

Negotiating Collective Goals and Individual Aspirations: Masculinities in Indonesian Young Adult Literature in the 1950s

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This article investigates the portrayal of masculinities represented in Indonesian literature for young adults in the 1950s. The period chosen is a significant marker in Indonesian history, as it was when the newly formed nation was solidifying its national cohesion. The increasingly nationalist and patriotic atmosphere resulted in the emergence of two opposing cultural tendencies: the nationalist and independent spirit that typically spread among citizens of a newly independent country versus the tendency to maintain Indonesian values, the latter requiring submission to collective societal norms. The cultural values—namely, the revolutionary spirit to be an independent nation and the nationalist enthusiasm that required young citizens to be restrained, loyal, and contributing to the nation—are reflected in the masculine norms of the literature. It can be argued that forms of masculinity constructed in a society are closely related to the dynamics of its sociocultural changes. In addition, this article challenges the monolithic association of masculine norms with domination, assertiveness, and individualism.

Keywords: masculinities, Indonesia, young adult literature, revolution, nationalist enthusiasm

Introduction

This article examines forms of masculinity represented in Indonesian literature for young readers published in the 1950s. The texts discussed in this study are narratives targeted toward children and young people from around ten to 18 years old.¹⁾ Unlike the abundant studies on women and femininities, men and masculinities have been relatively under-researched. Scholarship on gender has largely highlighted the impacts of patriarchy and

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1) In this article I sometimes use the more generic term “young people” to refer to children, adolescents, and youths. I use the term “children” when referring to young people who have not reached adolescence. “Youths” and “adolescents” refer to those aged between 12 and 18 years.

men's domination of women. However, studies on the complexities of masculine norms within patriarchal systems have been less researched. This has resulted in a view of masculine norms as being homogeneous and universal. Such forms of homogenous masculinities are associated with domination, muscularity, and rationality. As a result, sociocultural particularities influential in the formation of diverse masculinities tend to be sidelined.

In his seminal study on masculinities, R. W. Connell (2003) asserts the complexity, nuances, and ambiguities of what it means to be men. By studying different groups of men in Australia, Connell argues that masculinities are dynamic and contextual as they are contingent on a number of factors ranging from personal or individual to global.

The importance of social context in shaping and changing masculine norms is highlighted also by Chris Beasley (2005), Roger Horrocks (1994), and Shelly Errington (1990). Horrocks argues that the pressure to continuously conform to prescribed patriarchal masculinities can lead to despair and mental disturbance in men: "patriarchal masculinity cripples men" (Horrocks 1994, 25). Connell and Horrocks imply that normative masculinities are pervasive and hegemonic; therefore, they are harmful to both women and men. The pervasiveness of normative masculinities encourages men to conform to this ideal manhood to such an extent that it is felt to be the natural and proper way to be a real man (Beasley 2005, 229). The importance of social dimension in shaping masculine norms in a society is summed up by Errington thus: "humans are biologically unfinished and need human culture to develop into humans" (Errington 1990, 12).

Among the limited number of studies on Indonesian masculinities, very little attention is given to the representation of masculinities. Studies on Indonesian masculinities have focused mainly on limited ethnographic or sociological perspectives. This is in contrast to studies on Indonesian femininities, which are more varied in scope. Studies by Tineke Hellwig (1994) and Barbara Hatley (1997), for instance, have identified that stereotypical Javanese notions of womanhood (submissive, dedicated to family or husband, and sexually passive) are widely recurrent images in Indonesian modern literature. In the area of gender practices, Hatley (2002), Julia Suryakusuma (1996), and Saskia Wieringa (2002) have investigated different ways in which gender ideologies were promoted by ruling groups and how they were challenged by different gender practices.

Despite the limited sources on Indonesian masculinities, attempts to find information on the subject can be made by looking at how classical narratives about gender relations inform ideas of male norms. A useful source is provided by Helen Creese's study (2004) on the literature of the Javanese and Bali courts from the ninth to the nineteenth century. Through the investigation of classical court poetry known as *kakawin*, Creese shows that these poems are full of images of the virility of male heroes, which is

frequently associated with the acquisition of women: “sexual prowess, proven by the acquisition of women, is crucial to the all-powerful, conquering hero as is victory in battle” (Creese 2004, 196). It is clear from these examples that in terms of sexuality, males were the controllers and instigators, and their sexuality was meant to be displayed through the subjugation of women. Concerning the construction of the ideal male, a later prose version of the Sutasoma story puts it eloquently: “the basest man is made to marry by his wife, the mediocre man is wedded by his father and mother, but excellent is the man that marries through his conquest in war thus staking his life” (Creese 2004, 110).

The *kakawin* poetry tradition of Java and Bali examined by Creese is heavily imbued with cultural influences from Indian and Sanskrit traditions that flourished in pre-Islamic Java between the seventh and fifteenth centuries and were retained in Bali from the ninth until the late nineteenth century (Creese 2004, 4). Therefore, it is understandable that the classical poems pay special attention to the idealized and prescriptive norms of high-rank males. According to Creese, the presence of male descendants is vital in Hindu traditions because men have to perform appropriate religious rites and ceremonies devoted to their ancestors to ensure the well-being of the family lineage (Creese 2004, 71). Male, not female, roles are the crucial element in the continuation of these traditions.

