

THE WITTE KRUIS KOLONIE SALATIGA: A CONTEXTUAL CHRISTIAN PROJECT IN 1902

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ABSTRACT

Salatiga is generally associated with a strong historical Christian presence, an image closely linked to institutions such as the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga. In prevailing historiography and local memory, this institution is viewed as a charitable Christian response to the eruption of Mount Kelud in the early twentieth century. However, this interpretation remains insufficiently grounded in critical archival reconstruction and does not adequately explain the colony's institutional formation, spatial positioning, and social function. This study addresses this gap through a systematic reexamination of colonial records and digital archival sources. This research employs a historical-critical method based on bibliographic reconstruction and the analysis of Dutch-language colonial newspapers accessed through Delpher, supplemented by institutional documentation and secondary literature. The material is organized thematically into three analytical categories: the events of the Kelud eruption, the biography and networks of the founder, and the institutional formation of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga project. The research findings indicate that the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga emerged as a derivative response to the multi-scale crisis following the eruption of Mount Kelud. The eruption exacerbated pre-existing structural vulnerabilities shaped by limited colonial public health, racial segregation, job insecurity, and uneven economic development. Against this backdrop, Salatiga functioned as a strategic humanitarian node due to its geographic accessibility, colonial administrative position, and established missionary networks. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the institution operated through a hybrid model combining missionary philanthropy, colonial governance, and labor organization. These findings revise existing interpretations of Christian philanthropy, which often assume institutional coherence, moral autonomy, or purely benevolent intentions. The case of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga demonstrates that Christian philanthropic practices were structurally embedded in systems of colonial control, social stratification, and crisis management. This study reframes the history of disasters in the Dutch East Indies by showing how environmental disasters generated institutional innovations in colonial humanitarian governance.

Keywords: *Christian philanthropy, Dutch East Indies, Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga*

INTRODUCTION

Salatiga was one of the most prominent colonial hill towns in the Dutch East Indies during the early twentieth century. Located in Central Java, approximately 60 kilometers south of Semarang, the town was widely recognized for its modern urban infrastructure, sanitation system, and colonial residential environment (Prakosa, 2017; Sasi et al., 2025). Colonial publications even positioned it as a model municipality alongside major urban centers in Java (Sasi et al., 2025).

After the Indonesian War of Independence, health and sanitation remained important concerns in local governance (Soedijono, 1987). However, a brief review of local historiography reveals that the literature has largely emphasized urban modernization, village improvement, and postcolonial development policies (Anwar, 2019; Budi et al., 2016; Pemkot Salatiga, 2019; Permadi et al., 2016; Sidik, 2019; Supangkat, 2015, 2023; Supangkat et al., 2025), while paying limited attention to the relationship between religion, philanthropy, and disaster relief in the colonial city.

Although the majority of Salatiga's population is Muslim (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Salatiga, 2024; Muawanah, 2018), the town occupied a distinctive position within the Christian zending landscape of the Dutch East Indies during the colonial period (Astuti, 2025; Hassani, 2025; Redaksi Dinamika, 2020; Sidik, 2019). Salatiga became an important center for zending institutions and Christian social organizations, including the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga, one of the oldest Christian philanthropic institutions in colonial Java (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008; Seo, 2014; Sidik, 2019; Yayasan Sosial Kristen Salib Putih, 2022). Furthermore, historical accounts describe this institution as an organization involved in relief efforts during natural disasters and health crises, such as cholera outbreaks and the eruption of Mount Kelud in the early twentieth century (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008; Manasika, 2024; Muljati, 2020; Yayasan Sosial Kristen Salib Putih, 2022). Despite its historical significance, the institution has received scholarly attention within Indonesian historiography (Damayanti et al., 2019; Donalia & Sanubari, 2020; Liyanovitasari & Setyoningrum, 2025; Sahertian et al., 2021; Sairatu et al., 2025; Setiyawan & Pudjihartati, 2021; Widyatama & Tumimomor, 2024).

Meanwhile, the history of disasters in the Dutch East Indies during the colonial period is not a new field of study. Works by Susie Protsky, Rudolf Mrázek, Sartono Kartodirdjo, Andrian. B. Lopian, William Frederick and Sumartono, and more recent studies by Galuh Ambar Sasi have examined disasters within the context of colonial governance, technological modernity, morality, and indigenous vulnerability (Frederick & Soeroto, 2005; Kartodirdjo, 2019; Mrázek, 2006; Protschky, 2022; Purwoko & Sasi, 2025; Sasi, 2024; Sasi et al., 2023; Sasi & Rayanti, 2022). However, these studies remain largely state-centered and have paid limited attention to the role of private,

faith-based organizations in disaster response and humanitarian relief.

