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RESISTANCE THROUGH THE PEN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF PRIJAJI FIELD IN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT (1907-1914)

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ABSTRAK

This research aims to examine the role of Medan Prijaji, a newspaper founded by Tirta Adhi Soerjo in 1907, in the anti-colonial movement during the period 1907-1914. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a critical historical approach through literature study. The research results show that Medan Prijaji not only functions as a medium of information but also as a symbolic public space that enables socio-political mobilization. This newspaper became a catalyst in voicing criticism against colonialism and building community solidarity to achieve social change. These findings also highlight the importance of Medan Prijaji as a cultural resistance tool in facing cultural homogenization due to colonial domination. This research makes an important contribution to the study of socio-political history, particularly regarding the role of media in building resistance and solidarity. Moreover, these findings are relevant for understanding the potential of modern media as a tool of resistance in the current context of globalization.

I. INTRODUCTION

During the colonial period of the Dutch East Indies, mass media played a strategic role in shaping public opinion and became a tool for political struggle for the indigenous population. Medan Prijaji, a newspaper founded by Tirta Adhi Soerjo in 1907, was one of the most influential indigenous media outlets. Not only as a medium of information, Medan Prijaji also functioned as an instrument of social and political mobilization, unlike other newspapers that tended to maintain the colonial status quo. With the courage to voice criticism against exploitative and discriminatory

colonial policies, Medan Prijaji became a symbol of resistance in the Indonesian press in the early 20th century. (Sarkowi & Otoman, 2018).

The period from 1907 to 1914 was an important phase in the history of the Indonesian national movement. Dissatisfaction with colonial policies such as the Cultuurstelsel and forced labor, which oppressed the lives of the indigenous people, created social-political tensions. In this situation, the mass media became a vital tool for voicing dissatisfaction and fighting against injustice. Medan Prijaji seized this momentum to fight for the people's rights, combat racial discrimination, and advocate for the rights of exploited workers. (Karim & Siregar, 2023). This newspaper became a symbolic public space that allowed for the expression of criticism and collective solidarity against the colonial system.

The success of Medan Prijaji in building a discourse of resistance is inseparable from the visionary figure of Tirta Adhi Soerjo, who believed that the press has great power in shaping public opinion. Tirta used Medan Prijaji to deliver sharp critiques against the colonial government and to raise political awareness among the indigenous population. Besides serving as an advocacy tool, this newspaper also became a medium to mobilize collective actions that fought for social justice and civil rights. (Kosasih, 2013). Through its articles, Tirta invites the public to unite in facing colonial oppression.

The influence of Medan Prijaji spread widely, becoming a catalyst for the emergence of national movement organizations such as Budi Utomo and Sarekat Islam. This newspaper bridged various social groups and widely disseminated ideas of resistance in the Dutch East Indies. In this context, Medan Prijaji not only served as a conveyor of information but also as a strategic instrument that built solidarity and national identity among the indigenous population. This role makes Medan Prijaji very significant in the history of Indonesia's struggle. (Hakim, 2020).

This research aims to analyze the strategic role of Medan Prijaji in socio-political mobilization during the colonial period, highlighting how this newspaper used rhetoric and communication strategies to influence the political awareness of the indigenous population. Moreover, this research fills the gap in the literature that has predominantly focused on biographical history or the chronology of events. (Dahm, 1991; Adams, 1995). Thus, this research makes a significant contribution to the study of Indonesia's socio-political history and offers new insights into the role of the media in shaping resistance discourse and national identity amidst colonial dominance.

II. METHODS

This research is a historical study or a descriptive qualitative study. Historical research is used because this study focuses on analyzing the role of the Medan Prijaji newspaper during a specific period in history, namely between 1907-1912, which is related to the anti-colonial movement. The approaches used are historical and media studies approaches. The historical

approach is necessary to analyze the social, political, and economic context during the 1907-1912 period in the Dutch East Indies, while the media studies approach is used to analyze how Medan Prijaji, as a print media, played a role in building the narrative of resistance against colonialism. This research draws from Primary Data: Articles, editorials, opinions, and newspaper publications of Medan Prijaji from the period 1907-1912. Secondary Data: Books, journals, and research articles related to the history of the anti-colonial movement in Indonesia, particularly those concerning the role of the press. In addition, historical archives, personal letters, and official documents from the colonial period are also used as secondary data.

