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A STRONG AND RESILIENT STATE

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Muhammad Yuanda Zara

Islamic Patriotism in General Sudirman Comic Strips of *Suara Muhammadiyah* Magazine (1966-1967)

Abstract: *This paper examines 29 editions of comic serials portraying the struggle of one of the most influential military commanders in modern Indonesian history, General Sudirman, published from 1966-67 by the official magazine of Muhammadiyah, Suara Muhammadiyah. By using an historical and comic studies approach, this research reveals that the comic aimed to arouse a feeling of Islamic patriotism among readers of the magazine. The still-ill Sudirman was visually depicted as a devout Muslim, whose patriotism and survival ability in guerrilla operations deep in Java's forests during the Dutch-Indonesian war were illustrated as being rooted in his Islamic faith and his experience as a young member of Hizbul Wathan, Muhammadiyah's boy scout group. This study sheds light on comics, a neglected product of Indonesian Islamic cultural history, which sought to renegotiate the important place of Islam during the Dutch-Indonesian war (1945-1949), amid the new opportunities presented by the political turmoil that occurred during the final phase of President Sukarno's rule, when this comic was published.*

Keywords: Comic, Heroism, Islamic Patriotism, Indonesian Revolution, Muhammadiyah.

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji 29 edisi komik yang menggambarkan perjuangan salah satu panglima militer paling berpengaruh dalam sejarah Indonesia modern, Jenderal Sudirman, yang diterbitkan oleh majalah resmi Muhammadiyah, Suara Muhammadiyah, pada 1966-1967. Dengan kajian sejarah dan komik, diketahui bahwa komik ini bertujuan untuk menggugah rasa patriotisme Islam di kalangan pembaca. Sudirman yang masih sakit digambarkan sebagai Muslim yang taat. Patriotisme dan kemampuan bertahan hidupnya dalam operasi gerilya selama perang Belanda-Indonesia di hutan-hutan Jawa diilustrasikan berakar pada keyakinan Islam dan pengalamannya, ketika ia masih muda, sebagai anggota Hizbul Wathan, kepanduannya Muhammadiyah. Studi ini mengeksplor komik, produk yang terabaikan dari sejarah budaya Islam Indonesia, yang berusaha untuk menegosiasikan kembali posisi Islam selama perang Belanda-Indonesia (1945-1949), dengan kesempatan-kesempatan baru yang muncul akibat kekacauan politik pada fase akhir pemerintahan Presiden Soekarno saat komik ini diterbitkan.

Kata kunci: Komik, Heroisme, Patriotisme Islam, Revolusi Indonesia, Muhammadiyah.

ملخص: يتناول هذا المقال ٢٩ نسخة من الرسوم الهزلية، والتي نشرتها المجلة الرسمية للجمعية المحمدية *Suara Muhammadiyah* في الفترة من ١٩٦٦-١٩٦٧، وهي تصور نضال أحد القادة العسكريين الأكثر نفوذا في التاريخ الإندونيسي الحديث، وهو الجنرال سوديرمان. وباستخدام منهج الدراسات التاريخية والكوميديّة، يكشف هذا البحث على أن هذه الرسوم الهزلية تهدف إلى إثارة الشعور بالوطنية الإسلامية لدى قراء المجلة، حيث تم تقديم سوديرمان الذي لا يزال مريضا بصريا على أنه مسلم ملتزم بدينه، كما تم توضيح وطنيته وقدرته على البقاء في عمليات حرب العصابات في أعماق غابات جاوا خلال الحرب الهولندية الإندونيسية على أنها متجذرة في عقيدته الإسلامية وتجاربه، عندما كان شابا، كعضو في الكشافة المحمدية التي يطلق عليها اسم «حزب الوطن». وتستكشف هذه الدراسة الرسوم الهزلية، التي تعتبر نتاجا تم التغاضي عنه من التاريخ الثقافي الإسلامي لإندونيسيا، والتي تسعى إلى إعادة التفاوض حول مكانة الإسلام المهمة خلال الحرب الهولندية الإندونيسية (١٩٤٥-١٩٤٩) مع الفرص الجديدة الناشئة عن الاضطرابات السياسية في المرحلة الأخيرة من عهد الرئيس سوكارنو، عندما نُشر هذا الكتاب الهزلي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرسوم الهزلية، البطولة، الوطنية الإسلامية، الثورة الإندونيسية، الجمعية المحمدية.

Founded in 1912, when Indonesia was a Dutch colony, Muhammadiyah was originally a small organization aimed at improving the Islamic community in Yogyakarta (Darban 2011). Today, Muhammadiyah is known as the oldest and largest modernist Muslim organization in Indonesia, with tens of millions of members spread throughout the country, and with influence extending beyond Indonesia. This organization is known for its dedication to the renewal of Islamic understanding and practice. In order to show Muhammadiyah's major contribution in advancing religious attitudes and the welfare of Indonesian society, scholars often cite its public service institutions, the number of which are astronomical for a non-profit organization in a developing country. It manages thousands of educational, social, economic and religious institutions, with the aim of improving the standard of life of the Indonesian people.

There have been many studies that have examined the role of Muhammadiyah in advancing religious thought, education level and social welfare in Indonesia during the last century and at the beginning of the 21st century (Alfian 1969; Beck 2019; Federspiel 1970; Kim 2007; Nakamura 1983; Noer 1973; Palmier 1954; Peacock 1986). These studies, and others that are too numerous to mention here, have provided a broad and deep understanding of how Muhammadiyah was born, survived and even developed into a national organization that now has a major influence in Indonesia. Muhammadiyah is perceived not only as a religious organization that prioritizes the piety of its members, but one that also plays a role in building an Indonesian society that has high social awareness within the framework of its commitment to the Indonesian nation-state.