Creese’s study indicates strong Hindu influences in the exaltation of physical prowess to mark high-rank masculinities in Javanese and Balinese courts. This notion is shared by Pam Nilan, Argyo Demartoto, and Agung Wibowo (2014) as well as Marshall Clark (2008). Using interviews with Indonesian men and TV advertisements respectively as the primary data, these two studies highlight the references to bravery and heroism as important markers of what it means to be men in Indonesia. Nilan *et al.* refer to heroic narratives, such as the one about the mythical Javanese warrior Gatotkaca, as sources of inspiration for young Indonesian people to exercise their manliness. Yet, they assert that this heroic masculinity is not permanently adopted by males. As males get older, authoritative but benevolent male norms are usually adopted. This is manifested in the figure of senior and fatherly men, or *bapak* (Nilan *et al.* 2014, 81).

In spite of the references to heroic, brave, and sometimes violent masculine norms that have been highlighted in the three studies discussed above, a study by Nur Wulan (2013) offers a slightly different finding about Indonesian masculine norms. Using literature for young people published in the post-Reformasi period as the primary data, Wulan argues that the notion of restraint, rather than norms based on heroism and violence, is a dominant form of masculinity represented in the literature. In Wulan’s study, the norms associated with senior or mature men (*bapak*) become important values that are consistently represented through the male characters in the texts studied.

The studies on Indonesian masculinities discussed above show that such masculinities are dynamic and dependent on a number of factors. Besides individual and particular factors, external factors such as globalization are also instrumental in the formation of masculine norms. It can be said that sociocultural changes in Indonesia have been significantly influenced by external or global forces. These changes include the escalation of nationalist zeal in the 1950s in Indonesia. The increasing nationalist awareness cannot be detached from the escalating spirit to be independent that was affecting newly decolonized countries around the world.

Nationalism is a good site to investigate gender relations. It is an area where collective goals and aspirations of a society can be identified. As the execution of nationalist projects often takes place in political fields, which are considered a public sphere, nationalism is often perceivably associated with men. This accords with Anias Mutekwa (2012), who argues that discourses on nation and nationalism are frequently gendered and masculinized. Masculine norms, which are inseparable from a society's cultural values, are consequently affected by this global nationalist force. However, Nira Yuval-Davis (1993) provides a strong argument for the pivotal and heterogenous roles of women in national collectivities. This means that the roles of women in a nation's collective goals are equally important.

My examination of the dynamics of represented masculinities in the context of nation and nationalism does not justify the association of men with issues of nation building. Rather, I expose the ways in which men and masculinities have been closely linked to nationalist issues. In this way, awareness can be raised about the extent to which men are associated with nation and nationalism.

The 1950s can be said to have been a significant phase in the history of the newly formed country of Indonesia. This period was under the Sukarno presidency, which lasted from 1950 to 1965. Escalating nationalist consciousness was a significant marker of the time. The nationalist and patriotic enthusiasm was frequently coupled with the embrace of change and the mentality of struggle for the sake of a better future. This revolutionary spirit can be traced back to the armed struggles against the Allied troops, who were perceived to be preparing the way for a return of Dutch authority. It was first expressed in the Battle of Surabaya in November 1945, an important symbol of Indonesian resistance to external forces attempting to take control of the former Dutch East Indies (Ricklefs 1993, 217). The ultimate supremacy of the Allies in the struggle for Surabaya at this time did not stop Indonesians from remembering the defiance and resistance of *arek-arek Suroboyo* (Surabaya youths). Although William H. Frederick argues that the Battle of Surabaya did not provide strong evidence of a "*pemuda* revolution" (Frederick 1989, 295), the militant *pemuda* (young men) opposition to the European forces was a

potent symbol for the forces of revolution.

The belief that the *pemuda* accelerated the establishment of a just and free Indonesia was a prominent ideal of Tan Malaka, an internationally known Communist and an early symbol of the Indonesian revolution. His revolutionary ideas aimed at the establishment of a “free and socialist” Indonesia. His uncompromising stance against fascism and imperialism accorded with the militant and revolutionary ideals of the *pemuda*. In line with his idea that a nonrational way of thinking (embodied, for instance, in Hindu-Javanese culture and mysticism) could hinder the progress of Indonesian society, Tan Malaka described his politics as being in opposition to those of Sukarno. In his view, Sukarno represented the older generation, who were influenced by the negative aspects of Hindu-Javanese culture (Mrázek 1972, 38–39).

However, another tendency in opposition to this forward-looking view remained visible in the sociocultural landscape of the period. The more conservative tendency included norms elevating the virtues of the family system: respect for elders, self-sacrifice for the benefit of family (also meaning the nation as a big family), and increased exaltation of so-called *budaya ketimuran* (Eastern culture) as opposed to *budaya barat* (Western culture). A strong familial ideology was internalized by Sukarno during the late phase of his presidency. By constructing the nation as a family, Sukarno placed himself as the head of the family, the father figure who played a central role in the family. This was apparent in one of his speeches, when he said he wanted “to propose the spirit of the Indonesian nation, the spirit of family life” (Jones 2005, 116).

Sukarno’s political formulations—such as the concepts of Demokrasi Terpimpin (Guided Democracy); Nasakom (an acronym for “Nasionalisme, Agama, Komunis” or Nationalism, Religion, and Communism); and Manipol Usdek (an acronym for Manifesto Politik: Undang-undang Dasar 1945, Sosialisme, Demokrasi Terpimpin, Ekonomi Terpimpin, Kepribadian Indonesia [Political Manifesto: The 1945 Constitution, Socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economy, Indonesian Identity])—proved to be political rhetoric incapable of fixing the ailing Indonesian economy. Sukarno’s political innovations that combined substantially different concepts, such as religion and Communism, appeared to be radical. However, they were skillfully created as political maneuvers designed to bolster the president’s own rule. For instance, when the influences of Communism were strong, Sukarno showed sympathy to the movement. This resulted in growing support from Russia and China. Nevertheless, in order to limit their influence in his administration, he did not include Communist personnel in his cabinet (Grant 1967, 65).