The limitation becomes particularly visible in studies concerning the eruption of Mount Kelud. A manual bibliometric review using the keyword “Kelud” on Dimensions.ai, a global digital research database, for instance, reveals that studies on the history of disasters involving the volcano tend to focus on the 2014 eruption from a contemporary perspective. Moreover, it indicates limited discussion regarding colonial-period philanthropic institutions such as the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga. As a result, the relationship between volcanic disasters and Christian-based, private humanitarianism in the Dutch East Indies remains insufficiently explored.

Therefore, this article addresses that gap by examining the historical role of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga in responding to natural and health disasters in colonial Java during the early twentieth century. Rather than threatening the institution merely as a local charitable organization, this study positions the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga as part of a broader network of Christian humanitarianism within colonial urban society. By doing so, this article expects to contribute to three areas of study: the history of faith-based philanthropy in the Dutch East Indies, colonial disasters beyond state-centered perspectives, and the historical relationship between religion, humanitarianism, and urban social welfare in the Dutch East Indies colonial state.

Literature Review

Although the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga remains the oldest Christian philanthropic institution in colonial Java, the historiography on the organization is still relatively limited. A brief review of scholarly journals from the past ten years indicates that research on the institution has not been examined from a historical perspective, focusing instead on aspects such as education for orphans (Sairatu et

al., 2025; Setiyawan & Pudjihartati, 2021; Wulansari et al., 2018), healthcare for the elderly (Donalia & Sanubari, 2020; Liyanovitasari & Setyoningrum, 2025; Sahertian et al., 2021; Tauho, Panna, and Santos 2021; Wulansari et al., 2018), the production of promotional videos to attract donors (Widyatama & Tumimomor, 2024), and coffee cultivation (Damayanti et al., 2019). As a result, the institution's historical relationship to disaster relief, colonial urban society, and Christian philanthropy in the Dutch East Indies remains insufficiently explored

Moreover, the historical origins of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga have also been narrated inconsistently. Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink describe the institution as part of a Salvation Army initiative established in response to major floods on the north coast of Java and the eruptions of Mount Merapi and Mount Kelud in the early twentieth century. According to their account, the institution later developed into an independent Christian project near Salatiga intended to assist homeless populations and beggars displaced by disasters (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008). However, their discussion remains relatively brief and does not examine the institutional transformation of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga.

Subsequent studies provide additional but fragmented interpretations regarding the institution's formation. Manasika (2024), for instance, argues that the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga emerged as a Christian humanitarian response to structural poverty, cholera outbreaks, and plague epidemics affecting the indigenous communities under colonial rule. Complementing this interpretation, Muljati (2020) notes that the project was initially planned in Semarang, the headquarters of the Salvation Army, but humanitarian considerations and infrastructural limitations led its founders, Adolf Theodorus Johannes van Emmerick

and Alice Cornelia Cleverly, to establish the institution in Salatiga in 1902.

Similarly, Myung Kyu Seo emphasizes the institution's connection to the victims of the 1901 eruption of Mount Kelud. Seo further explains that the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga acquired approximately 155 hectares of land and later underwent an institutional transformation during the Japanese occupation and the Indonesian Revolution, eventually being transferred to the Javanese Christian Synod (Seo, 2014).

References to the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga also appear in the Indonesian mass media and local public narratives. However, these accounts often present conflicting information regarding the institution's origins, founding dates, and symbolic identity. For instance, *Suara Merdeka*, a local newspaper in Central Java, reported that the institution was founded in 1852 (Rosikhan, 2019), while local narratives associate its name with the discovery of a white marble cross during land clearing activities conducted by the founders' family (Setiyawan, 2016). Institutional publications particularly support these narratives but present different details about the names of the founders, the chronology, and the location (Yayasan Sosial Kristen Salib Putih, 2022). These inconsistencies indicate that the historical narratives surrounding the institution remain fragmented and insufficiently verified.

This article understands philanthropy not merely as charitable giving, but also as an organized intervention aimed at addressing humanitarian crises within a specific moral and religious framework. In a colonial context, Christian philanthropy frequently operated through missionary networks, orphanages, healthcare institutions, and settler-colonial and formal colonial structures, while positioning the minority and the perfection philanthropy (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008; Dirks, 2010; Krishnan, 2023; M.D., 1981; Pappas,

2026). Consequently, the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga was not only a religious institution, but also a form of faith-based humanitarianism that emerged in response to social dislocation, poverty, disease outbreaks, and natural disasters in colonial Java.

