

## The Role of Abdul Muis in the Youth Movement in Bandung 1913-1935

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Received 2 July 2025; Received in revised form 18 August 2025; Accepted 6 September 2025

### Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis aktivitas dan kontribusi Abdul Muis dalam memperkuat Sarekat Islam, menggambarkan lanskap politik Bandung pada masa itu, dan mengeksplorasi dampaknya terhadap perkembangan organisasi serta masyarakat lokal. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode historis dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui tahapan heuristik (pengumpulan sumber), kritik (evaluasi sumber), interpretasi (penafsiran data), dan historiografi (penyusunan laporan sejarah). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Abdul Muis memiliki peran sentral dalam menggerakkan Sarekat Islam di Bandung melalui kepemimpinannya yang karismatik dan strategis. Ia berhasil memperkuat organisasi dengan membangun jaringan, memobilisasi massa, serta menyuarakan perlawanan terhadap penjajahan Belanda. Selain itu, kontribusi Abdul Muis berpengaruh signifikan terhadap kesadaran nasionalisme masyarakat lokal dan dinamika politik Bandung pada periode tersebut. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memperkaya pemahaman terkait sejarah awal pergerakan nasional Indonesia dan peran tokoh-tokoh penting seperti Abdul Muis dalam membentuk dinamika sosial-politik.

**Kata kunci:** abdul muis, sarekat islam, pergerakan nasional.

### Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to analyze the activities and contributions of Abdul Muis in strengthening the Sarekat Islam, to describe the political landscape of Bandung during that period, and to explore its impact on the development of the organization as well as the local community. This research employs the historical method with a qualitative approach. Data were collected through the stages of heuristics (source collection), criticism (source evaluation), interpretation (data analysis), and historiography (historical writing). The findings show that Abdul Muis played a central role in advancing Sarekat Islam in Bandung through his charismatic and strategic leadership. He succeeded in strengthening the organization by building networks, mobilizing the masses, and voicing resistance against Dutch colonial rule. Moreover, Abdul Muis's contributions had a significant influence on raising nationalist awareness among the local community and shaping the political dynamics of Bandung during that period. This study is expected to enrich the understanding of the early history of Indonesia's national movement and the role of key figures such as Abdul Muis in shaping socio-political dynamics.*

**Keywords:** abdul muis, sarekat islam, national movement.

### INTRODUCTION

In the 20th century, Indonesia entered a crucial phase in its national movement. Sarekat Islam (SI) became one of the leading socio-political organizations in the struggle for independence. Many intellectuals and activists emerged to raise nationalist awareness, including

Abdul Muis, who played a central role in Bandung (Al-Chaidar, 1999).

Between 1913 and 1935, Bandung was a significant center of nationalist activity. Youth movements and organizations flourished, inspired by figures like Abdul Muis. As a journalist and writer, he used his works to promote

national awakening, education, and unity, motivating the younger generation to participate in the independence struggle (Anhar Gonggong, 1985).

The political climate in Bandung grew tense around 1920 as indigenous resistance increased. The Dutch colonial government intensified surveillance, as Bandung was home to many intellectuals and activists involved in major organizations such as Sarekat Islam (SI) and the Indische Partij (IP). Youth played a vital role in shaping national identity and organizing anti-colonial movements, with Abdul Muis influencing their thoughts and attitudes toward nationalism.

Born on July 3, 1883, in Sungai Puar, West Sumatra, Abdul Muis received Western education at Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (HIS) in Padang and later at HBS in Padang and Batavia (Jakarta). This shaped his political, social, and religious outlook. His career began as a clerk in the Department of Education and Religion, but soon he turned to journalism. In 1905 he joined *Bintang Hindia* magazine, and by 1913 he became editor-in-chief of *Kaoem Moeda*, a paper that became the backbone of SI's movement in Bandung. Through this platform, he strengthened the struggle using writing as a weapon.

