

**RACIAL AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCES IN THE MALAY-LANGUAGE PRESS
COVERAGE OF THE ANTI-CHINESE RIOT IN 1918 KUDUS, JAVA**

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2017

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(History)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

September 2019

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Racial and economic influences in the Malay-language press coverage of the anti-Chinese riot in 1918 Kudus, Java

submitted by Daniel Carkner in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for

the degree of Master of Arts

in History

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Abstract

An examination of the Malay-language press coverage in the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) following the Kudus riot of October 31, 1918. This riot, an attack by indigenous (*bumiputra*) townspeople against the long-established Chinese population following a brawl on October 30, caused half of the Chinese population to flee the town and led to mass arrests of indigenous townspeople and political leaders by the Dutch authorities. Previous work on the Kudus riot has explained it as the result of economic competition between Chinese and indigenous businesses. Less attention has been given to how the riot was interpreted by the wider racial communities of the Dutch East Indies in the aftermath. This thesis compares a large body of the Kudus riot coverage in Malay newspapers in the weeks after the riot and examines how the newspapers' editorial lines shifted in November 1918, from an initially cautious phase where the Malay papers simply reprinted Dutch content, to a phase where the papers sought out credible correspondents or spokespeople from their own racial group, to a final phase of aggressive criticism of other editors and their interpretations of the riot and arrests. The four main papers being examined represent distinct positions on the Chinese and indigenous sides: *Sin Po* (nationalist Chinese), *Djawa Tengah* (moderate Chinese), *Neratja* (moderate indigenous), and *Sinar Hindia* (nationalist indigenous). After comparing the coverage in those papers, the thesis examines cases of outsider figures who worked for newspapers owned by other racial groups as well as the efforts by some editors and community officials to establish and promote Chinese-indigenous “friendship meetings” as a way to prevent future outbreaks. The thesis establishes some of the limits of expression in the newspapers of the time due not only to the poor relationships between racial groups and the threat of arrest under Dutch censorship laws, but also seeks out examples of cosmopolitan ideas and awareness of a common colonized status shared by both Chinese and indigenous.

Lay Summary

This thesis looks at what newspapers in the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia) printed about an anti-Chinese riot by indigenous (bumiputra) people in the city of Kudus, Java in late 1918. After that riot, half of the Chinese people in Kudus ran away to Semarang or other big cities in Java and the Dutch police arrested more than a hundred indigenous people accused of being involved. Because some newspapers were owned by Chinese, European or indigenous people they often took the side of 'their people' in covering the riot and aftermath. The newspapers also had to be careful what they printed because the police could arrest them for spreading 'hate' against other races. But some newspapers tried to print the perspective of the other side too, because they hoped that better understanding between races might stop that kind of thing from happening again.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Daniel Carkner

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Introduction

On October 31st, 1918, in revenge for an inter-ethnic brawl the day before, a group of *Boemipoetra* (indigenous) townspeople launched a shocking attack against the long-established Chinese community of Kudus, a town in Central Java not far from the port city of Semarang. Many Chinese homes and businesses were burned. About ten people died and dozens were injured. The Dutch officials in the town did not, or could not, stop the violence while it was unfolding and only later conducted mass arrests of *Boemipoetra*. Almost half of the local Chinese population (two out of four thousand) fled to Semarang. This event disturbed the Chinese communities of the Netherlands East Indies, and a special conference was held in Semarang on November 16, with more than a thousand Chinese delegates from around the Indies.¹ The facts and significance of what had happened that day became a source of debate in Malay-language newspapers in Java during the following weeks.² In Chinese-owned newspapers, “that disaster in Kudus” became a symbol for the vulnerability of Chinese in the Indies.³ It hardened the attitude of those Indies Chinese who advocated a rejection of Dutch citizenship or subjecthood, since the state could evidently not protect them.⁴ In *Boemipoetra* papers the events were downplayed and the unjust overreaction by the Dutch was considered the main story.⁵ The

1 “Verslag vergadering besar di gedong T.H.H.K Semarang hal perampokan di Koedoes,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 18, 1918.

2 Papers printed in the Malay language at this time were owned by Chinese, Javanese, Dutch or others, and therefore acted as a site of interaction between racial groups in a way that newspapers in the Chinese language, Javanese language and other could not.

3 Only days after the riot, *Pewarta Soerabaia*, a Chinese paper, compared the situation of the Indies Chinese to that of the Armenians in Turkey. “Gegeran di Koedoes,” *Pewarta Soerabaia*, November 2, 1918. And *Tjhoen Tjhioe*, a Chinese newspaper from Surabaya, described it like this in their end-of-year editorial, “[1918] has caused a very violent shock, so that the nation does not have a fixed idea of how it should stand. [...] The position of the Chinese nation in the Indies was extremely unsettled and certain Chinese felt like they were sitting on thorns.” “1918-1919,” *Tjhoen Tjhioe*, December 31, 1918.

4 Leo Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java, 1917-1942* (Marshall Cavendish International, 2005), 24, 37.

5 For example, the Batavia *Boemipoetra* paper *Neratja* expressed regret about the event, but noted that a hundred *Boemipoetra* had been arrested, including clerics and political leaders, whereas no Chinese were arrested, even though they were accused of having fired revolvers during the riot. “Perkara perkelahian di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 7, 1918. And the far-left *Boemipoetra* paper *Sinar Hindia* believed that Kudus was being used as a pretext to massively expand police surveillance and repression of their activists. “Wah, Wah, rama betoel, rama betoel!” *Sinar Hindia*, November 13, 1918.

Boemipoetra side was already suffering from injustice and oppression under Dutch colonialism and felt that the events in Kudus were just one of many horrible things that had happened recently.

Java in the 1910s was a place where shifting Dutch policy had laid the groundwork for events like the Kudus riot by pitting Chinese and *Boemipoetra* against one another in economic, legal, and educational domains. In that setting, it often seemed to Chinese or *Boemipoetra* nationalists that they were being treated especially unfairly and that the other group was being given advantages. Therefore in their pursuit of justice they often mobilized on the basis of race against other racial groups.⁶ Boycotts and counter-boycotts, political violence and aggressive rhetoric had been escalating between them for the last handful of years, and the Kudus riot was just one small outburst in that larger context.⁷ Yet presenting the reaction to it as simply a story of conflict—or even as merely one of many instances of the supposedly timeless struggle between Muslim Indonesians and the Indonesian Chinese—does not adequately encompass the range of what Malay newspapers printed about it. I will explore this tension between antagonistic discourse and the inter-ethnic integration through a look at the newspapers and how content about Kudus circulated among them.

Methodology

Much has been written in English about political violence in Indonesia, in particular relating to Islam, rural Java, and ethnic relations.⁸ As is common in many academic works on Southeast Asia, these often combine political science, historical and anthropological approaches. Many of these employ economic and demographic charts in conjunction with examinations of Javanese culture and broader

6 As Takashi Shiraishi puts it, “A new order was in place, built along racial lines and based on deeply ingrained racial antagonism. As if to remind the Chinese of this new reality, [Kudus] took place [...]” Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java’s New Order,” *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe*, 1997, 188.

7 Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912-1926* (Cornell University Press, 1990), 46.

8 For a few examples among many, see Zulfan Tadjoeuddin, *Explaining Collective Violence in Contemporary Indonesia: From Conflict to Cooperation* (Springer, 2014); Charles A. Coppel, *Violent Conflicts in Indonesia: Analysis, Representation, Resolution* (Routledge, 2006); Zachary Abuza, *Political Islam and Violence in Indonesia* (Routledge, 2006).

social theories about violence.⁹ That literature mainly deals with post-Independence Indonesia, and far less so regarding the colonial era. That approach could be used in the examination of Kudus 1918. However, this study will not be following their approaches, not least because the only full-length academic work about Kudus is already written in this style.¹⁰ This study is instead a look at the aftermath of the riot as observed in coverage in the Malay-language press in the time.¹¹ I believe this approach can provide closer insights into the world of the people affected by the riot; it has been used effectively in recent years in studies on more recent riots in Java by Sidel, Purdey and others.¹² Although the voices of the perpetrators and victims are mostly absent from the newspaper content, the editors and correspondents were closer to the events in many ways than the Dutch officials and police whose records have been used to do past studies of the Kudus riot.

As a rapidly modernizing Dutch colony in the 1910s, the Dutch East Indies had a healthy newspaper economy of papers printed in the Dutch language.¹³ However, that language was not widely

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- 9 For example, Tadjoeuddin summarizes this common view of the cause of ethnic violence in Indonesia: “two seemingly competing phenomena have been utilized by rational choice theorists to explain conflict onset: greed and grievance [...] conflict reflects elite competition over valuable point-sourced natural resource rents, disguised as collective grievance [...] greed simply means the ‘economic opportunity’ to fight, and should be distinguished from socio-political grievances.” Tadjoeuddin, *Explaining Collective Violence in Contemporary Indonesia*, 6–7. Bertrand states, on the other hand, that “There is a tendency for waves of resurgence or intensification of violence that coincide with critical junctures of institutional reform [...] Groups seek to position themselves either to protect past gains, favorable definitions of national models, or institutions that provide them with protection and representation [...] periods of stable political institutions and ethnic relations are followed by periods of institutional reform accompanied by more ethnic violence.” Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4–5.
- 10 Masyhuri, “Konflik Sosial Di Kudus 1918: Terlibatnya SI Kudus dalam Konflik Sosial Ekonomi.” (Universitas Gadjah Mada, 1981).
- 11 The coverage began in early November as papers started to hear about the event and wanted to make sense of it; it gradually tapered off in December 1918 but never fully disappeared throughout 1919, especially in Chinese-owned papers. In December 1919 it became a front-page matter again as the accused rioters were put on trial in Semarang; this coverage was extremely detailed and continued until the trial ended in February of 1920.
- 12 Jemma Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia: 1996-99* (University of Hawaii Press, 2006); John Thayer Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia* (Cornell University Press, 2006).
- 13 These Dutch papers were run mainly by Europeans, both expatriate and Indies-born, as well as by mixed-race Indo people who had European legal status. Their lower level staff were often Javanese and they often apprenticed European-educated Chinese or Javanese as well. There were many local papers but there were seven large papers that had been founded in the late nineteenth century and essentially lasted until the end of Dutch rule: *Java-Bode*, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* and *Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* from Batavia; *De Preanger-Bode* from Bandung; *De Locomotief* from Semarang; and *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* and *De Nieuwe Soerabaja Courant* from Surabaya. Gerrit Pieter Arie Termorshuizen, *Realisten En Reactionairen; Een Geschiedenis van de Indisch-Nederlandse Pers, 1905-1942* (Amsterdam: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 2011), 76.

used by non-Europeans in the Indies, except a small elite who had a European education. The colony also had large range of newspapers printed in the Malay language and other vernacular languages.¹⁴ Malay was the language of inter-ethnic communication and therefore well suited for newspapers aiming for a broad audience. In preparing my study, I started with one Malay paper (*Sinar Hindia*), and looked for the other papers it cited in its Kudus riot coverage, and continued like this until I had a wide enough collection of materials to be able to compare. I was able to do this because none of the papers created their material in isolation, but rather developed their content through a combination of borrowed content, editorial responses, and only occasionally through original information obtained from their own correspondents. In the end, with a surplus of materials, I have decided to focus on four Malay-language newspapers (two Chinese and two *Boemipoetra*) and only occasionally refer to the twenty or so other Dutch and Malay papers that I have also collected. These four newspapers were among the most important and loudest voices in the debate over Kudus, and also represent the geographic and ideological range fairly well.

Historical Context

Java during the First World War and the years immediately after it was a place in deep turmoil. In many ways society there had been deeply destabilized by several waves of government reform and repression which were done in service of keeping and extending European control over this large and heterogeneous Asian colony. The ‘Ethical Policy’, a new course for colonial government which started at the turn of the twentieth century, had promised to improve the lot of ‘the native’ with modernization

14 These papers were printed by the Indies Chinese, as well as by *Boemipoetra*, *Indo* people and others. Many of these papers were closely identified with the ethnic group of the owners, and had ties to organizations and educational institutions aiming to advance that group—for example, the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* for Chinese and the *Sarekat Islam* for *Boemipoetra*. But at other times, papers could change hands to owners of another background, and almost all of them had staff working for them who did not belong to the same racial group as the owners. As for the largest Malay papers at this time, it is more difficult to get accurate circulation figures compared to their contemporary Dutch papers. Suryadinata lists four big Malay Chinese papers of the 1920s, all of which were around at the time of Kudus: *Perniagaan* and *Sin Po* from Batavia, *Pewartu Soerabaia* from Surabaya, and *Djawa Tengah* from Semarang. Leo Suryadinata, *The Pre-World War II Peranakan Chinese Press of Java: A Preliminary Survey*, 18 (Ohio Univ Ctr for Intl Studies, 1971), 10.

and structural reform, but with little actual benefit to those it claimed to help.¹⁵ Marxism and Pan-Islamism became popular among the *Boemipoetra* intellectuals at around the time of the world war, and the increasing anti-capitalist and anti-colonial rhetoric terrified European plantation owners and capitalists, leading to an increase in gun purchases among Europeans and also among the wealthier Chinese.¹⁶ During the war many of the Indies Europeans felt quite isolated from the Netherlands proper as England had controlled their shipping routes and telegraph lines.¹⁷ Increasing *Boemipoetra* organization and militancy led to targeted attacks against the economy itself; for example, arson of sugar plantations was widespread with 900 occurring in 1917 and more than 1400 in 1918.¹⁸ In the second half of 1918, as the peace talks and the collapse of empires happened in Europe, the Javanese countryside was filled with rumours of violent anti-colonial revolution that would expel the Dutch and put in place the leaders of the *Boemipoetra* nationalist movement as kings.¹⁹

The young, modernizing *Boemipoetra* intellectuals wanted to break out of their inferior social position and this often meant turning on those Chinese who were the local business owners and capitalists. To this end, they had set up the *Sarekat Islam* in 1912, a Muslim trader's union which was developed as a way to boycott Chinese business that grew into a mass political organization by the start of the First World War. From the beginning the SI aimed to found or purchase its own newspapers so that *Boemipoetra* readers would have an alternative to the European and Chinese press.²⁰ The growth of the SI into a mass organization shifted the focus away from its original anti-Chinese mandate, but economic competition between the communities in places like Kudus meant that the tension was still present. The fact that some Kudus SI leaders were arrested for participating in the riot, and that the SI

15 John Sydenham Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (CUP Archive, 1956), 226–30.

16 Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Brill, 2011), 534-5.

17 van Dijk, 200.

18 van Dijk, 534–35.

19 van Dijk, 554.

20 Ahmat Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)*, 17 (SEAP Publications, 1995), 123.

papers downplayed Chinese suffering in the aftermath, offers some evidence that the SI had not entirely shed its anti-Chinese function.²¹ Meanwhile the Dutch government and press reacted very negatively to the rise of the SI, ushering in an age of almost totalitarian surveillance and political control, with occasional concessions given to try and guide the course of the organization away from anti-colonial militancy.

The Chinese community in Java had gone through a massive change in recent years as well. The Dutch had gradually changed the way the colony was run in ways that favoured the development of *Boemipoetra* at the expense of the Chinese.²² An increase in Dutch- and Chinese-language education among Chinese, the end of traditional practices such as tax farming, and growing nationalism in reaction to the Chinese revolution of 1911, contributed to the foundation of many new clubs and organizations both among *totok* (immigrant) and *peranakan* (creolized) Indies Chinese.²³ This was not unique to the Indies but was happening in the Chinese diaspora worldwide.²⁴ Most notable among these new institutions was the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (THHK, 中华会馆), founded in 1900 by *peranakan* who had been educated in Dutch missionary schools.²⁵ By 1907-8, Chinese Chambers of Commerce (*Siang Hwee*, 商會) were founded all over the Indies. The Chinese-owned press was deeply tied in with these various organizations, either because their editors had been educated through them, or were influential in them. These organizations also had their role to play in the aftermath of Kudus, as for example the Semarang Chinese labour association *Tiong Hoa Ing Giap Hwe* took charge of

21 Fearing the rise of the SI in 1913, the Dutch did not allow it to become a single Indies-wide legal organization, but insisted that each local branch be legally autonomous. So, the central branch did not control the regional ones and one cannot speak of a universal SI policy or practice on anything. Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, 69–72.

22 Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java, 1917-1942*, 4.

23 *Totok* Chinese refers to those born in China and who spoke or read Chinese, whereas *peranakan* Chinese (descendants) were locally born, often had several generations of local ancestors who had taken *boemipoetra* wives, and spoke Malay or other local languages.

24 Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Evelyn Du-Dehart, *Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora: Illusions of Open Space in Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Shanghai*, vol. 1 (Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 5–10.

25 Lea E. Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism: The Genesis of the Pan-Chinese Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1916* (Free Press, 1960), 57.

coordinating relief and resettlement for the refugees.²⁶ Another aspect of the Chinese population that should be considered is that, as they often acted as middlemen or entrepreneurs in the Indies, their behaviour occasionally resembled that of the Dutch. Yet other times they recognized their status as ruled or colonized people (*kaoem terperintah*) or became involved in revolutionary politics that were quite at odds with what the Dutch wanted.²⁷

The conflict in Kudus as portrayed in the pages of the Malay papers in Java was between these two groups, the *Tionghoa* (the preferred name used by Indies residents of Chinese descent) and *Boemipoetra* ('sons of the soil,' the preferred name of the indigenous groups of the Indies who were mostly Muslim and spoke Javanese, Sundanese and other languages).²⁸ Even in their rhetorical disputes over the Kudus riot, the newspapers almost universally used these preferred terms for one another and never the derogatory Dutch terms *Inlander* or *Tjina*. There were also other groups in society who reacted to Kudus, but did not play much of a direct role, such as the *Indo* (mixed-race people with Dutch status) and Arab communities. For the purposes of this paper, I will use the terms Chinese, *Boemipoetra*, and European people and communities. The very real social division between *totok* Chinese and *peranakan* Chinese is almost never mentioned in the coverage of Kudus, so I will not spend too much time on it.²⁹ Ever present in the background were the Dutch, visible especially as local capitalists, officials and police officers, who were managing the legal consequences for Kudus and had

26 "Perkelaian orang Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra di Koedoes," *Tjahaja Timoer*, November 4, 1918.

27 Williams describes a typical kind of Indies Chinese nationalist at this time who had the "ability to cooperate, at least on the surface, with men of all political shades. He could simultaneously pay homage to the Chinese emperor, be respectful towards the Dutch, and work for revolution." Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 145.

28 These racial groups were legally distinct and belonging to them was enforced by the Dutch down to the level of treatment and dress. Although it was often acknowledged in the response to Kudus that the groups were linked by common ancestry, there was never any doubt expressed that these group identities were real and defined their members.