This historiographical ambiguity is significant because disaster studies in the Dutch East Indies generally emphasize colonial governance, technological modernity, morality, and the vulnerability of indigenous populations. Important contributions by Susie Protschky, Rudolf Mrázek, Sartono Kartodirdjo, Adrian B. Lapian, and Galuh Ambar Sasi have significantly shaped the historiography of colonial disasters in Indonesia (Kartodirdjo, 2019; Lapian, 1987; Protschky, 2022; Sasi, 2024; Sasi et al., 2023; Sasi & Rayanti 2022). However, these studies have paid limited attention to Christian-based private philanthropy as a historical actor in disaster management and humanitarian aid.

Consequently, the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga has not been comprehensively studied within the broader framework of colonial humanitarianism, faith-based disaster relief, and the social history of colonial urban society in Java. This study addresses this gap by reconstructing the institution's early history and placing it within the broader context of disaster response, Christian philanthropy, and colonial social transformation in the Dutch East Indies, particularly as part of the social history of the modern colonial city.

Conceptual Framework

This study uses John Tosh's concept of total social history to examine the emergence of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga within the broader social context of colonial Java. Rather than treating philanthropy solely as a religious activity, this framework situates charitable institutions within interconnected dimensions of urban society, including

geography, social crises, economic conditions, political structures, and state intervention (Tosh, 2021). Therefore, this analytical approach builds upon and expands the theoretical framework of Christian philanthropy (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008; Dirks, 2010; Krishnan, 2023; Pappas, 2026).

Furthermore, this study draws on theories of philanthropy that conceptualize it as voluntary social action directed toward public welfare and humanitarian intervention (Payton & Moody, 2008; Zunc, 2011). In colonial societies, philanthropic institutions often functioned not only as charitable organizations but also as mediators between social crises, religious morality, and public welfare. In the Dutch East Indies, Christian philanthropy often operated through missionary networks, orphanages, healthcare institutions, and disaster relief initiatives that addressed humanitarian needs beyond the formal capacity of the colonial state (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008; Dirks, 2010; Krishnan, 2023; Pappas, 2026).

This perspective allows the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga to be examined not simply as a religious institution, but as a form of faith-based humanitarianism that emerged in response to social dislocation, poverty, disease outbreaks, and natural disasters in colonial Java. Consequently, the institution is positioned within the broader history of colonial humanitarianism and private social intervention in the early twentieth century.

Using this perspective, the formation of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga is examined through four interrelated contexts. First, this study analyzes the humanitarian crisis following the 1901 eruption of Mount Kelud and the subsequent disease outbreaks. Second, it reconstructs the urban and social environment of colonial Salatiga before and after the disaster, including its geography, social life, economic structure, and political setting. Third, it evaluates the

relationship between colonial governance and private philanthropic intervention in responding to the humanitarian crisis, including possible gaps between official policies and local social needs. Finally, the study examines the development of Christian-based social services implemented by the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga as a contextual response to social vulnerability and disasters in colonial Java.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses historical research methods combined with qualitative archival analysis to reconstruct the early history of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga as a Christian-based philanthropic institution in colonial Java. It is known as Salib Putih, located on Jalan Hasanuddin No.4, Kumpulrejo Village, Argomulyo District, Salatiga, Central Java.

The research focuses on Dutch-language archival materials related to disaster relief, philanthropy, and the social history of the Dutch East Indies in the early twentieth century. Primary sources were collected from the *Delpher* digital archives, a digital repository containing colonial newspapers, magazines, books, and publications from the Netherlands and the former Dutch East Indies. Data collection was conducted between June and October 2025 using the keywords “Wittekruis Kolonie Salatiga,” “Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga,” “Keloed,” and “Kloet.” The first two keywords refer to the Dutch colonial name for the institution, while the latter refers to Mount Kelud and its historical spelling variations in early twentieth-century Dutch publications.

An archival search conducted between June and October 2025 yielded 453 references, consisting of newspaper articles, institutional reports, colonial publications, and related historical records. To facilitate the organization and management of sources, all references were compiled into the *Zotero* database. The collected data were then classified into

three analytical categories: (1) “Kelud,” comprising references related to the eruption of Mount Kelud and the disaster situation; (2) “Emmerick,” comprising references regarding the founders and institutional background of the institution; and (3) “Begin,” comprising references related to the institution's founding and early development.

This analysis employed historical source criticism and qualitative content analysis, following standard historical research procedures. Source criticism was conducted by comparing multiple archival records to identify consistencies, contradictions, chronological sequences, and contextual reliability among colonial publications. Comparative analysis across categories was used to reconstruct the relationship between the volcanic disaster, the humanitarian crisis, philanthropic initiatives, and the formal organization of the institution.

