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A View of Historical Philosophy from the Perspective of Tan Malaka

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SUBJECT

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Abstract

The philosophy of history has a crucial role in understanding not only "what happened," but also "why and where" the direction of historical development. Tan Malaka was one of the figures who made significant contributions to the thought of historical philosophy in Indonesia. Tan Malaka presents a perspective on historical dynamics based on historical materialism, class struggle, and socialist vision. This research systematically analyses Tan Malaka's philosophical views, especially those related to the direction of historical movement, the actors involved, and the purpose of the direction of the movement of history. The research method used in this study is a historical method with a qualitative approach, utilising historical sources, such as *Madilog, Naar de Republiek Indonesia, Aksi Massa*, and others. Tan Malaka developed a philosophy of history based on dialectical materialism adapted to the conditions of the colonised society, emphasising the importance of class conflicts, the power of the masses, and revolution as the main drivers of history. "100% independence" is at the core of his thinking, which demands comprehensive political, economic, and cultural independence. His analysis of the internal contradictions of colonialism, the role of the inferior priayi, and the criticism of the incomplete revolution provides a critical perspective in understanding the history of Indonesia and contemporary issues that must be faced.

1. Introduction

The view of historical philosophy is how a person or group understands and interprets past events by considering specific perspectives, values, and contexts (Hegel, 1801). There are various views in the study of historical philosophy, one of which is positivism, which emphasises the importance of objective facts and documents as the primary source of historical truth (Nugroho, 2016). On the other hand, revisionist views seek to revise

traditional interpretations by including new evidence or historical perspectives that are often overlooked (Fahmi, 2021). In addition, the historicist view argues that every historical event must be understood in the context of its time, not based on current standards (Purwanto, 2001). There is also a critical view of history as a means to expose injustice and encourage social change (Prayogi, 2022). Each view impacts how history is written, taught, and understood, resulting in diverse narratives about the past. Understanding the various historical perspectives is essential to developing an in-depth analysis and avoiding oversimplifying the complex events in a civilisation.

Historical philosophy reflects on the essence, meaning, and structure of the historical development of humanity and civilisation (Rochmiatun, 2017). Generally, there are two main approaches in the philosophy of history: speculative and critical. The speculative approach seeks to identify the ultimate pattern or purpose of history, as seen in the thought of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who viewed history as a manifestation of the Absolute Spirit through a dialectical process, or the view of Karl Marx, who saw history as a class struggle towards the formation of a communist society. This approach tends to be teleological, believing history moves towards a predetermined goal (Rochgiyanti & Sriwati, 2022). In contrast, the philosophy of critical history, represented by thinkers such as Wilhelm Dilthey and Robin George Collingwood, focuses more on the methods of writing history, the limitations of historical knowledge, and how humans understand (*verstehen*) past events. This approach rejects the deterministic view of history and emphasises the importance of subjective interpretation in building historical narratives (Munir, 2004). In addition, the philosophy of history also questions whether history has a linear, cyclical, or random nature, as well as how human freedom interacts with social structures (Muhsin, 2007). Through these fundamental questions, the philosophy of history helps us understand the past and reflect on how man gives meaning to the times, changes, and fates of his civilisation.

History can be understood as a reflection of the dynamics of society that are constantly changing, influenced by various social, political, and economic aspects. In this regard, the philosophy of history has a crucial role in understanding not only "what happened," but also "why and where" the direction of historical movements. Tan Malaka was one of the figures who made significant contributions to the thought of historical philosophy in Indonesia. As a revolutionary, Marxist thinker, and freedom fighter, Tan Malaka provides a distinctive perspective on historical developments based on historical materialism, class struggle, and socialist vision. His thinking remains relevant today and provides a theoretical basis for analysing social change in the modern context (Askhari, 2018).

Research on Tan Malaka has been conducted by many previous researchers, including: (1) Edi Suprianto, Johanis Josep Montolalu, and Anton Tukiran (2024) who examined the idea of a republic state according to Tan Malaka in Naar de Republiek Indonesia; (2) Wahyu Trisno Aji (2024) who researches Tan Malaka in the concept of 100% independence to perfect the independence of the Republic of Indonesia; (3) Wahyu Trisno Aji, Marzuki, and Nanang Zakaria (2024) which discusses education as the first step in shaping civilisation in the perspective of Tan Malaka; (4) Elfi and Ghazali Siregar (2024) who examine Islam and Marxism from the perspective of Tan Malaka, and; (5) Khairul Abrar (2025) who examines the suitability of Tan Malaka's political thought with the political reality of Indonesia during the Reform Period. Nevertheless, there is still little research that systematically discusses Tan Malaka's view of historical philosophy, especially related to the direction of historical movement, the actors driving history, and

the purpose of the direction of historical movement. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by analysing Tan Malaka's thinking through the perspective of historical philosophy seen from the concept of the direction of historical movement, the actors driving history, and the purpose of the direction of historical movement.