These opposing and self-contradictory tendencies are reminiscent of the ambiguities that characterized late colonial policies. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten (2000) and Susan

Blackburn (2004) shared similar findings about the ambiguities of the colonial administration's policies in the Indies with regard to gender matters. On the one hand, these policies reflected the paternalistic colonial mentality, which perceived colonized societies as being in need of the tutelage of the colonizer. On the other hand, they suggested a progressive and liberal outlook, which viewed the colonized as having the right to self-government and improvements in their well-being. What the two periods have in common is the struggle between the forces of change, seeking to improve existing conditions, and those that attempted to preserve the status quo.

During Sukarno's administration, the contradictory characteristics of the presidency represented the opposing natures of two political stages: Constitutional Democracy (1950–57) and Guided Democracy (1957–65). As Tod Jones (2005, 14) asserted, Constitutional Democracy was characterized by a liberal and broadly Western outlook that attempted to minimize state intervention in governance. Meanwhile, Guided Democracy was more inward looking and nationalist in its orientation (Jones 2005, 14).

The forms of masculinity represented in literature for young readers published during the Sukarno presidency in the 1950s and early 1960s maintain a strong degree of cultural continuity in the face of great political and social change. The texts discussed in this study are those published by state-sponsored and commercial publishers. As a form of gender ideology, masculine norms are first imposed by cultural agencies affiliated with the ruling power of a particular period. However, this type of masculinity may fail to gain normative status if larger parts of society resist and detach themselves from it. It is only confirmed as normative when many components of civil society accept, endorse, and also spread the ideal masculinity through cultural means.

Methods

The primary data for this study consists of narratives for young people that were published in the 1950s and early 1960s. The forms of narrative include novel, short story, and opinion. Most of the short stories and opinions are taken from newspapers having specific ideological inclinations, which grew significantly during the period. These newspapers had a special section for young people (adolescents). The varieties of newspapers studied in this article represent the varied political ideologies of the period, namely, nationalist, leftist, and Islamic inclinations. This is a good way to discuss the relationship between masculinity and political ideology. In total, four novels, 13 short stories, and two opinions are examined.

This article employs a number of alternative ways to identify ideal norms in chil-

dren's literature. They are derived and implied from a number of studies conducted by Claudia Nelson (1989), Wendy Michaels and Donna Gibbs (2002), and John Stephens (2002). Examining the ways in which male protagonists evolve in the narratives is a common method to identify how they deal with conflicts and go through trials and tribulations. A text can be said to further a form of masculinity that valorizes physical prowess if its male protagonist overcomes challenges using physical strength or by outdoing his enemies through physical fights. Meanwhile, the advancement of a less-centered masculinity can be found in texts that present the protagonist as having the ability to use negotiation skills in solving problems.

Another means to find masculine norms idealized in young people's narratives is by observing the gendered behavior of antagonists or villains. The difference between the good and the bad is frequently more clearly defined in children's literature than in literature for adults. This can inform us about what forms of masculinity are marginalized and not desirable.

The third means to identify ideal manliness in the narratives is by observing the reasons that trigger the gendered actions of the heroes. In the advancement of a less-patriarchal masculinity, for instance, male protagonists' actions are usually based on empathy toward others. More patriarchal actions are usually driven by self-interest to dominate others, show off one's strength, and win competitions.

Paying attention to the role of mothers and female characters, as well as the extent to which they influence the protagonists' actions and decisions, is an alternative way to discern masculinity norms being foregrounded in the narratives. A patriarchal text tends to minimize the presence and role of female characters. On the other hand, less patriarchal texts amplify the significant role of female characters even though the protagonists are male.

The last method used in this study to examine masculine norms in the texts is by examining how the male protagonists resolve disputes and conflicts: whether they tend to use negotiations, physical coercion, or even threats.

As this study attempts to construct a classification of masculine norms based on specific data, I do not use any existing models or forms of masculinity that have been formulated by previous scholars. In line with the notion that masculinities are plural and contextual, I argue that the uniqueness of Indonesian sociocultural contexts in the 1950s resulted in the formation of specific masculine norms and ideals. This will offer more authentic findings and arguments.

Depending on the content of the text, some methods may be used more intensively than others. This is because each narrative has a particular dominant element, which can be explored to identify the forms of masculinity being advanced in it.

Youths and the Development of Literature for Young Readers in the 1950s

Attempts to optimize the role of youths as an important element of the new nation are apparent in the increasing supply of reading materials for them. The expansion of new media for political propaganda was initiated by the Japanese during their wartime occupation. This new media largely comprised materials that were attractive visually as well as appealing to the auditory sense. Thus, forms of media such as pamphlets, speeches, posters, and broadcasting were some of the channels developed by the Japanese to influence people's thinking.

The use of media to convey cultural and political messages continued in the years after the Japanese occupation. This can be seen from the burgeoning of newspapers containing a youth section from the late 1940s. This shows that literature for adolescents or young adults started to be taken more seriously. It was at this time that the category of children's literature started to expand and include literature for older children or adolescents.