However, almost none have seriously discussed the relationship between Muhammadiyah, nationalism, and popular culture in the mid-1960s, a period that is often perceived as a difficult one for Islamic politics in Indonesia. So far, no one has elaborated on how Muhammadiyah built and strengthened national awareness among its members and Indonesian Muslims in general during that era, through an element of popular culture that is often seen as far removed from Muslims: comics. In studies of the history and development of Islamic arts in Indonesia, the cultural achievements of Muslims are usually considered to encompass art forms such as mosque architecture (Graaf 1963; Rochym 1983; Zein 1999), literature and Islamic journalism (Arimbi 2009; Krier 2011; Rush 2016; Steele 2018; Weintraub 2011),

Islamic music (Barendregt 2011; Berg 2011; Harnish and Rasmussen 2011; Rasmussen 2010; Sutton 2011), and movies (Heeren 2012; Izharuddin 2017). Comics, thus, are almost completely abandoned, perhaps because their image is associated with slapstick humor, caricatural drawings, light stories, and less complicated illustrations, which are read only during leisure time by children or teenagers.

These conceptions lead us to two more specific ideas. First, Muhammadiyah is generally only thought of as contributing to a sense of Indonesian nationalism through formal and modern institutions such as schools, universities, orphanages and hospitals. Secondly, studies of the history of Islamic culture in Indonesia ignore the important role of comics as a means of preaching Islam and building a sense of Indonesian nationalism. Without an in-depth study of the role of popular media, such as comics, for spreading a feeling of Islamic patriotism, let alone one whose protagonist role was represented by a prominent Indonesian national hero who came from Muhammadiyah, we tend to ignore the creativity and breadth of methods Muhammadiyah uses in constructing ideas that combine Islam and nationalism in Indonesian society in a time of chaos.

This study will fill this gap in the literature by analyzing how a comic strip serial published in the official Muhammadiyah biweekly magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah* (now: *Suara Muhammadiyah*), played a role in building and disseminating the idea of Islamic patriotism among Muhammadiyah members and Indonesian Muslims in a turbulent time in Indonesian history. I examined 29 numbers of the serial (at that time referred to as *tjergam*, or pictorial story) published in this magazine in 29 editions between February 1966 and December 1967, which visually described the last 13 months of Sudirman's life (19 December 1949-29 January 1950). One serial, number 13, cannot be completely used because the page containing it was damaged (*Suara Muhammadiyah*, No. 23-24, no month provided, presumably December 1966). The focus of this comic was General Sudirman (1916-1950), one of the most important figures in modern Indonesian history. Sudirman, dubbed "one of the country's most revered national heroes" by Audrey Kahin (2015, 443), is particularly remembered for his role as the first Commander-in-Chief of the People's Security Army (TKR, the precursor of the Indonesian National Army [TNI]) (1945-1950), and for leading the Indonesian army in the war of independence against the Dutch forces (1945-1949).

After Sudirman died in 1950, his memory was still alive in the minds of the Indonesian people, and has been continuously reproduced in various ways, even until today. In Indonesia, there are only three Great Generals—an honorary title and the highest rank for an Indonesian soldier who has performed extraordinary tasks for the country, bestowed by President Suharto in 1997—and Sudirman is one of them. Katharine E. McGregor argues that after Sudirman passed away, there were various attempts made by the Indonesian government and military, two institutions that claimed Sudirman as an integral part of them, to build his image as a national hero of Indonesia by, for example, publishing a memoir about him in 1950, and the award of the title of National Hero to Sudirman by President Sukarno in 1964 (McGregor 2007, 127). Since the emergence of Suharto's rule, widely known as the New Order (1966-1998), which marked the strengthening of the role of the military in the Indonesian government, efforts to promote Sudirman's greatness were carried out by the New Order government and by the military as a way to demonstrate and legitimize military leadership in Indonesian politics. This includes using a picture of Sudirman in several rupiah denominations (1968), publishing a collection of Sudirman speeches (1970), establishing various Sudirman museums and monuments (especially in the 1970s), and naming major streets in Indonesian cities after him (McGregor 2007, 127–28).¹

McGregor's study convincingly maintains that the government and military during the New Order era dominated the creation of narratives about Sudirman in the Indonesian public sphere. Despite its importance, her study overlooks the fact that there was another group at the beginning of Suharto's era (1966-67) who also represented Sudirman to the public, with a distinctive target audience and in a way that has never been studied before: Muhammadiyah and the comic serials in *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, which were aimed at Indonesian Muslims and especially Muhammadiyah members. Founded in 1915 by the founder of Muhammadiyah himself, Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, *Suara Muhammadiyah* is Muhammadiyah's official print media (Pusdalitbang Suara Muhammadiyah 2019). This study shows that the production of the image of Sudirman during the New Order era was marked not only by purely military and political aspects, as McGregor's study suggested, but also by Islamic dimensions, with the emphasis that Sudirman was not only a heroic military man, but also a devout Muslim who loved his country.

From various studies on comics in the United States, and more recently also in Asia, it is understood that comics play a vital role in how the media and artists represent contemporary social, cultural and political phenomena, as well as in preserving memories and reinterpreting the past (Earle 2017; Knopf 2015; Rosenbaum 2003, 2021; Scott 2015; Sheyahshe 2008). Comics have existed in Indonesia since 1931, with the publication of the title *Put On* by Kho Wang Gie in the Chinese language newspaper, *Sin Po*. In 1950, comic artist Abdulsalam, in the *Kedaulatan Rakjat* (Yogyakarta) newspaper, published a comic that introduced nationalism and heroism in the Dutch-Indonesian conflict (Bonneff 2008, 21; Sachari 2007, 134). Indonesian comics reached their first peak in the 1960s and 1970s, which is considered the ‘golden age’ in the history of Indonesian comics. The Indonesian comics in the 1960s and 1970s served as people’s entertainment, by presenting Indonesian-style superheroes (or superheroines) who imitated American-style superheroes. As a response to this trend, comics emerged that carried elements of indigenous Indonesian culture, whose stories were an adaptation of traditional stories from Java and Sumatra. Marcel Bonneff briefly mentions Islamic elements in Indonesian comics in the 1970s, but in the comics he studies, which tell imaginative stories, Islam is presented as an antagonistic element, as a mere background for its characters, and sometimes as an educational value (Bonneff 2008, 39, 56, 66).