The data collection techniques used are library studies and the search of physical and digital archives. The researcher collected issues of the Medan Prijaji newspaper available in libraries and national or digital archives. In addition, literature related to the role of the media in the anti-colonial movement and the history of Indonesia in the early 20th century is also examined. The data analysis techniques used are content analysis and historical analysis. Content analysis will be used to identify the main themes in the articles and editorials of Medan Prijaji, such as how the resistance against colonialism is represented. Historical analysis is conducted to understand the socio-political background and the impact of this newspaper's publication on society and the anti-colonial movement at that time. (R. M. Joko Prawoto Mulyadi, 2016).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Medan Prijaji Utilizes Public Space

Medan Prijaji, located in the heart of the city, serves as a strategic public space for the community to voice criticism against colonial policies. This space is not just a gathering place, but also a symbol of the community's resistance against the oppression carried out by the colonial government. History records that various social and political movements often utilized Medan Prijaji to organize protests and voice their aspirations. Thus, Medan Prijaji has established its position as a critical discussion arena that plays a role in shaping the historical narrative of the people's resistance against colonialism. (Sitorus, 2023).

In various activities held at Medan Prijaji, the community not only expresses their dissatisfaction but also strives to build collective awareness through art and culture. For example, the staging of folk theater and murals depicting the suffering caused by colonial policies have become effective tools for attracting public attention and conveying messages of resistance. These activities serve as a medium to encourage dialogue among community members, as well as to strengthen collective identity in facing the challenges of oppression. In this way, Medan Prijaji successfully integrated cultural elements into the resistance strategy against colonial policies. (Rahmawati, 2023).

The importance of Medan Prijaji as a public space in this critical context shows that physical spaces can function as catalysts for social change. Through various initiatives carried out at Medan

Prijaji, the community not only voiced criticism but also built the necessary solidarity to achieve the desired change. Further research on the dynamics of this public space can provide valuable insights into how the community utilizes the space to advocate for their rights and challenge colonial dominance. Therefore, Medan Prijaji not only serves as a place to voice criticism but also acts as a social laboratory that encourages a paradigm shift in understanding the relationship between society and power. (Habib F, 2017).

Community involvement in various activities at Medan Prijaji reflects a complex social dynamic, where individuals from diverse backgrounds gather to share their experiences and perspectives. In this context, Medan Prijaji not only serves as a physical location but also as a space to build a collective narrative that can trigger change. Research shows that the social interactions occurring in this public space can raise awareness of the social and political issues faced by the community. By uniting different voices, Medan Prijaji contributes to strengthening the network of solidarity among citizens who strive to oppose detrimental colonial policies. (Setiawan et al., 2024; Saefudin et al., 2023).

In the digital era, the use of social media has strengthened the function previously played by Medan Prijaji as an important public space. Social media allows the messages of criticism and resistance voiced in Medan Prijaji to reach a wider audience, including the international community. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become the main channels for disseminating information, creating discussions, and building solidarity in a more inclusive manner. Activities taking place in physical public spaces such as Medan Prijaji, including discussions, protests, or cultural events, can now be documented through photos, videos, or live streaming and disseminated online. (Rizkianto, 2024). This documentation not only expands the reach of the message but also ensures that the voices raised remain relevant and accessible to future generations.

The Challenges of the Prijaji Field and Their Resistance Strategies

Medan Prijaji, as one of the important newspapers in Indonesia in the early 20th century, faced various challenges in its efforts to voice resistance against Dutch colonialism. The main challenge faced was the repression from the colonial authorities who sought to silence voices deemed threatening to the stability of the government. Repressive actions, such as censorship, newspaper closures, and the arrest of journalists and activists, are some forms of pressure that directly threaten the continuity of Medan Prijaji in conveying messages of resistance. (Rahmawati, 2023).

In facing these various threats, Medan Prijaji developed adaptation strategies that included content diversification and the use of more subtle language to avoid censorship. The founder and editor-in-chief, Tirta Adhi Soerjo, was known for his ability to convey criticism implicitly, using allegory and symbolism in his writings. In this way, Medan Prijaji was able to voice the public's

dissatisfaction with colonial policies without directly challenging the authorities, thereby reducing the risk of closure or repressive actions from the colonial government. (Nahdia, 2018).

In addition to writing strategies, Medan Prijaji also utilized existing social networks to expand its reach and influence. Collaboration with intellectual figures, activists, and community organizations allows this newspaper to gain broader support in disseminating important issues. By building strategic alliances, Medan Prijaji is able to create a safe discussion forum to address various issues faced by the indigenous community, even in risky conditions. This strategy not only helps in maintaining the existence of Medan Prijaji but also strengthens the support base for the resistance movement. (Sitorus, 2023).

Another challenge faced by Medan Prijaji is the issue of funding and operational sustainability. In a situation where advertisements from pro-colonial parties became the main source of income, Medan Prijaji sought to attract readers from the indigenous community who wanted to support media that opposed colonialism. By offering relevant and engaging content to readers, Medan Prijaji successfully built reader loyalty that impacted the financial stability of the newspaper. This approach also helps in creating collective awareness among the community about the importance of supporting resistance media.