To enhance validity and reliability, data triangulation was conducted by cross-checking newspaper reports, institutional publications, secondary historical works, and local historical narratives. Variations in spelling, chronology, and institutional descriptions were critically evaluated to reduce archival bias and the inconsistencies commonly found in colonial-era documents.

This study assumes that colonial newspapers and institutional publications served not only as records of events but also as representations shaped by colonial social, political, and religious perspectives. Consequently, the interpretation of the archival materials was conducted critically, taking into account the broader colonial context in which the documents were produced.

This study did not use statistical testing due to its qualitative historical nature. However, descriptive categorization and comparative source analysis were systematically applied to identify recurring themes, institutional

patterns, and historical relationships within the archival materials.

Methodologically, this study is limited by the uneven preservation of colonial archives, the dominance of Dutch-language perspectives, and the potential for incomplete documentation of indigenous experiences and local responses. Furthermore, this research relies heavily on the availability of digital archives at *Delpher*, which may not fully represent all historical records related to the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga and the eruption of Mount Kelud.

The methodological framework of this research draws primarily on the standard historical and social history research approaches, particularly regarding source criticism, contextual interpretation, and the reconstruction of social institutions within broader historical processes.

DISCUSSION

Data interpretation revealed new findings. First, the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga was established to address 27 issues resulting from the eruption of Mount Kelud, specifically in the Semarang Residency area. Second, it was centred in Salatiga, due to the region's five unique characteristics and four models of state–social institution collaboration. Third, its services cover four areas and are contextually specific (see Table 1).

Table 1: Findings

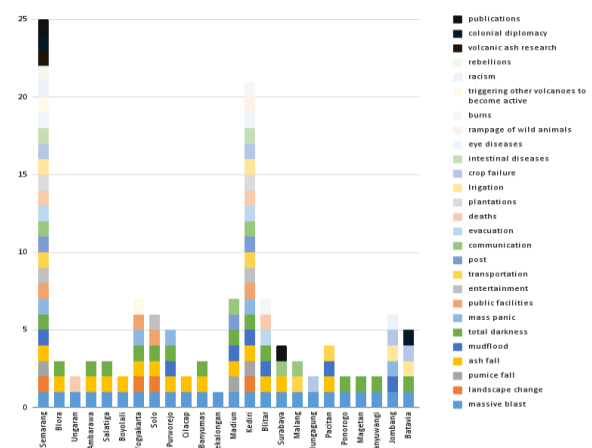
No	Item	Novelty
1	Community needs after the Kelud disaster	Response to 27 Problems in the Semarang Residency
2	Local context of Salatiga	Physical and human geography, economic and social life, political structure, <i>zending</i> centre, evacuation centre
3	State intervention and social institutions	Local, national, transnational networks, mass media
4	Forms of Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga Service	Poverty alleviation, teaching Christian virtues, care, cleanliness, independence

Source: data analysis

The 1901 Kelud Crisis

The eruption of Mount Kelud in 1901 rapidly developed into a multidimensional humanitarian crisis that exposed the vulnerability of colonial society in Java (Geuns, 1901). Rather than functioning solely as a geological event, the eruption disrupted transportation systems, communication networks, agricultural production, public health conditions, and everyday social life across multiple regions of the Dutch East Indies. In this context, the disaster revealed the fragility of colonial infrastructures and the limited capacity of the colonial welfare system in responding to environmental emergencies.

Figure 1. The Impact of The first Kelud Eruption



Source: Data Analysis

The eruption generated severe secondary hazards, including ashfall, volcanic rock, mud rain, lava, underground rumblings, and cold winds descending from the mountainside (Anonymous, 1901q, 1901w, 1901aq, 1901au, 1901a, 1901r, 1901y, 1901ac, 1901ar, 1901p, 1901s, 1901t, 1901as, 1901n, 1901o, 1901u, 1901at, 1901ab, 1901f, 1901m, 1901g, 1901h, 1901i, 1901j, 1901av, 1901v, 1901x, 1901aa, 1901k, 1901c). In several urban areas (Figure 1), volcanic material produced conditions of near-total darkness that forced the closure of schools, offices, shops, and entertainment venues.

Railway transportation, postal services, telegraph networks, and newspaper circulation also experienced significant disruption. These conditions demonstrate that volcanic disasters in colonial Java could destabilize not only the physical environment, but also the infrastructural foundations of colonial modernity itself (Anonymous, 1901e, 1901ad, 1901d, 1901ae, 1901af, 1901ag, 1901ah, 1901ai, 1901aj, 1901ak, 1901am, 1901an, 1901ao, 1901ap, 1901au).