However, the comics published in the Islamic print media in the 1960s have not been studied at all. From several studies on Indonesian comics between the 1930s and 1970s, as mentioned above, one would get the impression that the publishers of comics were only artists or media who were oriented towards local traditions, Indonesian nationalism, Western stories or connected with the Chinese community. Without examining the Islamic comics, one would assume that Muslims hardly took part in the efforts to convey Islamic and national values visually in the golden age of Indonesian comics. A study of the history of comics in Indonesia is incomplete without a discussion of the presence of Islamic comics in the 1960s, of which *Suara Muhammadiyah* was the pioneer. Studies on the representation of Muslims in comics already exist (Rhett 2020), but how Muslims themselves, in this case the Islamic print media, published comics for Muslim readers during a chaotic time is still being neglected.

The questions raised in this study are: 1) How did *Suara Muhammadiyah* view the importance of Islamic patriotism in Indonesia

at the time it published the General Sudirman comic? 2) How did this comic visually narrate Sudirman's struggle during the Indonesian revolution, especially with regard to elements of Islamic patriotism? 3) What methods did the author-artist of the comic and *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine use to maximize the potential of the comic in order to spread the idea of Islamic patriotism?

By using a historical approach combined with comic studies, I argue that this comic aimed to revive the public memory of General Sudirman in order to evoke a feeling of Islamic patriotism among the readers of this magazine, who were spread all over Indonesia. This comic depicted how, under the still-ill Sudirman, the less well-armed Indonesian troops managed to defeat the fully armed Dutch soldiers. Sudirman was depicted as a devout Muslim, whose knowledge about how to survive the harsh guerilla war in the deep forests of Java, and his patriotism, was rooted in his Islamic belief and his participation in Hizbul Wathan, Muhammadiyah's boy scout movement during his youth. Through this study, I hope to show that comics played a key role in how modernist Muslim media imagined and constructed the popular memory of the Dutch-Indonesian war, and emphasized the role of Islamic patriotism in the conflict, aimed at the new generation of Indonesian Muslims who did not experience the war.²

Visually Experiencing General Sudirman's Struggle Via Comics in *Suara Muhammadiyah*

The General Sudirman comic, in black and white, was published for the first time in *Suara Muhammadiyah* No. 3, in February 1966, and appeared on page 34. No information is available about why the magazine published a comic serial about a general who died 16 years before. However, by looking at the context of the time that this comic was published and the cover on this edition, we can understand the socio-political context that facilitated the comic.

This comic was published from February 1966 to December 1967. During this period, a very violent ideological conflict occurred especially between the Muslims and the communists (Abdullah, Abdurrachman, and Gunawan 2012; Ricklefs 2012). President Sukarno had a close relationship with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), and was hostile to the Masyumi Party, an Islamic party with a broad base and an enemy of the PKI. The disbandment of the Masyumi Party

by Sukarno in 1960 disappointed many Muslims. However, Islamic leaders continued to approach Sukarno and one of them awarded the Star of Muhammadiyah to Sukarno in April 1965 (Drakeley 2009). The failed coup attempt by a group of Left-leaning troops on September 30, 1965 gave Muslims the opportunity to cooperate with another enemy of the PKI, the anti-communist Indonesian military, to remove the communists from Indonesia's political map (Arifin 2016; Suara Muhammadiyah 1965b, 1965a, 1966a). Muslim leaders, including those from Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, moved away from Sukarno and approached the anti-communist military (Drakeley 2014). Immediately after the abortive coup, the military, with the help of the Muslims, carried out the hunt, arrest and punishment of the communists. It is in the context of the hunt for communists by the combined forces of the military and Muslims that this General Sudirman comic was published by *Suara Muhammadiyah*, as a way to remind the Indonesian public that the greatest general in Indonesian history, Sudirman, was both patriotic and pious.



Figure 1. The cover of *Suara Muhammadiyah*, No. 3, February 1966.

The General Sudirman comic was published for the first time in this edition
(Source: *Suara Muhammadiyah*, No. 3, February 1966)

The cover above showed a photo of two people talking, who seemed to be close friends. They were the Chairman of Muhammadiyah, Kyai Haji Ahmad Badawi, and General A.H. Nasution. This cover emphasized the importance of religious leaders, represented by Kyai

Badawi, and military officials, represented by General Nasution, for Muhammadiyah members and Indonesian Muslims in general. Both were anti-communists and both represented a newly-formed cooperation between the military and an Islamic organization. In addition, this also meant that there were two top commanders of the Indonesian army represented in this edition, namely General Sudirman (Chief Commander of the People's Security Army, 1945-50) and General Nasution (Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces [ABRI], 1962-66). A text was added to reinforce the photograph on the front cover: "*Muhammadiyah selalu bersama ABRI*" (Muhammadiyah is always with ABRI) (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966c, [1]3 February). In other words, in this edition, Muhammadiyah was depicted as close to an anti-PKI general, emphasizing Muhammadiyah's anti-PKI stance and Muhammadiyah's full support for the army in its fight against the PKI. This also gave the impression that since the Sudirman era, Muhammadiyah had a close relationship with and contributed to the development of the armed forces, and in 1966 Muhammadiyah's relationship with the army was gaining momentum. Unlike Sudirman, Nasution had never been associated with Muhammadiyah in the past, but he did share an anti-communist attitude with Muhammadiyah, an Islamic organization that was considered to have played a crucial role in helping the army face the communists. Thus, this edition, with the Badawi-Nasution photo on its first page, and the first edition of General Sudirman's comic in it, confirms that the comic was present in the midst of a strong anti-communist atmosphere and amid efforts at cooperation between the armed forces, particularly the army, and the Muslims, to diminish the communist influence in Indonesia. It is in this context that the *Suara Muhammadiyah* editorial team decided to publish the comic.

The comic, entitled "*Djenderal Sudirman Pahlawan Kemerdekaan*" (General Sudirman, a Hero of Independence), was written by Z. Atmapertama and drawn by Zuhdan. It is not known exactly who Atmapertama and Zuhdan were, or what their artistic background and their relationship to this magazine was. I inquired about these two people with the most senior figure at *Suara Muhammadiyah*, Ahmad Syafii Maarif (who worked as a journalist in the magazine between 1965-1972, and until his passing in 27 May 2022, in addition to his position as general manager of the magazine, was also widely known as

an influential Indonesian public intellectual), but Maarif said that he did not know the two names, either because in 1966 he had just started working at the magazine or because he had forgotten, considering that the comic was published more than five decades ago (Maarif 2020).