29 I assume that the newspapers editors felt that the community was under siege by people who did not differentiate between *totok* and *peranakan*, and that the appeal to community solidarity led them to downplay the community cleavages. The only time I encountered any mention of distinctions in Chinese papers was when large meetings or events were reported on. In those cases, it was not unusual for the journalist to precede a summary of a speech with 'so-and-so was speaking Hokkien and said...' The only time I saw this distinction made in *Boemipoetra* papers was in an editorial in *Neratja* which opined that *totok* might have more claim to post-Kudus damages from the Dutch government than *peranakan*, because they were more clearly foreign citizens under the protection of China. "Perkara Koedoes," *Neratja*, November 13, 1918.

decision-making power over the main points of contention such as financial compensation, policing, and so on.³⁰

Historiography

Although it is rare to find a full-length work about the Kudus riot, it has continued to be written about in the century since it took place. Here I will try to review what some of those historical works have said about it. The first book about it came out almost immediately. It was not a work of academic history, but a fictionalized account published in 1920 by journalist and novelist Tan Boen Kim.³¹ Tan wrote for *Sin Po* in the early 1910s and was editor of *Tjhoen Tjhioe* in 1915, so he knew the world of crime and politics reporting well.³² He apparently based his narrative of the events in Kudus on newspaper coverage, and possibly a post-riot tour of Kudus as well. According to the conventions of the genre of crime novels at the time, his narrative portrays a conspiracy of insulted Javanese merchants—a dramatized version of the common ‘economic competition’ explanation for the riot. However, the novel contains an appendix with reproductions of newspaper coverage (mostly from *Sin Po*), information about relief efforts for refugees, and a summary of the trial in 1919-20. It was this section that later Indonesian writers cited for some details that did not make it into Dutch records.

The only full-length academic work on the Kudus events was a 1981 thesis written on the topic by an Indonesian academic, Masyhuri, titled “Social conflict in Kudus 1918: the involvement of the Kudus Sarekat Islam in a socioeconomic conflict,” completed at the University of Gadjah Mada.³³ As the title implies, it analyses the riot through the social and economic factors that led up to it:

30 The Malay Chinese press used a mix of Malay and Dutch words when speaking about Europeans; they were often the *orang Europa* or *orang Ollanda* and were represented by the *pemarentah/regeering* (the government), most commonly encountered as the *politie* (police), *toean Resident* (the highest-ranked local European official), various *Controleurs*, and so on.

31 Tan Boen Kim, *Peroesoehan Di Koedoes: Soeatoe Tjerita Jang Betoel Telah Terdjadi Di Djawa Tenga Pada Waktoe Jang Belon Sabrapa Lama* (Tjiong Koen Liong, 1920).

32 Claudine Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia: A Provisional Annotated Bibliography*, vol. 3 (Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1981), 310.

33 Masyhuri, “Konflik Sosial di Kudus 1918.”

competition in the *kretek* cigarette industry, the rise of the *Sarekat Islam* and Chinese nationalism, local personalities in Kudus, and so on. It was written almost exclusively using Dutch colonial records, with a small amount of oral history from some individuals whose connection to the 1918 events is unfortunately not explained. Masyhuri concludes that some of the immediate factors that contributed to the riot were the particularly strong religious attitude of Muslims in Kudus and the rise of far-left radicalism which he believes made *Boemipoetra* townspeople primed for radical action.³⁴ He notes that most Dutch sources concluded that the SI was responsible for the riot, but that he rejected this oversimplification that may have come from their dislike of the SI.³⁵ This thesis was released as a book when print censorship was loosened in Indonesia after the fall of the Suharto era. The editor of this edition laments that its historical sources cannot describe any resolution to the riot outside of arrests and the court system.³⁶ Indeed, Masyhuri's account one can find very detailed and seemingly accurate information about the riot and its precursors, but almost nothing about what happened afterwards. Things that would have concerned the Dutch official observers, such as the movement of SI leaders or the destruction of property, are described in detail, but other things such as what happened to the two thousand Chinese refugees are not discussed at all.

Aside from Masyhuri's thesis, the most developed academic study of Kudus was by The Siauw Giap. His 1966 article compared Kudus in 1918 to anti-Chinese riots in Sukabumi in 1963.³⁷ He emphasizes a systemic discrimination against Chinese Indonesians that can surface as riots in circumstances where the conditions are right. He also believed that no one had written a "rounded narrative" of what had happened in Kudus in 1918.³⁸ He gives a brief history of the economic basis of the ethnic conflict and notes that the *kretek* cigarette industry there—the most important local industry

34 Hasyim Asy'ari, *Bakar Pecinan!: Konflik Pribumi vs Cina Di Kudus Tahun 1918* (CërMIN, 2006), 89–92.

35 *Bakar Pecinan!*, 93–94.

36 *Bakar Pecinan!*, viii.

37 The Siauw Giap, "Group Conflict in a Plural Society," *Revue Du Sudest Asiatique* 1 (1966): 3.

38 The, 19.

and the one Kudus was known for—was “virtually an Indonesian industry” until the First World War, and that these “Kudus entrepreneurs were truly capitalists, and were more capitalist minded than other Javanese.” Due to this wealth, there were “relatively more *hadji*” (had made the pilgrimage to Mecca).³⁹ His description of the riot itself does not differ significantly from Masyhuri’s, although he occasionally provides new details, such as the reluctant participation of ‘Indonesian’ policemen in putting down the riots due to their sympathy to the SI.⁴⁰ In his conclusion, The regards political ideology or religion as mere pretexts for anti-Chinese violence, and points to economic competition as the recurring factor, whether in 1918 or 1963: “Envy of the greater economic wealth of the Chinese on the average may also spark off group conflict, irrespective of the political orientation of the Chinese.”⁴¹

Subsequent historical works that mention Kudus mainly draw on those three texts. Charles Coppel, Leo Suryadinata, and Jemma Purdey, who are major historians of the Indies/Indonesian Chinese, cite The Siauw Giap’s essay when discussing Kudus.⁴² Suryadinata has been very aware of the Kudus riot in his writings on that era and especially to the newspaper dispute over it. He articles from the dispute between two papers in one sourcebook⁴³ and in another book described the feud in the press over the riot as influencing the Chinese relationship with the colonial government.⁴⁴ On the other hand, a 2008 book on the history of the Indonesian Chinese by Benny Setiono has a chapter about Kudus which exclusively cites the appendix of Tan Boen Kim’s novel.⁴⁵ And a recent study of Islamic

39 The, 21-2.

40 This allegation was often repeated in the Dutch coverage of Kudus, and some of the Chinese coverage that drew heavily on the Dutch interpretation, as it focused on the unreliability of *Boemipoetra* police who could not be trusted to enforce the law against their fellow Muslims.

41 The Siauw Giap, “Group Conflict in a Plural Society,” 31.

42 e.g. Suryadinata, *The Pre World War II Peranakan Chinese Press of Java*, 85; Charles A. Coppel, *Studying Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia*, 7 (Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 2002), 102; Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia*, 7.

43 Leo Suryadinata, *Political Thinking of the Indonesian Chinese, 1900-1995: A Sourcebook* (NUS Press, 1997), 9–16.

44 His description of the situation was: “Most of the indigenous press blamed the Chinese, while the peranakan Chinese newspapers took the opposite view. Two peranakan Chinese dailies, *Sin Po* and *Djawa Tengah*, tended to look at the matter from quite a different angle. While condemning the Muslims traders for initiating the incident, the dailies also blamed the Dutch for not protecting the Koedoes Chinese.” Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java, 1917-1942*, 24.

45 Benny G. Setiono, *Tionghoa Dalam Pusaran Politik* (TransMedia, 2008).

piety in the history of the *kretek* cigarette industry in Kudus cites both Tan and Masyhuri heavily.⁴⁶ Kees van Dijk, in his book about the Indies during the First World War, is a rare writer who returned to newspaper coverage (from *Neratja* and *De Locomotief*) and parliamentary transcripts to place Kudus in the context of popular uprisings and political feuds of its time.⁴⁷ The handful of short history books published in Indonesian about Kudus (the city, not the riot) rarely the 1918 events at all.⁴⁸ The official history of the Jawa Tengah province published in 1994 does mention some *Boemipoetra*-Chinese conflicts instigated by the *Sarekat Islam* in Solo in 1912 while explaining the rise of the Semarang faction, but does not mention the Kudus riot.⁴⁹ Another work of local history mentions it, but only to note that H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto arrived and settled some social unrest.⁵⁰ To summarize, the Kudus riot is still written about on occasion, but not often and for the most part it is not considered to have been a very important or formative event in wider histories of Java.

On the matter of Indies newspapers, by comparison with the historiography on newspapers in other countries, the amount written on Malay newspapers in particular, is slight. Although it is not a work of academic history, Pramoedya Ananta Toer's series of novels (the Buru Quartet) which are a fictionalized account of the life of Malay newspaper editor Tirto Adhisoerjo, offer many insights into that historical moment,⁵¹ as does his nonfiction book on Tirto Adhisoerjo.⁵²

46 Muhamad Yusrul Hana, "Dinamika Sosio-Ekonomi Pedagang Santri Dalam Mengembangkan Industri Kretek Di Kudus, 1912-1930," *JUSPI (Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam)* 2, no. 1 (2018): 15–35.

47 Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War, 1914-1918*, 554–59.

48 Some books I consulted that do not mention it: Solichin Salam, *Kudus Purbakala Dalam Perjuangan Islam* (Menara, 1977); Wiyono Hartono Kasmadi, *Sejarah Sosial Kota Semarang (1900–1950)*, Departemen Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Direktorat Sejarah Dan Nilai Tradisional, 1985.

49 Moh Oemar and Abu Suud, *Sejarah Daerah Jawa Tengah* (Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan, 1994), 155.

50 Salam, *Kudus Selayang Pandang*, 109.

51 Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *This Earth of Mankind*, vol. 1 (Penguin, 1996); Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Child of All Nations*, vol. 2 (Penguin, 1996); Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Footsteps*, vol. 3 (Penguin, 1996); Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *House of Glass*, vol. 4 (Penguin, 1997).

52 Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Tirto Adhi Soerjo RM, *Sang Pemula Disertai Karya-Karya Non-Fiksi (Jurnalistik) Dan Fiksi (Ceren/Novel) RM Tirto Adhi Soerjo* (Lentera Dipantara, 2003).

Gerard Termorshuizen published an exhaustive, thousand-page history of modern Dutch Indies newspapers in 2011 that provides deep context to how the economy of newspapers worked. Although he focuses on Dutch-language papers, he documents their interaction with Malay-language papers as well. He has a low opinion of the indigenous-owned papers. Although he admits their importance to the birth of nationalism, he notes they had little value as news providers, in that they mainly catered to their own community, did not have the resources to pay for ANETA wire content, and ‘borrowed’ many reports from European papers.⁵³ On the other hand, he assesses the Malay Chinese papers as having large readerships, enough resources to subscribe to ANETA and high quality coverage of Indies politics, including the Indonesian nationalist movement.⁵⁴ Although the book does not mention Kudus, it was very helpful for understanding the newspapers as institutions and how they worked in relation to other papers.

The best history of Malay-language newspapers in the Indies is Ahmat B. Adam’s 1995 work *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)*.⁵⁵ The book traces the stages of evolution of the vernacular press of the Indies from the nineteenth century until 1913. Unfortunately, the *Boemipoetra* and Chinese newspaper world changed a surprising amount between 1913 and 1918, due to the social changes which were taking place. Therefore, Adam’s book is excellent for understanding the processes that gave rise to the papers I am examining, but it does not describe their circumstances at the time of the riot. Some handbooks that were very helpful in finding biographical information about the newspaper editors and Malay newspaper history during the years not covered by Adam (1913 to 1920) were Claudine Salmon’s exhaustive biographical encyclopedia of Malay Chinese authors⁵⁶ as well as an encyclopedia of Indonesian newspapers *Seabad Pers*

53 Termorshuizen, 83-85.

54 Termorshuizen, 85.

55 Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)*.

56 Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia*.

Kebangsaan 1907-2007 ('A century of national press') which has chapters on many, though not all, of the newspapers I used in my study.⁵⁷

Primary Sources

Before moving on to my analysis of the content of the newspaper coverage of the Kudus riot, I will briefly give some information about the newspapers themselves. As I mentioned above, I settled on four primary newspapers, with occasional reference to other newspapers as well. These four newspapers are *Djawa Tengah*, *Sin Po*, *Sinar Hindia*, and *Neratja*.

Djawa Tengah ('Central Java') was the first Malay-language Chinese newspaper in Semarang (founded in 1909) and it or its competitor *Warna Warta* was the top Malay paper in the city in 1918. It had left-wing or liberal politics and supported Chinese nationalist politics, though it was relatively sympathetic in its coverage of *Boemipoetra* politics. Among its editors at this time were Tan Keng Sam (nom de plume Han Soe Tjiat)⁵⁸ and Kwik King Hien⁵⁹ and R.M. Tjondrokoesoemo. The paper defended the Chinese side on Kudus but aimed to give a balanced view and was less hostile to the SI on this matter than most Chinese papers.

Sin Po (新报, 'New Newspaper'), based in Batavia, was the most important Malay-language Chinese newspaper at this time. One guidebook to historical Indonesian newspapers called the paper "The Bodyguard from Batavia" due to its combative role in defending Chinese interests.⁶⁰ It existed from 1910 until 1965. Among its editors were Kwee Hing Tjiat (a well known *peranakan* intellectual, who left the paper in 1918 or possibly 1919), Tjoe Bou San (who became director and lead editor after Kwee left), and Lauw Giok Lan (one of the founders of *Sin Po*). The paper took a hard line on the

57 Taufik Rahzen, ed., *Seabad Pers Kebangsaan 1907-2007* (Yogyakarta, Indonesia: I: BOEKOE, 2007).

58 Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia*, 3:321.

59 Salmon, 3:219.

60 Rahzen, *Seabad Pers Kebangsaan 1907-2007*, 63.

Kudus riot and called for harsh punishment of anyone involved, and eagerly reprinted numerous Dutch accounts of the riot which played up the depravity and savageness of the Muslim rioters.

Sinar Hindia ('Light of the Indies'), based in Semarang, was the main paper representing the left wing of the Sarekat Islam and eventually the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) during the early 1920s. It was the first *Boemipoetra*-owned newspaper in Semarang according to Liem Thian Joe, who wrote a history of the city in the 1930s.⁶¹ The paper had as its editors many of the leading Javanese communists of the time, including Semaoen, Mas Marco, and Darsono. The paper downplayed the importance of the riot itself and was very vocal on the heavy-handed Dutch military and police response which used Kudus as a pretext to militarize the towns of Central Java.

Neratja ('Balance') was an important but short-lived paper founded in 1917, and which represented the mainstream SI faction (*Centraal Sarekat Islam*). Its editors feuded with *Sinar Hindia*, arguing against a move towards far left politics in the SI. The paper received some government support which made it suspect among some SI left-wingers.⁶² Among its editors were some major figures of the Indonesian nationalist movement including R. Djojosoediro, Hadji Agoes Salim, and Abdoel Moeis. The paper defended the *Boemipoetra* side on Kudus and downplayed the culpability of the SI but also called for reduced tensions with the Chinese.

A final paper I will mention is *De Locomotief* ('the Locomotive'), a Dutch paper from Semarang and one of the largest newspapers in the Indies. This Liberal newspaper was in favour of the Dutch 'Ethical Policy' and was very long-lasting (1845-1956). Its editor at this time was Am. J. Lievegoed, who had been editor of various Dutch papers in the Indies and Europe since c.1906, and

61 Liem Thian Joe, *Riwayat Semarang (Dari Djamannya Sam Poo Sampe Terhapesnja Kongkoan)*, (Boekhandel Ho Kim Yoe, 1933), 216.

62 Ruth Thomas McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1965), 37.

who took over *De Locomotief* in 1917. The paper believed that the police should deal harshly with Kudus rioters but not to the degree that many other Dutch papers did.

1. The Kudus Riot and Media Perception

In order to be able to explain the coverage of the riot, I will go over the basics of what happened, relying partly on early newspaper coverage and partly on Masyhuri's account. In late October 1918, the Kudus Chinese community held rituals processions through the town to honour a folk religious figure Tua Pek Kong in the hopes of warding off the Influenza epidemic ravaging the city.⁶³ One of these processions took place on October 30th; it was a noisy procession and many of the participants were wearing costumes of Arabs, Africans, Chinese kings, and so on.⁶⁴ As the procession passed by the historic mosque tower, the sight of the mock Hadji and Arab costumes angered some of the *Boemipoetra* who were there.⁶⁵ The procession ground to a halt as wagons going in two opposite directions refused to make way; heated words and blows were exchanged. The mosque drum was beaten to call for reinforcements, and it turned into a brawl that was broken up by the police.⁶⁶ Who hit first, and which side had been rudely laughing at the other side's customs before the fight, would become an important point of contention between Chinese and *Boemipoetra* papers in the coming weeks.

The next day, October 31, a meeting was called at the Kudus SI office to calm tensions. Some local officials were there, including the Vice Regent (*patih*) Martosoedirjo, the Police Superintendent and the Chinese Lieutenant Goei Kim Ho. The SI had a list of demands, including restrictions on the route and nature of Chinese parades and on disarmament of the Chinese community, who they alleged to be stockpiling weapons.⁶⁷ However, according to Masyhuri's retelling, the meeting was in bad faith

63 Tua Pek Kong (大伯公), a religious figure revered by some Southeast Asian Chinese and who is thought to have lived on the island of Penang in the 1700s.

64 Some of the newspaper coverage of the time offered a longer list of costumes; for example, *Djawa Tengah* mentioned that "there were some people disguised in the clothes of various nationalities, such as Arab, Hadji, African, Chinese wedding garb and other funny clothes." See "Hoeroe hara besar di Koedoes," *Djawa Tengah*, November 1, 1918. *Neratja*, on the other hand, said they were dressed as "Hajis, Regents, 'black Turks' and shouted Islamic slogan 'Laillaha illoellah.'" "Perkara perkelahian besar di-Koedoes," *Neratja*, November 7th, 1918.

65 "Hoeroe hara besar di Koedoes," *Djawa Tengah*, November 1, 1918.

66 *Bakar Pecinan!*, 68–69.