The social consequences of the eruption extended beyond immediate physical destruction. Contemporary reports described mass panic, displacement, crop failures, famine, disease outbreaks, rising mortality, and environmental degradation affecting both urban and rural populations (Anonymous, 1901au). Reports concerning the unusual movement of wild animals, particularly elephants and tigers descending from upland regions, further reflected widespread perceptions of ecological disorder and environmental anxiety within colonial society (Anonymous, 1901c, 1901a). As a result, the eruption was interpreted not merely as a natural disaster, but also as a broader social crisis that threatened public stability.

Interestingly, the highest concentration of disaster reports emerged not from Kediri, the region closest to Mount Kelud, but from the Semarang Residency, located approximately 460 kilometers from the volcano (see Figure 1). This pattern suggests that the circulation of disaster information in colonial Java was shaped not solely by geographical proximity, but also by media infrastructure and environmental conditions. The extensive reporting of *De Locomotief*, one of the largest colonial newspapers in Java, combined with southeasterly trade winds that carried volcanic material toward the northern coast, intensified the visibility of the crisis in Semarang and surrounding regions (Anonymous 1902a, 1901b,

1902d, 1902e, 1902f, 1902g, 1901l, 1902k).

In Semarang, the eruption generated broader social and political tensions beyond environmental destruction alone. Colonial newspapers reported increasing racial tensions between Europeans, Chinese communities, and indigenous populations, as well as growing suspicions toward Muslim pilgrims, who were frequently associated with the spread of disease through maritime mobility. At the same time, the eruption disrupted colonial diplomatic activities involving the Kingdom of Siam and encouraged scientific interest in the industrial potential of volcanic ash (Anonymous, 1901al). These developments demonstrate that the eruption affected not only environmental conditions, but also the political, intellectual, and social dimensions of colonial life.

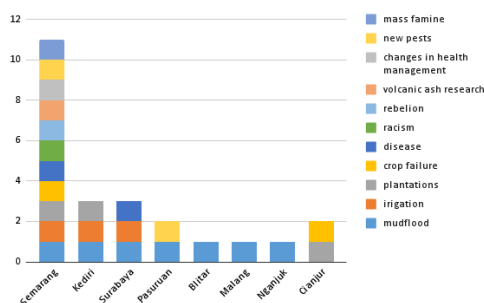
The crisis was further intensified by widespread cosmological fears and environmental uncertainty. Prior to the eruption, colonial newspapers had extensively discussed a comet shower and a solar eclipse, both of which were interpreted by local communities as signs of impending catastrophe, including war, famine, disease, and earthquakes (Anonymous, 1901au). Reports of unusual animal behavior—including restless horses, mass bird movements, and tigers descending into populated regions—strengthened perceptions that the natural order itself had become unstable. These accounts indicate that volcanic disasters in colonial Java were understood not only through scientific observation, but also through cultural anxieties and apocalyptic interpretations of nature.

The severity of the humanitarian crisis in the Semarang Residency was closely related to structural vulnerabilities that had existed long before the eruption (Anonymous, 1902j, 1902l). According to historical studies, at least five interrelated factors contributed to this condition. First, the geographical environment of the

northern coastal region—dominated by swamps, rivers, fishponds, and rice fields—created favorable ecological conditions for the spread of disease vectors. Second, poverty and limited sanitation among indigenous populations accelerated the transmission of waterborne diseases. Third, the expansion of irrigation systems, transportation routes, and communication networks unintentionally facilitated the spread of endemic illnesses. Fourth, increased global mobility, particularly through Dutch shipping routes and the movement of Hajj pilgrims, was perceived by colonial authorities as introducing foreign epidemics. Finally, colonial healthcare services remained highly unequal and restricted by racial and economic barriers (Suryo, 1989).

Within this fragile social environment, the eruption of Mount Kelud intensified pre-existing crises rather than creating entirely new ones. Contemporary reports repeatedly described recurring crop failures, famine, disease outbreaks, and worsening living conditions among indigenous communities. In several accounts, these threats were described as more frightening than piracy itself (Anonymous, 1902c; Emmerick, 1902).

Figure 2. The Impact Of Kelud's Eruption



Source: data analysis

Yet, colonial reports rarely identified Salatiga as one of the principal centers of humanitarian collapse despite its location within the broader Semarang Residency. This relative environmental stability, combined with its cooler climate,

urban facilities, and missionary networks, later positioned the town as a strategic humanitarian space for relief activities. Under these circumstances, the emergence of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga can be understood not merely as a religious initiative, but as part of a broader response to the limitations of colonial welfare and the expanding humanitarian crisis in early twentieth-century Java.