The community is involved in Medan Prijaji as a medium of struggle through various forms of participation, both direct and indirect. As readers, the indigenous community provided financial support by purchasing this newspaper, which became one of the main sources of funding for Medan Prijaji amidst the lack of support from pro-colonial parties. Additionally, readers often contribute by sending letters, opinions, or reports about the conditions they experience daily, making Medan Prijaji not only a source of information but also a space for the community to voice their criticism of colonial injustices.

The Political and Social Impact on the Netherlands After the Reporting of Medan Prijaji

Medan Prijaji, as one of the leading newspapers in Indonesia in the early 20th century, had a significant impact on politics and society during the Dutch colonial era. Sharp and critical reporting on colonial government policies was able to trigger public awareness of the injustices and oppression they experienced. Through its provocative writings, Medan Prijaji not only served as a source of information but also as a mobilization tool that encouraged the community to demand their rights. In this context, this newspaper played an important role in strengthening the nationalist movement and challenging the legitimacy of the colonial government. (Alifia, 2020).

The Medan Prijaji newspaper often exposed policies that harmed the indigenous population, such as land appropriation, forced labor, and heavy taxes. Through in-depth analysis and strong narratives, this newspaper successfully drew public attention to these issues, which may have previously been overlooked. The impact of this reporting is the increased collective awareness

among the community about the need to resist colonial policies. This created significant political pressure for the Dutch government, which felt threatened by the growing public opinion among the indigenous population. (Sarkowi & Otoman, 2018).

The colonial government's response to the Medan Prijaji coverage reflects their concern about the media's influence in shaping public opinion. As a reaction to the criticism raised, the Dutch government took repressive actions such as censorship, closing down newspapers, and arresting journalists and activists involved. These actions aim to control the emerging narrative and reduce the influence of Medan Prijaji among the public. However, these efforts only strengthened the newspaper's position as a symbol of resistance, as the repressive actions increased public dissatisfaction with the colonial government.

On the other hand, the social impact of Medan Prijaji's reporting is evident in the increased public participation in discussions and collective actions. Through opinion columns and investigative reports, this newspaper educates readers about the importance of their involvement in advocating for social and political rights. This community involvement has become one of the factors that strengthen the nationalism movement in Indonesia, creating a stronger network of solidarity among various social groups. In this context, Medan Prijaji not only served as a news disseminator but also as an agent of social change. (Nasihin, 2014).

Overall, the political and social impact of Medan Prijaji's reporting on the Dutch colonial government demonstrates how media can serve as an effective tool of resistance. Despite facing various challenges and repressive responses from the government, this newspaper managed to maintain its influence and continued to voice the public's dissatisfaction. This underscores the importance of the media's role in building collective awareness and advocating for social justice amidst political injustice, making Medan Prijaji one of the significant milestones in the history of Indonesia's struggle for independence. (Habib F, 2017).

The Influence of the Prijaji Field on the National Movement

Medan Prijaji, as one of the newspapers published in the early 20th century, played an important role in shaping the historical narrative of the Indonesian national movement and independence. Through critical and analytical reporting, this newspaper provided a platform for various issues faced by the indigenous community, as well as highlighting the injustices perpetrated by the Dutch colonial government. By amplifying the voices of the community, Medan Prijaji not only served as a source of information but also as a mobilization tool to garner support for the nationalist movement, which in turn influenced the collective consciousness of the Indonesian nation. (Yacob & Syam, 2016).

The influence of Medan Prijaji in the narrative of the national movement's history is evident in the way this newspaper documented various important events, such as labor strikes, social demonstrations, and political movements that emerged among the public. In its reports, Medan

Prijaji not only presented facts but also added context and in-depth analysis. Thus, readers not only receive news but also a broader understanding of the people's struggle for independence. This makes Medan Prijaji one of the important references in writing the history of the Indonesian national movement. (Fachrurozi, 2019).

Furthermore, Medan Prijaji contributed to the formation of national identity by highlighting the struggles of nationalist figures and explaining the ideas underlying the movement. Through articles and editorials written by Tirta Adhi Soerjo and his colleagues, this newspaper educated the public about the importance of unity and solidarity in facing colonization. By promoting nationalist ideas, Medan Prijaji helped cultivate the spirit of nationalism that became the main driving force in the struggle for independence. (Sermal & Rahma, 2021).

On the other hand, the colonial government's response to Medan Prijaji's reporting also shows the significant impact of this newspaper on the historical narrative. The repressive actions taken by the government, such as closures and censorship, only strengthened Medan Prijaji's position as a voice of resistance. These actions inspired a new generation to continue the struggle initiated by this newspaper, making Medan Prijaji an integral part of the narrative of Indonesia's national movement and independence history. (Nasihin, 2014).