67 *Bakar Pecinan!*, 68.

as SI leaders had fanned out into local neighbourhoods and villages that morning spreading the word that action would be taken against the Chinese. According to his sources, one of the messages spread was: “come to the mosque tower at around 6:00 pm if you want to get a lot of property.”⁶⁸ Whether or not the SI actually orchestrated it or did the recruiting, many of the newspapers observed that career criminals from nearby Mayong had answered the call and added to the numbers of rioters that night.⁶⁹ The police set up checkpoints around town in the afternoon and waited for something to happen, but by 8:00 pm some of the officers went home. Seeing this, the rioters began their attack.⁷⁰

A group of 80 or so *Boemipoetra* marched into the Chinese area, throwing stones and trying to break down the doors, while crowds followed from a distance.⁷¹ *Pewarta Soerabaia* described it as *Boemipoetra* armed with knives and spears, aiming to take revenge on the Chinese.⁷² Although the police and officials were on site, they were too few to prevent the riot. The number of rioters grew to 2000, some of whom were armed or setting fire to houses with oil. The regent (*bupati*) of Kudus called the Resident in Semarang to ask for military assistance.⁷³ According to Masyhuri, by 10:30 pm many of the original rioters started to leave, carrying off valuables with them, and some of those who remained started to help the victims (“namely, ethnic Chinese men and women”).⁷⁴ *Djawa Tengah*, however, said that the rioters suddenly turned and battled the police at around this time, with many wounded, including one who later died in the hospital.⁷⁵

68 *Bakar Pecinan!*, 69.

69 e.g. “Hoeroe hara besar di Koedoes,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 1, 1918, “Peroesoehan di Koedoes dan hal-hal jang berhoeboeng dengen itoe – III,” *Sin Po*, November 15, 1918.

70 *Bakar Pecinan!*, 72–73.

71 *Bakar Pecinan!*, 70–71.

72 “...beberapa banjak orang Boemipoetra pada dateng di wijk Tionghoa, bebrapa antaranja dengen bersikep sendjata keris dan toembak, niat aken bales sakit hati pada itoe orang² Tionghoa.” “Gegeran di Koedoes,” *Pewarta Soerabaia*, November 2, 1918.

73 *Bakar Pecinan!*, 72–73.

74 *Bakar Pecinan!*, 75.

75 “Hoeroe hara besar di Koedoes,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 1, 1918.

Masyhuri asserts that the night's assault (*penyerbuan*) was exclusively directed against the Chinese residents, although some adjacent houses rented by *Boemipoetra* were also destroyed.⁷⁶ This matter would also be a point of argument in the newspapers—some claimed that the burning of houses *Boemipoetra* lived in proved it was not an anti-Chinese riot. Masyhuri says that during the riot “resistance from the Chinese side could be described as almost non-existent. Some hid in their homes after the riot passed. And when their houses were destroyed, they fled without regard for their property.”⁷⁷ Finally, as the troops from Semarang arrived in the early morning, the riot petered out and mass arrests of rioters and suspected rioters began.

The day after the riot, *De Locomotief* estimated that 9 Chinese had been confirmed dead, 7 of whom had died in fires, and said that the number of *Boemipoetra* dead had not been released so far.⁷⁸ *Djawa Tengah* described the sight of the morning train arriving in Semarang from Koedoes with all 8 cars full of Chinese families fleeing the riot.⁷⁹ Arrests continued in the weeks after the riot, and after three weeks an estimated 159 people had been arrested, nearly all on the *Boemipoetra* side.⁸⁰ This brief event was over but it left both the *Boemipoetra* and Chinese feeling that they had been treated unjustly by each other and by the Dutch. It left the local and Indies-wide Chinese community shocked and feeling that they could not rely on the protection of the Dutch.

The position of the Chinese-owned papers on the Kudus riot, revealed in the first few weeks of November 1918, was that it had been a disproportionate, cruel, and one-sided response by the *Boemipoetra* to a small dispute with Chinese townspeople. They thought that the focus of the public

76 *Bakar Pecinan!*, 74.

77 “Sebagian dari mereka, setelah terjadi kerusuhan, bersembunyi di dalam rumah. Dan ketika rumah mereka berhasil dibongkar, mereka melarikan diri tanpa memperhatikan lagi harta benda mereka.” *Bakar Pecinan!*, 73.

78 “De onlusten te Koedoes,” *De Locomotief*, November 2, 1918

79 “Hoeroe hara besar di Koedoes,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 1, 1918.

80 “Koedoes,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, November 21, 1918.

and government assistance should be on the victims who lost their homes and possessions.⁸¹ They felt betrayed by the government which had not protected the Chinese and by the *Boemipoetra* townspeople. The most common words used to describe the event in their headlines were the generic *perkara* (case) or *hal* (matter), but in other cases they referred to it as *peroesoehan* (riot or revolt), *perampokan* (looting), or other words evoking disorder and theft. The liberal Chinese position, typically expressed by the Semarang paper *Djawa Tengah*, expressed sympathy and understanding to the *Boemipoetra* townspeople involved in the riot, that they had been misled or simply lashed out due to cruel treatment by the Dutch. The harder Chinese nationalist position, often taken by *Sin Po* in Batavia or *Pewartja Soerabaia* in Surabaya, emphasized that the legal system had to harshly punish those responsible and called for a strengthening of the police to protect Chinese communities and property from the *Boemipoetra*. For example, one *Sin Po* piece on November 6 asked that the law fall hard on those to blame so that they could become an example to others.⁸²

The basic position of the *Boemipoetra* papers on Kudus was that it was a two-sided riot or fight that had horrible consequences for both sides: loss of property and displacement for the Chinese, and arbitrary mass arrests and militarized streets for the *Boemipoetra*. They denied SI culpability in organizing the riot despite the arrest of some SI Kudus members and leaders.⁸³ When describing the event, they also used some of the same terms as the Chinese papers—such as *perkara* or *peroesoehan*—but also used the terms *hioe-hara* (upheaval), *perkelahian* (quarrel or fight) or *perang ketjil* (little war).

81 This matter was raised to the colonial government by the Chinese Consul to the Indies, who noted that similar damages had been awarded by Mexico in a riot against Chinese businesses there in recent year. “Perkara Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 13, 1918. And the call for damages was an important part of the pan-Indies meeting of Chinese organizations in Semarang in mid-November. “Conferentie Semarang,” *Sin Po*, November 18, 1918.

82 “Kita harep sadja pamerenta nanti bikin penjelidikan jang teliti, dan pada orang-orang jang bersala didjatoken hoekoeman jang paling berat, sebagai tjonto, soepaja di laen tempat tida bisa lagi terdjadi seperti apa jang soeda terdjadi di Koedoes.” “Kariboetan di Koedoes,” *Sin Po*, November 6, 1918.

83 Semaoen makes a point about this in one of his essays on Kudus, noting that it was no more a case of ‘S.I. Kudus vs. Chinese’ than it was *Boemipoetra* vs the *Siang Boe* organization or vs *Tiong Hoa Hwee Kwan*, but that it was instead some people against some other people from the two nations. “Perang ketjil di Koedoes,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 9, 1918.

The latter terms certainly imply a two-sided affair and were almost never used in Chinese papers. The more moderate position of the *Boemipoetra* papers was typically expressed by *Neratja* in Batavia, calling for reconciliation and recognition of the situation faced by the Chinese, while still portraying the events in Kudus as somewhat murky and not really the fault of either side. The more hardline position was often expressed in *Sinar Hindia*, which tried to turn attention from the riot itself or blame the Chinese, and to emphasize the Dutch overreaction: mass arrests and soldiers patrolling the street in Kudus and nearby Demak, using the riot as pretext to repress the SI in the region.⁸⁴

Although the Dutch-language newspapers' take on Kudus is not the focus of this study, I will summarize them as well, in order to explain how they influenced and were sometimes appropriated by the Malay papers. The Dutch papers were quite hostile to the SI movement and were predisposed to blame them.⁸⁵ After Kudus they expressed horror at the disorder and in adopted an uncharacteristic position of strong sympathy for the Chinese. Their proposed solutions involved stronger police, not compensation or an improvement in social conditions. They used terms such as *relletjes* (little riots), *uitspattingen* (excesses), or *onlusten* (uprisings). The liberal Dutch position could best be exemplified by the coverage in the Semarang paper *De Locomotief*. They worried that reactionary elements were trying to take advantage of the SI unrest to implement a 'Prussian saber-regime' in Java but admitted that a stronger field police should be established.⁸⁶ More conservative Dutch papers had a longstanding hatred of the SI and their coverage emphasized the so-called bloodthirstiness and fanaticism of the Muslim rioters. Such papers included the pro-planter and anti-union *Het nieuws van den dag voor*

84 In another essay Semaoen writes in all caps that Demak (the city between Semarang and Kudus) "HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH the events in Kudus!" and yet the arrival of the military there was being greeted eagerly by the white press. "O, Koedoes!" *Sinar Hindia*, November 9, 1918.

85 Termorshuizen, *Realisten En Reactionairen*, 156–57.

86 "Een jaar, dat heugt," *De Locomotief*, December 31, 1918.

Nederlandsch-Indië, which regularly advocated violence against natives to solve cases of unrest, or the *Indo* paper *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* which opposed the SI in the name of defending *Indo* interests.⁸⁷

Having given an overview of what the broad positions of the papers of each community was, I will move on to the details of the Kudus riot coverage.

⁸⁷ Termorshuizen, *Realisten En Reactionairen*, 527.

2. The Coverage of the Kudus Riot

This section will deal with how the coverage of the Kudus riot and its aftermath spread out into the Indies newspaper world and how the newspapers settled into opposing positions as the weeks went by. As I have mentioned in the introduction, Java in 1918 had many newspapers printed in Dutch, Malay, as well as other vernacular languages such as Javanese. News about events such as the 1918 Kudus riot could be risky for these editors—especially for *Boemipoetra* editors who had the lowest legal status—as they might fall afoul of the so-called ‘hate-sowing articles’ (*haatzaai-artikelen*) which forbade printing certain content, including factual descriptions, that authorities deemed to cause racial tensions, as well as broader ‘press offense’ (*persdelict*) laws.⁸⁸ Many of these editors had already spent time in prison for *persdelict* offences, and those who hadn’t had at least been called before a court to answer for something they had printed.⁸⁹ But the editors wanted to print news that would get them more readers, and in some cases they also felt that they had to defend the interests or perspective of their racial group in the public sphere. Each paper had its own staff with its own personality, of course, but they were also connected to local social movements or mass organizations, to educational institutions, to the businesses that purchased advertisements in their pages, and so on.

Dutch Coverage into Malay

I will start my look at the Kudus riot coverage with the use of Dutch newspaper content in the Malay papers. The earliest Malay newspapers in the nineteenth-century Indies got their start by simply

88 Termorshuizen, 156–62.

89 In his 2011 dissertation on censorship in the Indies, Yamamoto included a table of all the *Persdelict* cases he could find during 1917-1929. There were cases in 1918 and 1919 for almost every newspaper I examined in my study, and these cases included Dutch, Indo, Chinese, and Boemipoetra editors. Nobuto Yamamoto, “Print Power and Censorship in Colonial Indonesia, 1914-1942,” Cornell University, 2011, 128–34. And of course, some of these editors such as Darsono had already spent time in prison for press offences in the years before 1917.

translating content from Dutch papers for their readers.⁹⁰ By 1918, they were far more sophisticated and diverse, but that practice had not disappeared. It was staple of the news economy, done by smaller papers printed in Dutch, Malay, or other languages, which the big Dutch-language papers often complained about.⁹¹ Plagiarism between Malay papers also happened.⁹² It makes sense, then, that the coverage of the Kudus riot would continue these practices. The Dutch papers were the most prestigious, resourceful and influential and were therefore the typical source for any major news, whether controversial or not.⁹³ As well, the Malay papers were willing to reuse content from their ideological rivals if it meant having a dramatic story about events their readers would want to know about. *Sin Po* explicitly addressed this in an article about Kudus in mid-November: “Here, in *Sin Po*, readers have been able to read quotes and reports and perspectives from the White press, and from the *Boemipoetra* side... and also perspectives and counterarguments from the Chinese side.”⁹⁴ Finally, there was the aforementioned legal risk. It was simply safer to use this Dutch content at first, despite its negative attitude towards the *Boemipoetra*, while waiting to see what transpired politically and to avoid arrest

90 Ian Proudfoot describes this happening between *De Locomotief* and *Bintang Timor* as far back as the 1860s: “Items from *De Locomotief*, a notoriously liberal newspaper, for instance, could safely be repeated in the Malay press. In this way even contentious topics could be aired.” Ian Proudfoot, “Room To Manoeuvre In The Nineteenth-Century Indies Malay Press: The Story of a Javanese Lieutenant,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 35, no. 102 (2007): 160. Pramoedya Ananta Toer frames the development of early *Boemipoetra* newspapers after 1900, from an early phase where they simply plagiarized the ‘white press’ to a more developed phase where they aimed to shape public opinion. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Sang Pemula: Disertai Karya-Karya Non-Fiksi (Jurnalistik) Dan Fiksi (Cerpen/Novel) RM Tirto Adhi Soerjo* (Lentera Dipantara, 2003), 43–44.

91 Termorshuizen, *Realisten En Reactionairen*, 77.

92 *Djawa Tengah* printed a series of articles about this practice in early 1919, although not in connection with the Kudus riot coverage. It started by mentioning an accusation between two of its rival papers—*Pewarta Soerabaja* (from Surabaya) accused *Warna Warta* (from Semarang) of “...often quoting news without mentioning where they came from and those quotations were seen as acts that violated journalistic rules.” The article called for a greater respect for those rules and for author’s rights (*auteursrecht*), but at the same time it allows for a number of situations where reusing content should be allowable. For example, they say, *De Locomotief* may write an article, and due to its importance *Djawa Tengah* might reprint it in Malay. If other Malay papers reuse that translations, they should not be blamed and the credit should still go to *De Locomotief*, and so on. “Journalistiek diefstalkah?” *Djawa Tengah*, January 16, 1919.

93 Exceptions to this rule were situations where the knowledge of the *Boemipoetra* or Chinese editors gave them special insight. *Sin Po* named one such example as their own coverage of the campaign to end the Chinese Officer system, which Dutch papers would have to report secondhand. See “Kariboetan di Koedoes dipreksa dengan katja neutral,” *Sin Po*, November 12, 1918.

94 “Disini, dalem *Sin Po*, pematja soeda bisa pematja bebrapa koetipan den verslag dan pemandangan pers poeti, djoega begimana fihak Boemipoetra [...] dan djoega pemandangan dan pembelaan fihak Tionghoa.” “Goelembang tinta perkara Koedoes I,” *Sin Po*, November 15, 1918.

under the strict press laws. The editor of *Djawa Tengah* admitted to this approach in the paper's Kudus riot coverage:

At first when the news came in about the disturbances that took place in Kudus, we did not want to take a standpoint [...] *Djawa Tengah* was only filled with news from correspondents or translations from the paper *De Locomotief*. We wanted to stay silent because the news that was coming in was inconsistent and because the government had become involved in the matter. Because we believe that the government will be fair and listen to the voices of two parties, and surely they would be able to decide who is right or wrong, or whether both are right or both wrong.⁹⁵

The final line in that quote shows the paper's careful performance of allegiance to the government.

During the week or so after the riot—from the 31st of October to the 9th of November, give or take a few days—most of the Malay papers simply translated Dutch content. *Sin Po* relied completely on them for the facts of Kudus during the first two weeks—mainly *De Locomotief* and wire content but also *de Nieuwe Courant* and *Nieuws van den Dag*. It was only in a comparative piece on November 12th that they finally cited the coverage of a fellow Malay paper.⁹⁶ And *Neratja* also had long articles for the first week which cited only *De Locomotief* and did not print anything citing their own correspondent until November 7th.⁹⁷ Other papers sat out the first week, such as *Tjhoen Tjhioe*, a Chinese paper from Surabaya. It only printed a brief wire story about Kudus until November 8th where its first full story mainly cited the coverage in other Malay papers.⁹⁸ *Sinar Hindia* cited content from

95 “Moela² koetika ada dateng kabar tentang peroesoehan jang terdjadi di Koedoes, kita tida maoe bikin standput apa² dan tida maoe bikin pemandangan soeatoe apa melingken dalem soerat kabar kita *Djawa Tengah* moeat kabar² dari correspondenten atau salinan² dari s.k.k *De Locomotief* sadja. Kita maoe tinggal diam sebab kabaran jang dateng tentang hal itoe senantiasa ada berlainan satoe sama lain dan pemarentah soedah tjempoer tangan oesoet perkara tadi. Dari sebab kita pertjaja jang Regeering bakal berlakoe adil dan mendengerken soeara dari doea doea pihak, nistjaja ia bakal bisa ambil poetoesan siapa jang salah dan siapa jang benar atau doea² pihak salah ataupun sama benernja.” “Perloe dibikin dami, antara pendoedoek Bp. Dan T.H.,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 15, 1918.

96 “Kariboetan di Koedoes dipreksa dengen katja neutraal,” *Sin Po*, November 12, 1918.

97 “Perkelahian besar di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 7, 1918.

98 “Peroesoehan di Koedoes dan Pamereksaannja,” *Tjhoen Tjhioe*, November 8, 1918.

Djawa Tengah and *Warna Warta* during that first week, but those articles themselves were mainly based on Dutch wire content.⁹⁹

Here I will give a more specific example of how early news of Kudus from *De Locomotief* and the wire service ANETA made their way around the Indies, following the pathways of the newspaper economy rather than political fault lines. *De Locomotief*'s first full piece about the Kudus incident “Unrest in Kudus” appeared in the morning edition on November 1st.¹⁰⁰ It was one of the only papers to have original reporting the morning after the riot, so its copy travelled far. This fifteen-paragraph piece describes the turn of events in of the previous night, and gives some preliminary figures and interpretation—alleging that the riot had been planned in advance by the SI—and so on. It ends with the statement that the authorities have already restored “*rust en orde*” (calm and order, the motto of colonial repression in that era).¹⁰¹ This tone was not surprising, given that the paper typically balanced its Ethical Policy commitments with a desire to see nationalism and rebellious behaviour put down with a firm hand.¹⁰²

Sometime on that same morning of November 1st, the wire service ANETA wrote a shorter article using the material from *De Locomotief* and sent it to its subscribers around the Indies.¹⁰³ Thus the first article about Kudus appearing in many of the Dutch-language Indies papers was this piece under the ANETA-Service or Indies News section. This article was about half the length of *De Locomotief*'s piece and gave credit to that paper in the last two paragraphs. *De Preanger-Bode*, *Het*

99 “Perang Ketjil di Koedoes,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 4, 1918, “Kabar Bohong,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 7, 1918.

100 “De onlusten te Koedoes,” *De Locomotief*, November 1, 1918.

101 The term *rust en orde* appears a number of times in the colonial law allowing for the exiling of unwanted political actors from their place of residence in the Indies. In the historical literature it has come to symbolize the lengths the government went to in order to maintain the colonial system. See Christiaan Willem Margadant, *Het regeeringsreglement van Nederlandsch-Indië*. Vol. 1. M. Nijhoff, 1894.