The comic opened by providing a historical context. This first edition of the comic took up half a page and was comprised of four panels. Above it was a large column that introduced the comic to readers for the first time. On the left side, in capital letters, was written: “*Djenderal Sudirman Pahlawan Kemerdekaan.*” On the right side, there was a picture of four people, with Sudirman appearing the most dominant figure. He was depicted wearing his iconic clothes: a long dark coat, sweater, and a *blangkon* (Javanese traditional head-dress for male). Behind him were three Indonesian fighters. Overall, Sudirman appeared not as a field soldier, but a sharp-minded, wise and humble military commander.

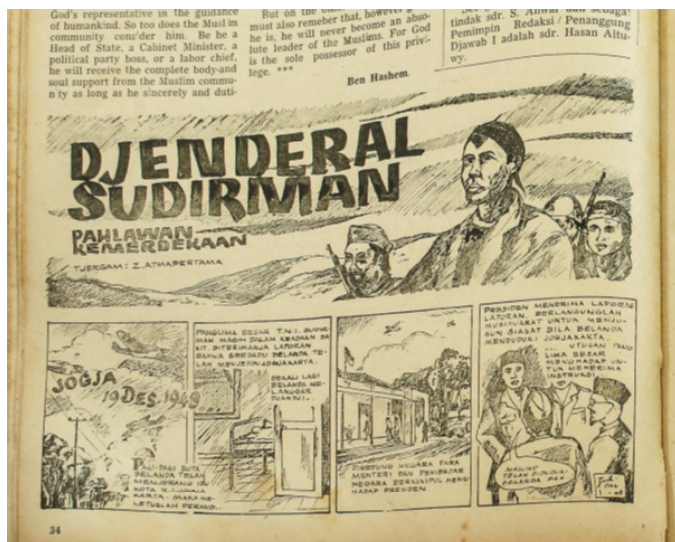


Figure 2. The first serial of ‘*Djenderal Sudirman Pahlawan Kemerdekaan*’
(Source: Suara Muhammadiyah, No. 3, February 1966)

This first edition provided context for the historical events in which Sudirman would later play a major role and to which readers were expected to bring their memory, namely the massive attack by Dutch troops on the Indonesian capital, Yogyakarta. This attack, which the Indonesians called the Second Military Aggression, and the Dutch dubbed a police action, had a profound impact on the existence of the Republic of

Indonesia. In the initial phase the attack, which began on December 19, 1948, was a successful endeavor for the Dutch, since it enabled the Dutch troops to take over the city, capture Republican civilian leaders and force Indonesian fighters to retreat to the countryside, where they began their guerilla tactics (Ricklefs 2001, 282).

The first panel in the Sudirman comic showed the situation of Yogyakarta during the Dutch attack. In the sky, Dutch fighter planes were seen flying, with a number of paratroopers jumping from them, indicating the Dutch attempt to occupy the Indonesian capital on December 19, 1948. Subsequently, the picture of a bedroom was shown, which symbolized that at that time, Sudirman was seriously ill. It was in the midst of his illness that he received a report from a soldier that Dutch troops were attacking Yogyakarta. The author-artist of the comic clearly sided with the Republicans because in the panel they wrote: "Once again the Dutch broke their promise" (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966c, [1]3 February). The scene then moved to the front of the presidential palace in the city, which was previously the Dutch Resident's mansion. Two Dutch planes flew in the sky, indicating that the Dutch were continuing their attacks. There were several people who appeared to enter the palace and it was narrated that the ministers and other officials of the Republic met President Sukarno there. Sukarno, with a shocked face, received a report from an Indonesian soldier that the Maguwo Airbase, which was only a few kilometers from the presidential palace, had been occupied by the Dutch. From here, the story became increasingly more dramatic, visually depicting the various responses of the Republican nationalists to the Dutch attacks, as explored below.

General Sudirman: Sick but Patriotic and Tough

One of the ideas that Indonesians most clearly remember when they talk about General Sudirman is that he fought guerrilla warfare in an extremely difficult condition due to his tuberculosis, with only half of his lungs working properly (Sardiman 2008). This comic visually depicted this detail. In the second edition of the comic, the still-ill Sudirman was illustrated as having the initiative to take action in the midst of a heated situation due to the Dutch attacks. He waited in vain for his messenger, who was dispatched to gather information. He decided to pay a visit to the presidential palace along with his personal doctor (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966b, [2]4-5, February-March).

There, Sudirman met with Indonesian civilian leaders, and was told that nothing serious had happened, so Sudirman was asked to go home immediately to rest but he refused. He finally left the building for his safety (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966c, [3]6 March).

As army commander, Sudirman soon issued a defensive order to all Indonesian troops. He moved to Mangkubumen Keraton, then outside Yogyakarta. Sudirman continued his journey to the south of Yogyakarta, where his health deteriorated. From there, Sudirman and his entourage continued on to the countryside. The comic depicted the group crossing the wide Opak River, indicating that they had begun entering rugged countryside. He and his entourage survived, and the author-artist of the comic in the caption depicted their gratitude to God in an Islamic way: "Alhamdulillah [thank God], we crossed it safely" (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966d, [4]7 & 8 April). This was the first reference to Islam in Sudirman's long journey. Comic number 5 is the beginning of a long and harsh adventure that made Sudirman's reputation, namely the guerrilla warfare in the interior forests of Java. The unwell Sudirman could not walk, and he was depicted sitting on a litter on his journey, on hilly terrain on his way between Grogol and Panggang-Palihan, then heading to Wonosari, a place where he would lead a guerrilla war (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966e, [5]9 May).