Starting from the 1950s, publications for young people became more diverse, particularly in terms of form and writing technique. A number of publishers besides Balai Pustaka emerged during the Sukarno presidency. These publishers, such as Djambatan, J. B. Wolters, and N. V. Nusantara, produced texts intended for young readers. In addition, the emergence of children's magazines, such as *Kunang-kunang* in 1949 and *Si Kuntjung* in 1956, added to the availability of reading material for children. The appearance of increasingly varied children's texts implies that young people started to be taken into account as potential readers and that their need for books was addressed more seriously.

The increasing availability of books for young readers opened up opportunities for the dissemination of cultural values. Books for young readers became a possible medium through which a distinctive Indonesian masculinity could be formulated.

Masculinity Characterized by Noble Character

A form of masculinity quite prevalent in the increasingly varied literature for the young is characterized by noble character. This is similar to the Javanese aristocratic masculinity of the late colonial era. According to Nur Wulan (2009) in her article about forms of masculinity represented in Indonesian young adult literature in the late phase of the Dutch colonial period (the first three decades of the 1900s), the literature foregrounded a masculine norm characterized by restraint. This ideal masculine type is characterized

by, among other qualities, an ability to restrain oneself from anger and worldly passions. Tales inspired by popular traditional folklore usually foreground this masculine norm. They can be found particularly in books published by Balai Pustaka and the children's magazine *Si Kuntjung*. Thus, until the 1950s and early 1960s the existence of Balai Pustaka continued under the new government, and its role as a supplier of "healthy" reading materials did not change.

Folktales published by Balai Pustaka and other publishers tend to minimize elements of Western masculinities associated with individualism, the cultivation of the mind, and a future-oriented outlook. Rather, they foreground a form of masculinity closer to that embodied in the heroes of the Javanese *wayang*. An ideal embodiment of the noble masculinity that combines martial skills and noble character is Arjuna. He is the ideal *ksatriya* in the *wayang* stories, and his noble qualities appear to have inspired the representation of male characters in folklore texts.

The maintenance of a harmonious society is the basis for the portrayal of male protagonists in *Si Kuntjung*. The magazine places emphasis on the construction of morally superior male protagonists. Rather than presenting its male protagonists as subjects with strong individual aspirations, *Si Kuntjung* emphasizes the nobility of being unselfish and altruistic. The advancement of a caring (*penyayang*) and submissive (*mengalah*) masculinity is apparent, for instance, in the short story *Djangan dilawan dengan kekerasan* (Do not resist with violence) (Machroni 1956, 9). The moral message conveyed in this text, as its title suggests, is that we should not resort to violence even when we are physically assaulted.

The presence of caring male protagonists is prevalent also in many other short stories, such as *Tahu membalas budi* (Knowing how to repay kindness) (Gt. M. Indra 1956, 1), *Senapan angin* (Air rifle) (Kak Al 1956, 6), and *Singa jang membalas budi* (The lion that knows how to repay kindness) (S. Pant 1956, 5). It is emphasized in these narratives that being caring toward both human beings and animals is rewarding: love for animals is honorable, and animals will reciprocate our kindness by helping us when we are in trouble.

The heavy emphasis on the moral development of children seems to be the main vision of *Si Kuntjung*. Moral superiority is embodied in the representation of a significant number of male characters in the texts. Qualities considered to be potentially damaging to the maintenance of moral superiority, such as greed, arrogance, and stinginess, are strongly condemned. For instance, a woodcutter in *Penebang kaju jang djudjur* (The honest woodcutter) (Chrysanto 1956, 8) is rewarded with priceless axes made of gold. The axes are presented to him by a fairy after he tells her honestly that the precious golden axes she has found do not belong to him.

The magazine's didactic mission is clearly seen also in one of the criteria for being an official agent of the magazine: "an agent should be a young teacher who is committed, honest, and interested in the well-being of children."²⁾ The impact of the mission on the structure of the narratives is that the narratives always end happily. Problems can be solved because the male protagonists are of good character, not because of other factors commonly associated with male qualities, such as physical strength and assertiveness.

The fostering of the social dimension in the presentation of male protagonists results in the marginalization of qualities related to individual aspirations. Male protagonists who boast of being superior and who are in the habit of accumulating individual possessions are punished. The absence of elements having to do with individual aspirations significantly differentiates male protagonists in *Si Kuntjung* from those of the prewar Balai Pustaka texts. Although the Balai Pustaka texts have a social dimension, they always make it clear that the male protagonists' keen determination to be successful financially and academically is something that readers should emulate.

The continuous presentation of morally sound male protagonists in texts intended for schoolchildren shows that this male norm was being projected as an ideal Indonesian masculinity. People and institutions involved in the production of children's literature, such as writers, teachers, and schools, clearly were attempting to disseminate this cultural value through the books they produced. Although children's literature is intended for young readers, it is mostly produced and written by adults. These adult producers—authors, publishers, teachers, parents—according to Torben Weinreich (2000) are "mediators" whose aim is to introduce child readers to cultural notions idealized by their society. In the words of J. D. Stahl *et al.*: "since children represent the future in any society, the approach that a culture takes to its children often epitomises what the culture considers to be of central and enduring value" (Stahl *et al.* 2007, 1).