102 Termorshuizen, *Realisten En Reactionairen*, 415–16.

103 ANETA, which stood for *Algemeen Nieuws- en Telegraaf-Agentschap* (“General News and Telegraph Agency”) was founded by Indies journalist D.W. Berretty in 1917 because the highly censored and often delayed international wire services were not considered reliable for use by Indies papers. Termorshuizen, 94–102.

nieuws van den Dag, *De Sumatra Post*, and presumably many others all printed this same article with minor formatting variations.¹⁰⁴ *Neratja* printed this article translated sentence-by-sentence into Malay on their afternoon printing on the 1st as well.¹⁰⁵ They followed this translated wire article with a few more paragraphs of their own commentary on the causes of Islamic fanaticism in that region.

Elsewhere that afternoon, content from those two Dutch articles was also appearing in many other Indies papers. *Sin Po*'s first article about Kudus cited *De Locomotief* as well as "Wire news (from Sin Po correspondent)."¹⁰⁶ As *De Locomotief* is mentioned only halfway through the long article, aside from the final paragraph marked "(other correspondent)" it is unclear which parts are based on information from their own sources, which are from *De Locomotief* and whether anything was from ANETA. Certainly, despite being written in Malay and not Dutch, many of the turns of phrases feel quite similar to those in *De Locomotief*'s article. *Sinar Hindia* also printed the November 1st piece from *De Locomotief* on November 4th, translated into Malay, alongside what had been printed so far in *Djawa Tengah* and *Warna Warta* (both Chinese papers from Semarang).¹⁰⁷ Their translation of the *De Locomotief* piece still carried much of the content about SI responsibility but some lines were omitted, such as a reference to rioters praying at home before going out to burn down Chinese houses, and the final paragraph about the restoration of *rust en orde* was deleted. *Sinar Hindia* would revisit the *De Locomotief* piece again a few days later, this time quoting it more selectively in a piece signed by Semaoen who gave his own interpretation, while admitting somewhat uncharacteristically that "we have not yet been able to investigate with our own eyes and ears in Kudus, but we must partly believe in the reporting in Dutch newspapers."¹⁰⁸

104 "Onlusten te Koedoes," *De Preanger-Bode*, November 1, 1918, "De opstootjes te Koedoes," *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, November 1, 1918, "Javadienst," *De Sumatera Post*, November 1, 1918.

105 "Perkelahian besar di-Koedoes," *Neratja*, November 1, 1918.

106 "Kariboetan di Koedoes," *Sin Po*, November 1, 1918.

107 "Perang Ketjil di Koedoes," *Sinar Hindia*, November 4, 1918.

108 "Perang Ketjil di Koedoes," *Sinar Hindia*, November 9, 1918.

Smaller papers which couldn't afford the exorbitant ANETA fees commonly reprinted the wire content the next day, usually giving credit to the paper they got it from.¹⁰⁹ This was this case with the ANETA article reappearing in some of the *Boemipoetra* papers; for example, *Djawi-Hisworo* (printed in Surakarta) translated the piece into their own Malay version (phrased differently from *Neratja*'s) on November 4th with the preamble "from Semarang wired on November 1 to *Preanger Bode* as follows".¹¹⁰ They made little effort to edit the article for ideological reasons; they even retained the "rust en orde" line, rendering it generically in Malay as "soldiers ... helping to assure peace and safety" (*soldadoe ... membantoe akan keamanan dan keselamatan negeri*). *Sinar Sumatra*, a Chinese paper in Padang, also reprinted it a few days later, but this time simply reprinting the *Neratja* piece word for word, including the extra paragraphs at the end which *Neratja* had added about Islamic fanaticism.¹¹¹ Although I was not able to trace this path any further, I would not be surprised if versions of these two articles from November 1st continued to circulate in other papers in the Indies and beyond.

Sin Po was an outlier and continued to translate full Dutch articles on Kudus into the second half of November. Unlike most Malay papers—and perhaps due to their status as the most-read Malay paper in the Indies, and hence practically a peer of the Dutch newspapers—they had no qualms about continuing to quote chauvinistic elements of the Dutch press. On November 7th, for example, they translated a piece from *Het nieuws van den Dag* that was full of slurs and disdain directed at the *Boemipoetra*, probably selected because of these concluding lines:

The Chinese demanded more and better protection of themselves and their property against indigenous excesses during the Kudus events; and they are truly right. [...] The government, which invariably ignored the countless warnings of experts on the natives and the interior territories, bears a great deal of responsibility.¹¹²

109 Termorshuizen, *Realisten En Reactionairen*, 98.

110 "Reroesoehan di Koedoes," *Djawi-Hisworo*, November 4, 1918.

111 "Perkelahian besar di Koedoes," *Sinar Sumatra*, November 9, 1918.

112 "Hal-hal di Koedoes," *Sin Po*, November 7, 1918. The original passage in Dutch read "De Chineezzen eischen meer en beter bescherming van lijf en goed tegen inlandsche uitspattingen als het gebeurde te Koedoes; en ze hebben waarachtig gelijk. [...] De regering, die de tallooze waarschuwingen van kenners van den inlander en de binnenlandsche

In East Java, the Chinese paper *Pewarta Soerabaia* likewise translated a number of pro-Chinese, anti-SI articles from *Soerabajasch Handelsblad*, such as one on November 7th that accused the rioters of being animals. This article listed atrocities in detail and called on the Governor General to restore order.¹¹³ The only Dutch article mentioning Kudus which *Sinar Hindia* approvingly translated and reprinted during this time was from the paper of their ally, *Sneevliet*.¹¹⁴ This article was about *Boemipoetra* soldiers in the service of the Dutch state and the *Sinar Hindia* postscript says that they hope soldiers will read it, think about it, and potentially not unjustly take a life in the future because of it. However, as a general trend this first phase of Kudus riot coverage that involved the near-exclusive repackaging of Dutch content ended around a week after the riot, when more original and audacious material started to appear in all of the Malay papers. The next section will examine that move towards trying to find out information independently.

Correspondents and Fact-finding

We have seen in the previous section that many of the Malay-language papers relied at first on reusing content from Dutch papers. What replaced it was a mix of reports from correspondents or contacts, original editorial content, as well as reference to the coverage or debates occurring in other Malay-language papers. These types of content often blended into one another in a single article, but in this subsection I will try to look specifically how the Malay papers tried to establish the facts of what had happened through their own contacts rather than via other newspapers. They mainly did so by printing the results of fact-finding endeavours from their ‘side’ as well as by focusing their reporting on the actions of political figures who they found sympathetic. These Kudus correspondents rarely

toestanden steevast in den wind sloeg, draagt een groot deel van de verantwoordelijkheid.” “Stoere rust-bewaarders,” *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, November 6, 1918.

113 “Perboeatannja itoe kaoem fanatiek ada sebagai binatang...” “Kasoekeran di Koedoes dan jang berhoehoeng,” *Pewarta Soerabaia*, November 7, 1918.

114 “Kelaparan dan pertoendjoekan koeasa,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 16, 1918.

claimed to be direct witnesses (or participants!) in the riot, but their residence there or physical presence after the fact lent credibility to their accounts.

During that first week after Kudus when the Malay papers were still printing secondhand Dutch coverage of the riot, many people on fact-finding trips and official inspections headed to Kudus by car or train. Among the official or political visits I could count, there were: Mansveld, an army captain who led 130 infantrymen to train in Kudus after the riot;¹¹⁵ the Resident (highest ranking Dutch official) of Semarang, who was worried that the “Chinese who had left did not want to return”;¹¹⁶ Sneevliet, the Dutch socialist living in Semarang;¹¹⁷ A.D.A. de Kat Angelino, a government official in charge of Chinese relations;¹¹⁸ Auw Yang Kee, the Consul General of China;¹¹⁹ Kwee Kee Tie, editor of *Djawa Tengah*;¹²⁰ unnamed editors of *Tjhoen Tjhioe* from Surabaya;¹²¹ unnamed editors of *Sinar Hindia*;¹²² *Centraal SI* notables R.M Soerjopranto,¹²³ H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto and R.Mohamad Joesoef.¹²⁴ Even this long list excludes some lesser-known people who announced their visits to Kudus in newspapers, including a car of Chinese from Semarang who told *Djawa Tengah* that they had been blocked from getting to Kudus by a mob of *Boemipoetra* in a town along the way.¹²⁵

Those figures announced their visit to Kudus and many had official purposes for making the trip. But Semarang papers like *Sinar Hindia*, *De Locomotief*, *Warna Warta* and *Djawa Tengah*, as well as resourceful papers in Surabaya and Batavia, also had local contacts who could wire them updates about Kudus. There are rarely names or details about these people—their material was invariably

115 “De onlusten te Koedoes,” *De Locomotief*, November 2, 1918.

116 “Kabar-kabar hal Koedoes,” *Sin Po*, November 6, 1918.

117 “Boekan menolak penjakit tetapi membikin penjakit,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 6, 1918.

118 “Pergi ka Koedoes,” *Sin Po*, November 5, 1918.

119 “Keriboetan di Koedoes,” *Tjahaja Timoer*, November 6, 1918.

120 “Keriboetan di Koedoes,” *Tjahaja Timoer*, November 6, 1918.

121 “Peroesoean di Koedoes dan Pamereksaannja,” *Tjhoen Tjhioe*, November 8, 1918.

122 “Boekan menolak penjakit tetapi membikin penjakit,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 6, 1918.

123 “Perkelahian di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 4 1918.

124 “R. Tjokroaminoto dalam perdjalan,” *Neratja*, November 12, 1918.

125 “Kabar-kabar hal Koedoes,” *Sin Po*, November 6, 1918.

prefaced with ‘from correspondent’ and, if necessary in a long article, ‘from another correspondent’. Only occasional advertisements in the newspapers hinted at how they were recruited; one such blurb in *Djawa Tengah* in early 1919 calls for competent correspondents from all the ‘big places’ in Java and warns: “for those who can’t write—don’t bother applying!”¹²⁶ No payment is mentioned. Fear of legal liability may have been the reason for their anonymity, but not naming ‘correspondents’ also allowed some plagiarized content to be passed off as coming from the paper’s own contacts.¹²⁷ These Kudus correspondents were not salaried journalists being sent out to investigate regional events. Indies newspapers simply did not have enough resources for that, with the possible exception of large Dutch papers like *De Locomotief*. Rather, the ‘correspondent’ might actually just be someone in the same community organization as the editors or even a reader who had received a free subscription for occasional services rendered.¹²⁸ At the moment when the Malay papers stopped using Dutch content, they started relying on these local contacts and political allies to describe things, which fed into the increasingly stratified war of words between the Chinese and *Boemipoetra* papers. Here are a few figures who went beyond the status of ‘correspondent’ and had their names printed alongside accounts of the riot or aftermath.

One of the few named Kudus correspondents on the *Boemipoetra* side was Soeroredjo, a close ally of *Sinar Hindia* and the Semarang SI.¹²⁹ Soeroredjo was a train conductor and dissident left-wing SI Kudus member who had clashed with the local *Centraal* SI-aligned leaders in Kudus and been instrumental in forming a splinter organization PKBT (*Perhimpunan Kaoem Boeroeh dan Tani*, Union

126 “Ditjari lagi bebrapa: Correspondent jang Tjakep,” *Djawa Tengah*, March 26, 1919.

127 In the cases above where Malay papers reused the ANETA wire piece from November 1st, it was often under a section ambiguously titled ‘*Kabar Kawat – dari correspondent Sin Po*’ (Wire News – from the *Sin Po* correspondent). Other short articles cited no sources at all but simply said quite ambiguously ‘*diwartaken*’ (it is rumoured or it has been reported).

128 According to Adam, this practice was quite common among Malay papers going back to their origins in the nineteenth century. See Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)*, 25.

129 “Perang Ketjil di Koedoes,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 2, 1918.

of Workers and Peasants). In fact, *Djawa Tengah* had printed a long report that he wrote about the PKBT meetings in Kudus on the same day they printed their first report of the riot.¹³⁰ The PKBT propaganda campaign had escalated tensions in Kudus in the months before October 31st, although Soeroredjo himself was not accused of direct involvement in the riot nor arrested for it.¹³¹ He wrote letters to *Sinar Hindia* which the paper dutifully printed in November as telling the ‘real story’ in Kudus, with the first being printed on November 11th.¹³² His longest piece was printed a full month after Kudus but included a first-person account of some things he had seen on the day of the riot—a surprisingly rare thing in all of the Kudus riot coverage.¹³³ I suspect that he felt free to write more openly because he had not been arrested and because he was writing for the rebellious *Sinar Hindia* which regularly skirted the norms of the press. His articles were occasionally picked up by SI papers farther afield, such as *Oetoesan Melajoe* in Padang, Sumatra.¹³⁴ (In late 1919 and early 1920, Soeroredjo also wrote *Sinar Hindia*’s coverage of the Kudus trial.¹³⁵)

Z. (Zainoel) Mohamad was another figure similar to Soeroredjo—a fellow PKBT organizer and ally of the Semarang SI who had been *Sinar Hindia*’s Kudus correspondent.¹³⁶ He was arrested during the mass arrests after the riot, and despite people testifying that he had not been there, he was held in preventative detention, apparently from the fall of 1918 until the trial in early 1920.¹³⁷ *Sinar Hindia* took up his cause, and in addition to regularly printing updates about his case, they printed at least one full article of his written about Kudus.¹³⁸ The postscript to this article notes that it was written in the Kudus jail. Unlike Soeroredjo’s article, this one does not have any first person testimony from that day,

130 “Verslag pendek openbare vergadering P.K.B.T. di Koedoes,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 1, 1918.

131 Recall that Masyhuri had partly attributed the riot to the PKBT’s radical propagandizing in the months leading up to it. *Bakar Pecinan!*, 40–41.

132 “Si Boeas di Koedoes,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 11, 1918.

133 “Hal ramai-ramai di Koedoes terpeksa saja angkat pena,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 30, 1918.

134 “Perang Ketjil di Koedoes,” *Oetoesan Melajoe*, November 14, 1918.

135 e.g. “Pemandangan hal papriksa’an perkara relletjes di Koedoes,” *Sinar Hindia*, February 2, 1920.

136 *Bakar Pecinan!*, 40–4.

137 “Volksraad,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 28, 1918.

138 “Drahoeroe di Koedoes,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 11, 1918.

relying instead on secondhand allegations. Given that he was potentially facing a five-year prison sentence or longer, it is not surprising that he did not print any description of what he had been doing that day. He was even charged with a *persdelict* offence while stuck in the Kudus jail, not for this but for a March 1918 piece about police excesses.¹³⁹

A more mainstream SI correspondent was Raden Mas Soerjopranoto, commissioner of the *Centraal* SI based in Yogyakarta, who went to Kudus in early November and wrote a series of letters to *Neratja* which were quoted in full.¹⁴⁰ Although other SI figures visited Kudus in the riot aftermath, it was his visit that was turned into a ‘report’ that was quoted in many newspapers. His basic conclusion was that there was no proof the SI had been involved, but that he thought all sides should keep meeting to calm things down. In his investigation he focused especially on the altercation the day before at the mosque rather than the riot on the 31st. He went into detail about the excesses of the Chinese parade, noting that their dress and behaviour provoked the Muslims at the mosque.¹⁴¹ He says that he had proof the Chinese had discharged guns in the subsequent brawl. As for the actual riot that displaced the Chinese, he glossed over it in a few sentences; a fight was started by the Chinese near the mosque, which soon got out of control and when some local villagers came to help, bad people followed them.¹⁴² *Sinar Hindia* reprinted a condensed version of the report as part of a longer piece by Semaoen.¹⁴³ *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, a conservative Dutch paper, ridiculed Soerjopranoto’s report, calling him a comedian and describing his claims, such as that Chinese had shot and injured multiple *Inlanders* (*Boemipoetra*), as completely absurd.¹⁴⁴ *Sin Po* plagiarized that *Nieuws van den Dag* article

139 “Persdelict lagi,” *Sinar Hindia*, January 25, 1919.

140 “Perkelahian di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 4 1918, “Perkelahian besar di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 9 1918..

141 “Perkara perkelahian besar di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 7th, 1918.

142 “...Boemipoetra jang mengangkat pasir ke-mesjid dengan bawa grobag-grobag itoe telah diserang oleh pihak T.H. dan inilah jang laloe menimboelkan perkelahian besar lama-kelamaan dan terbakar. Oleh tanda terbakar jang terpoekoel, datanglah orang-orang kampoeng dan desa akan menolongnja, tetapi sebagai sering kejadian dalam tempo terbakar, orang-orang djatah sama merampasi djoega barang-barang jang ditolongnja.”

143 “O, Koedoes!” *Sinar Hindia*, November 9, 1918.

144 “Een grappenmaker,” *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, November 16, 1918.

as well, translating it into Malay but removing some of the sarcastic commentary.¹⁴⁵ *Djawa Tengah* was likewise unimpressed and printed a brief article calling Soerjopranoto slanderous and uninformed.¹⁴⁶ However, *Neratja* remained supportive and continued to print material he sent them.¹⁴⁷ Some of his factual claims also reappeared later in *Neratja* in essays by Abdoel Moeis without their source being cited.¹⁴⁸

On the Chinese side, there were also well-informed people giving insider information, although there was no direct analogue to Z Mohamad or Soeroredjo—there was no Chinese person without official rank who was based in Kudus sending full descriptions to their ‘side’. The closest thing to such a regular informant on the Chinese side was the Kudus Chinese Officer, Goei Kim Ho.¹⁴⁹ He was present in many articles as someone who had been interviewed on the scene, often by Dutch papers. *Sin Po* heavily cited his experience on October 31st by quoting from the correspondent of *De Nieuwe Courant* who had interviewed him.¹⁵⁰ (*Sin Po*, which was famous for its campaign for the abolition of the Chinese Officer system, inserted a few slights again Goei even while using his testimonial secondhand in their coverage.¹⁵¹) The only signed letters printed in the papers by Goei were related to fundraising activities to help the victims of Kudus, although some of them did contain descriptions of the riot and aftermath.¹⁵²

145 “Djoeroe penjelidik jang loetjoe,” *Sin Po*, November 20, 1918.

146 “Satoe Fitenahan Berhoeboeng dengan hal Perampokan Besar di Koedoes,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 14, 1918.

147 “Perkelahian besar di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 9, 1918, “Perkara di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 14, 1918.

148 “Pemandangan dan pendapat tentang perkelahian di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 11, 1918.

149 Goei was the Chinese Lieutenant (Dutch-appointed community liaison) of Kudus, from 1916 until he resigned in 1921 due to illness. He was present through the entire chain of events surrounding the Kudus riot. The *Tua Pek Kong* procession that precipitated the riot started from his house, he was in the meeting with the SI before the riot, and after the riot he was chair of the local fundraising committee for victims.