2. Method

This study applies historical methods with a qualitative approach to analyse the view of historical philosophy in depth from the perspective of Tan Malaka. A qualitative approach is used through hermeneutic analysis of texts, which aims to interpret Tan Malaka's thought by paying attention to its socio-historical context, including colonialism, class struggle, and the influence of Marxist thought (Susanto, 2016). Analytical techniques include comparative studies and thematic analysis to identify conceptual patterns, such as historical dialectics and revolutions in historical motion (Rahman & Simbolon, 2025). The validity of the data was tested through source triangulation, namely by adjusting information from primary, secondary, and historical documents (Haryoko et al., 2020). This approach allows for the reconstruction of Tan Malaka's thought in the view of historical philosophy as a whole, not only as an abstract theory, but also as a concrete response to the conditions of his time.

The selection of historical methods allows tracing the development of Tan Malaka's thought in the context of his time and the socio-political movements that influenced it. This research process consists of several stages, namely heuristics (collection of sources), source criticism (verification of the authenticity and credibility of data), interpretation (interpretation of meaning), and historiography (presentation of analysis results) (Kartodirdjo, 1992). The primary data sources include historical records, such as Tan Malaka's works (*Madilog: Materialisme. Dialektika, dan Logika; Naar de Republiek Indonesia; Aksi Massa; Dari Penjara ke Penjara; Merdeka 100%: Tiga Percakapan Ekonomi-Politik; Muslihat Politik & Rencana Ekonomi Berjuang*, and; *GERPOLEK: Gerilya-Politik-Ekonomi*) as well as relevant Indonesian historical records.

3. Findings

The Life Journey of Tan Malaka as a Source of Personal Experience in His Philosophical Reflection

Tan Malaka, whose full name is Ibrahim Simabua Datuk Sutan Malaka, is known as Ibrahim by his parents. However, he is better known as Tan Malaka among children and adults, a name reflecting the honour and semi-aristocratic status he inherited from his mother's aristocratic background (Jarvis, 1987). In 1908, Tan Malaka continued his education at *Kweekschool*, a teacher education institution in the Dutch colonial era, located in Fort de Kock, Bukittinggi (Mrázek, 1972). Tan Malaka completed his education in 1913 and returned to his village. His return was marked by being awarded a Datuk title and an engagement offer. However, he only accepted the title and rejected the engagement offer (Syaifudin, 2012). Tan Malaka then managed to collect funds from the community in Pandam Gadang Village to continue his education abroad. In 1913, Tan Malaka went to the Netherlands to study at the *Rijkskweekschool* (College for the Teaching Profession) (Mrázek, 1972).

During his stay in Europe, Tan Malaka developed an interest in the history of revolution and the theory of social revolution as a tool for social transformation. His initial interest in this topic arose from the book *De Fransche Revolutie*, given by G.H. Horensma (Tan Malaka's teacher at *Kweekschool*, Fort de Kock, Bukittinggi) (Jarvis, 1987).

The book explores France's French Revolution and various important events between 1789 and 1804. After the Russian Revolution in October 1917, Tan Malaka's interest in communism, socialism, and social reform deepened. He began to study the works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin (Syaifudin, 2012). While in the Netherlands, Tan Malaka became acquainted with Henk Sneevliet, one of the founders of the Indische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeniging (ISDV), which was the forerunner of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party) (Jarvis, 1987). In November 1919, Tan Malaka completed his studies and received his diploma (Syaifudin, 2012).

After completing his education, Tan Malaka left the Netherlands and returned to his village in Pandam Gadang. In January 1920, he received an offer from Dr. C.W. Janssen to teach the children of workers at a tea plantation in Tanjung Morawa, Deli Serdang, North Sumatra (Poeze, 2008). In his teaching, he discussed the social revolution with the workers, known as Deli Spoor, and raised the issue of the decline of indigenous peoples (Syaifudin, 2012). In addition to teaching activities, Tan Malaka also established a relationship with ISDV and produced several writings for the media (Jarvis, 1987). As a journalist, he raised the theme of economic inequality between capitalists and workers in one of his works, "Land of Paupers, " published in the March 1920 edition of Het Vrije Woord. Tan Malaka also highlighted the suffering of workers in the Sumatra Post newspaper (Syaifudin, 2012).

In late 1920, Tan Malaka visited Batavia (now Jakarta) after receiving an offer from his teacher, G.H. Horensma, to work as a teacher. However, Tan Malaka rejected the offer because he wanted to establish his own school. G.H. Horensma understands and supports his decision. In 1921, Tan Malaka was elected as a Volksraad (People's Council of the Dutch East Indies) member, but he resigned on 23 February 1921. After that, Tan Malaka left Batavia and arrived in Yogyakarta in early March 1921. While in Yogyakarta, Tan Malaka prepared a proposal for a grammar school. He also participated in the sixth congress of the Sarekat Islam organisation and met with several prominent Islamic figures, such as Haji Oemar Said Tjokroaminoto, Agus Salim, Darsono, and Semaun. The congress discussed the issue of dual membership between Sarekat Islam (SI) and Partai Komunis Hindia Belanda (Communist Party of the Dutch East Indies) (Syaifudin, 2012). After the sixth congress of the Sarekat Islam organisation, Semaun invited Tan Malaka to come to Semarang, join SI Merah, and participate in the SI Merah meeting. Tan Malaka accepted the invitation and left for Semarang. The SI Merah meeting decided there was a need for a rival for schools managed by the Dutch East Indies government, which then encouraged the establishment of a school called Tan Malaka School (Syaifudin, 2012). As a guideline for the school, Tan Malaka wrote SI Semarang dan Onderwijs, which served as a guide in the management of Tan Malaka School (Poeze, 2008).