On another occasion, the scene shifted to an ambush by Indonesian troops on Dutch forces in the middle of the forest. No narrative about Sudirman was included, but the main idea presented supported the image that the author-artist of the comic wanted to build, namely that Indonesian fighters were very eager to fight, despite their limitations. The Dutch troops were described as heavily armed. The Indonesian army was depicted as relying only on machine guns, which were clearly seized from the enemy. Thanks to the strategy of diverting and suddenly attacking the enemy, and then escaping, the Indonesian troops were depicted to have successfully shot the Dutch soldiers, destroying their bren carriers, and forcing them to retreat (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967e, [18]6 March, 1967f, [19]8 April).

Sudirman's harsh adventure in the forest became increasingly difficult because the Dutch troops searched rural residents and even chased Sudirman into the deep jungle. Sudirman and his entourage were forced to keep moving to avoid the pursuit (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967n, [21]10 May). Sudirman's escapade was

illustrated as increasingly tense, but he was still full of courage. One day in January 1949, his escape route was revealed by the Dutch troops and they surrounded Sudirman and his entourage. They continued to move through tough terrain in order to flee from the Dutch troops. Night fell and heavy rain poured, forcing Sudirman's group to stop at a modest hut in the middle of a humid, dense forest (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967h, [22]11-12 June). However, they could not stay there long. Besides, Sudirman's medicine had been damaged by the rain. Sudirman and his entourage were portrayed as being at the limit of their physical and mental strength to endure the situation (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967i, [23]13-14 July).

Finally, the rain was depicted as stopping and the sun began to rise. They could even get far better food than what was available in the forest (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967j, [24]15 August). This hope was strengthened even further with a picture of the bigger goal that the Indonesian fighters, including Sudirman, wanted to achieve: reclaiming the city of Yogyakarta, a symbol of Republican power that was now in Dutch hands. The illustration shown was a scene related to the General Offensive of March 1, 1949, when the Republican troops conducted surprise attacks on Dutch positions in Yogyakarta, enabling the Republic to control the city for six hours. This attack later became an icon of the Republic's victory over the Dutch on the battlefield. The author-artist of the comic portrayed the scene in a pro-Republic and anti-Dutch tone in comic number 26. In one corner of the city, several Indonesian soldiers were seen running as if they were preparing to launch an attack. The Indonesian soldiers managed to control important public facilities. A narrative was developed, emphasizing that the world had been deceived by the Dutch, who said that the Republic had been crushed. It also illustrated the warm welcome and great support of the people of Yogyakarta for the attack. These kind of images gave the impression to readers of *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine that the Indonesian troops had defeated the Dutch (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967l, [26]18 September).

However, the general offensive was described as making the Dutch angry, leading to them taking revenge on the Indonesians, as seen in comic number 27. It illustrated how cruelly the Dutch military retaliated, not only against Indonesian soldiers but also innocent civilians. Dutch fighter planes were depicted dropping bombs that destroyed Indonesian villages. Sudirman and his entourage, realizing

that they were still being chased by the Dutch, moved more frequently from one village to another. The author-artist of the comic emphasized why Sudirman's safety needed to be protected: "Pak Dirman's safety is equal to the safety of the Republic of Indonesia" (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967m, [27]19-20 October).

A better situation for Sudirman was illustrated in comic number 28. On April 1, 1949, the Sudirman group was described as arriving at Sobo Village (East Java), which was the safest place from the reach of the Dutch. Sudirman was depicted hearing the latest news via radio, about major progress made by the Dutch and Indonesians, which had a major impact on the Indonesian struggle, as well as on Sudirman's guerrilla movement in recent months. A voice from the radio quoted in this panel announced an agreement that had reached between Indonesia and the Netherlands, including the return of the Indonesian government to Yogyakarta and the cessation of hostilities. The agreement meant that the guerrilla movement had to end and Sudirman had to return to Yogyakarta. Sudirman's group was relieved by this news, but the villagers where Sudirman's group stayed were described as being very sad about Sudirman's plan to return home (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967n, [28]21-22 November).

In narrating Sudirman's guerilla campaign, a strong impression was created in the comic that Sudirman had received widespread support from the people in rural areas. The author-artist of the comic developed the idea that if the Dutch were the rulers in Yogyakarta, then the Republicans were in power in the countryside. Sudirman and his entourage in Pracimantoro, south of Surakarta, were warmly welcomed by the villagers (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966k, [11]19 October). The villagers were illustrated as thanking Allah for the security that was maintained in the village (with an Islamic expression of gratitude, "*alhamdulillah*" [thank God]) (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966l, [12]20, 21, 22 [probably] November).

The unity between the army and the people was a visual theme that appeared quite often in this comic. In one example, an Indonesian courier was depicted disguising himself as an ordinary citizen to escape a search by a Dutch soldier, and another depicted a wounded Indonesian fighter receiving treatment from a red cross nurse (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967d, [17]5 March). Innocent, ordinary people were often portrayed as victims of Dutch atrocities. In one issue, the Dutch were shown conducting a search of a village suspected of hiding

Indonesian fighters. The Dutch troops were illustrated as immediately opening fire as soon as they entered the village. A village man who was shot screamed because he was injured, and when he was dying he remembered Almighty God, saying, "O Allah, I was shot" (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967g, [20]9, May).

General Sudirman and His Troops as Devout Muslims

One of the strongest messages conveyed by the General Sudirman comic strips was how Islam played an important role in the struggle of Indonesian fighters against the Dutch, and this was illustrated from the highest commander level (in this case Sudirman) to the lowest level (ordinary Indonesian soldiers). There were several ways to convey this visually. The first was to show how Indonesian fighters surrendered themselves to Allah in the midst of the difficult struggles they were facing. In comic number 6, several Indonesian soldiers were depicted talking under a tree. They were part of the Sudirman's entourage, who were resting briefly in Playen (south of Yogyakarta). One of them missed his family and asked his younger friend about the fate of the family they left behind. His friend answered wisely, and gave the readers an illustration of the attitude a Muslim should take in such a difficult situation: "For me, we leave our fate and our safety to Allah because everything has its fate written in Allah's hand. And humans can only try." The person who asked the question agreed with his friend, but he still wondered what they could and should do at that time. His friend answered: "We really have to have a strong belief that everyone has a different fate. So do we. In a war like the one we are facing now, it is as if the angel Izrail [the angel of death] is behind us. At any time he could take our lives" (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966g, [7]11 & 12 June).