He also co-founded the Bumiputera Committee with Ki Hadjar Dewantara in 1913, opposing Dutch colonial celebrations. In 1917, he represented SI in

the Netherlands to promote *Indie Weerbaar* and later encouraged the establishment of the Technische Hooge School (now ITB) in Bandung. By 1918, he became a member of the Volksraad representing Central SI (A.P.E. Korver, 1985).

Within SI, Abdul Muis contributed significantly serving as a senior leader, vice president of Central SI (1915-1922), advocating for schools to educate future leaders, and promoting SI's participation in the Volksraad. He also addressed women's rights and supported female activism within the organization. His courage earned him the nickname "Napoleon of Sarekat Islam," and he was later recognized as Indonesia's first National Hero by President Soekarno in 1959 (Arsip vergadering van 29/30 Augustus 1931, 1931).

From 1913 to 1935, SI experienced both growth and internal conflicts, yet Abdul Muis remained a strategic figure, promoting social justice, strengthening SI amid ideological rivalries, and spreading progressive nationalist ideas. His writings, widely published in newspapers, criticized colonial policies, emphasized unity across ethnic and religious divides, and inspired youth to think critically and actively join the movement (Azmi, 1982).

Through his journalism and activism, Muis shaped the spirit of Bandung's youth, encouraging them not only to join youth groups like Jong Java or

Jong Sumatra but also to engage in intellectual debates about Indonesia's future. His vision of unity and knowledge-based empowerment became a foundation for the nationalist struggle (Bintang Hindia, 1905-1907).

Despite his importance, academic studies focusing on Abdul Muis's specific contributions in Bandung during 1913-1935 remain limited. This research therefore seeks to analyze his role in Sarekat Islam, his influence on Bandung's youth and intellectual movements, and his broader impact on the city as one of the epicenters of Indonesia's national awakening (Dewan Pimpinan Pusat Sarekat Islam, 2012).

## METHODS

This study employs the historical method, which consists of four main stages: heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. This method was chosen because it is in line with the objective of the research, namely to reconstruct Abdul Muis's role in the Sarekat Islam movement in Bandung during the period 1913-1935 based on valid and reliable historical evidence.

### 1) Heuristics

The first stage is heuristics, namely the process of searching, collecting, and compiling relevant historical sources. The sources used in this study consist of both primary and secondary sources.

- Primary sources were obtained from archives, newspapers, and official documents, such as: *Arsip vergadering van 29/30 Augustus 1931*, the newspaper *Kaoem Moeda, Oetosan Hindia* (March 6, 1923), and *Sin Po* (June 27, 1916), all of which reported on Sarekat Islam's activities and Abdul Muis's involvement. In addition, the *Peraturan Dasar dan Rumah Tangga Sarekat Islam* (Constitution and Bylaws of Sarekat Islam), published by the Central Executive Board of Sarekat Islam in 2012, was also consulted.
- Secondary sources include scholarly works, books, and articles, such as those written by Al-Chaidar (1999), Anhar Gonggong (1985), A.P.E. Korver (1985), Azmi (1982), and Foulcher (2010). These materials were obtained from the collections of the UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung Library, the Bapusipda Library in West Java, the Batu Api Library, the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI), and the National Library of Indonesia.

### 2) Criticism

The second stage is criticism, namely the verification process of the collected sources to determine their authenticity and credibility. Criticism is divided into two categories:

- External criticism was conducted to test the authenticity of the sources by examining their physical aspects, such as paper, ink, language, writing style, and publication details. Basic questions addressed include: when was the source produced, where was it produced, who produced it, what material was used, and whether it exists in its original form or as a reproduction.
- Internal criticism was carried out to assess the credibility of the sources by analyzing the author's perspective, objectivity, and the reliability of the information. This step involved cross-referencing different sources and corroborating evidence. For example, information from *Kaoem Moeda* was verified against *Oetosan Hindia* and official Sarekat Islam records.