150 “Kariboetan di Koedoes,” *Sin Po*, November 6, 1918.

151 One such comment about his handling of the situation on October 31st noted that he did not have the fortitude to stand up for his side at the meeting between the SI and officials (“Goei Kim Ho tida ada poenja katabahan mengadep di vergadering...”). “Peroesoehan di Koedoes dan hal-hal jang berhoeboeng dengan itoe – III,” *Sin Po*, November 15, 1918.

152 e.g. “Soerat Terboeka,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 13, 1918. Most of these types of letters were cosigned by other members of the fundraising committee and so it is unclear how involved Goei was in the writing.

A more unusual ‘correspondent’ for the Chinese papers was the Chinese Consul-General to the Indies, Auw Yang Kee, who had visited Kudus by car to survey the damage and subsequently went to Batavia to question the government on the matter.¹⁵³ The presence of a Chinese Consul General in Java was very recent; the first one arrived in Batavia in 1912 and he first visited Semarang in 1915. But the presence of support of official China suited the *peranakan* Chinese nationalists as a counterweight against the Dutch.¹⁵⁴ Although none of the papers got a direct report from him in the way that the *Boemipoetra* papers got written reports from the SI correspondents, in a way he functioned like *Centraal* SI representative Soerjopranoto, since he visited on behalf of the Chinese side and his movements and comments were reported on by the papers. The Consul also brought some *peranakan* notables from Semarang with him in the car to Kudus, including *Djawa Tengah* editor Kwee Kee Tie and *Tiong Hoa Ing Giap Hwe* member and Kudus relief organizer Kwik King Hien.¹⁵⁵ Thus, in that way firsthand information and secondhand stories made their way into the Chinese papers, although not in the form of a signed letter ala Soeroredjo.

As we can see, the type of ‘correspondents’ who signed their name in submitting content about Kudus were a mixed bunch, and none submitted more than a handful of pieces. And, aside from Goei Kim Ho, these were not at all the direct participants in the night of October 31st—not rioters (for obvious reasons), not police officers, not town officials, not people who had lost their homes or businesses, or even simple observers from the town. Many of those people ended up in the newspapers during the trial in 1919 and 1920 when their testimony was recorded—low level officers, shopkeepers, victims and neighbours. But the people who wrote in or otherwise informed the papers in late 1918 were already notables, activists or connected to the newspapers. Thus, the tone of their pieces was not a

153 “Consul General Tiongkok ka Koedoes,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 4, 1918. “Perkara Rampok di Koedoes,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 10, 1918.

154 Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 194–96.

155 “Keriboetan di Koedoes,” *Tjahaja Timoer*, November 6, 1918. The fact that Kwik King Hien was involved in Kudus relief was covered in other places, e.g. “De Koedoes-vergadering der Chineesche organisaties,” *De Preangerbode*, November 21, 1918.

firsthand testimonial, but rather an assertion of facts, often including numbered lists of its new assertions. They often also included information which had already been published elsewhere days or weeks earlier.

In an essay examining correspondents in Malay newspapers a few years earlier than Kudus, Hagen notes their detail-laden first-person language intended to make the readers, for whom even the concept of a newspaper might be very new, feel as though they had an unmediated view of the crime or occurrence being described.¹⁵⁶ He also notes that these descriptions were often followed in the same article by secondhand information collected by the correspondent which could only add to the veracity of the original description. I suspect that, in the case of these irregular Kudus correspondents, claiming such a close presence to the events as they unfolded might have been more perilous in this case, raising possible legal consequences as well as moral ones. But many of the editors and politically-affiliated inspectors did mention their presence in Kudus after the fact. For example, on November 8th, the editors of the Surabaya Chinese newspaper *Tjhoen Thjioe* noted that they were writing from the Hotel Tionghoa in Kudus itself, but most of their article was facts restated from *Warna Warta* and *Sinar Hindia* or commentary from colonial officials.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, it was often their claim to having personally inspected Kudus that lent weight to their veracity, even as they mixed firsthand information with things they had learned in newspapers.

War of Words

Having examined how the news about Kudus was produced, I will now move on to the selective quotation and critical commentary on other Malay newspapers. This kind of article started appearing roughly a week after the riot and continued for a few more weeks as each paper responded and

156 James M. Hagen, "'Read All about It': The Press and the Rise of National Consciousness in Early Twentieth-Century Dutch East Indies Society," *Anthropological Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (1997): 116, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3317671>.

157 "Peroesoan di Koedoes dan Pamereksaannja," *Tjhoen Thjioe*, November 8, 1918.

responded again to what the other papers were printing. I will preface this description by noting that this type of interaction between paper did not begin or end with the topic of Kudus. Any given week in a Malay newspaper in this era would probably have content of this type, with more positive or negative editorial commentary given the topic at hand. When it came to Kudus, I would say that this type of content was the most important moment for the papers to clearly express their position on what had happened in Kudus, because they had a clearly defined position they could amplify or criticize.

The confusion and disagreement about Kudus was recognized by observers at the time; one pseudonymous *Boemipoetra* writer in *Pewartar Soerabaia* on already described it as such on November 6th:

The Chinese Malay newspapers in Semarang also talked about this matter and added their editorial views. Looking at the reports from these newspapers, the reasons for the riot are unclear, so it is hard to know which side is correct. The first says said that it was caused by inter-group hatred, while the other said it was because of the *Boemipoetra* who had been beaten by the Chinese, and wanted payback. I have my suspicions that those two causes given in the Chinese Malay press in Semarang are not right...¹⁵⁸

As I said in the introduction, the most vocal part of the dispute seemed to mainly take place between the most nationalist Chinese newspapers on one side (*Sin Po*, *Pewartar Soerabaia*), and the Semarang SI papers on the other side (*Sinar Hindia*, *Oetoesan Hindia*). The comparatively moderate papers such as *Djawa Tengah* and *Neratja* did take sides and write commentaries on other papers' coverage, but did not attack as vigorously. Some of the small regional papers, which had editors who were often opinionated on other matters, do not appear to have written anything original at all about Kudus:

Djawi-Hisworo from Surakarta, *Bintang Soerabaja* from Surabaya, and *Oetoesan Melajoe* from Padang

158 "Poen soerat kabar Melajoe Tionghoa di Semarang pada menoetoer tentang itoe hal dengan disertain pemandangannya redactie. Menilik verslag dari itoe soerat-soerat kabar, sebabnja itoe pembrontakan ada matjem-matjem, hingga soesah boeat ditetepken mana jang betoel. Jang satoe bilang disebabkan dari kebentjian antara satoe dengan lain golongan bangsa, sedeng jang lain bilang disebabkan lantaran orang Boemipoetra, jang telah dipoekoel oleh saorang Tionghoa, maoe membales sakit hati. Menoeroet saia poenja doegaän, jaitoe dengan alesan atas verslag dalem pers Melajoe Tionghoa di Semarang, itoe doea sebab seperti ada dibilang di atas, tiada betoel..." "Satoe daia oepaia boeat bikin beres kariboetan di Koedoes," *Pewartar Soerabaia*, November 6, 1918.

were some papers I examined which only copied or translated articles without any attempt at commentary. We can disregard those papers in this section.

I will begin with *Sinar Hindia*, which took a very strong stance against almost all of the other Malay papers.¹⁵⁹ It began this campaign early and aggressively, which may explain why almost all of the other papers seemed to single out Semaoen (and to a lesser extent his colleague Darsono) as the most objectionable Kudus commentators. A telegram Semaoen sent the *Centraal SI* leader H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto neatly sums up many of his allegations about Kudus:

Kudus, read report of Soerjopranoto and *Boemipoetra* press which agree with my investigations. Chinese still wrong first.
On second day [Oct 31st] little war was started by Ing The, wearing Javanese clothes hit *Boemipoetra*.
Second night Chinese used revolvers.
There is word fires were started themselves to disperse *Boemipoetra*, but *Boemipoetra* imitated setting fires out of irrepressible anger.
Houses were mostly *Boemipoetra*'s *huurhuis* (rented houses). Three *Boemipoetra* families also burned their homes.
Because of *reactie* (movement) of white and yellow press preventative detentions (prisoners) were made *willekeurig* (arbitrarily). Many *onschuldigen* (innocent people) jailed.
Chinese side wildly struck and revolver, not one arrested.
Boemipoetra looting mostly poor from villages who are now suffering.
Arrangement is all *eenzydig* (one-sided), repressing *Boemipoetra*.
Arrival of soldiers swelled the heart and insults of oppressing class towards SI cohort which wasn't involved, as in Demak they [soldiers] ran wild.
This *onzekerheid* (uncertainty) causes concern among *Boemipoetra* and anger too.
My proposal, protest the arbitrary detention in the *Volksraad* [Indies parliament], leave the Chinese alone, the behaviour of the white and yellow press.
Request the military go home, *rechtszekerheid* (certainty of rights) guaranteed for *Boemipoetra* and, make haste with government commission which is *onpartydig* (not one-sided).¹⁶⁰

159 I was not able to obtain microfilms for *Sinar Hindia*'s sister papers such as *Oetoesan Hindia* and *Soera Rajat*. These shared editors with *Sinar Hindia* and I suspect based on responses to them from Chinese papers that they have a similar line.

160 "Koedoes liat verslag Soerjopranoto dan pers Boemipoetra tjetjok onderzoek saja. / Tionghoa tetap salah doeloeloe. / Hari perang ketjil kadoewa dimoelakan oleh Ing The, pakean Djawa poekoel Boemipoetra. / Kadoewanja malem Tionghoa goenakan revolvernja. / Ada kata tebakaran dimoelai sendiri boeat boebarkan Boemipoetra, tapi lantas Boemipoetra meniroe membakar dari tida tahannja kemarahan. / Roemah kebanyakan huurhuis (roemah sewa) Boemipoetra. Tiga familie Boemipoetra toeroet kabar roemahnja. / Sebab reactie (gerakan) pers poeti dan keoning tangkepan preventief (tahanan) dibikin willegeurig (sawenang-wenang). Banjak onschuldigen (orang-orang jang tida berdosa) diboei. / Fihak Tionghoa poekoel dan revolver dengan boewas tida satoe jang ditangkep. / Boemipoetra merampas kebanyakan miskin desa jang ini waktoe hidoep soesa. / Oeroesan samoe eenzydig (berfihak sebelah) menindas Boemipoetra. / Kadatengannja soldadoe bikin besarnja hati kaoem pemerass dan fitnahan boeat kaoem S.I. jang tida toeroet tjampoer

Clearly, Semaoen had staked out a position where the *Boemipoetra* population of Kudus had not done much wrong. And he and his allies in Semarang continued to push this line wherever they could find a hearing for it.

Sinar Hindia had used translated content from *De Locomotief*, *Warna Warta* and *De Nieuwe Courant* in the first week after the riot, but now it turned on all of them. A short article titled “False news” (*Kabar Bohong*) appeared on November 7th taking issue with *Warna Warta*’s report that the Kudus SI president and his wife had been arrested.¹⁶¹ And on the 9th the paper printed a ‘Kudus issue’ (*Koedoes-Nommer*) which was almost entirely about the riot and contained several essays about it. One by Semaoen printed an essay lumping together most of the Indies press as the ‘money-class press’ (*pers kaoem oeang* or *pers kaoem hartawan*) and the ‘white and yellow press’ (*pers poetih dan koening*).¹⁶² After that day, a few articles appeared defending *Sinar Hindia*’s position on Kudus and arguing the facts of what had happened, while not focusing too much on any particular competing paper. But on the 13th the paper printed a pseudonymous editorial attacking the *Warna Warta* coverage. It said “believe it, the way we see it the Chinese and Dutch papers only want to denigrate us and especially the SI.”¹⁶³ It accused the Chinese of airing dirty laundry and over-emphasizing their generosity towards the *Boemipoetra*.¹⁶⁴ At one point the article accuses the Chinese authors of drinking two glasses of whiskey before putting pen to paper!

seperti di Demak lantas meradjalelah. / Onzekerheid (tida ada kapastian) ini bikin kakwatiran Boemipoetra dan kamarahan djoega. / Voorstel saia protestlah dalem Volksraad willekeurige preventief, Tionghoa dibiarkan sadja, klakoeannja pers poeti dan koening. / Mintalah militair dipoelangken, ditanggoeng rechtsekerheid (kapastian hak) Boemipoetra dan spoedregeeringscommissie jang onpartydig (tida perfihak sabelah).” Reproduced in “Peroesoehan di Koedoes dan hal-hal jang berhoehoeng dengen itoe – II,” *Sin Po*, November 12, 1918.

161 “Kabar Bohong,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 7, 1918.

162 “O, Koedoes!” *Sinar Hindia*, November 9, 1918.

163 “...pertjajalah pada kita jang soerat soerat kabar Tionghoa dan Belanda itoe hanja berkahendak akan memboesoekan pada kita teroetama pada badannja S.I.” “Wah, Wah, rama betoel, rame betoel!” *Sinar Hindia*, November 13, 1918.

164 “Dalam ‘Warna Warta’ tanggal 4-11-1918 terdapatlah tjoetji tjoetjian jang terlaloe amat kotornja bagi kita Bp dan oentoek memboesoekkan perhimpoeenan kita S.I. dengan tidak loeka penghina’an, malah penulis W.W. dengan ta’ mempoenjai maloe soedah berkata pendeknja begini: betapakah kebaikan kita Tionghoa pada Boemipoetra tentang

The defensive articles continued to appear in most issues. The paper's resident columnist '*De Onwetende (Si Bodo)*' (the Ignorant) printed short sarcastic columns attacking whoever would criticize the paper's line on the Kudus riot throughout November. *De Onwetende* even printed some satirical poems about the Kudus debate in a mix of Malay and Javanese, including one on the 12th which accused *De Locomotief* of running amok.¹⁶⁵ It is unclear if the columnist is the same person who wrote anonymous news and editorial content about Kudus under other names such as '*Goblok*' (Ignorant) or, in one case, signed "humbly a village guy named Stupid, Ignorant, crippled coolie."¹⁶⁶ In another article discussing *De Locomotief's* coverage of various recent riots in Java, *Sinar Hindia* called that paper the "Rasputin of the Indies."¹⁶⁷ However, these short insulting articles were not as substantial (in terms of length or engagement with other texts) as those appearing in some other Malay papers at this time.

An editorial reprinted on the 16th from *Sinar Hindia's* sister newspaper from Semarang, *Soeara Ra'jat* (people's voice), was actually mildly critical of Semaoen, saying he was wrong to try and assign complete blame to the Chinese. However, it did not accept the way his rhetoric was being portrayed elsewhere:

We understand why is it that Semaoen and the other leaders of Boemipoetra speak in such a way. Allegations that the S.I. *association* caused that dispute [in Kudus] awakens our brothers' anger. In his essay Semaoen explained that because of our direction, strikes might arise. Our goal is that the *strength* of the workers and peasants increases in *the association* until they are strong enough to seize the profits of the monied class and will force the government so that its employees do not always side with the business class. However, it must not be that because of our goals, people kill, burn houses, and so on in retaliation.¹⁶⁸

kelakoean dan dermawan di dalam Bp mendapat kesangsara'an? Akan tetapi sekarang pembalasannja Bp dengan perboatan jang begitoe nadjis. ..."

165 "Sjair Kembang Djamboe Karoek," *Sinar Hindia*, November 12, 1918.

166 "...hamba orang orang desa, benama, Goblok. Bodo. Koeli pintjang." "Keada'an jang aneh sekali," *Sinar Hindia*, November 14, 1918.

167 "Relletjes di Boeloesan," *Sinar Hindia*, November 19, 1918.

168 "Akan tetapi kita mengerti, mengapakah sebabnja Semaoen dan lain lainnja memimpin Boemipoetra bitjara begitoe roepa. Toedoehan bahwa *perhimpoean* S.I. menjebakkan perselisihan itoe membangunkan kemarahan hati saudara kita. Didalam karangannja maka Semaoen menerangkan bahwa lantaran haloean kita boleh timboel memogokan. Haloean

Sinar Hindia's combative content about Kudus gradually decreased towards the end of November, although it did not disappear. The paper printed Soeroredjo's piece on the 30th, which I have mentioned in a previous section. This full-length article was partly firsthand testimonial and partly criticism of how some other newspapers represented that day in Kudus.¹⁶⁹ As the Kudus content decreased, *Sinar Hindia* did not stop attacking other newspapers; they simply shifted to new topics on which to express their disagreement.

Neratja, on the other hand, generally avoided direct criticism of the coverage of other papers on the matter of Kudus. As far as I can tell, only two articles in the Kudus aftermath consist of quotes from other papers with commentary. The first was a November 9th summary and mild critique of the Dutch coverage of the Kudus riot that had been printed in *Sin Po* during the previous week (from *De Locomotief*, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, and *Het Nieuws van den Dag*), some of which had originally been translated from *Warna Warta* (a Chinese Malay paper).¹⁷⁰ It opens with the statement that *Boemipoetra* should be aware of a wide range of views, even from sides that dislike them such as the European press. The piece then paraphrases the Dutch articles that had been in *Sin Po*, sometimes asking clarifying questions or asserting contrary facts that are known to them. The article closes with a note that *Neratja* had mailed some of its recent issues to *De Locomotief* in the hopes that they will quote them and show everyone the *Boemipoetra* side of the debate. Such a framing was quite mild compared to the combative rebuttals in *Sin Po*, *Sinar Hindia* and other papers. Another piece on November 13th quoted a few paragraphs from *Sin Po*'s follow-up coverage on Kudus, which had called

berichtiar soepaja *kekoatan* kaoem boeroeh dan orang tani bertambah didalam *perhimpoeannja* hingga mereka koeat tjoekope akan mereboet *kaoentoengannja* kaoem oeang bagai dirinta sendiri dan akan memaksa kepada pamarintah soepaja pegawainja jangan selaloe memihak kepada kaoem hartawan itoe. Akan tetapi tida boleh djadi bahwa lantaran haloean kita maka orang orang memboenoeh, membakar roemah d.s.b., hanjalah sebagai membalasan sadja.”

“Kariboetan di Koedoes,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 16, 1918.

169 “Hal ramai-ramai di Koedoes terpeksa saja angkat pena,” *Sinar Hindia*, November 30, 1918.