On February 13, 1922, Tan Malaka was arrested by the Dutch authorities while visiting a school in Bandung, because they felt threatened by his presence (Syaifudin, 2012). He was later exiled to the Netherlands, although the date of his arrival in the Netherlands is still a matter of debate (Jarvis, 1987). Upon arrival in the Netherlands, Tan Malaka joined the Dutch Communist Party (Communistische Partij Nederland) and was proposed as the party's third candidate for the Dutch House of Representatives elections in 1922 (Poeze, 2008). He did not expect to be elected because his primary purpose in the candidacy was to voice the actions of the Dutch in Indonesia and encourage the *Partai Komunis Hindia Belanda* (Communist Party of the Dutch East Indies) to support the

struggle for Indonesian independence. Before the results of the vote were announced, he left the Netherlands and went to Berlin, Germany (Jarvis, 1987).

While in Berlin, Germany, Tan Malaka met Darsono, a communist from Indonesia who had ties to the Comintern's Western Europe Bureau. Subsequently, Tan Malaka continued his journey to Moscow, the Soviet Union (now Russia) and arrived in October 1922 to participate in the Executive Committee of the Comintern (Jarvis, 1987). At the Fourth Congress of the Comintern held in Moscow, Tan Malaka proposed collaboration between communism and Pan-Islamism to create greater mass action. However, the proposal was rejected by many parties (Poeze, 2008). In January 1923, he and Semaun were appointed as correspondents for *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale* (International Red Union). During the first half of 1923, Tan Malaka also actively wrote for various journals related to the labour movement in Indonesia and the Netherlands (Jarvis, 1987).

Tan Malaka left for Canton (now Guangzhou, China) and arrived in December 1923. He publishes an English-language journal called The Dawn for a workers' organisation in the Asia-Pacific transportation sector. In December 1924, the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*) began to suffer setbacks due to the oppression carried out by the Dutch government. In response to this situation, Tan Malaka wrote a book, *Naar de Republiek Indonesia* (Towards the Republic of Indonesia), published in Canton in April 1925 (Malaka, 2016). In this book, he describes global conditions, including the economic crisis that hit the Netherlands, the chances of revolution in the Dutch East Indies through the nationalist movement and the Indonesian Communist Party, and his prediction that the United States and Japan would negotiate with the sword to determine who would be stronger in the Pacific, which would later become World War II in the Pacific region (Jarvis, 1987).

On July 20, 1925, Tan Malaka moved to Manila, Philippines, because he felt the environment resembled Indonesia. He later became a correspondent for the nationalist newspaper El Debate, edited by Francisco Varona (Jarvis, 1987). At that time, the Indonesian Communist Party planned a 1926 rebellion based on the Prambanan Conference (December 25, 1925), Central Java (Yuwono, 2025). The Dutch East Indies government was aware of this plan and exiled several Indonesian Communist Party leaders (Yuwono, 2024). In February 1926, Alimin, a member of the Indonesian Communist Party, left for Manila to seek approval from Tan Malaka (McVey, 1965). However, Tan Malaka rejected the strategy and plan of the rebellion, arguing that the Indonesian Communist Party was still too weak and lacked the strength to carry out the revolution (Syaifudin, 2012).

As a representative of the Comintern in Southeast Asia, Tan Malaka felt entitled to reject the plan put forward by the Indonesian Communist Party. This statement was later denied by several former members of the Indonesian Communist Party (McVey, 1965). Tan Malaka sent Alimin to Singapore to convey his views and instructed him to arrange a surprise meeting between the leaders of the Indonesian Communist Party. When he saw no progress, Tan Malaka decided to go to Singapore alone to meet Alimin. He learned that Alimin and Musso had gone to Moscow to seek support in carrying out the Indonesian Communist Party rebellion of 1926-1927. While in Singapore, Tan Malaka met Subakat, another Indonesian Communist Party leader who shared his views. They agreed to thwart Musso and Alimin's plan. During this period, he wrote *Aksi Massa* (1926), which contained his views on the Indonesian revolution and the nationalist movement. This work was intended to support his efforts in changing the direction of

the struggle of the Indonesian Communist Party and gaining support from cadres who sided with him (Jarvis, 1987).

In December 1926, Tan Malaka left for Bangkok. With Djamaludin Tamin and Subakat, he founded the Partai Republik Indonesia in early June 1927, which sought to distance itself from the influence of the Comintern and criticise the Indonesian Communist Party. On August 12, 1927, Tan Malaka returned to the Philippines but was arrested on charges of illegally entering the Philippines (Yuwono & Vicaldo, 2025). In legal proceedings, he obtained the help of Dr. San Jose Abad, but was eventually sentenced to deportation to Amoy (Xiamen), China. Police from the Kulangsu International Settlement had been informed of Tan Malaka's arrival in Amoy. They were waiting at the port to arrest him for extradition to the Dutch East Indies (Jarvis, 1987).

