese initially controlled.

#### THE FIVE-DAY BATTLE IN SEMARANG

The aggressive campaign by Indonesian youth and the BKR (Badan Keamanan Rakyat) in Semarang against Japanese forces stands as a pivotal moment in Indonesia's struggle for independence. This confrontation, which unfolded in October 1945, was marked by intense conflict and profound sacrifice, depicting the fervour and determination of the In-

Indonesian population to reclaim their sovereignty. The tension began with the youth's attempts to disarm Japanese soldiers from the Kido Battalion and Yagi Battalion who were encamped in Semarang as they travelled from Papua to Jakarta. Major Kido Sinichiro led the Kido Butai, while General Nakamura commanded the Yagi Battalion. Uniquely positioned as front-line troops with extensive combat experience in Papua, the Yagi Battalion formed a formidable force. Their reluctance to relinquish arms, fueled by misinformation regarding Indonesian intentions, set the stage for a volatile clash. Reports indicated the Japanese forces comprised around 2000 soldiers (Sumantri 1960, p. 139-140).

Initial efforts by the Indonesian youth to negotiate the surrender of Japanese weapons in Jatingaleh were met with deceit. The delegation, led by Mr. Wongsonegoro, engaged in discussions with Kido Butai, who feigned cooperation by handing over weapons that were ultimately ineffective—either empty or damaged. This act enraged the youth and ignited conflicts between small groups of Indonesian fighters and Japanese soldiers (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 107).

Parallel to these events, the AMRI Semarang orchestrated a Youth Conference that unified voices across Java, calling for the expulsion of both Japanese forces and their Dutch collaborators. In light of this fervent sentiment, shelters were established at Jurnatan Prison and Bulu Prison to accommodate those deemed threats to Japanese occupation (Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 107). On October 14, 1945, bold actions erupted when youth from the Taman Siswa Economic College seized a building in Candi Baru that previously housed Japanese officers. This act prompted a swift response from Japanese soldiers, leading to the capture of many youths by the Nakamura Butai from Magelang (Soekarni, 1956, p. 94; Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 127).

In a desperate bid to quell growing unrest, the Japanese arrested Mr. Wongsonegoro as a hostage, further inciting the flames of rebellion among the youth. Panic ensued when rumours spread alleging that Japanese forces had poisoned local water supplies, culminating in the tragic death of a local doctor, Dr Karjadi, during a water inspection (Soekarni 1956, p. 94). In a surge of rage, the youths retaliated by capturing approximately 400 Japanese civilians from the Cepiring Sugar Factory, a site that had evolved into a weapons repair facility, indicative of the tensions between the occupiers and local

populations (Soekarni 1956, p. 94; Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, 1977, p. 127; Notosusanto 1979, p. 140).

Reacting to the unrest and underestimating the resolve of the Indonesian fighters, Kido Butai launched an offensive into Semarang. Following intelligence reports of a coordinated plan among Indonesian leaders to seize remaining Japanese weapons, Kido Butai executed a preemptive strike against Semarang, aiming to quell any signs of rebellion in the wake of Indonesia's proclamation of independence (Notosusanto 1979, p. 140-141).

The Japanese army's offensive unfolded in two main thrusts. One faction advanced along Jalan Oei Tiong Ham (now Jalan Gajah Mada) toward the TKR dormitory, while another group targeted Gergaji (Central Semarang) and Purusara Hospital, attacking hospital staff (Kodam VIII Diponegoro Military Disjarah 1977, p. 222). This tactical assault not only aimed to seize weapons from the People's Security Army but also served to terrorise the civilian population. As chaos erupted, Japanese troops executed indiscriminate murders against youths, police, and students, setting homes ablaze in a stark demonstration of power (Kodam VIII Diponegoro Military Disjarah 1977, p. 222-223).

The brutality of the Kido Butai's assault reverberated throughout Semarang, attracting reinforcements from youth groups across the archipelago. Young fighters joined from locations such as Genuk, Demak, Pati, Cepu, and others from the Southeast, including Purwodadi, Surakarta, Jogjakarta, Magelang, and Ambarawa, as well as those from the West, like Kendal, Pekalongan, and Purwokerto (Soekirno 1956, p. 96). Accounts document staggering casualties, with estimates ranging from 20,000 Indonesian fatalities and 500 Japanese deaths, illustrating the devastating toll of the five-day battle, which ultimately marked one of the bloodiest confrontations in Indonesia's early independence history (Notosusanto 1979, p. 140). Efforts to negotiate a ceasefire were begun by Mr. Wongsonegoro, illustrating the complexities of the struggle as leadership attempted to navigate through conflict towards a semblance of resolution. However, the fierce resistance displayed by Indonesian youth during these harrowing days in Semarang serves as a testament to their unyielding quest for freedom, propelling the narrative of Indonesia's fight for sovereignty forward.

This battle not only significantly impacted the course of Indonesia's independence movement but also symbolised the broader struggle against colonial oppression. The sacrifices of those involved

in the Semarang Five-Day Battle continue to resonate, reminding future generations of the importance of resilience and solidarity in the face of adversity.

## CONCLUSION

Several important factors influenced the radicalism and militancy of youth in the Five-Day War in Semarang. First, they had a strong motivation and goal to fight the Japanese and Allied Army due to the harsh occupation of the Japanese army during the war and the Dutch attempt to return by riding on the Allies. Second, in addition to the pressure of the Japanese military occupation, on the other hand, there is the strengthening of the mentality of the youth through military and semi-military training applied to young people between the ages of 15 and 25, through organisations formed by Japan. Third, socialist-Marxist youth group organizations also influenced youth radicalism and militancy, which developed since the national movement. This makes Semarang City known as a "red" city during the national movement. At the beginning of the revolution in Semarang, there were still supporters of the school who were strongly influenced by youth groups from Jakarta, such as Sukarni's group. The influence of Marxist socialist youth was seen in the labour and student organisations that dominated the youth resistance in the battle in Semarang.

These actions were aimed at expelling the Japanese and relentlessly resisting the return of Dutch colonial forces to defend their newly gained independence. The five-day battle of Semarang, which marked the beginning of the Indonesian National Revolution, showcased the courage and determination of the Semarang youth. Despite facing overwhelming odds, the youth of Semarang continued to fight for their independence. Their sacrifices and unwavering spirit laid the foundation for the Indonesian nation.

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