170 “Perkelahian besar di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 9, 1918.

on the government to compensate the Chinese community for their losses.¹⁷¹ *Neratja*'s response reviewed some comparable situations in history, such as the Boxer rebellion in China, and concluded that the *totok* Chinese might have a claim for damages, but that the *peranakan* Chinese probably didn't.¹⁷² Aside from those and the articles submitted by R.M. Soerjopranoto, the only full-length pieces that sought to establish the paper's position on Kudus were essays by Abdoel Moeis which reexamined the events of Kudus and their effects on ethnic relations without citing sources for the statements and facts contained in them.¹⁷³

Sin Po took some time to arrive at its combative position on Kudus. After reproducing Dutch content for some time after the riot, the paper's first look at other Malay coverage was printed on November 12th. It was reprint of an article from *Pewartar Soerabaia* titled "The commotion in Kudus through a neutral lens"—the same one quoted in the introduction to this section. The article compared the basic interpretation of the riot in *Warna Warta* and a handful of Dutch papers. *Sin Po*'s postscript noted approvingly that it had been written by a "*Boemipoetra* ... who is neither on the right or left side" which, in the current situation, they deemed to be a valuable trait.¹⁷⁴ But the postscript continues: "...unlike Mr. Semaoen's writing style, which very clearly and blindly sits on the *Boemipoetra* side," something they say it is "not good to leave unopposed."¹⁷⁵ The paper followed up on this by printing three full-page, front page essays criticizing Semaoen's Kudus rhetoric. The first outlines Semaoen's

171 "Perkara Koedoes," *Neratja*, November 13, 1918.

172 "Orang-orang Tionghoa peranakan sekarang terpaksa nanti toetoe moeloet lantaran ia orang poenja keadaan jang tidak pasti, jaitoe apa marika ada rajat Olanda atawa rahajat Tiongkok. Tapi Tionghoa totok tidaklah bisa dibantah lagi marika poenja hak boeat minta ganti segala keroegian jang marika soedah dapat lantaran itoe peroesoehan!"

173e.g. "Pemandangan dan pendapat tentang perkelahian di-Koedoes," *Neratja*, November 11, 1918, "Koedoes," *Neratja*, November 13, 1918.

174 "Toelisan di atas ada boewa kalamnja saorang Boemipoetra. Maski tida saanteronja kita setoedjoe sama ia poenja pendapat, tapi toch boleh dibilang jang ia tida berfihak pada kanan atawa kiri. Dan dalam kaädahan jang seperti sekarang, djoestroe sifat begitoe ada jang berharga paling besar dari soeatoe toelisan." "Kariboetan di Koedoes dipreksa dengen katja neutral," *Sin Po*, November 12, 1918. The piece appeared a week earlier under the title "Satoe daia oepaia boeat bikin beres kariboetan di Koedoes," *Pewartar Soerabaia*, November 6, 1918.

175 "Tidalah seperti toewan Semaoen poenja tjara menoelis, jang njata sekali dengen memboeta ada belahken fihaknja Boemipoetra [...] Maka poen kita anggap tida baek itoe ditinggal tida terbanta."

factual assertions about what had caused the riot and criticized them one by one. For example, they ridiculed Semaoen's claim that the Chinese had burned down their own shops on the 31st, and said that people from Kudus had told them it was done by some Kudus *Boemipoetra* with the help of well-known criminals from nearby Mayong.¹⁷⁶ The second article discusses the recent history of trade and competition in Kudus, with regards to religion and the rise of the SI, and attempts to show how Semaoen is wrong in his claims about how those contributed to the breakdown in Kudus.¹⁷⁷ The third article again examines economic factors and mostly avoids specific quotes in favour of building on the assertions made in the previous columns.¹⁷⁸ They repeatedly accuse him of legitimating (*halalken*) murder and arson by trying to come up with political justifications for what happened, and they portray his socialist rhetoric as being a cover for taking the side of *Boemipoetra* capital over Chinese capital. "Is that really the meaning of *socialistische politiek*?" they ask.¹⁷⁹ The series closes with the editors situating their side in relation to others:

We have never sought out rivalry with the *Boemipoetra*, thus we ourselves cannot be blamed. Not one creature in this can say that we have helped the powerful side perfect their oppression of the weak side, that we do not have feelings for the weak side which is still working to get its liberation. No, we only try to protect ourselves from arbitrary treatment.

Chinese people are weak, yes, yes, indeed weak, but if forced such weak people can also do whatever to protect themselves.¹⁸⁰

176 "Boekan sekali orang Tionghoa jang soeda membakar roemah lebi doeloe! Lebi djaoe kita dapet denger di Koedoes, jang perosoehan boekan melaenkan dilakoeken oleh Boemipoetra di itoe tempat, tapi oleh Boemipoetra Koedoes dengen terbantoe oleh banjak boeaja-boeaja dari Majong, jang lama soeda terkenal tentang kedjahatannja."

"Peroesoehan di Koedoes dan hal-hal jang berhoeboeng dengen itoe – II," *Sin Po*, November 12, 1918.

177 "Peroesoehan di Koedoes dan hal-hal jang berhoeboeng dengen itoe – III," *Sin Po*, November 15, 1918.

178 "Peroesoehan di Koedoes dan hal-hal jang berhoeboeng dengen itoe – IV," *Sin Po*, November 16, 1918.

179 "Maka dengen alesan apatah toewan Semaoen bisa halalken itoe perboeatan biadab jang digerakin oleh kapitaal Boemipoetra boeat moesnaken kapitaal Tionghoa? Apatah begitoe memang artinja socialistische politiek?"

180 "Kitaorang tida pernah tjari permoesoehan pada Boemipoetra, maka kitaorang sama sekali tida bisa disaki salah. Tida satoe machloek di ini doenia nanti bisa kata, bahoewa kita soeda bantoein fihak koewat boeat sampoernaken tindessannja ia ini pada fihak lemah, bahoewa kitaorang tida ada peonja pengrasahon bagi fihak lemah jang lagi bergerak boeat dapetken kamerdikahan. Tida, kitaorang tjoema melindoengken diri sendiri jang maoe diperlakoeken sawenang-wenang. Orang Tionghoa lemah, ja, ja, memang lemah, tapi kaloe dipaksa itoe orang-orang lemah djoega nanti bisa berboat apa-apa boeat lindoengken dirinja."

The paper also ran some approving essays explaining the coverage in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*.¹⁸¹ They continued to run anti-SI polemics about Kudus; on the 20th, their translation of *Het Nieuws van den Dag*'s very aggressive polemic against R.M. Soerjopranoto's Kudus report,¹⁸² and on the 21st and 22nd three essays of their own critiquing Darsono's take on Kudus.¹⁸³ After that, their polemics against other Malay papers' Kudus riot coverage slowed down. On the 25th, they published a short (two paragraph) response to Abdoel Moeis and *Neratja* and, as far as I can tell, that was the end of it.¹⁸⁴ So, what differentiated *Sin Po*'s response from that of the other papers? It was assertive, and confident, and well informed. As the Malay paper with the largest readership in the Indies, it seems that it felt it was at the level of the Dutch papers, and was sympathetic to them while being hostile to the SI papers. Suryadinata, the historian of the Indonesian Chinese, claim that *Sin Po* sympathized with the Indonesian nationalists during this time and was in turn popular in that movement.¹⁸⁵ He may have been referring to a different historical moment, because it seems difficult to reconcile this with its stance on Kudus which resembled that of the Dutch. Their strong focus on criticizing Semaoen and Darsono, and only to a lesser degree the *Centraal* SI writers such as Abdoel Moeis, shows that they were far more alarmed by radical talk that seemed in its mind to justify murder and looting.

Djawa Tengah, despite being a more moderate paper than *Sin Po*, also made sure to defend the Chinese community from what was being printed about it in the SI papers. They noted that it was legally risky to speak out about Kudus, but promised to be brave and to push ideas that were not anti-Chinese, or anti-*Boemipoetra*, but "pro."¹⁸⁶ Their first rebuttal of SI coverage was an anti-Semaoen

181 "Geloembang tinta perkara Koedoes I," *Sin Po*, November 15, 1918, "Geloembang tinta perkara Koedoes II," *Sin Po*, November 15, 1918.

182 "Djoeroe penjelidik jang loetjoe," *Sin Po*, November 20, 1918.

183 "Koedoes," *Sin Po*, November 21, 1918, "Sedikit perkatahan boeat toean Darsono," *Sin Po*, November 21, 1918, "Sedikit pikiran prihal Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra," *Sin Po*, November 22, 1918.

184 "Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra," *Sin Po*, November 25, 1918.

185 Suryadinata, *The Pre World War II Peranakan Chinese Press of Java*, 22.

186 "Pembrita Redactie, Kapada Toean Toean Pengelis hal Perampokan jang ngeri di Koedoes," *Djawa Tengah*, November 13, 1918.

piece printed on November 11th which had been written by the owner and editor of *Tjahaja Timoer*.¹⁸⁷ Their own response to Semaoen and Abdoel Moeis, with a point by point rebuttal of claims from *Oetoesan Hindia* and *Neratja*, came out the following day, which they printed on November 12th.¹⁸⁸ The piece lashed out at Semaoen as an unethical man misleading his people, and stated that even the supposedly moderate Abdoel Moeis buried a hint of a threat of popular revenge in his essays about reconciliation. But the piece had a different tone than those in *Sin Po*; rather than looking down disdainfully on their uneducated social inferiors, they seemed more disappointed in how the *Boemipoetra* leaders had turned against them. It seems that what separated *Djawa Tengah* from the above Chinese papers was its greater sympathy for the SI struggle, and its willingness to actually engage with its ideas and to explain where it went wrong. For example, on November 14th they published a letter from Mohamad Kasam, *Sinar Hindia* editor and reporter, explaining the position of the Semarang SI on what had happened at Kudus.¹⁸⁹ It was followed by a few editorial notes on where *Djawa Tengah* disagreed. Even in a highly critical piece on Semaoen printed on the 16th, the editors took the time to coherently explain Semaoen's anti-capitalist politics, although they commented that when it reached the point of inciting the masses, it could result in the death of innocent women and children as in Kudus.¹⁹⁰

The rhetorical war over the Kudus incident was relatively short-lived; it only lasted from around November 9 until the start of December. The 'war' was fought the hardest by *Sinar Hindia* and *Sin Po*, with the support of other papers which had close ties and a similar outlook to those two papers. But, due to the ever present threat of arrest under press censorship laws, or due to a their moderate political

187 "Pertimbangan Aken halnja keriboetan Di Koedoes oleh Kwee Khajj Khee & Tan Thwan Khing," *Djawa Tengah*, November 11, 1918. This piece had appeared a few days earlier in *Tjahaja Timoer* (on November 8th). It seems that Tan Thwan Khing, the *Tjahaja Timoer* editor, also occasionally worked as an editor for *Djawa Tengah*, but he was not identified as such here.

188 "Prihal rampok besar di Koedoes," *Djawa Tengah*, November 12, 1918.

189 "Sikapnja 'Serikat Islam' Semarang," *Djawa Tengah*, November 14, 1918.

190 "Keriboetan di Koedoes," *Djawa Tengah*, November 16, 1918.

positions, most of the other Malay papers did not attack the other side very harshly. *Neratja* and *Djawa Tengah* seemed to truly believe in fairness and balance, even while they felt compelled to defend their own interpretation of the facts. The Kudus riot itself did not completely disappear from any of the papers until at least the spring of 1920, when the trial had finished. In early 1919 many of the Chinese papers continued to print updates about their fundraising efforts for the victims, and occasional memorial events for those who died.¹⁹¹ After that coverage waned, the only occasional updates were anticipation of the trial, or about the conditions of the imprisoned *Boemipoetra* or the displaced Chinese.

¹⁹¹ “Verslag Officiaal dari Twia Teh Hwee di Koedoes, jang diboeka oleh Central Comite, Fonds Kasoesahannja Bangsa Tionghoa di Koedoes Toewa,” *Djawa Tengah*, February 4, 1919.

3: Beyond the War of Words

In the previous section I examined the rhetorical conflict over the Kudus incident and the factors that drove the newspapers to stake out opposing positions. In this section I will look at the papers that considered the perspectives of other racial groups and chose to de-escalate tensions. As I have mentioned above, the combative nationalist rhetoric between *Boemipoetra* and Chinese papers was not the only type of commentary they were printing in the Kudus aftermath. On that matter, they were not simply held back by fear of the Dutch press laws, but were actually somewhat interested in each others' ideas in ways that are worth reexamining. Some of the sympathetic coverage of the SI in Chinese papers like *Djawa Tengah*, which I have mentioned above, can be explained by their organization being more diverse than it appears on the masthead. And the principles that caused *Neratja* to hold back from fully attacking the Chinese side eventually developed into their support for a post-Kudus 'friendship movement'.

Many of the newspapers became obsessed with the Kudus trial which took place a year after the riot and, at least on paper, they put their trust in resolution of the matter in the court from the very start of November 1918. In papers like *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* and *Djawa Tengah*, the front page story for the morning edition almost every day from December 1919 to February 1920 was full-page coverage of the trial.¹⁹² In a simple count of column inches, that coverage almost certainly exceeded all other content relating to the Kudus event, even the coverage of the original riot. I believe it made an appealing subject for these papers for a number of reasons: it was highly salacious, yet it was in the Dutch papers, and therefore safe to cover; and that the ongoing expressions of faith in the result of the trial was a sort of performance of its own. Together with the nationalistic 'war of words', this trial coverage tends to overshadow other reactions to Kudus or other proposals for how to resolve the

¹⁹² Presumably for political reasons, *Sinar Hindia* barely covered the trial at all in early 1920, with the exception of a few factual updates about sentencing and so on.

problems it had raised. Here, I hope to bring to light some of those more minor reactions, after laying the groundwork with an explanation of how Indies Malay newspapers were more diverse than they appeared on the masthead.

Outsider Figures in the Newspapers

We have seen in the previous section that many of the Chinese and *Boemipoetra* newspapers acted as defenders or crusaders for their own racial group. In the years before the Kudus riot many in the Chinese press had already decided SI papers such as *Oetoesan Hindia* and *Sarotomo* were simply racist against them.¹⁹³ Yet the Indies newspaper business was such a marginal one that no paper could survive by appealing exclusively to a particular religious or party demographic, even if those were often the basis for the identity of a paper.¹⁹⁴ Almost all of the newspapers of the Indies were constantly on the verge of bankruptcy.¹⁹⁵ The most successful papers were those which found readerships outside of the in-group; the Dutch and Chinese papers were best at this. Here I will discuss a few of the figures who did not fit into the racial category their newspaper belonged to—a microcosm of the wider Indies society, where the major story was one of racially exclusive spaces and lives, but the minor story contained instances of cross-racial elite spaces (such as Theosophical lodges¹⁹⁶) and of spaces shared by necessity in the working world.

Many of the Malay papers were more racially integrated in their daily functioning than one might perceive from the names on the masthead. First of all, the printing staff and other low-level workers at this time were almost certainly *Boemipoetra* (and some poor Chinese) across all papers, be

193 Rahzen, *Seabad Pers Kebangsaan 1907-2007*, 84–88.

194 Termorshuizen, *Realisten En Reactionairen*, 81.

195 Hendrik MJ Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Writing* (BRILL, 2004), 166.

196 Shiraishi mentions a Theosophical Lodge in Surakarta in 1916 which was a “prestigious meeting place of Dutch, Indos, Chinese, Kasunan and Mangunegaran princes, aristocrats, and high-ranking officials in Surakarta.” Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, 120.

they Dutch, Chinese, Javanese, or other.¹⁹⁷ This was simply an economic choice as they could be paid the least—a role that Chinese workers held in nineteenth century Indies newspapers.¹⁹⁸ Also like the Chinese in an earlier generation, many of these low-level *Boemipoetra* employees eventually learned the trade and moved on to become proper journalists or editors later. The most famous case of this was Tirto Adhisoerjo, the first anti-colonial *Boemipoetra* journalist in the Indies. In 1901 he became an apprentice at *Pembrita Betawi* under F. Wiggers and in 1902 at *Nieuws van den Dag* under Karel Wijbrands. It was this experience that allowed him to found *Medan Prijaji* in 1907, a paper which would influence all of the SI papers that arose in the following decade.¹⁹⁹ As Farid and Razif described this process, these apprentices “learned, apart from writing and editing, how to manage a publishing house so that it could be self-sustaining and produce reading material independently of the colonial power.”²⁰⁰ Because of these apprenticeships and previous work relationships, editors had been exposed to other racial groups, and even if that experience had been a negative one, it surely influenced their running of a newspaper later on. Other figures who worked for papers of other ethnic groups did so at a higher level, not because of rising from the bottom ranks but because their education, status, and personality made them assets to the newspapers. For example, despite being the leading Chinese nationalist in the Indies, *Sin Po* had a Eurasian lead editor up until 1916, J.R. Razoux Kühr. Appointing him was partly done for legal reasons as his race would allow him to be tried in a European court should any problems arise.²⁰¹ Finally, financial ties linked the papers to backers from other groups.

197 Termorshuizen, *Realisten En Reactionairen*, 114.

198 In the 1860s and 1870s, Chinese men like Lie Kim Hok apprenticed at Dutch papers and were eventually able to purchase printing presses and launch the first Chinese Malay papers in the 1880s. Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)*, 62–67.

199 Toer and RM, *Sang Pemula Disertai Karya-Karya Non-Fiksi (Jurnalistik) Dan Fiksi (Cerpren/Novel) RM Tirto Adhi Soerjo*, 44–47, 69–73.

200 Hilmar Farid and Razif, “Batjaan Liar in the Dutch East Indies: A Colonial Antipode,” *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 3 (2008): 279–80.

201 *Sin Po Jubileum Nummer 1910-1935* (Djakarta: Sin Po, 1935).

Many of the early SI papers had been funded by Chinese capitalists and advertisers from other groups (or from one's own group) were a common source of feedback to editors.²⁰²

In the content I examined about Kudus, the most notable figure of the 'elite recruitment' type was Raden Mas Tjondrokoesoemo, who was an uncredited Javanese editor of the Chinese paper *Djawa Tengah*. I call him uncredited because his name never appeared on the masthead of the paper in this era—only K.T. Kwee ('head editor') and Njoo Joe Tik ('editor in Solo') were listed there. Yet it was no secret that he worked for them, as he was periodically identified as the paper's editor in Dutch papers between 1915 and 1921, when he finally resigned over the issue of editorial independence and was offered a position at a competing Chinese paper, *Warna Warta*.²⁰³ He was apparently from a noble family and was not a partisan journalist. I found an interesting quote from him in a Dutch paper a few years later: "I do not know [SI leader] Tjokroaminoto, nor am I a member of the *Sarikat Islam* or any other political or trade union. But I carefully follow the course of events in order to be able to carry out my journalistic work from a neutral point of view."²⁰⁴ The fact that he wrote some signed editorials in *Djawa Tengah* calling for racial reconciliation makes him a fairly unique figure in the post-Kudus moment. These editorials used the aftermath of the Kudus riot to discuss broader issues of community leaders, the law, and ethics. One such piece on November 10th, titled "National leaders who still try to cause harm to subject nations," only mentions Kudus in passing and goes on to discuss movement leaders who incite and don't check their facts before publishing.²⁰⁵ His main piece on the Kudus riot, which I have mentioned a few times, was published on the 15th and feels like a continuation of some of the ideas from his essay on the 10th. This new essay was a combination of platitudes about harmony

202 Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 188.