Whose example can be followed in the matter of maintaining faith during the war? The answer was General Sudirman. In a panel, an Indonesian soldier said to his friend: "An instance that can be emulated is Pak Dirman, who has a solid faith. In a state of illness he did not surrender his fate to the Dutch, and instead he put up a fight" (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966f, [6]10 May). His friend responded: "Yes, brother, those words of yours. We submit our fate in Allah's hands. We endeavor with prayer, hopefully Allah will always protect us. Amen." This prayer was responded with an amen by his friend.

The intensity of the Dutch attacks, the harsh adventure in the jungle, and the separation from their families gave birth to awareness among Indonesian fighters about the vulnerability of their lives. As a result, a spiritual consciousness was born among them. They, as seen in the comic panels, believed that defending the homeland from invasion by foreign enemies required not only manpower and weapons, but also the belief that Allah would help those who fight to defend their homeland. Another indication that this was a sacred struggle was a depiction on one occasion where Sudirman was given a pseudonym, which was a combination of the Islamic elements and Javanese elements in him: Abdullah Lelonoputro, which means servant of Allah, a wandering son (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967k, [25]17 September).

When on another occasion Sudirman thanked the villagers who had helped him, he conveyed his appreciation and good wishes to them in an Islamic fashion: “Thank you for your warm welcome here. Hopefully Allah will reward your deeds” (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967k, [25]17 September). Thus, the good deeds of the villagers were interpreted not only as assistance from fellow citizens, but as help with a spiritual value, which was expected to be rewarded by Allah in the future. This is a concept that is uniquely Islamic in the context of a political war between two countries. On another occasion, Sudirman was depicted writing on the table. He wrote: “... please maintain sincerity, obedience and discipline in our soldiers.” Discipline is a typical concept of a patriotic army, but sincerity (*ikhlas hati* in original text) is an Islamic concept that deals with a heart that is willing to accept all of Allah’s decisions, including all of the difficulties one is facing (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967k, [25]17 September).

The story in comic number 14 is the strongest one for promoting Sudirman’s Islamic patriotism. Sudirman and his entourage were portrayed arriving in a village. Sudirman then shook hands with Kyai Mahfudz, an *ulama* (Islamic scholar) and a leader of a *pesantren* (rural Islamic boarding school) in Ponorogo, East Java. Sudirman and Kyai Mahfudz were illustrated shaking hands warmly. Sudirman gave greetings in an Islamic fashion, “*Assalamu’alaikum*” (peace be upon you), and the kyai greeted him back with the more complete answer, “*Wa’alaikumsalam warahmatullah*” (may the peace and mercy of Allah be with you). The pictures and conversations in this edition connected Islam, which was represented by the kyai, and Indonesian nationalism,

which was represented by Sudirman. Sudirman and Kyai Mahfudz sat on the floor and chatted. Sudirman asked Kyai Mahfudz about the condition of his pesantren and the kyai answered: “Alhamdulillah, the recitations of the Qur’an are still running well. And we are always ready for the holy war to defend the country and religion of Allah.” For the kyai, the Dutch-Indonesian war was not solely a war for political reasons, but also a sacred war with a holy mission, and he delivered this thought directly to Sudirman, who seemed to approve of the notion. Sudirman and Kyai Mahfudz then parted. Sudirman said goodbye and said to the kyai “*doa pangestu*” (prayers and blessings). The kyai responded: “We pray that hopefully Allah will always protect us all and Pak Dirman is always healthy and has no obstacles in leading the struggle” (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967a, [14]1 January).

Sudirman’s Islamic patriotism was also demonstrated by Sudirman’s adherence to Islamic teachings in the midst of a war situation. He was not only depicted using Islamic symbols, such as the Muslim cap and greetings in Islamic terms, but was also illustrated performing the *shalat* (obligatory prayers for every Muslim), despite the difficult circumstances caused by the war. Comic number 15 portrayed a scene on December 23, 1948, when the car of Sudirman’s group was intercepted by other Republican troops in Bendo, East Java. At that time it was not uncommon for Indonesian army groups to be unaware of other groups, which led to this kind of obstruction. An armed soldier said that, on the orders of his commander, the group and their car were to be detained there. He also wondered who the person in the back seat was, whose silhouette could be seen from outside the car (from the context, it was clearly Sudirman). But no answer was given, and the comic took the form of a dramatic narrative of how the local soldiers in Bendo finally learned that the mysterious silhouette was Sudirman. Sudirman’s guard then requested an audience with the superior of the soldiers. The commander said that Sudirman’s entourage would be detained until his higher commander arrived and Sudirman’s guard agreed to wait. Because it was already dusk, he then asked permission to perform the sunset prayer. The next picture depicted a scene in a *mushola* (small prayer room) showing several Muslims performing *shalat* prayer. There was a soldier there who asked where the “prisoner” (referring to Sudirman, whose identity was still unknown) was. A man replied that Sudirman was inside and had just started performing *shalat*

prayer. The soldier in his heart then muttered, “who is he actually?” (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967b, [15]2 January).

Sudirman’s identity was only revealed in comic number 16. A scene in the prayer room was depicted in which Sudirman led the prayer for the two congregations behind him. A soldier from the local troops that were holding Sudirman’s group was described as entering the prayer room, and after looking at the prayer leader from behind, then spoke in his heart, “He looks like Pak Dirman.” This indicated that he was shocked when he found out that the mysterious figure he was holding was actually Sudirman, his supreme commander. The next picture showed a scene when Sudirman had finished praying. He chatted with one of the soldiers who obstructed him and his entourage. The soldier revealed both his shock and relief at knowing who the imam was. He then apologized for not immediately knowing that this mysterious figure was in fact the head of the Indonesian military. Another local Republican soldier who witnessed the situation was described as saying in his heart (as reflected in the words written on the thought bubble on the panel): “It turns out to be Pak Dirman ... I was moved and amazed” (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967c, [16]3 February).