Salatiga's context

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Salatiga occupied a distinctive position within the social geography of the Dutch East Indies. Located between 450 and 825 meters above sea level and surrounded by Mount Ungaran, Mount Telomoyo, and Mount Merbabu, the town was widely recognized for its cool climate and mountainous landscape (Asmawinangun, 1929).

Colonial publications frequently portrayed Salatiga as one of the healthiest and most attractive hill towns in Java, functioning simultaneously as a resort, sanatorium, and resting place for Europeans suffering from respiratory diseases and exhaustion (Anonymous, 1916b, 1916a, 1917). However, this image of colonial modernity concealed deep social inequalities structured through race and class segregation. Urban space in Salatiga was divided between Europeans, Foreign Orientals, indigenous elites, and ordinary indigenous populations. Residential districts, entertainment venues, and social organizations were organized according to these hierarchical distinctions. Europeans and colonial elites gathered in institutions such as the Harmonie Societeit, while Chinese communities, military personnel, and indigenous elites occupied separate social spheres through their own organizations and meeting spaces. Even the town squares were spatially segregated between elite and non-elite populations (Prakosa, 2017). As a result, Salatiga is represented not merely as a colonial resort town, but also a

fragmented urban society shaped by exclusionary structures of colonial governance.

At the same time, Salatiga developed into one of the principal centers of Protestant missionary activity in Central Java. Multiple missionary organizations operated simultaneously within the town, including the *Nederlandsch Zending Genootschap*, *Doopsgezinde Zendings Vereeniging*, *Nederlandsche Gereformeerde Zending*, and *Nederlandsch Hervormde Zending* (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008; Seo, 2014). These organizations established extensive religious and social networks that later became significant in responding to humanitarian crises. Among them was the Salvation Army, an evangelical movement founded in London in 1878 by William Booth. The organization combined Christian evangelism with anti-alcohol campaigns and social service activities, making it particularly active among marginalized urban populations (Anonymous, 1902).

Within this missionary environment, Emmerick emerged as an important figure in local humanitarian activities. As a low-ranking Salvation Army officer stationed in Salatiga, his salary remained extremely limited, forcing him to reside in Blauran, a market district located along the social boundary separating indigenous and Foreign Oriental settlements (Emmerick, 1902). This position placed him in close proximity to the urban poor and migrant populations affected by the broader humanitarian crisis following the eruption of Mount Kelud.

Demographic conditions further intensified social vulnerability within Salatiga. Colonial statistics from 1902 recorded substantial indigenous populations alongside European and Foreign Oriental communities, although the colonial classification system itself reflected unequal modes of enumeration and representation. Indigenous women and children were frequently underrepresented

in official statistics, illustrating broader patterns of colonial marginalization. At the same time, these demographic conditions reveal that humanitarian vulnerability existed even within one of the most prosperous colonial urban centers in Central Java. The poor, refugees, abandoned children, and displaced indigenous populations later became the primary targets of missionary and philanthropic intervention.

The eruption of Mount Kelud transformed Salatiga from a colonial health resort into a humanitarian refuge. Prior to the eruption, the town had already experienced tensions related to social inequality and periodic raids from surrounding districts. After the disaster, improved transportation infrastructure enabled large numbers of refugees to migrate toward Salatiga in search of food, employment, and security. Its cooler climate, agricultural resources, plantations, and relative environmental stability made the town appear safer than many other regions within the Semarang Residency.

Although precise refugee statistics remain unavailable, colonial reports estimate that approximately 5,000 displaced people entered the town and concentrated particularly around indigenous settlement areas (Anonymous, 1902). Contemporary descriptions depicted severe humanitarian suffering among these refugees, including diarrhea, vomiting, beriberi, chronic wounds, fever, exhaustion, and starvation. Reports repeatedly described emaciated women, abandoned children, blind individuals, disabled laborers, and severely ill refugees occupying public spaces, stables, and roadside shelters (Emmerick, 1902). In this context, the humanitarian crisis became increasingly visible within the urban landscape of Salatiga itself. The arrival of refugees not only transformed the social character of the town, but also heightened fears regarding public health, especially the spread of cholera and epidemic disease.

Under these circumstances, Salatiga evolved into what may be understood as a colonial humanitarian space: a relatively stable urban center where missionary organizations, local elites, colonial authorities, and philanthropic actors converged to respond to the broader crisis affecting Central Java. The emergence of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga therefore cannot be separated from the unique intersection of environmental stability, missionary infrastructure, racial segregation, refugee mobility, and the limitations of colonial welfare within Salatiga during the aftermath of the 1901 Kelud eruption.