Tan Malaka arrived in Shanghai in September 1932 after an attack launched by Japanese forces in China. He decided to head to Hong Kong by disguising himself as a Chinese-Filipino and using the pseudonym Ossario. While in Hong Kong in early October 1932, Tan Malaka was arrested by British officials from Singapore and detained for several months (Jarvis, 1987). The experience of oppression against the Chinese community that he witnessed and experienced in Hong Kong shaped Tan Malaka's firm stance of refusing compromise in negotiations with Japan or negotiations with the Dutch in the 1940s (Kusno, 2003). In August 1937, Tan Malaka left for Singapore with a fake Chinese identity and worked as a teacher, Ong Soong Lee. After the Dutch surrendered to Japan, he returned to Indonesia via Penang, the Malay Peninsula. Tan Malaka then sailed to Sumatra and headed to Jakarta in mid-1942. Furthermore, Tan Malaka wrote *Madilog (Materialisme, Dialektika, dan Logika)* in 1943 (Malaka, 1943).

After Indonesia declared its independence, Tan Malaka returned to using his real name. He travelled to Java Island and witnessed the struggle of the people of Surabaya against the British Army in November 1945. Tan Malaka is aware of the differences in the struggle between the people in various regions and the leaders in Jakarta (Malaka, 2005). He considered that the leaders in Jakarta were too weak to negotiate with the Dutch (Jarvis, 1987). Tan Malaka founded *Persatuan Perjuangan*, a coalition of about 140 smaller struggle groups, to address the felt gap. After several months of discussions, this coalition was officially formed at a congress in Surakarta in mid-January 1946. The coalition adopted the "*Minimum Program*", which affirmed that only complete independence was acceptable, that the Indonesian government should reflect the people's will, and that foreign-owned plantations and industries should be nationalised (Malaka, 2014). In 1947, this coalition succeeded in forcing the resignation of Prime Minister Sutan Sjahrir. However, Tan Malaka seems unable to unite the political divisions in his coalition to turn them into absolute political control (Mrázek, 1972).

Tan Malaka spent the next few months in Yogyakarta, trying to establish a new political party called the *Partai Murba*. However, he did not manage to attract back his followers as he had done before. When the Dutch took control of Yogyakarta in December 1948, Tan Malaka fled Yogyakarta and headed to rural areas in East Java. On February 21, 1949, Tan Malaka was shot dead at the foot of Mount Wilis, Selopanggung, Kediri Regency, after being arrested and detained in the village by Second Lieutenant Sukotjo from the Sikatan Battalion, Brawijaya Division (Syaifudin, 2012).

Thinkers and Traditions That Influenced Tan Malaka

Tan Malaka's thought was shaped by synthesising various intellectual traditions, including Marxism, Islam, and Minangkabau egalitarian values. The primary influence

comes from Marxism, mainly through the work of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin. Tan Malaka adopts the concepts of historical materialism and class struggle, but rejects orthodox Marxist economic determinism by emphasising the role of human agency and the specific conditions of colonial society (Dirlik, 1989). In the *Madilog* (*Materialisme, Dialektika, dan Logika*) book (1943), Tan Malaka wrote:

> *"Dialectics must be a tool for dismantling oppression, not dogma imposed from outside." (p. 89)*

The influence of the Islamic tradition is seen in its emphasis on social justice and anti-feudalism, which Tan Malaka combines with socialism. Tan Malaka's work *GERPOLEK: Gerilya, Politik, Ekonomi* (1948) Tan Malaka stated:

> *"Islam teaches equality, while colonialism creates class." (p. 56)*

In addition, the Minangkabau background, which adopted the *basandi syarak* (customary law based on Islam) customary system, provided the foundation for the concept of collectivism and village democracy in his vision of a "100% independent society" (Wibawanto, 2019). Tan Malaka's thinking is not only theoretical, but has also been tested through various political actions. During the PKI Uprising of 1926-1927, Tan Malaka rejected the strategy of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which he considered premature in his book Aksi Massa (1926), and emphasised the importance of careful mass preparation (Poeze, 2008). Tan Malaka argued that mass action must involve all levels of the people, from farmers to factory workers. This view aligns with what he stated in his *Aksi Massa* book (1926).

> *"The Indonesian Revolution must be driven by the literate peasants, not just the factory proletariat." (p. 45)*

In the 1945–1949 Revolution, the idea of "100% independence" became the basis of the Persatuan Perjuangan program, which rejected diplomacy with the Dutch and encouraged the nationalisation of colonial assets (Malaka, 1948). His criticism of the Renville Agreement (1948), which he called "puppet independence", directly influenced the movement of factory and land occupation by workers and peasants (Duiker, 1996). This aligns with his views in his *Merdeka 100%: Tiga Percakapan Ekonomi-Politik* book (1945) as follows.

> *"Independence must mean controlling the coal mines, not just the flag." (p. 201)*

4. Discussion

The form of patterns and rhythms of the historical movement process in Tan Malaka's view

Tan Malaka's understanding of the historical movement is based on an interpretation of Marxist materialist dialectics adapted to his colonial society's real conditions. In his important work, *Madilog (Materialisme, Dialektika, dan Logika),* Tan Malaka provides a perspective on the laws of dialectics, such as the unity of opposites, the negation of negation, and the transformation of quantity into quality, by applying them to the analysis of Indonesian history. Tan Malaka wrote down why dialectics are important in the Madilog book.