### 3) Interpretation

The third stage is interpretation, which refers to the process of analyzing and synthesizing the verified historical facts. In this stage, the researcher employed transformational leadership theory and conflict theory as analytical tools. Transformational leadership theory was applied to understand how Abdul Muis acted as a leader who motivated

youth through the press, public speeches, and organizational movements. Meanwhile, conflict theory (Karl Marx) and the theory of hegemony (Antonio Gramsci) were used to explain the dynamics between colonial power and indigenous movements, as well as how Abdul Muis and Sarekat Islam sought to foster critical awareness to resist colonial hegemony.

### 4) Historiography

The final stage is historiography, namely the writing of historical narratives based on the data that have been collected, verified, and interpreted. This stage involves reconstructing the past events in an imaginative yet critical manner, guided by the evidence. The historical writing is presented systematically to illustrate Abdul Muis's role in Sarekat Islam, particularly in Bandung, and his influence on the development of nationalist consciousness among youth during the period 1913-1935.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Influence of Abdul Muis's Ideas on Bandung Youth (1913-1935)

Abdul Muis's intellectual legacy in Bandung cannot be separated from his role as a writer and journalist. His position as editor-in-chief of *Kaoem Moeda* provided a platform to articulate nationalist ideas in ways that were

accessible to the youth. By using journalism as a medium of struggle, he was able to raise awareness of political and social injustice under colonial rule (*Kaoem Moeda*, 1913-1920). His writings emphasized the importance of knowledge, education, and unity, which resonated strongly with young people seeking new orientations in the midst of colonial oppression. This demonstrates that the press became a vital arena in shaping the political consciousness of Bandung's youth (Dewan Pimpinan Wilayah Sarekat Islam Jawa Barat, 2005).

In addition to journalism, Abdul Muis consistently emphasized critical thinking and intellectual engagement. He did not merely encourage resistance but also taught youth to analyze the roots of colonial domination and the necessity of collective struggle. His thoughts connected nationalism with moral responsibility, inspiring Bandung youth to regard independence not only as a political project but also as a moral duty. In this sense, Abdul Muis acted as both a political guide and a moral compass for the younger generation.

The historical context of Bandung further amplified the reception of Muis's ideas. As a city with many schools, printing houses, and intellectual gatherings, Bandung provided fertile ground for the spread of nationalist thought. The presence of youth organizations such as Jong Java and Jong

Sumatra enabled cross-cultural dialogue, and Abdul Muis's emphasis on unity across ethnic and religious lines aligned with the aspirations of these groups. His writings challenged parochial identities and promoted a broader Indonesian identity, which was crucial for the development of nationalism (Foulcher, 2010).

The colonial government's repressive policies paradoxically strengthened the appeal of Muis's ideas. Surveillance and restrictions imposed on indigenous movements fueled resentment among the youth, and Abdul Muis's works provided both an outlet for frustration and a framework for organized resistance (Korver, 1985). His critical stance toward Dutch policies, expressed through both journalism and speeches, encouraged young people to question authority and imagine alternatives to colonial structures. In this way, his influence extended beyond abstract ideals into concrete strategies of resistance.

Furthermore, Abdul Muis's advocacy for education and knowledge democratization gave Bandung youth new tools for empowerment. He believed that independence required not only political mobilization but also intellectual preparation. His encouragement for the establishment of schools and emphasis on knowledge dissemination provided a vision for long-term nation-building. For the youth of Bandung, this message reinforced the idea that they were not merely

followers of a movement but active agents in shaping the nation's future (Latif, 2011).

Taken together, Abdul Muis's ideas shaped a generation of young people in Bandung who were politically conscious, socially critical, and committed to national unity. His intellectual contribution was not limited to temporary mobilization but laid the groundwork for a more enduring nationalist awareness. Thus, his influence on Bandung youth during 1913-1935 must be understood as both ideological and practical, as it informed their worldview while also directing their actions in the struggle for independence.