Intervention and Services

The humanitarian crisis following the 1901 eruption of Mount Kelud exposed the structural limitations of colonial welfare in the Semarang Residency. Although the colonial government implemented emergency measures, including partial exemptions from land rent and medical costs for indigenous patients, these interventions remained insufficient in the face of rapidly expanding humanitarian needs. Medical treatment relied heavily on Javanese physicians using basic antiseptic materials, while temporary medical boards composed of civil servants, pharmacists, and urban doctors were mobilized to contain the outbreak (Anonymous, 1902i, 1902m, 1902h). Nevertheless, the growing number of patients overwhelmed colonial health infrastructures, revealing the fragility of state-centered disaster management in early twentieth-century Java.

These limitations were intensified by racial segregation within colonial healthcare systems. Access to formal medical treatment remained concentrated among urban elites, leaving many non-elite indigenous communities dependent on local remedies and informal healing practices. Colonial reports described the use of volcanic ash mixed with fennel, *polosari* (*Alyxia stellata*), and shallots as

alternative treatments among marginalized populations (Anonymous, 1901z). In response, colonial authorities expanded medical distribution through missionary and religious networks by appointing priests as intermediaries for basic healthcare provision (Anonymous, 1902i, 1902m, 1902h). This policy demonstrates that colonial humanitarianism functioned not solely as a medical intervention but also as a mechanism of social governance that combined health management, religious influence, and political control.

The expansion of missionary involvement in disaster relief was closely linked to colonial anxieties regarding the spread of Islam, particularly through *pesantren* networks and Muslim pilgrimage movements. From the perspective of colonial authorities, humanitarian crises created opportunities for religious competition and political mobilization among indigenous populations (Anonymous, 1902b; Suryo, 1989). As a result, healthcare provision became intertwined with expanded efforts to reshape indigenous loyalties and strengthen colonial stability. Disaster management therefore operated not only as a response to suffering but also as part of a wider colonial strategy of social regulation.

Within this context, the Salvation Army emerged as one of the most active Christian organizations involved in relief activities. However, the organization itself experienced internal tensions and institutional limitations. Its humanitarian services in Semarang became overcrowded, financially strained, and increasingly criticized for inefficient management practices (Anonymous, 1902l, 1902m, 1902j). These pressures contributed to the growing dissatisfaction of Emmerick. His resignation in late 1901 therefore reflected an ideological shift toward a more independent model of Christian humanitarianism.

Following his separation from the Salvation Army, Emmerick began

developing a localized philanthropic initiative in collaboration with colonial officials, church networks, businessmen, and urban elites in Salatiga (Anonymous, 1902). Financial support from school administrators, municipal authorities, and local associations enabled the creation of a new humanitarian project oriented toward displaced indigenous populations. Initially centered in Blauran, relief activities later moved to Regentslaan due to the increasing concentration of refugees in urban public spaces. What began as limited food distribution and religious outreach rapidly evolved into a large-scale humanitarian operation serving hundreds of displaced people each week.

Importantly, these relief activities extended beyond charitable food assistance. Emmerick and Cleverly combined medical care, hygiene instruction, religious teaching, and labor discipline within their humanitarian practices. Food distribution, wound treatment, sanitation education, and Christian preaching were integrated into a broader project of moral and social reconstruction among displaced indigenous communities. In this sense, humanitarian aid functioned simultaneously as relief, discipline, and social transformation (Anonymous, 1902; Emmerick, 1904).

The growing scale of the crisis also attracted wider philanthropic and political support. Colonial journalists, plantation officials, philanthropic organizations, and critics of Dutch colonial policy increasingly viewed the Salatiga initiative as a practical solution to the expanding humanitarian emergency. Through media exposure and political lobbying, Emmerick successfully reframed the refugee crisis as a structural social problem requiring long-term institutional intervention rather than temporary emergency relief alone.

This shift became visible in Emmerick's proposal for the establishment of a "beggar colony" designed to

accommodate displaced indigenous populations within a self-sufficient agricultural settlement. His proposal emphasized labor, hygiene, agricultural productivity, and social rehabilitation as mechanisms for overcoming dependency and restoring social order. The acceptance of this proposal by the Resident of Semarang, which included responsibility for hundreds of cholera orphans, marked a significant transformation in colonial humanitarian governance (Anonymous, 1914; Beresteun, 1902; Emmerick, 1902). Relief activities were no longer confined to temporary aid distribution, but expanded into the construction of semi-permanent systems of social management for marginalized populations.