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> *Dialectics is not just a theory, but a scalpel to dissect the colonial ulcers that are eating away at the nation's body." (p. 112)*

According to Tan Malaka, history is not linear, but rather a contradictory process that develops through the conflict between the forces of production (workers and owners of the means of production) and the relations of production (the system of ownership and class structure). In the colonial context, he identifies the central contradiction between the indigenous productive forces (the peasants and plantation workers) and the colonial production relations (the forced plantation system and monopoly capitalism). Tan Malaka not only adopts a rigid Marxist dialectic, but also enriches his thinking with elements of praxis materialism that emphasises on: (1) The active role of historical subjects (colonised peoples) in changing their material conditions, which differs from orthodox Marxist economic determinism (the idea that a society's economic system determines all aspects of its social, political, cultural, and intellectual life); (2) The national-international dialectic in the struggle for national independence must be understood in the context of the global struggle between imperialism and the oppressed people, and; (3) Cultural synthesis between western scientific methods and eastern ways of thinking (Wibawanto, 2019).

In Tan Malaka's thought, the concept of unity of opposites is a fundamental principle that explains that historical reality always contains internal contradictions that encourage change. Tan Malaka argues that every social system, including Indonesian colonial society, is made up of conflicting but inseparable elements, such as the colonial and colonised classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, as well as feudal traditions that confront capitalist modernity, including the European class, the Foreign Eastern class, and the Indigenous class. This contradiction is not a weakness of the system, but rather the source of the dynamics of history itself. For example, in his analysis of the colonialism of the Dutch East Indies, Tan Malaka revealed that the system actually created tools that could destroy it, such as Western education introduced by the colonialists, which gave birth to an educated elite who then led the resistance against colonialism. There are other examples, such as the colonial plantation industry, that produced the concentration of workers, which ultimately became the basis of the revolutionary movement. This understanding led Tan Malaka to reject the mechanical view that regarded social change as a peaceful process. Instead, it affirmed that conflict was a historical path to a new synthesis. This principle of contradictory unity underpinned his belief that revolution was not an abnormality, but a natural manifestation of the contradictions in colonial societies (Regita et al., 2022).

The concept of negation of negation in Tan Malaka's thought describes a dialectical process in the form of initial social conditions (thesis) first rejected or negated by its antithesis. Subsequently, the antithesis will undergo re-negation, resulting in a higher synthesis. Tan Malaka gives a unique interpretation of this concept by emphasising that the emerging synthesis is not just a repetition of the original thesis, but rather a qualitative leap that integrates the progressive elements of the previous two stages while overcoming existing contradictions. In the context

of Indonesia's struggle, Tan Malaka uses this concept to analyse how colonial society (thesis) will be rejected by the national revolution (antithesis), and this revolution must be negated again through socialist transformation to achieve true independence (synthesis). This process reflects Tan Malaka's view that history does not move linearly but through dialectic developments. Each stage contains new potential contradictions that drive further change. This understanding underpins his critique of inconsistent revolutions and emphasises the need for a sustained struggle to achieve comprehensive social liberation (Crawford, 2018).

According to Tan Malaka's thinking, the transformation of quantity into quality explains how the accumulation of small quantitative changes can reach a critical point that triggers fundamental change qualitatively. Tan Malaka uses this law of dialectic to analyse the revolutionary process in Indonesia in the form of oppression carried out by colonialism, the political consciousness of the community, and local resistance that was initially fragmented (quantitative), gradually gathering until it reached a critical mass that produced a revolutionary (qualitative) leap. In his writing, Tan Malaka provides a concrete illustration of the labour strikes in various plantations that were initially sporadic and separate. However, through organisation and accumulation of experience, they eventually developed into a national political movement that threatened the colonial system. He also applied this principle to explain the evolution of class consciousness from a separate individual dissatisfaction (quantity) to an organised collective consciousness (new quality). For Tan Malaka, this understanding is crucial for revolutionary strategy because it shows that revolutionary changes do not occur suddenly but through accumulation and careful preparation. This is reinforced by the duty of revolutionaries to actively support this transformation process through political education and mass organisation (Stange, 1970).

In studying history, Tan Malaka sees class conflict as an important element and a key driver of social change. In contrast to orthodox Marxist perspectives that often focused on the differences between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in industrial society, Tan Malaka developed a more in-depth and contextual class analysis for Indonesian colonial society. He identified three main poles in the conflict: (1) The Dutch colonisers who symbolised imperialist capitalism; (2) The local feudal elite (*priayi* and nobility) who cooperated with the colonial system, and (3) The oppressed people, consisting of plantation workers and peasants. Tan Malaka argues that the dynamics of modern Indonesian history are formed through special interactions between these three powers. In his work *Naar de Republiek Indonesia* (Towards the Republic of Indonesia), he explains how the colonial system created conditions that led to its destruction by giving birth to new classes that would oppose it. For example, the development of the colonial plantation industry resulted in an exploited plantation proletariat, while a limited Western education gave birth to indigenous intellectuals who loved their homeland. These two groups became key actors in the anti-colonial movement and revolution (Faisal & Syam, 2015).

