



## Indonesian Islamic Intellectual Fashion Style in The Early 20th Century: Photo Narrative Analysis

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### Abstract

The development of clothing began to have a variety of functions ranging from the symbol of social status to the symbol of a person's position. Indonesia stretches from the Hindu-Buddhist, Islam to the modern era Indonesia clothing is very dispersed and coloured by customs and culture that developed in its time. Entering the beginning of the 20th century, with the emergence of Indonesian Intellectuals as a result of the Dutch ethical politics fashion style of Indonesian to be varied. Among Indonesian Islamic Intellectuals, a similar change occurred. Robes or sarongs are often synonymous with the characteristics of a Muslim's clothes are no longer a major symbol. The purpose of this study is to know Indonesian Islamic Intellectuals' clothing style in the early 20th century. The method used is a historical research method consisting of 4 stages, namely heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The study's results found that Western fashion styles influenced the fashion styles of Indonesian Islamic Intellectuals in the early 20th century. Suits, ties, hats and shirts are the common Western clothes these people wear.

**Keywords** *Fashion Style, Intellectual Islam, Indonesia*

### INTRODUCTION

The development of clothing began to have a variety of functions ranging from the symbol of social status to the symbol of a person's position. As Chaney said, the external appearance became one of the important sites for lifestyle. Surface matters will become more important than substance (Hendariningrum & Susilo, 2008). Dressing traditions in Indonesia consist of variations influenced by local customs and culture. Over the centuries, foreign cultural influences such as Indian, Arab, and European have enriched the diversity of clothing in India (Reid, 2014). Indian, Islamic (Arabic and Persian), and European influences brought different dress styles to India (Lukitaningsih et al., 2022).

Reid (2014) says that most Javanese people are bare-chested while the lower part of their body is covered with a sarong. During colonialism, Europeans introduced modern clothing. Although initially, they refused on the grounds that the clothes came from the Dutch, who were infidels. Sukarno's stories (Adams, 2014) gave a picture of this case. With the emergence of Indonesian educated people as a result of Dutch ethical politics in the early 20th century, western clothing gradually began to be accepted. In Batavia, where many educated people were, in the 1930s, Western clothing was effortless to find (Mrazek, 2013). Islamic modernists were the first to use these clothes (Nordholt, 2015).

Although not much writing on the history of dress style in Indonesia has been done by several experts and historians, both Indonesian and foreign historians, one of them is called

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Outward Appearances by Henk Schulte. However, his research still seems to have not touched on the influence of Western dress styles among Indonesian intellectuals in the 20th century in depth. Other historians also seem not interested in this research subject. Even though Western dress styles in the early 20th century had a major influence in shaping the identity of Indonesian Muslims who were known to be moderate, therefore this research tries to trace back and present a little picture of how Western dress styles affect Indonesian Islamic intellectuals.

This paper will focus on the dress style of Indonesian Islamic intellectuals in the early 20th century. As in the above, as a result of Dutch ethical politics, many Indonesian natives began to recognize in-depth Western culture, including, in this case, how to dress. Western clothing, synonymous with modern clothing and symbols of progress, began to be worn by educated Indonesians, including educated or intellectuals from Muslim groups. Therefore clothes have become a communication tool to show identity.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Based on the analysis, the researcher found ten books, eight journals, one internet source, one film and two photos to strengthen the literature review of this journal. There are books in the form of biographies which may be one of the primary sources that strengthen this research, such as *Biografi Bung Karno: Penyambung Lidah Rakyat Indonesia* and *Bunga Rampai Sejarah II*. These two books played an important role in analyzing a photo containing a photo of the Sarekat Islam Association. The analysis of the photo relates to the clothes worn by members of the Sarekat Islam Association. The rest are books of supporting sources such as *Sejarah Tokoh Bangsa, Sejarah Perkembangan Intelektual Indonesia Sampai Masa Kontemporer*, and others.