#### **Abdul Muis's Role in Mobilizing Bandung Youth within Sarekat Islam**

Abdul Muis's leadership within Sarekat Islam was not only ideological but also organizational. As a prominent figure in SI Bandung, he provided a concrete space for youth to engage in nationalist activities. His role as editor of *Kaoem Moeda* positioned him as a communicator who could bridge intellectual discourse with mass mobilization. The newspaper served as a training ground for young activists to express their views and to familiarize themselves with political debates. Through this medium, Muis succeeded in connecting the broader ideals of SI with the specific aspirations of Bandung's youth (*Oetosan Hindia*, 1923, March 6).

Beyond his work in the press, Abdul Muis actively engaged in public mobilization. He organized meetings, delivered speeches, and initiated movements that directly involved youth participation. His charisma and oratorical skills made him a central figure capable of uniting different groups under the banner of Sarekat Islam. These activities transformed Bandung into one of the organizational hubs of SI, where young people found both ideological guidance and opportunities for political practice (Pringgodigdo, 1950).

Abdul Muis's efforts extended to political representation and international engagement. His appointment to the Volksraad in 1918 and his mission to the Netherlands in 1917 demonstrated to Bandung youth that political struggle could operate at multiple levels. By participating in colonial institutions while simultaneously opposing their injustices, he modeled a dual strategy of resistance: using the system to voice demands while also mobilizing grassroots movements (*Sin Po*, 1916, June 27). For young activists, this duality illustrated the flexibility and adaptability required in the nationalist struggle (Suryanegara, 1995).

Another significant aspect of Muis's role was his emphasis on education as a foundation for leadership. He advocated for the establishment of schools that could prepare youth as future leaders of the nation. This vision aligned with Sarekat

Islam's broader agenda of empowering the indigenous population through intellectual development (Vlekke, 2008). For Bandung's youth, this translated into a sense of responsibility not only to resist colonial rule but also to equip themselves with the knowledge necessary for nation-building.

Importantly, Abdul Muis also engaged with issues of gender equality within the Sarekat Islam framework. His support for women's rights and involvement in SI's women's organizations provided an inclusive model of mobilization. This broadened the scope of youth participation by recognizing young women as integral actors in the nationalist movement. Such inclusivity reinforced the relevance of SI in Bandung's dynamic social landscape and further strengthened its legitimacy among the younger generation.

Finally, Muis's reputation as the "Napoleon of Sarekat Islam" symbolized his courage and determination in the face of colonial repression. This image resonated strongly with Bandung's youth, who sought both inspiration and leadership in their struggle. By combining intellectual vision, organizational capacity, and symbolic leadership, Abdul Muis mobilized young people in Bandung to play an active role in the nationalist movement. His contributions ensured that SI was not only an organization of adults but also a platform for youth

empowerment and political training (Tjokroaminoto, 1924).

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight Abdul Muis's significant influence on the political awakening of Bandung youth during the early twentieth century. His thoughts, articulated through journalism and public discourse, stimulated critical awareness and encouraged the younger generation to resist colonial domination. By linking nationalism with moral and intellectual responsibility, Muis helped shape a generation of youth who viewed independence as both a political necessity and an ethical imperative.

At the organizational level, Muis's involvement in Sarekat Islam provided Bandung youth with a concrete arena for activism. His role as a writer, orator, and leader enabled him to bridge ideas with practice, inspiring young people to participate in mass mobilization and political engagement. Moreover, his emphasis on education, gender inclusion, and political representation broadened the scope of youth involvement, making them not only supporters of SI but also active contributors to the nationalist cause.

In a broader sense, Abdul Muis's contribution illustrates how intellectual leadership and grassroots mobilization could reinforce each other in the context of the Indonesian nationalist movement.

His ability to influence ideas while simultaneously organizing practical actions ensured that Bandung youth were not merely passive recipients of nationalist rhetoric but active shapers of the struggle. Thus, Abdul Muis stands as a key figure whose legacy bridged ideological vision with social transformation, leaving a lasting impact on both Sarekat Islam and the development of national consciousness in Bandung.

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