The visual narrative promoting Islamic patriotism in Sudirman’s struggle is not only displayed in his struggle during his life, but also in the public atmosphere when the general died and was buried. Sudirman died on January 29, 1950, about a month after the transfer of sovereignty from the Netherlands to the Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RIS), with the Republic of Indonesia being one of the states. This transfer of sovereignty marked the end of the Dutch-Indonesian conflict. The scene of Sudirman’s funeral in Yogyakarta on January 30, 1950 was depicted in comic number 29. The comic included representations of Islam and Muhammadiyah in the funeral procession, which was filled with mourners. The clothes worn by the mourners became symbols that represented the groups of people who were present. In one striking panel, the author-artist of the comic featured two Muslim mourners; first, a man wearing a Muslim cap, and second, a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf. One of them then prayed in an Islamic way: “May Allah forgive all his sins, and accept his deeds, by placing him in heaven.” There was also a mourner wearing a military helmet, indicating that the deceased was an important person in the Indonesian military. The symbolization of Muhammadiyah can

be seen from the picture of three mourners dressed in Hizbul Wathan uniforms (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967o, [29]23 & 24, December).

The closing panel was a half-body image of Sudirman showing the best combination of Islam and patriotism: he was dressed as an army commander and as a devout Muslim (he wore a black Muslim cap). With a distant gaze, he was depicted as speaking, giving a final message to all Indonesians, including Muslims. Some of the terms he used were clearly taken from Islamic principles, so that they gave an Islamic flavour to this discourse: *“Insaf, pertjaja dan jakinlah, bahwa kemerdekaan suatu negara dan bangsa jang didirikan di atas timbunan korban harta benda dan djiwa raga dari rakjat dan bangsanja itu insja Allah tidak akan dapat dilenjapkan oleh manusia siapapun djuga”* (Be aware, believe and rest assured, that the independence of a country and nation that is founded on the great sacrifice of property and body and soul of the people and nation, God willing, can never be eliminated by any human being). In closing, the author-artist of the comic wrote reflectively about Sudirman’s death and his legacy and the importance that his struggle be remembered and revived, even though Sudirman had died 17 years earlier. Aspects of an Islamic patriotism were reflected in the last caption, which once again used Islamic terms to give an Islamic character to the struggle to defend Indonesian independence, which was commanded by Sudirman: *“Seorang Muslim sedjati telah mendahului kita... Gugur satu tumbuh seribu... Di tangan generasi muda mendatang perjuangjan diteruskan, tegakkan agama, negara dan bangsa. Wallahu a’lam”* (A true Muslim has left us ... If one dies, a thousand will rise ... In the hands of the next generation the struggle is continued, to uphold religion, state and nation. Allah knows best) (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967o, [29]23 & 24, December). “A true Muslim” here clearly refers to a devout Muslim who also loves his country, and is willing to sacrifice himself for his country. Sudirman, according to this comic, is the best example of “a true Muslim.”

Comic number 29 was the closing edition, as well as the longest in the serial, and was the edition in which Sudirman’s Islamic patriotism was summarized and his legacy reconsidered. In a panel, Sudirman was depicted as inspecting a line of Indonesian soldiers who were neatly uniformed and fully armed. While tapping the arm of one of the soldiers, Sudirman, who was portrayed as a wise father of the younger Indonesian soldiers, gave advice that emphasized to the soldiers the importance of

faith in loving the homeland: “*Teruskan perjuangannya anak-anakku... Tuhan menjertaimu... Baik-baiklah anak-anak*” (Continue your struggle, my children ... May God be with you ... Be good, my children) (Suara Muhammadiyah 1967o, [29]23 & 24, December).

General Sudirman and His Muhammadiyah Roots

There were other ways that the author-artist of the comic highlighted Sudirman’s Islamic patriotism, namely by showing that Sudirman’s Islamic roots came from his interaction and association with Muhammadiyah. This depiction was featured in several editions of the comic. It first appeared in edition 8. There, Sudirman was seated on a litter and his entourage were on their way to Pracimantoro (Central Java). Then, it was illustrated that one of the members of the group (not shown clearly, but judging from the context, perhaps Sudirman himself), was conjuring an image in his mind. In the thought bubble he was described as thinking: “... this situation is the same as when I was a member of the Hizbul Wathan scout movement.” Founded in 1918, Hizbul Wathan (HW) is a scouting organization founded by Muhammadiyah to educate young males to be independent, disciplined and beneficial to their environment. In various places in the Netherlands Indies at that time, HW became an effective medium for Muhammadiyah to attract Muslim youth.

The name, literally meaning “the people who love the homeland,” implies that young people are taught to love their country, have self-discipline, develop a leadership attitude and skills to survive in nature, and are taught about Islam (Arifin 2016, 92; Majelis Diktilitbang and LPI PP Muhammadiyah 2010, 64, 109). Even though HW is a scouting movement, there are military-like elements in its activities. This is also evident from the nickname that HW gave itself during the colonial period: “the soldiers of Muhammadiyah.” Being a member of the HW was seen as an honor among some young people at that time, given that HW provided them with uniforms and semi-military training (Abdullah 2009, 123). The HW was an indigenous version of the European-oriented Dutch scout movement in the Indies. Sudirman became a member of HW after he graduated from MULO (junior high school) in Cilacap, Central Java, in the late 1920s or early 1930s, and again when he taught at HIS (elementary school) Muhammadiyah in the same city in 1935 (Sardiman 2008, 38–49).

In the 8th edition of the comic, the author-artist of the comic portrayed a HW training session in the wilderness. The HW members were depicted carrying someone lying on a stretcher. This indicates that the use of a stretcher, which was later used by an unwell Sudirman during his guerilla war in 1948-49, was not new to him (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966h, [8]13 & 14, July). This illustration also shows that HW had given young Sudirman the opportunity to get to know and explore the Indonesian landscape, – at least the forests of central Java – socialize and work with many people, and obtain survival skills with limited resources using relevant physical exercises. Readers were invited to believe that Sudirman’s love for the Indonesian homeland, his knowledge about survival in the outdoors (which was the basis of guerrilla warfare), his understanding about discerning wind direction, finding food in the forest, taking shelter from inclement weather, and his obedient attitude to Islamic teachings were formed by the HW.