Tan Malaka developed a unique understanding of the dialectical relationship between revolution and evolution in a historical context, rejecting the

simplistic view that separates the two concepts. He argued that revolution was not a sudden, isolated event, but rather the culmination of a long evolutionary process, involving the accumulation of quantitative changes in political consciousness, mass organisation, and the material conditions of society. In his work entitled Aksi Massa (1926), Tan Malaka put forward the theory of revolution as an art that must go through three important phases: (1) The Evolutionary Preparatory Phase, which includes a long period of people's organising, political education, and the construction of alternative institutions such as schools, trade unions, and peasant cooperatives. In this phase, change took place gradually through wage increases, anti-feudal campaigns, and the spread of class consciousness; (2) The Qualitative Transition Phase in the form of contradictions in the colonial system reaches a critical point (such as an economic crisis, the defeat of the colonial military, or a local uprising) and revolutionary momentum begins to take shape. Tan Malaka emphasised that this phase requires political leadership that can transform sporadic protests into organised movements, and (3) The Revolutionary Phase, i.e. the old power is overthrown. A new social structure begins to be built. In contrast to the view that revolution is a single moment, Tan Malaka views it as a continuous process that must be immediately followed by economic and cultural transformation (Kencana, 2023).

The epistemology of historical motion in Tan Malaka's view

For Tan Malaka, the class struggle is not just a theoretical idea taken from European Marxism, but an empirical reality intertwined in Indonesian history. In his in-depth analysis, he formulated a theory of class struggle, adapted to the complexity of the social structure of colonial societies that were fundamentally different from Western industrial societies. Tan Malaka describes the class configuration in the Dutch East Indies as a multi-layered hierarchy of oppression, with colonial capitalists--Dutch and foreign business people at the top. In the middle is the comprador bourgeoisie (Chinese businesspeople and bureaucrats). At the bottom are the oppressed masses of the people, including the plantation proletariat, small farmers, the urban poor, and the marginalised natives (Fauzi, 2009). The peculiarity of Tan Malaka's class analysis lies in its ability to identify class ambivalence in the colonial context. In his works, he highlights explicitly the dual roles of the lowly *priayi* (low-paid indigenous employees) and progressive clerics, who, on the one hand, were part of the colonial apparatus, but on the other hand had revolutionary potential because they felt firsthand the gap between their education and the social mobility hampered by the colonial system. This analysis explains why many leaders of the national movement actually came from the low aristocracy (*priayi rendahan*), such as Tirto Adhi Soerjo, Marco Kartodikromo, and Hadji Misbach (Kuntowijoyo, 2003).

Tan Malaka also developed the idea of the chain of imperialism that describes how class oppression works globally. He argued that the proletariat in the Netherlands and the tea plantation workers in Deli Serdang, Sumatra, were victims of the same imperialist capitalist system. However, they suffered from different levels of exploitation. This view became the basis for his call for international solidarity between the oppressed in the colonies and the working class in the

capitalist countries. However, Tan Malaka is not trapped in mechanical class determinism. He emphasised that: (1) Class awareness needs to be built through structured political education; (2) The class organisation must be adapted to local conditions (such as peasant unions and industrial labour unions), and (3) Revolutionary leadership must be accountable to the working class (Zulhemi, 2000). Tan Malaka's criticism of the early leftist movements in Indonesia focused on their inability to understand the specifics of class configuration in their colonial society. In his analysis of the failure of the Indonesian Communist Party Rebellion of 1926-1927, he shows that the movement is trapped in: (1) Revolutionary romanticism without a deep class analysis; (2) Fetishism of military action that is separate from the mass base, and; (3) Failure to build a proper class alliance between plantation workers, farmers, and clerics (Dandy, 2023).

In Tan Malaka's view, the masses of the people are not only seen as passive historical objects, but as collective subjects that have the potential to transform through three types of power, namely: (1) Productive Power which functions as a generator of economic value through activities in the agricultural, plantation, and industrial sectors; (2) Political Power which is the material basis for carrying out resistance through strikes, demonstrations, and direct actions, as well as; (3) Cultural Power which acts as a protector of egalitarian traditions of indigenous communities which is a source of resistance (Maulana, 2016). Tan Malaka's analysis of the dockworkers' movement in Surabaya between 1918 and 1923 illustrates his views on the process of forming mass consciousness that took place in several stages, namely: (1) The Spontaneity Stage which was marked by protests related to economic wages; (2) The Transition Stage involving the intervention of educated people who introduce political awareness, and; (3) The Organic Stage is marked by the formation of labor unions with a clear program of struggle (Imron, 2003). In the context of the physical revolution between 1945 and 1949, Tan Malaka observed that the popular masses, consisting of the People's Warriors (an armed group that emerged spontaneously in the countryside), the Revolutionary Youth (intellectual elements), and the Railway and Port Workers (underground logistics network), became the main pillars of physical resistance, while the political elite often acted as a barrier (Yuwono, 2024). His criticism of the Renville Agreement (1948) was based on his belief that diplomacy that was not supported by organised mass forces would always end in compromise with foreign parties (Marshanda, 2023).