203 "Overzicht der Inlandsche Beweging," *De Preanger-bode*, January 3, 1921.

204 "Ik ken Tjokroaminoto nietpersoonnoch ben ik lid van de Sarikat Islam of van eenige andere politieke of vakvereniging. Maar ik ga den gang van zaken nauwkeurig na, teneinde mijn journalistieke werkzaamheden te kunnen verrichten vanaf een neutraal standpunt." "De volksbeweging," *De Indische courant*, January 8, 1923.

205 "Pemimpin bangsa jang masi minta bikin karoesakan pada bangsa jang terpimpin," *Djawa Tengah*, November 10, 1918.

and piece, mild criticism of figures like Semaoen and the Dutch socialists Baars and Sneevliet, and some descriptions of how the newspaper navigated the post-riot crisis.²⁰⁶ Overall, reading Tjondrokoesoemo's writings on Kudus and other matters, it seems that he was an elite figure who believed that social justice could be achieved through reform and cooperation of the subject races against the unfairness of the Dutch colonial system.

A similar figure to Tjondrokoesoemo was Raden Nhabehi Sosrohadikoesoemo, member of the editorial committee of *De Taak* during the Kudus era. *De Taak* was a liberal Dutch-language weekly journal based in Semarang which had some former *De Locomotief* editors on its board.²⁰⁷ (I have not otherwise mentioned *De Taak*, since it only printed roughly three articles about Kudus, but it was influential enough that these articles were discussed in other Semarang papers.) Sosrohadikoesoemo was educated in the Netherlands and was one of the first Javanese to be promoted into European sectors of the civil service in the Indies.²⁰⁸ Unfortunately the only signed editorial I could find about Kudus in *De Taak* was not by him but by van Wijngaarden, another editor.²⁰⁹

A different type of outsider editor was Kho Tjoen Wan, who was apparently a Chinese editor or possibly administrator of *Sinar Hindia*. I became aware of him in the footnotes of an essay by historian Leo Suryadinata, who gives a brief biography of him, noting that "He was at one time the director of *Sinar Hindia*, a newspaper affiliated with Sarekat Islam. He became a Communist and was detained by the colonial authorities after the 1926-1927 rebellion."²¹⁰ This surprised me, as he was never listed on

206 "Perloe dibikin dami, antara pendoeboek Bp. Dan T.H.," *Djawa Tengah*, November 15, 1918.

207 Termorshuizen, *Realisten En Reactionairen*, 411.

208 Joost Coté, *Realizing the Dream of RA Kartini: Her Sisters' Letters from Colonial Java*, 114 (Ohio University Press, 2008), 239.

209 "Koedoes," *De Taak*, November 9, 1918. Christiaan Peter van Wijngaarden was a Semarang lawyer and advocate for the Ethical policy. See Fritjof Tichelman, *Socialisme in Indonesië: De Indische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeniging, 1897-1917*, vol. 1 (KITLV Press, 1985), 480.

210 Leo Suryadinata, "Pre-War Indonesian Nationalism and the Peranakan Chinese," *Indonesia* 11 (April 1971): 84, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3350745>.

the masthead of *Sinar Hindia* in any of the issues I saw.²¹¹ I could not find any other source that confirms his working for that paper, although some contemporary Dutch papers did mention him as a *Warna Warta* editor. In fact, only a few months after Kudus, *De Sumatra Post* summarized an article of his from *Warna Warta* that seems quite hostile to the SI:

[...] all too often the writers in the Native newspapers are guided by their personal hatred, without having to think more deeply about the issue they are dealing with, with the aim of setting the races against each other. According to this, for example, in the *Oetoesan Hindia*, the organ of the *Centraal S.I.* [...] [Kho] does not understand that the leader of this magazine Tjokroaminoto, who is experienced, allows this writing. [...] [Kho] cannot accept that a person who is old and experienced, as soon as he leads a paper, feels comfortable filling his organ with dirty writing not worth half a cent. He observes this characteristic in the *Oetoesan Hindia*, a sheet which is filled with foul articles, addressed to the Chinese, whereupon the bond between the two races is broken.²¹²

It is hard to reconcile that with his being the director of *Sinar Hindia*—although a Chinese leftist could certainly have his own perspective on anti-Chinese behaviour. But my suspicion is that he experienced the political conversion Suryadinata mentions at some point after writing this. By late 1920 he was briefly imprisoned under the *persdelict* laws for writing an anti-colonial article in *Warna Warna*.²¹³ And by 1921 he was touring Surabaya with Semaoen giving lectures on communism; the article even identifies him as Semaoen's 'roommate' (*huisgenoot*)! *Sinar Hindia* also had another Chinese editor at around this time, Liem Ban Goei. It is also unclear when he joined the paper, but by the fall of 1920 he was jailed under a *persdelict* offense for printing the phrase "Down with the Red-White-Blue flag ...

211 The roster on the *Sinar Hindia* masthead at around the time of Kudus was: Tjokromidjojo as Director-Administrator, Semaoen as Director-Editor, Marco, Soepeno, and Mohamed Joesef as Editors, Darsono as Editor in Surabaya, Darsono, and Noto-Widjojo as Editor-at-Large.

212 "[...] maar al te dikwijls de schrijvers in de Inlandsche bladen zich laten leiden door hun persoonlijke haat, zonder over de kwestie, welke zij behandelen, dieper na te denken, met het doel daarmede de rassen tegen elkaar op te zetten. Volgens zulks bijvoorbeeld in de *Oetoesan Hindia*, het orgaan der centraal S. I. [...] doch [Kho] begrijpt niet, dat de leider van dit blad Tjokroaminoto die ouder meer ervaren is, dit geschrijf toelaat. [...] [Kho] kan het niet aannemen, dat iemand, die oud en ervaren is, zoodra hij een blad leidt, zich aangenaam gevoelt, indien hij zijn orgaan kan vullen, met vuil geschrijf, dat geen halve cent waard is. Deze eigenschap merkt hij bij de *Oetoesan Hindia* op, welk blad alleen gevuld is met vuile artikelen, gericht aan het adres der Chineezzen, waardoor de band tusschen de twee rassen verbroken wordt." "Persklanken," *De Sumatra Post*, January 20, 1919.

213 "Drukpers-delicten," *De Preanger-bode*, September 2, 1920.

Bravo!” as editor of *Sinar Hindia*.²¹⁴ These figures may not change the overall narrative on what Semaoen, Darsono and their newspaper published about Kudus—especially if their entry into the paper occurred later—but they do show how personal political trajectories could also cross the ‘sides’ of the dispute for reasons other than common participation in Dutch politics, business or education.

There were other such figures involved in the Kudus riot coverage. One was Mohamed Noer who was an editor of *Sinar Sumatra*, a Chinese nationalist paper from Padang which was headed by Liem Koen Hian, who had previously lived and worked in Java and followed the politics there closely. But aside from Tjondrokoesoemo at *Djawa Tengah*, as far as I can tell none signed an article about Kudus at the paper they edited, which makes it difficult to know their perspective as outsiders in their office or how much they affected the discourse. One could disregard them as just being token figures who did not fundamentally disrupt the role of the Malay newspapers as crusaders for their own community. There is little enough evidence in the newspapers themselves that it is hard to prove the case either way. But even if none of them moderated the position of their paper by their presence, they still point to the features of ‘lived cosmopolitanism’ that existed even among nationalists at that time.²¹⁵ Their contact (and other such inter-group contacts through education, business and mass organizations) allowed for a proximity that may have been rare in the wider Indies society. The contact and familiarity let the community, newspaper and organization leaders try and make their own gestures at reconciliation outside of the court case.

214 The phrasing in Malay was “*toeroenkan Bendere Rood-Wit-Blauw ... Bravo!*” The coverage of the trial notes that Semaoen unsuccessfully tried to defend him by claiming that ‘bravo’ had a different connotation in Malay. “Drukpersdelicten,” *De Preanger-bode*, September 2, 1920.

215 As Stråth put it in a discussion of world history and cosmopolitanism, “Their lived ‘vernacular’ Eurasian cosmopolitanism became at the end estranged from the philosophical and intellectual development of enlightenment cosmopolitanism, which came to be defined as both elite and exclusively European.” Bo Strath, “World History and Cosmopolitanism,” in *Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies* (Routledge, 2012), 60.

Kudus Friendship Meetings

Moving on from the mixed racial composition of ‘nationalist’ newspapers, I will now look at an aspect of the coverage that referred more explicitly to Kudus and which was a conscious effort at reconciliation. In the introduction to this section I mentioned the newspapers’ obsession with the Kudus trial in late 1919 and early 1920 and the idea that it would somehow resolve this dispute. By comparison the form of resolution I will look at in this section only briefly caught the interest of the *Boemipoetra* and Chinese in late November and early December 1918 and, as far as I can tell, was essentially ignored in the Dutch-language press. What I am referring to here were the ‘fraternal meetings’ or ‘peace conferences’ organized between the *Boemipoetra* and Chinese in an explicit effort to defuse tensions over Kudus, or related matters such as jointly issued circulars calling for harmony.²¹⁶ This type of content praised the virtues of harmony and friendship, but it is difficult to separate the performance of harmony from editors from the official government policy which pushed for a racial ‘harmony’ that many of these editors would find unjust. (Since 1913 the Dutch policy for dealing with native newspapers had emphasized harmony and tolerance with one hand and repression and surveillance with the other.²¹⁷) Nonetheless, I will try to describe it in this section, so that this tactic to reduce tensions can be understood.

These types of meetings were proposed immediately after the riot. Later, the editor of *Djawa Tengah* admitted that such a meeting had been called for in Semarang on November 1st (the day after the riot), but that it had not taken place because “everyone’s blood was too hot and a misunderstanding

216 In the Malay coverage, these meetings are often called by the same name they as Paris peace talks occurring in Europe at the same time (*‘Conferentie Perdamian’* or peace conference). Other words used were *karoekeenan* (harmony), *persoedara’an* (fraternization or brotherhood) or, in the single Dutch reference I could find to these meetings, *verbroederingsbijeenkoms*t (brotherhood meetings). When they involved multiple organizations (such as the SI and THHK) they were also sometimes called joint meetings (*combinatie vergadering*), a term that was also used elsewhere for meetings of different chapters of the same organization.

217 Termorshuizen, *Realisten En Reactionairen*, 156.

might occur.”²¹⁸ The idea continued to circulate, and many of the first mentions of it in early November 1918 involve the *Centraal Sarekat Islam* in Batavia. It is hard to situate the drive for these meetings in relation to admission of culpability for Kudus since both H.A. Salim’s *Centraal SI* in Batavia and Semaoen’s left-wing SI in Semarang had followers involved in the Kudus riot and the newspapers of both were invested in downplaying SI or *Boemipoetra* responsibility. Regardless, it seems that the *Centraal SI* were the first to send telegrams about it to various parts of Java (a fact mentioned in multiple papers). The earliest mention I could find was on November 4th, where the Malang Chinese newspaper *Tjahaja Timoer* put its hopes in this kind of meeting:

We hope the leadership of the *Centraal Sarekat Islam* will intervene in this matter to make peace between Chinese and *Boemipoetra* people in Koedoes, so that hatred between the two nations should not arise, hatred which can spread between Chinese and *Boemipoetra* in the East Indies, which things can affect livelihood and trouble the *Boemipoetra* themselves in terms of finding a livelihood for the household. Remember the purpose and goal of Sarekat Islam!²¹⁹

Neratja echoed this a few days later, calling for a meeting between Dutch officials, Chinese leadership and the SI.²²⁰ The paper developed this more fully with a full page editorial by Abdoel Moeis a few days later, titled “*Boemipoetra* and Chinese.” After explaining his perspective on what brought the two races to a confrontation, he distanced his position from that of Semaoen.²²¹ He concluded with the following: “hopefully a gathering of *Boemipoetra* and Chinese, especially those with political bases, as

218 “Djoega pada itoe wektoe tanggal 1 November salah satoe bestuur dari bangsa B.p. soedah ada jang adjak bikin combinatie vergadering antara bestuur S.I. dan T.H. Aken tetapi ini adjakan tida bisa terkaboel sebab doea doea pihak darahnja masi panas dan kita koeatir kaloe tida berhatsil dan koeatir kaloe ada lain roepa kekliroean mengerti.” “Perloe dibikin dami, antara pendoedoek Bp. Dan T.H.,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 15, 1918.

219 “Kita harep soepaja bestuur dari Centraal Sarekat Islam soeka toeroet tjampoer dalem ini perkara boeat bikin dame orang orang Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra di Koedoes, soepaja djangan sampe timboel kebentjian diantara itoe doea bangsa, kabentjian mana bisa tersiar diantara bangsa Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra diantero Hindia, hal mana bisa moendoerkan pentjarian dan menjoesahkan orang Boemipoetra sendiri dalem hal mentjari pengidoepan roemah tangga. Ingatlah aken maksoed dan toedjoean Sarekat Islam!” “Perkelaian orang Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra di Koedoes,” *Tjahaja Timoer*, November 4, 1918.

220 “Poen kita djoega soedah minta diadakan conferentie dengan Bestuur dan Perkoempoelan T.H. di-Koedoes oentoek membitjarakan ini dan biar djoega dengan hasil membitjaraan ini semoewa penasaran dapat dihapoeskan. [...] hanja dengan lakoe demikianlah perkara jang besar ini dapat dioeroes seloeas-loeasnja jang boewahnja tentoe bakal dapat mengilangkan djoega kebentjian yang lebih dalam dari kedua pihak.” “Perkara perkelahian besar di-Koedoes,” *Neratja*, November 7th, 1918.

221 Abdoel Moeis and Darsono and Semaoen had publicly clashed earlier in 1918, but by this time had agreed to cooperate in an agreement broked by Tjokroaminoto. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 37–8.

well as press representatives from both parties, might hold a conference quickly, to find a way to shake hands considering the disaster in Kudus. This is a great example of resolving a feud!”²²² He concludes with a reminder that harmony between *Boemipoetra* and Chinese will be an essential element of the movement of the colonized (*kaoem jang terperintah*) seeking independence.²²³ Extracts from this editorial were soon being quoted approvingly in other papers such as *Djawa Tengah*.²²⁴ Even *Sin Po* conceded in passing that peace with the *Boemipoetra* was in the public interest (*goena kapentingan oemoem*), although this brief statement can hardly balance the full page articles they translated from Dutch papers calling for harsh measures against the SI.²²⁵

Out of all the papers, *Djawa Tengah* seems to have had the most developed and varied content about this friendship movement. (Many of the other papers simply described the meetings or printed repetitive platitudes about the benefits of harmony.) On November 15th, Tjondrokoesoemo, editor of *Djawa Tengah* wrote a full-page, front page editorial about the need to make peace.²²⁶ Much of the editorial was made up of the kind of flowery language and general statements I mentioned above, but also contained some rare insights into how the editorial staff viewed Kudus and what decisions they made in the weeks after the event. These include the way the paper carefully weighed its words before attacking other national groups, and also the aforementioned caution they exhibited during the first week after the Kudus riot, while they waited to see what the government position would be. Another

222 “...moedah-moedahan koempoelan² Boemipoetera dan Tionghoa, teroetama jang berdasar politiek, begitoe djoega wakil-wakil pers dari kedoea pihak, moga-moga lekas mengadakan conferentie, boeat mentjari djalan berdjabat tangan dengan menandgan bentjana di-Koedoes, ini sebagai soeatoe tjonto jang heibat dari pada hasil perseteroan!” “Boemipoetra dan Tionghoa,” *Neratja*, November 9, 1918.

223 “Semoea orang jang bersetoedjoe dengan kemerdekaan Hindia, tentoe tidak boeta, dan akan berasa, bahwa keroekoenan antero Boemipoetra dengan Tionghoa, sama-sama kaoem jang terperintah, akan mendjadi kekoeatan besar dalam pergerakan mentjari kemerdekaan itoe.” “Boemipoetra dan Tionghoa,” *Neratja*, November 9, 1918. Farid and Razif, in their essay on “wild” Malay writings in this period, notes that *orang terperintah* was an ambiguous term that sometimes meant “Javanese people” but could also mean “Indies people”. Thus its expansion to include Chinese people here is a very purposeful one. Hilmar Farid and Razif, “Batjaan Liar in the Dutch East Indies: A Colonial Antipode,” *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 3 (2008): 287.

224 “Prihal rampok besar di Koedoes,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 12, 1918.

225 “Conferentie,” *Sin Po*, November 16, 1918.

226 “Perloe dibikin dami, antara pendoedoek Bp. Dan T.H.,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 15, 1918.

(unsigned) editorial in the paper a week later went even further in clamouring for reconciliation. Titled “Peace! Peace!! Peace!!!” it lamented that this friendship movement had stalled. “Master Semaoen wants to make peace! The leadership of the S.I. in Semarang had an official meeting and already decided they want to make peace! Mr. Abdoel Moeis agreed to shake hands, alias peace!!!”²²⁷ It then went into detail about how the Chinese side was being perceived to have reacted to Kudus, and how it was in many ways inaccurate. Another letter they printed came from Hoo Tjien Siong, a Chinese notable from Pekalongan, who likewise called for meetings and reminded the readers of the family connection between the *Peranakan* Chinese and the *Boemipoetra*: “Remember the two sides are at the root still relatives through the wife.” He lamented that “If one person makes a mistake, then suddenly they are all seen as enemies. This is wrong.”²²⁸ Other such articles continued to appear in *Djawa Tengah*, showing their commitment to peace between races.

With calls for unity being printed in so many papers, information about actual meetings or results are more difficult to find. The meetings in Malang, the first of which was on November 20th, got most of the attention, although others were documented in Pekalongan and Batavia.²²⁹ Malang is at some distance from Kudus and Semarang, being roughly 250 km to the Southeast, and it is not clear why that city of all places was at the centre of this small friendship movement. The meetings continued in Malang after the 20th, with the next one apparently happening on November 30th. The best coverage of this meeting (or any such meeting) was in *Tjahaja Timoer*, which printed a very full 30-paragraph account of what transpired there.²³⁰ This first meeting apparently turned into an ongoing committee, as

227 “Toean Semaoen ingin bikin dami! Bestuur S.I di Semarang, wektoe bikin bestuurvergadering, soedah ambil poatoesan, poen ingin bikin dami!! Toean Abdoel Moeis mengadajak berdjabat tangan, alias dami!!!” “Dami! Dami!! Dami!!!” *Djawa Tengah*, November 21, 1918.