Meanwhile, the eight existing journals are part of the supporting sources for this research to strengthen this research. The journal by Lukitaningsih & et al (2022), entitled *Gaya Berpakaian Pria Pribumi di Sumatera Timur Awal Abad ke-20: Analisis Narasi* is almost the same as the author's research but has differences regarding the subject and research object. Another source is an internet source, while the other is a film source originating from the film *Tjokroaminoto: Guru Bangsa*. This source is used to see how the natives dressed at that time. For the last source, two photos are this study's analysis object. One photo is from KITLV's digital archives, and the other is from the book *Adicerita Hamka Visi Islam Sang Penulis Besar untuk Indonesia Modern* by Rush (2017). These two photos then become two important sources in analyzing this research. The first photo is a photo of the Sarekat Islam Association. While the second photo is a photo of Hamka with Soekarno and Haji Abdul Karim Oei.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study, the method used is a historical research method. This method consists of four stages: heuristic, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The heuristic stage is the source search. The source is divided into two, namely primary and secondary sources. The primary source is the main eyewitness source. While secondary sources are various expressions that come from not from perpetrators and eyewitnesses directly an event. The unwritten source is an artefact or building photo (Kuntowijoyo, 2013).

This research uses mostly written sources, such as books, journals, internet articles, films, and photo archives. The primary sources used are photographs from the KITLV archives as well as two biographies of Soekarno and Muhammad Roem obtained from the Batu Api Library in Jatinangor, Sumedang. Secondary sources, in the form of books and supporting data, were also obtained from the library. Sources of research journals were obtained from the official website of the journal used. One of the internet sources is obtained from the official website alif.id.

After the heuristic stage, the next step is criticism. Criticism is divided into internal and

external. External criticism focuses on the physical aspects and authenticity of the source. The researcher uses three primary sources, namely the biographies of Sukarno and Muhammad Roem, which are primary sources because they contain statements from the main actors of the events studied. Photographs from KITLV taken in the early 20th century are also used as primary sources. In addition, there are books, journals, and articles that are used as secondary sources. Internal criticism focuses on the credibility of the source content. (Kuntowijoyo, 2013). The next stage is interpretation by interpreting historical facts and determining their meaning and relation to one another. Then the last stage is historiography, where the results of the interpretation of several facts obtained are constructed in the form of historiography or writing.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Netherlands implemented an ethical policy at the beginning of the 20th century. This policy focuses on three areas, namely education, transmigration, and irrigation. In the field of education, the Netherlands built schools and colleges. However, access to education is still limited for the children of the indigenous elite. From these schools grew the Indonesian intellectual community (Susilo & Isbandiyah, 2018). This group of intellectuals received much modern influence thanks to Western education. One of the visible modern influences is the use of Western clothing, such as suits and ties (Nordholt, 2005). This education was the primary tool for "uplifting" natives and leading them towards modernity and East-West unity (Shiraishi, 1997).

The demand for Western education continues to increase, but western schools are still limited. On the other hand, Muslims are open to modern ideas but are reluctant to send their children to Dutch schools. As an alternative, madrasas emerged as a solution to compiling a Western curriculum in Islamic-based education (Miftahudin, 2017).

Secular Dutch schools and madrasas began to develop. Secular school students tend to wear suits and ties—meanwhile, students from madrasa backgrounds combine Western and traditional clothing such as sarongs. The first generation of Muslim intellectuals joined modernist Islamic organizations such as Sarekat Islam or Muhammadiyah. Initially, traditionalists opposed Western clothing; even in 1927, Nahdlatul Ulama issued a fatwa haram. However, later the traditionalists accepted Western dress (Nordholt, 2005). The author will present two photographs featuring Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals. There the author will provide an analysis regarding the style of clothing they wear based on where the clothing originally came from and the context of the era that influenced them to wear the clothing.