The establishment of de Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga in Warak therefore represented more than the founding of a charitable institution. It reflected the emergence of a hybrid humanitarian model situated between missionary philanthropy, colonial governance, labor organization, and social engineering. Refugees, beggars, orphans, disabled individuals, and displaced workers were reorganized into a productive settlement structured around agriculture, craft production, sanitation, and Christian discipline. Even infrastructure challenges, such as water supply and clothing provision, were addressed through collaborations between local officials, private companies, and philanthropic actors (Anonymous, 1902n).

Viewed from this perspective, the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga was not simply a humanitarian response to disaster. Rather, it constituted a new form of colonial humanitarian space in which Christian philanthropy operated alongside state interests to manage social instability, regulate marginalized populations, and reconstruct indigenous life in the aftermath of environmental catastrophe.

CLOSING

The establishment of de Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga therefore represented more than the founding of a charitable institution. It reflected the emergence of a hybrid humanitarian model situated between missionary philanthropy, colonial governance, labor organization, and social engineering. Refugees, beggars, orphans, disabled individuals, and displaced workers were reorganized into a productive colonial settlement structured around agriculture, craft production, sanitation, and Christian discipline.

Viewed from this perspective, the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga was not simply a humanitarian response to disaster. Rather, it constituted a new form of colonial humanitarian space in which Christian philanthropy operated alongside state interests to manage social instability, regulate marginalized populations, and reconstruct indigenous life in the aftermath of environmental catastrophe. This study therefore demonstrates that humanitarianism in the Dutch East Indies cannot be understood solely as an expression of compassion or religious charity but also as a mechanism of social governance operating within broader colonial structures of power.

These findings contribute to the development of theories of Christian philanthropy, which have often emphasized missionary networks, orphanages, healthcare institutions, settler colonialism, or formal colonial structures, while frequently portraying Christian philanthropic organizations as morally coherent and inherently benevolent institutions. In contrast, this study demonstrates that Christian philanthropy in colonial Java was neither neutral nor socially perfect. Rather, it was deeply entangled with racial segregation, class inequality, colonial governance, labor discipline, and projects of social control. Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga functioned not merely as a missionary institution

servicing Christian minorities, but as a humanitarian mechanism directed toward marginalized indigenous populations produced by environmental crises and colonial social structures. In this sense, Christian philanthropy simultaneously operated as relief, moral intervention, and social regulation within colonial society.

At the same time, this study revises dominant approaches within the historiography of disasters in the Dutch East Indies. Existing scholarship has generally interpreted disasters through frameworks of morality, technological modernization, state legitimacy, or indigenous vulnerability. By contrast, this article demonstrates that environmental catastrophes could also stimulate forms of religiously grounded private humanitarianism operating beyond formal colonial institutions. The humanitarian crisis following the 1901 eruption of Mount Kelud, therefore became a catalyst for broader processes of colonial social transformation involving missionary organizations, philanthropic actors, refugee mobility, and new forms of welfare intervention.

This study also contributes to the history of religion in colonial Indonesia. In addition to expanding discussions on Christian philanthropy, the findings demonstrate that the Salvation Army and de Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga should not be understood as identical institutions. Although the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga emerged from networks associated with the Salvation Army, ideological disagreements concerning militarism, centralized authority, and humanitarian practice contributed to the institutional separation initiated by Emmerick. Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga thus emerged as an independent humanitarian organization with its own model of Christian social intervention in colonial Java.

Furthermore, this study confirms the relevance of John Tosh's concept of total social history for understanding colonial humanitarianism. The emergence of the

Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga cannot be separated from the interaction between environmental disasters, missionary expansion, racial segregation, public health crises, labor relations, refugee mobility, and the uneven development of colonial urban society. The humanitarian response in Salatiga therefore emerged not from a single factor but from the intersection of multiple social, political, environmental, and religious processes shaping colonial Java in the early twentieth century.

More broadly, the case of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga demonstrates how environmental disasters in colonial societies could stimulate the emergence of hybrid humanitarian institutions positioned between religion, civil society, and state power. In this sense, the history of the Witte Kruis Kolonie Salatiga contributes not only to Indonesian local historiography and the history of Christianity in Java but also to wider global discussions concerning disaster, philanthropy, colonial governance, and humanitarianism in the Global South.

Nevertheless, this study also has several limitations. The reconstruction relies predominantly on Dutch-language colonial newspapers and archival materials, meaning that the narrative remains strongly shaped by colonial perspectives. Indigenous voices and local non-colonial sources remain largely absent from the analysis. In addition, this article focuses primarily on institutional formation and humanitarian practices rather than the personal lives, emotions, and intellectual worlds of actors. Future studies may therefore deepen the social and cultural dimensions of colonial humanitarian history by incorporating local archives, oral traditions, missionary correspondence, and biographical approaches to actors involved in faith-based philanthropy in colonial Indonesia.

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