Tan Malaka's economic analysis is dialectical and contextual, emphasising three main elements, namely: (1) The colonial economic structure as the basis for oppression and Tan Malaka argues that the colonial economic system of the Dutch East Indies is not just exploitation, but a large machine that absorbs surplus value through extractive production patterns (such as plantations and mining) that make Indonesia a source of raw materials, low-wage systems supported by local feudalism (such as forced labor and cultuurstelsel), as well as trade monopolies that are detrimental to local small industries; (2) The internal contradiction of colonial capitalism, Tan Malaka does not view the colonial system as a static entity. He identifies a paradox in the development of colonial capitalism in the form of plantation industries requiring stability (which results in an organised working

class), while on the other hand, this system must maintain feudalism (to keep wages low) which actually hinders productivity, and; (3) People's economy as an alternative, Tan Malaka formulated the concept of local socialism based on production cooperatives as a substitute for the colonial plantation system, independent small industries by utilising local resources, and agrarian reform based on indigenous communities (Malaka, 1945).

The Direction and Purpose of the Historical Movement Process Towards a 100% Independent Society

Tan Malaka rejected the mechanical application of the Soviet Union state model in Indonesia. In his analysis, the material basis for socialism in Indonesia should focus on: (1) Agrarian potential that returns ownership to villages and indigenous communities; (2) People's industry in the form of a network of production cooperatives that independently utilise natural resources, and; (3) Maritime economy that takes advantage of Indonesia's geographical position in international trade. Tan Malaka wants a political system based on direct democracy through people's councils at the village level, broad regional autonomy per each region's cultural and economic characteristics, and workers' control of the means of production through an adaptive model of collective ownership. In a 100% independent society, the collective work ethic must be based on the values of cooperation (Kolo, 2016). Tan Malaka rejected the concept of insubstantial independence, which replaced colonial rule with a local elite. In his work *Naar de Republiek Indonesia* (Towards the Republic of Indonesia), published in 1925, he put forward fundamental principles that emphasised complete independence without diplomatic restrictions and a proactive foreign policy in the fight against imperialism, by providing support to the struggle of other oppressed nations (Kholik, 2006).

According to Tan Malaka, a 100% independent society not only means the recognition of political sovereignty from former colonisers, but also reflects the condition of the Indonesian nation to achieve comprehensive independence in three main aspects: political, economic, and cultural. In the political context, true independence means being free from all forms of foreign intervention through diplomatic pressure, military domination, or hidden bureaucratic control. In the economic sector, a 100% independent society requires liberation from the colonial economic structure, which is manifested in national ownership of strategic resources, independent industrialisation, and a socially just wealth distribution system. Meanwhile, in the cultural realm, complete independence is achieved when the inferior mentality towards the West and local feudalism can be abolished, replaced by consciousness based on science and egalitarian values (Malaka, 1948).

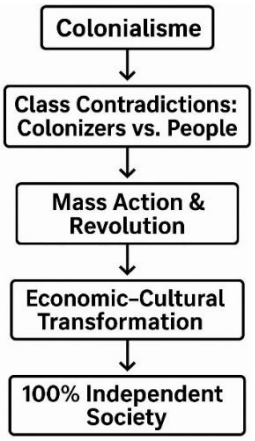
Tan Malaka distinguishes between *de facto* administrative independence and more substantial *de jure* independence. These differences often trigger new forms of colonisation that are more subtle but still exploitative. His sharp criticism of the Indonesian government after 1945 stemmed from the fact that although the national flag had been flown, the colonial economic structure was still maintained,

the bureaucratic apparatus inherited from the Netherlands was not abolished, and the feudal mentality in society did not undergo any fundamental changes. The concept of a 100% independent society, in modern analysis, can be used as a tool to criticise Indonesia's dependence on foreign investment and a development mentality that still prioritises the interests of the global market compared to national independence and the people's economy (Miftahudin, 2019).

The common thread of historical philosophy according to Tan Malaka

Findings on the patterns and rhythms of historical motion enrich the understanding of Tan Malaka's philosophy of history by revealing his creative adaptation to Marxist dialectical materialism in the Indonesian colonial context. First, Tan Malaka's analysis of the unity of opposites shows that the contradictions in colonial society are not only economic (workers and capitalists), but also include cultural and political aspects, such as the antagonism between the educated inferior elite and the feudal-colonial structure (Faisal & Syam, 2015). It expands the orthodox Marxist framework by including local dimensions that are often overlooked. Second, the concept of negation on negation proposed by Tan Malaka emphasises that the political revolution 1945 was only the initial stage. The final synthesis must include economic and cultural transformation to achieve 100% independence (Malaka, 1945). This view criticises the tendency of the Indonesian revolution to stop at formal independence without any structural changes (Miftahudin, 2019).

The epistemology of historical movements describes the chain of imperialism and the role of the masses of the people as historical subjects. Tan Malaka not only views the industrial working class as the perpetrators of the revolution (as stated by Karl Marx), but also involves farmers, plantation workers, and progressive intellectuals as a collective force (Zulhemi, 2000). These findings show how Tan Malaka integrates historical materialism with local egalitarian traditions (such as cooperation), making his historical philosophy more inclusive and contextual (Wibawanto, 2019). The 100% Independent Society strengthens the argument that Tan Malaka rejected the reduction of independence to only the political aspect. His concepts of economic independence (people's cooperatives) and mental decolonisation suggest that his philosophy of history is holistic, rejecting the dichotomy between material bases and cultural superstructures, which received less attention in classical Marxism (Kholik, 2006). These findings are relevant for postcolonial studies, as Tan Malaka had anticipated criticism of neocolonialism before the term became popular (Aji, 2024).