**Figure 1.** Tjokroaminoto with members of Sarekat Islam. (Source: KITLV)

Figure 1 shows HOS Tjokroaminoto in 1914 at a party meeting in Blitar, East Java. Members of Sarekat Islam are seen wearing various clothing, with influences from modern and traditional clothing styles. Western clothing, such as suits, ties, shirts, can be seen in the photo, while the sarong, beskap, blangkon represent the image of traditional clothing. These combinations imply many things. First, western clothing emphasizes Sarekat Islam is an organization that works in a modern way (Marihandono et al., 2015). The members of Sarekat Islam wear Western dress to show equality with Dutch as colonialists. This is how they assert that they can stand on equal footing with the Netherlands (Roem, 1977).

In a scene from the *Tjokroaminoto: Guru Bangsa* (Nugroho, 2015) film directed by director Garin Nugroho in 2015, shows how an ordinary member of the Sarekat Islam Association is talking with his friends. He said Sarekat Islam tried to show ordinary people could be equal to aristocrats and Dutch. Although the scene mentioned earlier is only fictional, it reflects the social context of the time.

Western clothing is also inseparable from the educational and social background of the Sarekat Islam leaders. As an example, Tjokroaminoto, whose family background cannot be underestimated. He is still a descendant of the Regent of Madiun to attend school at OSVIA, A civil service school (Marihandono et al., 2015). While the second is related to the use of traditional clothing such as *blangkon* and sarong. During the colonial era, both were nothing more than the clothes of common people, which conveyed the meaning of underdevelopment and low status of a person (Marihandono et al., 2015). Therefore, because this sarong is a commoner's clothing, they should have used it to symbolise that common people could rise as modern human beings and be equal to the colonialists. The use of sarongs can also be used as an affirmation for them as Indonesian Muslims, especially since sarongs have become a distinctive symbol or identity for Indonesian Muslims, especially traditional groups such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) (Damajanti. 2022). As stated by Mohammad Roem in his book *Bunga Rampai dari Sejarah II* (Roem, 1977), using a sarong as a symbol of clothing does not make a person's degree lower. Tjokroaminoto, as someone from an elite background, chose to wear a sarong rather than advising commoners to wear pants. Because he thought sarong was also an honourable garment and at the same time eliminated any differences in society.



**Figure 2.** Hamka with Sukarno and Oei Tjeng Hien (Abdoel Karim Oei). (Source: Rush (2017))

*Blangkon* has indeed become the identity of traditional Javanese clothing. *Blangkon* was originally intended to protect the heads of Javanese men from the hot sun. When Islam entered

Indonesia, there were two ends of the cloth tied, one end was a symbol of the monotheistic creed, and the other was the Apostle's creed and tied together, meaning to be a syhadatain. So, it is clear that apart from indicating traditional Javanese clothing, *Blangkon* also marks the identity of a Muslim (Cisara, 2018).

The second figure comes from the book written by Rush (2017), *Adicerita Hamka*, which features a photo of Abdul Karim Amrullah or often called Hamka, with Sukarno, the future President of Indonesia and Oei Tjeng Hien or Abdul Karim Oei in 1941. This photo took place during a meeting of three at Bung Karno's exile in Bengkulu in 1941 (Bashri & Retno, 2012). All three are Muhammadiyah members (Muchlas et al., 2018).

In the photo, Hamka, Sukarno and Oei Tjeng Hien wear modern clothes such as shoes, jackets, pants, ties, and shirts. They only wear caps as traditional clothing. Interestingly Hamka usually prefers to wear a sarong with a suit or shirt, not pants. This habit stems from his experiences in his youth in Medan, where Western-educated people laughed at him for not wearing pants like Dutch schoolchildren. Since then, Hamka has been reluctant to wear pants and prefers a sarong, although he still wears a suit and shirt (Rush, 2017).

Hamka has no Western educational background and only graduated from Sumatra Thawalib. However, he studied self-taught with the support of his charismatic and modern family. Hamka's father, a modernist in West Sumatra, introduced the use of preaching underwear. In addition, he also played a role in establishing the Sumatra Thawalib School, a modern educational institution in West Sumatra, which was driven by the thoughts of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha, who were popular in the Middle East (Muchlas et al., 2018).