228 “...saja minta dengan hormat, kelas doea fihak boeka vergadering djadi satoe dan bikin circulaire keroekoenan, boeat keselametannja doea fihak. Ingetlah doea fihak asalnja masi familie dari istri. [...] Kaloe ada satoe orang jang berboeat kesalahan, lantass pandeng semoea rata rata jadi moesoehnja. Inilah kliroe.” “Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 28, 1918.

229 “Tjari karempoekan,” *Sin Po*, November 21, 1918.

230 “Persoedara’an antara orang Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra,” *Tjahaja Timoer*, December 2, 1918.

a few weeks later the full membership list was printed in the paper, with positions divided between Chinese and *Boemipoetra*: Tan Kiek Djoen as chairman, R. Soedirdjo Atmojo as vice chairman, Kwee Sin Po and M. Tjokrowidjojo as advisors, and so on.²³¹ What eventually happened with this committee in 1919 is unclear.²³² Is it significant that people who were highly involved in the Dutch political system (in the case of Malang, Chinese officer Tan Kiek Djoen and Javanese noble Raden Soedirdjo Atmodjo) were so well represented in the friendship movement? As I mentioned in the introduction to this section, the Dutch government emphasized ‘harmony’ between racial groups in a way that it combined with repression of anti-colonial nationalism. Indeed, there was a certain strain of conservative Javanese nationalism that admired that kind of harmony, along with discipline and service to the Dutch as ideals for advancing their group, with their counterparts on the Chinese side represented by the conservative Batavia newspaper *Perniagaan*, which supported the Chinese Officer system.²³³ So, the mere fact of being Javanese or Chinese did not determine one’s position with regards to the government. And yet, regardless of their pro- or anti-government standpoints, the fact that these prominent men were asked to chair the meetings does not discount the friendship movement as having other meanings to other participants. After all, many meetings in that time, held for a variety of purposes, were chaired by such men.

In late November and early December, a few of the Chinese papers printed reconciliation circulars submitted in the name of local SI branches.²³⁴ On November 21st it appears signed in the name of the meeting of the leadership of the SI and the *Tiong Hwa Bian Hap Hwee* in Pekalongan, presumably from the meeting that had happened there on the 20th.²³⁵ This circular lamented that such a

231 “Comite Perdamean,” *Tjahaja Timoer*, December 23, 1918.

232 Since meetings that did not have official status could be broken up by the Dutch as illegal gatherings, it was not unusual to create official leadership lists and organizational status for projects with a short-term goal.

233 van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War, 1914-1918*, 255–56.

234 Of course, the fact that so few circulars and tracts from that era survive is unfortunate. They presumably showed a different side of politics than the newspapers.

235 “Membangoenken fikiran slamet,” *Djawa Tengah*, November 21, 1918.

small dispute had spiralled out of control, given that *Boemipoetra* and Chinese had lived together for hundreds of years. It urged members to show respect to each other rather than be prideful and arrogant. Essentially the same circular was printed again in *Pewarta Soerabaia* a week later, this time signed by the Malang SI.²³⁶ And by early December the ANETA wire service had translated an extract of it, or a similar circular, and sent it to its subscribers. *Sin Po* it printed this version (rendered back into Malay) on December 9th with a follow-up article on the next day discussing its significance. They said that its goals were admirable but that some claims, such as the one that the Kudus riot had been simply been a result of food shortages, were obviously incorrect. *Sin Po* wondered where that particular circular in ANETA had come from and how it compared to the one being put out by Chinese organizations in Batavia that week.²³⁷ The fact that the same circular is attributed to organizations hundreds of kilometres apart raises questions about its origin as well as which other cities' organizations signed on to it without it being reported in these newspapers.

In the end, was there any noticeable outcome from these meetings? It is difficult to say from the newspaper coverage alone, as most of the papers lost interest and moved on to other topics. During that moment in late November and early December, they were certainly taken seriously. In the Indies-wide Chinese association meeting about Kudus in mid November, the chairman had repeatedly reminded the delegates: "Get along, and we can live—don't get along, and we'll certainly die."²³⁸ In their end-of-year roundup, the Malang-based Chinese paper *Tjahaja Timoer* did mention the meetings:

... from that disturbance, it can be said that something useful emerged for Chinese and *Boemipoetra* people, which is that everywhere gatherings are being held to discuss cases of

236 "Circulaire," *Pewarta Soerabaia*, November 30, 1918.

237 "Kita masi menoenggoe dan lagi tjari dari mana kaloearnja, tapi tida poetoenja kita berharep soepaja itoe maksoed jang soetji bisa terkaboel. [...] Bisa djadi memang Anetta soeda salah ringkesin maksoednja itoe circulair, kerna toch terang sekali jang kariboetan di Koedoes soeda terdjadi boekan lantaran kakoerangan barang makanan." "Kabaran Anetta tentang curculair," *Sin Po*, December 10, 1918.

238 "Voorzitter beroelang-oelang kasi nasehat [...] Roekoen bisa idoep, tida roekoen tentoe mati." "Vergadering besar tentang hal peroesoehan di Koedoes," *Sin Po*, November 20, 1918.

peace, harmony and brotherhood among Chinese and *Boemipoetra* people, which in the held "Peace Committees" between the two nations in the big cities.²³⁹

Others were aware that the Dutch would be the only ones who would really benefit from a worsening of relations between *Boemipoetra* and Chinese. Tjondrokoesoemo, for example, mentioned in his aforementioned editorial that the government would be happy to reap the benefits of the division.²⁴⁰ *Neratja* thought so too, and had made their position explicit in early November: "harmony between the *Boemipoetra* and the Chinese, together as subject peoples, will become a major force in the movement to seek independence."²⁴¹ That that paper continued to push for friendship and harmony meetings until at least mid-December.

Contained in the newspaper content I examined are occasional glimpses at a more critical view of inter-racial friendship meetings. The afternoon before the riot in Kudus there was already a meeting between the Dutch, Chinese and SI officials in Kudus with the objective of peace 'guaranteed' by all parties. This useless meeting was already described in the same *Tjahaja Timoer* article on November 4th that called for the *Centraal SI* to involve itself in making peace.²⁴² It was also the same meeting that *Sin Po* criticized the Chinese Luitenant Goei Kim Ho for not defending Chinese interests.²⁴³ This meeting figures importantly in Masyhuri's account of the lead-up to the riot; although he describes in fairly neutral terms, the overall impression is that the local Kudus SI were being two-faced in calling for

239 "Tentang keriboetan di Koedoes di antara orang orang Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra, perkara mana soedah menimboelkan perasa'an jang koerang seneng pada orang Tionghoa, tapi dari itoe keriboetan, boleh dibilang soedah terbit satoe perkara jang sanget bergoena bagi orang orang Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra, jaitoe di mana mana soedah diadaken vergadering boeat membitjaraken perkara perdamean, keroekoenan dan persoedara'an di antara orang orang Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra, jang mana pada achirnja telah diadaken 'Comite Perdamean' di mana mana kota bsesar di antara dua bangsa itoe." "1918-1919," *Tjahaja Timoer*, December 20, 1918.

240 "...itoeelah ada soeatoe hal jang amat bagoes boeat pihaknja regeering, sedeng kaloe tida lekas lekas dibikin dami lagi, bole dispastikan kita orang poenja toedjoean dan haloean bakal koebra tiada djadinja, sedeng kaum pamerintah dapet tambah laloesa'an boeat lebih kras goenaken tindesannja pada kita..." "Perloe dibikin dami, antara pendoedoek Bp. Dan T.H.," *Djawa Tengah*, November 15, 1918.

241 "...keroekoenan antero Boemipoetra dengan Tionghoa, sama-sama kaoem jang terperintah, akan medjadi kekoeatan besar dalam pergerakan mentjari kemerdekaan itoe." "Boemipoetra dan Tionghoa," *Neratja*, November 9, 1918.

242 "Perkelaian orang Tionghoa dan Boemipoetra di Koedoes," *Tjahaja Timoer*, November 4, 1918.

243 "Peroesoehan di Koedoes dan hal-hal jang berhoehoeng dengan itoe – III," *Sin Po*, November 15, 1918.

negotiation while also secretly sending out their agents to sow chaos.²⁴⁴ I am not saying that the subsequent fraternal meetings were in bad faith as that one was. However, it should still be recognized that a public expression of harmony and cooperation may conceal underlying tensions that the newspaper was unwilling or unable to print. The specifics of a given situation, and the relationship between those involved in the meetings, should be treated differently in each particular situation, and their reuse by newspapers in other cities should also be viewed as its own event and not simply as a repetition of the physical meeting itself.

²⁴⁴ Bakar Pecinan!, 67–68.

Conclusion

Above I have brought the reader through the norms of the Malay newspaper industry and interracial politics in 1918 Java, which in turn framed what was printed about the Kudus riot. I discussed the use of Dutch content translated into Malay and how some of the Malay newspapers continued their contentious relations with one another through the Kudus ‘story’. And I have shown some evidence of the (unequal) racial integration in these Malay newspapers, as well as tentative gestures towards reconciliation that they published in the months after the riot. That integration and gestures towards harmony do not feel like they are enough to recast the overall narrative of the previous section, the ‘war of words’ between antagonistic racial communities. But I hope that the descriptions I have given of outliers and oddities in the Kudus coverage can add some nuance to the way the aftermath of the riot is seen. The perilous legal situation, as well as the personalities of editors and relationships between papers and mass organizations drove some of those with a more extreme orientation to moderate their rhetoric or to consider the needs and perspectives of the other. There was a spectrum of reactions to Kudus, and the particular orientation and focus of each paper did not fall neatly along racial lines, given not only the integration of the paper but the way elites from the various communities knew one another and shared educational background and outlooks that overlapped.

Here I hope that using the terminology of critical cosmopolitanism will be helpful for evaluating the trajectory and nature of the Kudus riot coverage. As I mentioned in the introduction, common ways to approach instances of ethnic conflict and nationalism in Indonesian history include social theories about group conflict or cultural-anthropological approaches that refer more specifically to things inherent in Javanese or Overseas Chinese culture. In that framing, the Chinese or *Boemipoetera* writers are defined by their conflict with one another or by ‘their’ culture, and Kudus exists as a one instance of a recurring historical pattern. I would say that these editors and communities were also defined by their relationship with one another and their shared experience as colonial

subjects (*kaoem jang terperintah*, as it was phrased in Malay at the time). This resembles what Furnivall called a ‘plural society’ in his classic analysis of Burma and the Indies, in which different groups are forced to live and work together in a colonial society, to live as member of a group but engage with others as individuals, and have limited choice in the matter.²⁴⁵

A difficulty in using the terminology of cosmopolitanism is that ‘cosmopolitanism,’ ‘cosmopolitan’ (or their Dutch equivalents *kosmopolitisch* or *wereldberger*) were not part of the regular political vocabulary of any of the newspapers I examined.²⁴⁶ On the other hand terms relating to group pride such as *tjinta bangsa* (love of nation) were common. This gives the impression of a time and place where reaching out to other groups was not conceived of as an important value. But *Boemipoetra* and Chinese nationalists in 1918 Java had more in common with European nationalists of the nineteenth century in that their nationalism was not necessarily hostile to others or anti-cosmopolitan—although obviously it was at times. Here I will lean on Sheldon Pollock, whose “Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History” gives a framework to apply these concepts into situations where it did not exist as an idea.²⁴⁷ With this in mind it is not so important whether these writers used the term cosmopolitan to think of themselves. As Pollock says,

my intention here is to think about cosmopolitanism and vernacularism as action rather than idea, as something people do rather than something they declare, as practice rather than

245 As he puts it, “the union is not voluntary but is imposed by the colonial power and by the force of economic circumstances [...] It might seem that common interest should tie them closely, for a dissolution would involve the bankruptcy of all the partners. But the tie is strong only so far as this common interest is recognized.” Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 307–8.

246 Aside from general observations of all of the content overall, there is an interesting example in *Djawa Tengah*: a running series in late 1919 that defined foreign terms for the Malay reader. In the spot where it might have appeared between Knot, Koh, and Laboratorium it was absent. Interestingly, the term *Liberaal* was defined in the same article but only as a very specific case, the proper name of a British political party founded in 1828 hoping for more change and openness. “Beberapa perkata’an asing jang perloe dipake dalem pers Melajoe, VI” *Djawa Tengah*, November 7, 1919.

247 Pollock compares the history of ancient Latin and Sanskrit cosmopolises. He portrays this Sanskrit cosmopolis as one that expanded through letters and not conquest: “Those who participated in Sanskrit cosmopolitan culture chose to do so, and could choose to do so.” In his description I see parallels with the Malay-speaking world of the early twentieth century, which was also spread by letters and not by conquest. Sheldon Pollock, “Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History,” *Public Culture*, n.d., 603.

proposition [...] This enables us to see that some people in the past have been able to be cosmopolitan or vernacular without directly professing either.²⁴⁸

Cosmopolitanism, both worldwide and in the Indies in particular, is a concept with a specific European provenance, and one whose significance has shifted over time. This is true both on the level of the genealogy of the term and in its usage in the Indies by Dutch writers.²⁴⁹ As Craig Calhoun puts it, in the traditional conception “Cosmopolitanism has been a project of empires, of long-distance trade, and of cities.”²⁵⁰ On the other hand, he says, “cultural identities and communal solidarities are treated less as creative constructions forged amid globalization than as inheritances from an older order.”²⁵¹ It would be easy to fall into a trap of portraying the Indies Europeans, as well as the highly European-oriented Javanese and Chinese as the most cosmopolitan, and those most invested in nationalist politics as the least cosmopolitan. Indeed, that notion was built into many aspects of Dutch colonial governance of its subject peoples in the Indies. But I feel that this sells short the numerous and diverse lower-level peoples of the Indies who were living and struggling through an era where the wider world was all around them, and who were open to and curious about it in a multitude of ways.²⁵² As Cheah puts it,

In the case of *ilustrado* cosmopolitanism, the sociality that led to the cultivation of a worldly consciousness occurs as a result of travel abroad. Here, world citizenship is based on the capacity to visit other places and to stay for a while when invited. However, the experienced cosmopolitanism of Kwee, a Dutch East Indies-born person of mixed Chinese parentage, is the

248 Pollock, 593.

249 For a small example of this, the results of a search for the world *wereldburger* in Indies Dutch newspapers on *delpher.nl* during this time period of 1918-20, the handful of results mostly appeared in articles about touring European musical acts or in praise of ‘well-educated’ local people who were very knowledgeable about European culture.

250 Craig J. Calhoun, “The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers: Toward a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,” in *Cosmopolitanism: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences*, vol. 3 (New York: Routledge, 2011), 3.

251 Calhoun, 5.

252 Homi Bhabha is one writer who has tried to consider how cosmopolitanism can be reconciled with situations of extreme injustice and marginality. He asks: “Are the Stoic values of a respect for human dignity and the opportunity for each person to pursue happiness adequate cosmopolitan proposals for this scale of global economical and ecological disjuncture? These extreme conditions—or awkward questions—do not constitute the limits of the cosmopolitan ideal.” Homi Bhabha, “Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism,” in *Cosmopolitanism: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences*, vol. 3 (New York: Routledge, 2011), 311–12; Or, as Julia Kristeva puts it: “Living with the other, with the foreigner, confronts us with the possibility or not of being an other. [...] the possibility or necessity to be foreign and live in a foreign country, thus heralding the art of living in the modern era, the cosmopolitanism of those who have been flayed.” Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (Columbia University Press, 1991), 13.

reverse of the well-heeled enlightened traveler's cosmopolitanism of invitation. Kwee does not travel the world. His cosmopolitanism is one of reception and visitation.²⁵³

Many of the radical anti-Dutch *Boemipoetra* nationalists had their Dutch friends—as Shiraishi puts it, “Tjokroaminoto had Rinkes, Semaoen had Sneevliet, and Soerjopranoto had van Hinloopen Labberton. Even Marco had his Dutch and Indo allies when he was prosecuted.”²⁵⁴ This openness while retaining one's own identity is something Henk Maier developed much more deeply in his history of Malay literature, *We Are Playing Relatives* (2004) and also Pheng Cheah's recent essay on Benedict Anderson and Southeast Asian Cosmopolitanism.²⁵⁵

In the context of Kudus and newspaper coverage, indeed many of those who preached conciliation and brotherhood were those who were highly integrated into the Dutch system at an elite level, despite perhaps having an anti-colonial orientation. For example, compare the Batavia-based *Neratja*'s more conciliatory tone to that of *Sinar Hindia*, a paper of revolutionary outsiders.²⁵⁶ But it wasn't entirely so. *Djawa Tengah* took a far more moderate tone that was sympathetic to the *Boemipoetra*, whereas *Sin Po*, a more central and elite paper, had an extremely chauvinistic view of the situation. And there were other oddities, such as the two Chinese editors of *Sinar Hindia* who fell into the orbit of that paper not only because of elite education, but also because of their political commitments to communism.

These newspaper editors, young intellectuals and mass organization members in the 1918 Indies may have had nationalist or proto-nationalist orientations but they were also voraciously consuming the ideas and technologies circulating at the time, whether from Europe, China, the Middle East or from

253 Pheng Cheah, “Benedict Anderson's Cosmopolitan Leanings and the Question of Southeast Asian Subjectivity,” in *Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies* (Routledge, 2018), 497.

254 Shiraishi goes on to say that there may have been some calculation of advantage in those relationships, but also that many of them may simply have been looking for someone to speak about things “on equal terms”. Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, 122.

255 Cheah, “Benedict Anderson's Cosmopolitan Leanings and the Question of Southeast Asian Subjectivity.”

256 Here I found the phrasing of Coté helpful: “the competing streams of Javanese nationalism, ranging from associationist-liberal to Marxist-radical nationalists.” Coté, *Realizing the Dream of RA Kartini*, 239.

the Indies. And the language they wrote in was one of openness and experimentation as well. As Henk Maier wrote about Mas Marco, *Sinar Hindia* editor,

the role of Malay as the language of motion and movement was confirmed, accessible to Europeans, Chinese, Eurasians, and natives who enjoyed being playing relatives within it. [...] Malay invited them to join the conversations about justice, equality, and harmony.²⁵⁷

Although this optimistic framing may seem like a strong reaction to the other framing of racial communities as bitter rivals, I feel that there is something in it worth remembering when thinking about Kudus and the way it travelled through the Malay papers. It may have been an elite fraternity—whether that of business owners or self-taught communists—that caused these editors to take into account the perspective of the other side. But it was still something that members of mass organizations on either side could understand and participate in, even if their thoughts on the matter were not recorded in newspapers.

257 Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives*, 165.

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