Picture 1. Thought flow of concepts from historical philosophy according to Tan Malaka. Source: Personal Documentation

Tan Malaka's visualisation of historical dialectics reflects a dialectical and multi-dimensional historical process. The first stage begins with colonialism as a thesis that creates internal contradictions through economic exploitation and political domination (Malaka, 1945). The second stage, class contradiction, shows the polarisation between three leading actors: (1) the colonial ruler as imperialist capitalists; (2) local elites who collaborate, and; (3) the oppressed masses (peasants, workers, progressive intellectuals), a distinction that is more complex than the Marxist proletariat-bourgeois dichotomy (Faisal & Syam, 2015). The third stage, mass action, describes the accumulation of quantitative resistance (strikes and political education) that reaches a critical point into qualitative change (revolution), according to the dialectical law of "transformation of quantity into quality" in the Madilog book (Malaka, 1943). The final stage, 100% Independent Society, emphasises a synthesis that includes not only political independence but also economic (cooperative) and cultural transformation (mental decolonisation), showing the uniqueness of Tan Malaka's thought that rejects orthodox Marxist reductionism (Wibawanto, 2019).

Table 1. Comparison of the concepts of orthodox marxism and Tan Malaka. Sourse: Personal Documentation

Concept	Marxism Ortodoks	Tan Malaka
Historical Actors	The Industrial Proletariat Class	Oppressed People (Peasants, Workers, Progressive Intellectuals)
The Purpose of the Revolution	A Class Without a Community	100% Independent Society in Political, Economic, and Cultural

The comparison table between orthodox Marxism and Tan Malaka shows three significant theoretical differences. In the context of historical actors, Tan Malaka expands the definition of the proletariat to include "oppressed people" to include non-industrial elements, such as peasants and intellectuals (Zulhemi, 2000). Regarding the purpose of

history, Tan Malaka added aspects of culture and economic sovereignty apart from the elimination of class (Malaka, 2005). The method of struggle emphasises the phase of the evolution of mass preparation that is underpaid in Leninist revolutionary theory (Malaka, 2000). Thus, this scheme illustrates the complexity of Tan Malaka's thought and emphasises his contribution in indigenising Marxist theory for colonised agrarian societies (Kholik, 2006).

5. Conclusion

Tan Malaka was one of the important figures in the history of Indonesia's struggle, and he devoted his life to independence and social justice. He was born in West Sumatra in 1897 into a Minangkabau family. Tan Malaka's education in the Netherlands shaped his anti-colonial consciousness and critical Marxist thought. After returning to Indonesia, Tan Malaka's experience as a teacher at the Deli Serdang tea plantation in Sumatra deepened his understanding of the exploitation under colonialism, which encouraged him to get involved in politics. In contrast to many Marxist thinkers of his time, Tan Malaka developed his thinking by adapting socialism to the conditions of his colonial society, which is reflected in his works, such as *Madilog (Materialisme, Dialektika, dan Logika), Naar de Republiek Indonesia* (Towards the Republic of Indonesia), and *Merdeka 100%: Tiga Percakapan Ekonomi-Politik*. During his years in exile, he explored various countries and built international revolutionary networks, while remaining focused on the struggle for Indonesia.

Tan Malaka's work has a distinctive and relevant analytical framework that helps us understand the dynamics of social change in Indonesia. Through the fusion of Marxist historical materialism and the real conditions of colonial society, Tan Malaka formulated the concept of a historical movement triggered by class dialectics, the power of the masses of the people, and a permanent revolution towards true independence (a 100% independent society). His thinking emphasised that political independence must be accompanied by economic and cultural transformation to build a sovereign society. Tan Malaka's analysis of the internal contradictions of colonialism, the role of the low priayi, and the criticism of the incomplete revolution provides a critical perspective in understanding the history of Indonesia and the contemporary issues facing the country.

From the point of view of theoretical implications, this research contributes to the study of historical philosophy by raising the perspective of Indonesia that is not entirely tied to the European Marxist framework, but rather reflects the values of cooperation in Indonesian society. In practical implications, Tan Malaka's ideas about popular economy and political education based on *Madilog (Materialisme, Dialektika, dan Logika*) can be used as an alternative in formulating a fairer development policy. In the political realm, his thinking on national sovereignty offers a framework for criticism of dependence on foreign investment and neoliberalism. However, applying his ideas needs to be adjusted to the changing context of the times. During the process of this research, several limitations may affect the results of the research, namely, the focus of this research is only on Tan Malaka's views on the philosophy of history related to the direction of historical movement, the actors driving history, historical dynamics, epistemology, and the purpose of the historical development. Therefore, the researcher hopes that further research can delve deeper into Tan Malaka's view of historical philosophy from the perspectives of ontology, ethics, aesthetics, and axiology. Thus, it is suggested that the results of this study be used as comparative material to enrich the complexity of future research.

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