Overall, one cannot overlook Medan Prijaji's influence on the narrative of the national movement and Indonesia's independence. Through sharp, analytical, and educational reporting, this newspaper succeeded in shaping the collective consciousness of the society and promoting the ideas underlying the struggle for independence. Medan Prijaji not only functions as a media outlet but also as an agent of change that encourages the community to take part in the historical struggle for independence. The legacy left by Medan Prijaji continues to be an important reference for future generations in understanding the history of the Indonesian nation. (Fachrurozi, 2019).

The End of Medan Prijaji

Medan Prijaji, a newspaper founded by Tirta Adhi Soerjo in 1907, became one of the important communication tools for the Indonesian national movement. However, despite playing a significant role in mobilizing society and criticizing colonial policies, Medan Prijaji had to face a tragic end in 1914. The closure of this newspaper not only marked the loss of a critical voice of resistance but also became a symbol of the challenges faced by independent media under the repressive colonial regime. (Purentia Iswara, 2018).

One of the main factors leading to the closure of Medan Prijaji was the increasingly repressive actions of the Dutch colonial government. In the face of sharp criticism from this newspaper, the government took steps to silence voices deemed to threaten political stability. Strict censorship and the closure of several alternative publications indicate that the government is trying to maintain control over the public narrative, while simultaneously eliminating platforms that can voice the people's dissatisfaction. (Kandi, 2016).

In addition to repressive actions, financial issues also pose a significant challenge to the sustainability of Medan Prijaji. Although this newspaper has a loyal readership base, the high production and operational costs often hinder its survival. Dependence on advertisements from pro-colonial companies increasingly trapped Medan Prijaji in a financial dilemma. Finally, the combination of political pressure and financial problems forced Medan Prijaji to cease its publication in 1914. (Fikri, 2022).

The closure of Medan Prijaji not only impacted the journalistic world but also the burgeoning national movement. The loss of this critical voice creates a void in the dissemination of information and analysis regarding important issues faced by society. However, even though this newspaper is no longer published, the legacy of Medan Prijaji remains alive in the collective memory of the nation. The news coverage and ideas championed by Medan Prijaji continue to influence subsequent generations in the struggle against colonialism. (Sitorus, 2023).

The end of Medan Prijaji marked the conclusion of an important era in the history of Indonesia's national movement. Although it has ceased publication, this newspaper has left a profound mark on the history of media and political movements in Indonesia. Its strong influence on the collective consciousness of society and the struggle for independence demonstrates the importance of the media's role in driving social change. Medan Prijaji is still remembered as a symbol of courage and commitment to justice, despite facing various challenges and pressures (Nicholas Mathews, Valérie Bélair-Gagnon, 2002).

IV. CONCLUSION

Medan Prijaji, a newspaper founded by Tirta Adhi Soerjo in 1907, played a strategic role in the anti-colonial movement in the Dutch East Indies during the period 1907–1914. Not only as a medium of information, Medan Prijaji functioned as an effective tool for social and political mobilization, using critical narratives to oppose exploitative colonial policies. This newspaper successfully raised political awareness among the indigenous population, facilitated social solidarity, and became a catalyst for the formation of national movement organizations such as Budi Utomo and Sarekat Islam.

The strategies used by Medan Prijaji included sharp rhetoric, strong symbolism, and the articulation of collective aspirations through the published articles. In addition, the arts and cultural activities organized by this newspaper became a means of expressing dissatisfaction with colonialism. Despite facing strict censorship and repression from the colonial government, Medan Prijaji remained consistent in voicing the people's struggle until it was ultimately halted in 1914.

Overall, Medan Prijaji made a significant contribution to building national awareness and strengthening solidarity networks to combat colonial oppression. The important role of this newspaper not only reflects the spirit of resistance of the indigenous people but also offers valuable insights into the role of the media in shaping political discourse and national struggle. These

findings underscore the relevance of Medan Prijaji as an important historical heritage for understanding the dynamics of resistance and the role of the media in the context of colonialism.

RECOMENDATION

This research emphasizes the role of Medan Prijaji in building national awareness and solidarity among the indigenous community, but there is still room for further exploration. In-depth research on the social impact of this newspaper's content and reader responses can provide a more comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, the relevance of these findings can be contextualized within the digital era, where social media plays a similar role as a modern public space for social mobilization and resistance. The limited access to the archives used in this research also opens up opportunities for richer analysis by integrating multidisciplinary approaches such as media sociology or communication studies. Thus, this research is expected to serve as a foundation for further studies on the strategic role of media in shaping socio-political discourse across various eras.

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