The combination of notions related to military values—such as martial arts, loyalty, and discipline—and Javanese aristocratic norms accords with the basic values fostered through the Boy Scout movement. They can be found, for instance, in a compilation of short stories titled *Tjerita si Pai bengal* (The story of naughty Pai) (Nasjah 1952). In the short story titled *Tjerita si Rahim pandu* (The story of Rahim the Scout), the male protagonist realizes that his motivation in helping an old woman in an accident is not genuine. Rather than being motivated by empathy, he helps her because he wants to

2) This is taken from an advertisement on page 14 of edition number 6, dated September 1956. The advertisement seeks people who are interested in becoming agents for the magazine. The main criterion for becoming an official agent is: "Sebaiknja seorang guru muda jang giat, djudjur dan menaruh minat terhadap nasib dan kesedjahteraan anak-anak. Terutama jang mempunjai hubungan jang baik dan erat dengan sekolah-sekolah rakjat setempat."

show off the moral superiority of *kepanduan* (Boy Scout) members. It is his *kepanduan* uniform that he is wearing when the accident occurs, not his genuine empathy, that drives him to help the old woman. This violates one of the ten basic *kepanduan* tenets, namely, being genuine in thoughts, words, and conduct.

The furthering of a male norm that gives priority to social responsibility and good character is in line with social values that strengthen national identity and bind together ethnically diverse people. It was impossible to advance individualism and the achievement of personal aspirations at a time when values related to togetherness were considered pivotal to the construction of a common identity. Therefore, it is noticeable that familial values, such as mutual cooperation, brotherhood, and willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the family's interest, are being furthered in the texts. Familial ideology in relation to the construction of masculinity can be seen from the representation of a male protagonist as the protector or head of a real or symbolic family in which those values are the guiding principles. These communalistic ideas are enshrined in the state's ideological basis (Pancasila).

Masculinity Characterized by Collective Heroism

Collective heroism is another prominent quality of masculinities furthered in Indonesian children's texts of the period. This form of masculinity is marked by a high degree of loyalty to friends and willingness to sacrifice for them. What differentiates this masculine norm from the form of masculinity advanced in texts of the pre-war period is that it contains a significantly higher level of patriotism. Bravery in defending truth (*berani karena benar*) is furthered in more noticeable ways. This is apparent particularly in adventure stories published in the 1950s.

Adventure stories in the 1950s mostly foreground uncomplaining and obedient male protagonists. One example showing how even a naughty boy can be turned into a problem solver maintaining the order in a community is *Si Pitak pahlawan kecil tiga serangkai* (Pitak the little hero and the trio of friends) (R. Soekardi 1961), one in a series of stories about a boy named si Pitak. Si Pitak builds a close relationship with his friends, Aman and Amin, and the three declare their loyalty to the friendship. Their adventures include accidentally witnessing a murder committed by a member of a criminal gang. This happens when si Pitak quietly leaves home late one night to sail to a small island with Aman and Amin. At the end of the story, si Pitak and his friends are praised and admired for having defended justice and maintained the order of the village:

Dan dengan ini saya perkenalkan kepada khalayak ramai, Munir atau Pitak, sa-orang pahlawan kechil, pembela keadilan, penentang kejahatan, dibantu oleh dua orang kawan-nya Aman dan Amin yang ketiganya merupakan satu tiga-sarangkai, pengawas keamanan dalam kampung dan kota kita.³⁾

On this occasion, I'd like to introduce Munir or Pitak, a little hero, the defender of justice and fighter against crimes. He is helped by his two best friends, Aman and Amin. The trio are the keepers of security in our village and town. (R. Soekardi 1961, 84)

It can be seen that the text emphasizes si Pitak's successful attempts to restore the stability and order of the whole community, not the individual benefits that he can potentially gain.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the prevalence of themes of solidarity, loyalty, and heroism, as they clearly reflect the predominant spirit of the 1950s. In a number of works, these themes are highlighted through the male protagonists' adventures and their attempts to maintain order in their community. Examples of texts that display these themes are the three stories in the *Si Pitak* series by R. Soekardi.

Si Pitak pahlawan kechil tiga serangkai, *Si Pitak jauh di-rantau* (Pitak in a land far away), and *Si Pitak kerani muda* (Pitak the young clerk) share a common characteristic in their attempts to emphasize the importance of giving priority to the group's or community's interests. In the texts, most heroic acts are performed by a group rather than an individual. If they are carried out individually by the male protagonist, they are performed for the sake of the group's or community's interests.

The three stories in the *Si Pitak* series present the protagonist, Munir or si Pitak, as a naughty boy, yet a hero of the community in which he lives. All three texts demonstrate the bravery of si Pitak and his close friends in fighting against crimes that threaten the peacefulness of the community.

Revolutionary Masculinity

Revolutionary masculinity is a way of describing the images of masculinity presented in the youth sections of newspapers and children's magazines published from the end of the revolution to the early years of Guided Democracy.⁴⁾ It is a variant of masculinity characterized by a strong and vigorous patriotic spirit; and it is evident in the representation

3) The quotation is in Malay as the available sources of the *Si Pitak* series used in this chapter are the Malay versions published in Kuala Lumpur.

4) My selection of newspapers with sections for youths mainly follows Marina Paath-Simpson's bachelor's thesis (1986). Paath-Simpson examines the utilization of literature as a tool of propaganda by governments, and how it also functions as an articulation of ideologies in a given culture.

of male protagonists as well as the tone of non-narrative texts such as editorial remarks, news items, and the lists of special vocabulary that accompany these publications.

After the acknowledgment of Indonesia's sovereignty in December 1949, the number of publications and newspapers grew significantly. Edward C. Smith (1983) noted that in 1949 there were about 75 newspapers, with a total circulation of more than four hundred thousand. Three years later, in 1953, the number of newspapers had increased significantly to 104. The diversity of Indonesian political ideologies during this period is also reflected in the newspapers of the time. For instance, *Bintang Timur* and *Harian Rakjat* reflected leftist ideology, *Duta Masyarakat* was the voice of the largest Islamic party, *Merdeka* articulated nationalist revolutionary ideas, and *Indonesia Raja* was an independent anti-Communist newspaper.

