

TAN MALAKA: COMMUNIST PIONEER OF THE REPUBLIC

Sofyka Putriani¹, M. Faiz Muzakki², Zainuddin Lubis³, M. Raffi Batubara⁴,
Akbar Rizki⁵, Rayvand Egintha Sembiring⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5,6} SMAS Al Azhar Medan

Email: sofikaputtri@gmail.com, mfzmkki@gmail.com, lubiszainuddin87@gmail.com, mrafi35batubara@gmail.com, akbarrizkybos@gmail.com, rayvan751@gmail.com

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Abstract

Tan Malaka, a revolutionary figure in Indonesian history, is celebrated for his ability to integrate communism, nationalism, and Islamic values. Through his works, *Naar de Republiek* and *Madilog*, he laid the foundation for a just and democratic society that emphasizes social welfare and education. This article revisits his contributions to Indonesia's independence movement and explores the contemporary relevance of his ideas in addressing socio-economic disparities. By analyzing his engagement with Islamic movements and critiques of colonial capitalism, this study positions Tan Malaka as not only a communist but also a unifying figure for Indonesia's ideological diversity.

Keywords: *Communist Pioneers of the Republic*

Introduction

Tan Malaka (1897-1949) was an Indonesian revolutionary whose ideas were ahead of his time. A visionary, he is renowned for his efforts to build a state system based on social justice, equal rights, and education. However, Tan Malaka's name is often marginalized in official documents of Indonesian history. This article aims to examine Tan Malaka's thoughts through a historical lens, focusing on his work, his interactions with Islamic movements, and the relevance of his thoughts in overcoming the socio-economic disparities that exist in Indonesia today.

Analysis of Tan Malaka's Thoughts in Historical Context

1. Criticism of Colonialism and Capitalism

Critique of Colonialism and Capitalism In *Naar de Republiek* Indonesia, Tan Malaka strongly criticized colonial capitalism which he said had turned humans into slaves. He wrote: "Independence does not only mean replacing foreign colonizers with local governments but also freeing the people from economic and political exploitation" [1]. Tan Malaka viewed colonialism as a form of exploitation that concentrated wealth in the hands of a few. He believed that the struggle for independence must include a structural revolution that included the redistribution of wealth and land ownership to the peasantry. Other scholars, such as Kahin, note that Tan Malaka's approach reflected the global struggle against imperialism, which was also a major theme of the international revolutionary movement of his time.[3]

2. Communism Integrated with Nationalism and Islam

Compared to other revolutionary figures because he did not reject local values. His interaction with Muhammadiyah showed that he believed in the harmony of Western ideologies such as communism and Islamic values. According to him, Islam can be a tool to empower society while strengthening national identity[4].

3. Education as a Pillar of Revolution

Tan Malaka introduced the concept of education based on logic and materialism as a tool of liberation. He believed that ignorance was the most effective tool of colonization. By building an educated society, Indonesia could free itself from dependence on foreign powers. Tan Malaka also emphasized the importance of education to combat superstition and feudal ideological patterns that he believed were hampering the development of Indonesian society [1].

The Relevance of Tan Malaka's Thoughts for Today's Indonesia

1. Redistribution of Wealth and Natural Resources

Tan Malaka's thoughts on collective ownership of natural resources can be applied to modern policies, such as collective management through cooperatives or BUMDes (village-owned enterprises). Research by Susanto and Haryanto (2020) shows that community-based resource redistribution has succeeded in reducing poverty in several regions in Indonesia [5].

2. Education to Reduce Inequality

Education remains a fundamental problem in Indonesia. Tan Malaka emphasized education that empowers, not just meets the demands of the labor market. His ideas are relevant to modern education programs that emphasize the development of critical thinking and creativity. Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2023) shows that the educational disparity between urban and rural areas is still high, which strengthens the relevance of Tan Malaka's concept [6].

Additional Enrichment and Criticism

1. Weaknesses of Political Strategy

Tan Malaka often faced criticism for his less than pragmatic political strategies, which often caused him to clash with other movement figures. This article could be expanded by analyzing how this influenced his role in Indonesian political history.

2. Emphasis on Global Dimension

As a figure inspired by Leninism, Tan Malaka was also connected to the global anti-colonial movement. This international role can be explored further to understand its significance in the context of world history.

Conclusion

Tan Malaka was a revolutionary figure whose ideas remain relevant to the challenges of contemporary Indonesia. He offered a visionary view of social justice, education, and wealth redistribution that can serve as a reference in designing modern policies. Despite facing political obstacles during his lifetime, Tan Malaka's legacy of thought remains an inspiration for the next generation in building a more just and prosperous Indonesia.

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