While Sukarno was more identical as a nationalist than an Islamist, however, during his exile in Ende and Bengkulu, he exchanged ideas with modernist Islamic figures such as Ahmad Hassan from PERSIS. The climax was when Sukarno joined Bengkulu's Muhammadiyah (Muchlas et al., 2018). Sukarno was a person who strongly advocated the use of Western clothing is useful for elevating the dignity of the colonized nation. Moreover, Dutch as colonialist used the clothes as a haughty attitude in front of the natives of their colony. Therefore, he wanted to wear western clothes to align themselves with the Netherlands. He strongly discouraged the use of blangkon and sarong, for both clothes were symbols of backwardness and his nation's humiliation. As explained above, because of his firm principles in wearing Western clothes, Sukarno fought with a *penghulu* who wanted to marry him to Oetari, one of Tjokroaminoto's daughters (Adams, 2014).

Meanwhile, regarding the use of the cap, Sukarno was proud of himself and claimed he was the first to popularize its use among the national movement figures. The cap was originally identical to common people's clothing. However, in Sukarno's hands, the caps transformed into a symbol of nationalist attire at the time, whether it was Islamists, Nationalists, Christians, or even Communists. It became a symbol of the national movement and united them in the same goal towards Indonesian independence (Adams, 2014). Soekarno succeeded in changing the image of the peci, which originally represented a soft tradition, common people and the low class, to become a symbol of Indonesia's national awakening. Western-educated educated people who initially despised the cap as an ancient tradition gradually adopted Sukarno's style of dressing in the cap. The native cap becomes a symbol of marginalized Indonesian society to rise (Kertamukti, 2013).

The leading figure in the photo is Oei Tjeng Hien, or Haji Abdul Karim Oei. A Muslim of Chinese descent who is also a Muhammadiyah figure in Bengkulu. What Oei wore was similar to Hamka and Sukarno. However, what is worth seeing is the sitting position. The attitude of sitting with one leg placed above the other was originally a characteristic of the European style as a symbol of affirming one's degree as a person who rules. Slowly natives followed it as a form of equality (Adams, 2014).

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research on the fashion styles of Indonesian Islamic intellectuals at the beginning of the 20th century, it is known that the fashion styles of Indonesian Muslims underwent various changes. The most striking change is the use of Western clothing by Indonesian Islamic intellectuals. This can be seen from the use of clothes, pants and shoes. In addition, as an interaction between Western and Eastern cultures. There is a mix of Western and traditional Indonesian clothing, such as skullcaps and sarongs. Then came people who wore suits, ties and pants combined with sarongs and skullcaps. The mushrooming use of Western clothing is inseparable from the background of its users at that time.

Initially, western clothing among Islamic intellectuals was introduced by people who were educated in the West and had received education in Dutch-made schools such as MULO, AMS and OSVIA. This can be seen from how the Sarekat Islam elites and members of the Jong Islamieten Bond dress and their educational background. While the use of Western clothing combined with traditional clothing was usually born from being influenced by the thoughts of Islamic reformers in the Middle East, such as Jamalludin Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Rida. This can be seen in the way Hamka dresses. As mentioned above, Hamka has never received a Western education, but he is very open to wearing Western clothes. Therefore, two styles of clothing were born due to the influence of Western clothing in Indonesia in the early 20th century. A completely Western dress style and a dress style that combines Western and traditional dress styles such as jackets, ties and trousers combined with sarongs and skullcaps.

Historical studies related to fashion styles in Indonesia are still very minimal. Even though the scope of research related to this matter is still broad. Most existing studies focus on the history of fashion styles at a particular time and society. Therefore, the author recommends several things,

1. Research on Indonesian history is still focused on a broad historical scope. Micro-history themes such as fashion history are still minimal to learn.
2. There are actually quite a lot of sources related to the history of fashion in Indonesia if people examine it more deeply.
3. As the largest Muslim country in the world, studies related to micro-history in Indonesian Islamic History are still very broad to be studied seriously.

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