Kunang-kunang was one of the children's magazines launched during the 1940s and 1950s. Published fortnightly by Balai Pustaka, the magazine's first issue appeared on February 10, 1949. In the editorial of the first issue, the magazine is described as replacing the earlier Balai Pustaka magazine *Sahabat Anak-anak*. With each issue consisting of twenty pages, the magazine contains a variety of subject matter ranging from short comic strips, short stories, and riddles to national and international news, short biographies of prominent figures, and explanations of important Indonesian terminology.

The general spirit of *Kunang-kunang* is optimistic and vigorous. This can be seen from the choice of prominent figures whose biographies appear in its issues, the descriptions of achievements that represent outstanding scientific progress, and the choice of Indonesian terminology explained in the magazine's vocabulary section. Except for Marie Curie, the short biography section of the first four issues is devoted to prominent male figures, including the Indonesian writer Sanusi Pane; Indian writer Rabindranath Tagore; 11-year-old Italian music conductor Pierino Gamba; Indonesian national hero Ki Hadjar Dewantara; and Imam bin Umar, one of the Prophet Muhammad's good friends. The only advertisement in these issues is for Blue Band margarine, with its prominent slogan *Pemuda sehat rakjat kuat* (Healthy young males, strong people).⁵⁾ This is asserted by pictures of physically active boys in the commercial. The vigor of the magazine is reflected also in the terminology listed in the vocabulary section. Most of the words explained here are related to the Indonesian revolution and the current political situation. They include *de facto*, *de jure*, *interim*, *mimbar*, *daulat*, *actief*, *blockade*, and *infiltratie*,

5) During this period, the "-a" form of words like *pemuda* and *saudara* was more commonly understood to include females as well. The gender division marked by the "-a" and "-i" endings became standard usage only later. However, the term *pemuda* in the advertisement is translated into "young males" instead of "young people" as it seems to refer exclusively to young males. This can be seen from the illustration in the advertisement.

terms that are usually associated with formality, authority, and penetration, all qualities generally related to masculinity.

Having a similar tone to *Kunang-kunang*, another children's magazine called *Kawanku* also calls on its readers to take an active role in building the nation. The content of the magazine implies that active involvement by young people will result in a stronger nation that can be competitive globally. A large number of articles, poems, vocabulary items, and stories in *Kawanku* suggest the importance of exploring the talents of Indonesia's young generation in order to develop the glory and dignity of the nation. The frequent inclusion of quotations, short biographies, and short articles related to international figures and scientific themes indicates the magazine's attachment to the spirit of progress (*semangat kemadjuan*) inspired by the achievements of Western rationalism. This is clearly illustrated, for instance, in an article titled *Kalau aku djadi wartawan* (If I were a journalist) (Suwardjo 1955, 1). In this article, Suwardjo describes the reasons why he wants to be a journalist: at a time of progress a journalist has a noble duty to enlighten people with news, just like a lighthouse giving guidance to ships in search of the harbor. The need for a progressive spirit in order to compete globally is apparent also in *Tjita-tjita ku* (My dream) (Achmad Nur 1955, 4). In expressions designed to inspire, Achmad Nur calls on his readers to work hard to achieve their dreams:

... kuingin ... mengadjak bangsaku madju, tegak membawa pandji kebesaran bangsa! Agar dapat duduk sama rendah, berdiri sama tinggi! Sedjadjar! Sederadjat! Bahkan melebihi bangsa-bangsa lain di dunia ini.

... I want ... to call on my nation to progress, to stand upright holding the banner of the nation's greatness! To be as low and as high as other nations of the Earth, on the same level, of the same rank, and even exceed them. (Achmad Nur 1955, 4)

Semangat kemadjuan is reflected also in the section on health, which frequently suggests that readers should maintain their health based on modern science, not on traditional myths. In short, the young generation of Indonesians are strongly expected to contribute actively to the cause of the nation's progress. This is summed up in John Stuart Mill's words, quoted in the second issue of *Kawanku* (1956): "Orang dapat membawa tjelaka pada orang lain, bukan hanja karena perbuatannja, tetapi djuga karena tak mau berbuat apa-apa [What can harm others is not just one's deeds but also one's unwillingness to act]."

Besides a community-focused *semangat kemadjuan*, individual expression seems to be encouraged in *Kawanku*. This is manifested, for instance, in the presence of themes related to emotional exploration, which is fuelled by dissatisfaction and the loss of loved ones. In a series of short stories titled *Ia dan kekasihnja* (He and his beloved), Kusumardi

tells the story of a teenage boy named Nung, who is discontented with the fact that there is still a big gap between the rich (upper class or *priyayi*) and the poor. As Nung is an artist, he channels his discontentment and restlessness into writing a diary, painting, and making sculptures. In spite of the fact that he himself is a *priyayi* boy, Nung condemns the exploitation of the maids in his house by his aristocratic relatives (Kusumardi 1956, 3).

The focus on the suffering of the poor indicates socialist influences, which were also significant in the 1950s and early 1960s. It also echoes the prominent cultural polemics between the so-called Manikebu artists and those having leftist inclinations in the later stages of Sukarno's presidency.⁶⁾

It is interesting to note that the values of the Boy Scout movement (*kepanduan/pramuka*) have a special place in *Kawanku*. George D. Larson records that the first Indonesian scouting organization, Javaansche Padvinders Organisatie (Javanese Boy Scout Organization; JPO), was founded in 1916 by the head of the Mangkunegaran palace, Soerjosoeparto. Like various other indigenous scouting organizations that burgeoned in Indonesia after 1920, JPO was strongly nationalistic (Larson 1987, 69). Soerjosoeparto himself was known as a nationalistically inclined leader of the Mangkunegaran kingdom who was actively involved in Boedi Oetomo before his formal appointment as the new ruler of the kingdom (Larson 1987, 63–65).