In comic number 9, it was illustrated that when, in December 1948, Sudirman was on a litter, he remembered his younger days in the HW. The scene turned into the camp in the field in the middle of the forest. Some of the HW members were working together, emphasizing the need for cooperation to survive in the outdoors. In the evening, they held a bonfire. One can see a HW leader talking to young HW members. The HW leader was portrayed delivering an important message to the younger members of the organization, one of whom was imagined to be Sudirman. He said to them: *“Tjnta tanah air adalah sebagian dari iman ...”* (Love for the motherland is part of faith) (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966i, [9]15 & 16, August).

After saying that, he continued, “My dear children, who knows if one of you will become the leader of the country in the future.” This narrative establishes a connection between this hope, perhaps in 1930s, and the fact that, in 1948, a former member of the HW had become an officer of the highest rank in Indonesian military. The author-artist of the comic closed the scene by emphasizing the importance of the HW in sowing the seeds of nationalism and patriotism for Sudirman: “HW Muhammadiyah has forged and formed leadership cadres. During his lifetime, Pak Dirman led the Banyumas Muhammadiyah Youth ...” (Suara Muhammadiyah 1966i, [9]15 & 16, August). In the 10th edition, the author-artist of the comic continued the visual narrative of the night-time HW campsite on Mount Batur (Central Java). The

scout leader was depicted thinking about the importance that HW survival training held for young people and its benefits for them in the future (*Suara Muhammadiyah* 1966j, [10]17, September).

Conclusion

After examining 29 editions of the comic serial about General Sudirman published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine between February 1966 and December 1967, this study demonstrates that the comic played an important role in helping Muhammadiyah construct and spread the idea of Islamic patriotism to its readers during a period when Indonesian Muslims were caught in a very violent ideological conflict against the communists. It can be concluded that one of the aims of this comic publication was to promote to readers the importance of Islam in one of the most important phases in modern Indonesian history: the Dutch-Indonesian war. This comic revived the memory of who this magazine viewed as the best representative of Islamic patriotism at that time, namely Indonesian Army Commander-in-Chief General Sudirman. He was portrayed as both a patriot and a pious soldier originating from the Muhammadiyah family. This comic emphasized that the combination of Islam and patriotism would be able to keep Indonesia safe during any political chaos.

This study shows that this comic visually portrayed that the struggle of General Sudirman and other Republican fighters against the Dutch, especially during the Second Dutch Military Aggression, was not only supported by manpower and weapons, but also by the Indonesian freedom fighters' strong faith in Allah. This was represented with pictures and narratives that depicted the piety of Sudirman and his troops when they were chased by Dutch troops. Equally important is the visualization of the idea that, for Indonesian Muslims, loving their homeland is part of their faith. Sudirman and other fighters were described as being in a really difficult situation, given the menacing Dutch attacks, the harsh routes they followed in the deep jungles of Java, the lack of logistical supplies for them during their adventure, their separation from their families, and Sudirman's serious illness. However, they managed to endure all of these difficulties. What made them mentally and morally strong enough to survive was their faith, especially in their belief that their struggle was legitimized by Islamic principles and that this struggle would

be helped by Allah. Thus, readers of this comic are certainly given a strong impression that Islamic patriotism makes a major contribution to the tenacity, strength and bravery of Indonesian fighters who were fighting to defend their country's independence from foreign enemies. The narrative established that the more Indonesian Muslim fighters had faith, the stronger their love for their homeland would become, which in turn would enable them to sacrifice themselves for the existence of their homeland.

The method used by the author-artist of the comic to promote the ideas of the Islamic patriotism of Sudirman and other Indonesian fighters was to vividly describe how they responded spiritually to critical situations in their struggle. From their facial expressions, their gestures, the clothes they wore, their body positions, and the words they said, the main characters were depicted as patriots who were also obedient Muslims. Sudirman's inner thoughts, which appeared quite often in this comic, indicated his view that the struggle was extremely hard, but he was grateful that his association with Islam and Muhammadiyah had helped him physically, morally and spiritually to survive the difficulties he faced. It was depicted that there was a sad and worried tone among the Indonesian fighters, who were far from their families and had to fight from the middle of the thick forests with limited logistical support, and were chased by the fully armed and cruel Dutch troops, but their grief and worry were later defeated by their optimism, part of which was born from their belief that by getting closer to and submitting themselves to Allah, Allah would help them to defend Indonesia's independence.

This study demonstrates that comics played a major role in the way that modernist Muslim media in Indonesia revived the popular memory of the Dutch-Indonesian war and emphasized the role of Islamic patriotism in the conflict, aimed at the new generation of Indonesian Muslims who had not experienced the war. This study sheds light on comics, an important but highly overlooked product of Islamic cultural legacy in Southeast Asia, and especially in Indonesia, which sought to renegotiate the important place of Islam during the decisive period of the Dutch-Indonesian war in 1945-49, with the opportunities Indonesian Muslims had in the final phase of President Sukarno's rule at the time this comic was released.

Endnotes

1. A number of books were written about Sudirman's biography, among them are Salam (1963); Imran (1985); Sardiman (2000, 2008).
2. All English translation of Indonesian texts are mine, unless otherwise stated. Additional notes in square brackets are also mine.

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The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

Articles should be written in American English between approximately 10,000-15,000 words including text, all tables and figures, notes, references, and appendices intended for publication. All submission must include 150 words abstract and 5 keywords. Quotations, passages, and words in local or foreign languages should

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2. Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
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6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

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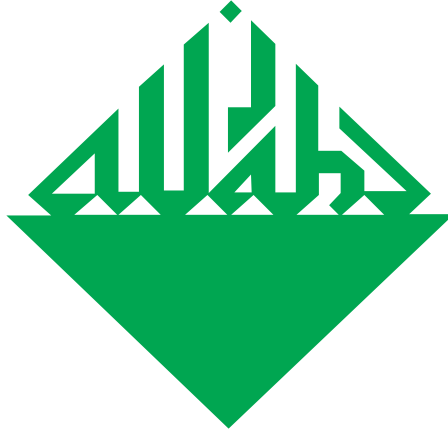
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