As it spread throughout the British Empire, the Boy Scout movement was adapted to suit the political aims of its leaders in different societies. An example of this adaptation can be found in British colonial Africa. According to Timothy H. Parsons, scouting in that region promoted a nationalist spirit of loyalty to independent nation-states rather than to the empire (Parsons 2004, 5). A similar phenomenon occurred in Indonesia, where scouting was a potential means of strengthening social cohesion. At a time when social order was a prerequisite for building a new state deeply affected by long periods of social chaos, the existence of a movement like the Boy Scouts played an influential role. This explains why the first national meeting of *kepanduan* since the colonial period, called Djambore Nasional, was held in the mid-1950s, on August 10, 1955 (Pak Tjarik 1955, 4).

6) Manikebu stands for “Manifes Kebudayaan” (Cultural manifesto). The acronym was popularized by artists who belonged to Lekra (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat; Institute of People’s Culture), the cultural organization attached to the Indonesian Communist Party, the PKI. In 1963 the tension between the two groups of artists reached its peak. The cultural disagreement was based on each group’s perception of what the arts should explore. The Manifes Kebudayaan artists held the view that art should contain “universal values” and not be used as political propaganda. In opposition to this, the Lekra artists advanced the idea that art should expose social realities, particularly issues dealing with the oppressed and the poor. For a more detailed explanation of the polemic, see Foulcher (1986).

This meeting was seen as the beginning of an important annual event in which *pandu* (Boy Scouts) from all parts of Indonesia would meet and pledge to uphold the state's principles of unity: one language, one nation, and one homeland (Pak Tjarik 1955, 4).

However, as the following discussion shows, the ways *Kawanku* reinterpreted the masculine norms advanced in the movement differed significantly from the narrative discussed previously (*Si Rahim Pandu*). The interest in *kepanduan* is shown by the presence of the *kepanduan* section in each edition of the magazine, reporting on the events held by the Indonesian *kepanduan*. Positive values of the Boy Scout movement are sometimes inserted into the section. At first glance, this seems to be contradictory to the emphasis on taking an active role and the encouragement of individual expression reflected in the contents of *Kawanku*. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that fostering this type of masculinity through the Boy Scout movement was beneficial to reviving the waning power of the British Empire in general and securing the position of the aristocratic class in particular. In Indonesia in the 1950s, the scouting movement was known to promote loyalty and obedience to the newly formed state. In this context, the constructions of masculinity *Kawanku* advanced in its 1950s editions fitted with the movement's locally adapted aims. As the magazine showed, values that were formerly upheld to promote submissiveness to an authority could now be furthered to strengthen the independence of formerly colonized and oppressed societies.

As in *Kawanku*, the literary sections for the young in Indonesian newspapers of the period further politically active masculinity. Tough and socially aware male subjects who are willing to take an active part in improving the nation's social conditions are consistently idealized in the texts. The toughness of this masculinity is manifested mainly in frequent expressions suggesting the need to be mentally strong and not easily surrender to the extremely difficult economic conditions of the period. In *Sikap, prinsip dan konsekwensi* (Attitudes, principles, and consequences) (Santani 1961, 3), an artist or literary critic is said to be not a real man (*banci*) if he does not dare to take a stand on issues concerning the Indonesian sociopolitical situation of the time.⁷⁾ This statement implies that an artist or literary critic is a male and the courage to give critical comments on existing social conditions is a gendered social task associated with a male's obligation.

Of the three newspapers discussed here, the masculine spirit in the youth section of *Bintang Timur* is the most pronounced. Having leftist ideological inclinations and

7) *Banci* is an Indonesian term for a male who dresses and behaves like a woman. In the Indonesian context it usually has a negative connotation as it is frequently associated with transvestites who offer cheap sex to males. *Banci* are often represented in the popular media as objects of ridicule. In some cases the term also negatively connotes males who do not behave according to normative notions of being male.

mostly exposing the suffering of the working class, unemployment, and the devastating impacts of poverty on family life, various items in *Bintang Timur* emphasize the need to be determined and confident in giving meaning to independence and to prevent the re-emergence of liberalism, feudalism, and capitalism. Despite the presence of a number of slightly sentimental short stories telling about the grief of losing loved ones during the revolution, many editorial remarks, essays, and readers' letters invite readers to write about topics that are closer to social problems. In one example of this kind of writing, Ansari's *Siap mewakili djamannya* (Ready to represent the age) (Ansari 1960, 3), it is suggested that the newspaper's section for young people should be dominated by patriotic writing. This is because young people were ready to speak up for independence and for the miseries that the ordinary people (*rakyat*) in the republic still suffered.

The association of devotion to the nation with masculine duty is reflected in a number of short stories that use as their setting the politically critical condition of the republic. In *Panggilan* (The call) (S. A. Sambas 1960), the narrator is disappointed by his girlfriend's marriage to someone else. She thinks he died taking part in the military operation to subdue the rebellion against the existing government. The title of the text suggests that participating in protecting the nation from disintegration is more than just an ordinary task for a young man. It is a patriotic and heroic call of duty that demands huge sacrifices, even including the loss of a loved one. What is highlighted in the short story is the value of devotion and the importance of being less self-centered. In other words, sacrificing a valuable possession for the cause of the nation is honorable. The loss of loved ones is nothing compared to the honor of serving the nation. Thus, although the call to serve the nation is considered to be a masculine duty requiring bravery and physical toughness, it is constructed on the basis of genuine devotion to the country. In a broader gender perspective, the same duty can also be associated with femininity, as loyalty and devotion have been culturally associated with norms of femininity.

In addition to heroic duty, the role of males in family life is also advanced in the youth section. The nationalist newspaper *Merdeka* presents a form of masculinity that is mostly related to a man's role in his family. Less political than the youth section of *Bintang Timur*, the section for adolescents in *Merdeka*, which is called *Pemuda Merdeka* (Independent youths), mostly contains reading material (poems, short stories, news) that revolves around family relationships, friendship, and love relationships among young adults. In general, the texts in this section highlight the indispensable role of the father as the breadwinner and the protector of the family. If a father fails to fulfill this role, the stability of the family will be threatened. For instance, *Ajah* (Father) (Sudiat 1962, 3) is the story of a woman who is angry with her husband for always coming home late. Although he has explained that this is because he is working overtime, the wife does not

believe him and suspects that there must be another reason. The story ends happily with the reconciliation of the couple after the husband takes the initiative to buy a bunch of flowers for his wife and she realizes her mistake. The reconciliation and the wife's understanding affirm the notion that men are in charge of the family's welfare. A harmonious relationship in the family can be achieved if there is trust in the ability of the head of the family. Similarly, peace and order in the nation can be maintained if people trust the leaders.

Despite the presence of texts highlighting the romantic side of relationships between husband and wife, as well as teen romance, the tone of *Merdeka's* literary section for young people in general advances a spirit of optimism in facing the challenges of the age. In one edition, the editor suggests that contributors should not use *Pemuda Merdeka* as a medium for escape from the harshness of reality by writing texts that are melancholic and sentimental. Pessimism in facing challenges should be avoided; the editor warns that this attitude has already afflicted the majority of young Indonesians.

The optimistic outlook is shared by *Duta Masjarakat*, an Islamic newspaper affiliated with the biggest Islamic mass organization of the period, Nahdlatul Ulama. Slightly more political than *Merdeka*, albeit not as straightforward as *Bintang Timur* in its exposition of the problems of ordinary people and opposition to Western capitalism and imperialism, the youth section of *Duta Masjarakat*, *Duta Teruna*, frequently employs the harsh economic and social conditions of the republic as the setting for its short stories. Compared to *Bintang Timur's* highly gendered association of the revolutionary spirit with masculine qualities, *Duta Masjarakat's* construction of masculinity is less rigorous. Coping with adversity in these stories highlights the Islamic notion of *takdir* (destiny) and the willingness to accept one's lot. This is conveyed through the representation of male protagonists who willingly accept their fate, even when it has a negative effect on their love relationships and economic circumstances.

An example of the furtherance of a religiously submissive masculinity can be found in *Takdir* (M. Dharto Wahab 1961). This short story presents a male protagonist who is broken-hearted after the death of his girlfriend. However, he realizes that he must accept his fate no matter how bitter it is, as it means that Farida, his girlfriend, was not the girl chosen by God to be his prospective wife.

In this way, *Duta Masjarakat* highlights the less assertive side of being male. In the July 4, 1959 edition, an editorial titled *Takdir* reminds readers to be stoical when experiencing failure. Belief in *takdir* is one of the six pillars of Islam (*Rukun Islam*). While advocating hard work and determination, the editor highlights the importance of believing in predestined fate when hard work fails to result in the desired goal.

In young people's literature of this period, a form of masculinity associated with

revolutionary spirit was constructed within a nationalist perspective. This means that the enthusiasm for change was disseminated in relation to attempts to strengthen national cohesion and unity. In newspapers based on a leftist ideology, such as *Bintang Timur*, the spirit for change was not fostered to encourage a rebellious attitude against the nation. Rather, it was ignited to make *pemuda* aware of social and economic injustice and sympathetic toward the suffering of marginal people. Readers might interpret the furtherance of revolutionary masculinity in the newspaper as part of a project to build a just Indonesia, consistent with the newspaper's mission to promote socialist values. In other ideologically inclined literature, being a revolutionary young man could also mean being mentally tough, religiously stoical, and optimistic in facing the challenges of life in a new nation. In short, what was needed at this immensely difficult time was collective awareness to build a more prosperous Indonesia. This could be achieved by maintaining nationalist loyalty and trust.

Conclusion

The period of the Sukarno presidency was a significant phase in the process of solidifying a national identity. This was the time when the so-called Indonesian national culture came into being. Forms of cultural expression, in this case literature for young people, actively contributed to building a national identity. The construction of ideal male norms was significantly affected by this nationalist vision.

The variety of masculine norms fostered in the significantly varied texts of this period, ranging from a less political and docile masculinity to a highly active and political masculinity, reflected the political dimensions that underlay the construction of masculinity. What seemed at first sight to be a less political masculinity, such as the form of masculinity advanced in *Si Kuntjung*, was actually highly political, since it was intended to strengthen the emergent state's social cohesion and advance national progress. The variety also reflected attempts to use literature for young people as a means to challenge the normative, less active, and docile masculinity associated with colonial cultures. Nevertheless, it can be said that the revolutionary-type masculinity was not intended to effect radical social change. Instead, it was constructed to support the nation-building project and solidify the newly acquired national identity that supported the authority of post-independence governments. This illustrates how the conservative tendency was also influential in the construction of the period's masculinity.

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