

School of Media, Culture & Creative Arts

**Constructing the Nation:
Representation and Children in Indonesian Cinema**

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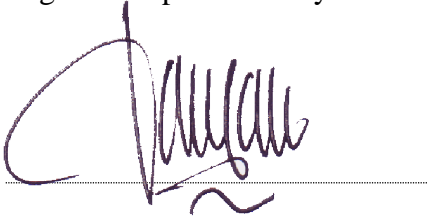
**This thesis is presented for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of
Curtin University**

September 2018

Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I Gusti Agung Ketut Satrya Wibawa', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

I Gusti Agung Ketut Satrya Wibawa

Date: 07 / 09 / 2018

Abstract

This doctoral thesis applies a critical national cinema perspective to the examination of the changing discursive construction of Indonesia as a nation through the representation of children in Indonesian cinema. Cinema studies scholars have generally observed that Indonesian film has been utilised to explore issues such as social class, the family, the authoritarian state, and national identity in relation to this nation's modern history of geopolitical and internal conflict (Said, 1991; Heider, 1991; Sen, 1994; Robert, 2000; Biran, 2009; Barker, 2011; Van Heeren, 2012; Paramaditha, 2014, Heryanto, 2014, Hanan, 2017). However, there has been limited dedicated scholarly attention given solely to the representation of children in this nation's cinema (Kittley, 1999; Strassler, 1999; Spyer, 2004; Wibawa, 2008; Allen, 2011; and Noorman & Nafisah, 2016) although the Indonesian child has been a favourite subject of Indonesian film directors and screenwriters. This thesis conducts close analysis of fiction films that place child characters in the main narrative, made in Indonesia from the colonial era to the period of political reform that followed the fall of the New Order, in order to examine the way these representations are constructed to convey cultural narratives and ideologies about Indonesia as a nation. As a creative-production research project, this thesis consists of an exegetical written component and a creative component (essay film), both of which address in their own way the same central research question concerning the discursive construction of the nation through the representation of children in Indonesian cinema.

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Acknowledgements

To my partner in life, Ida Ayu Mareti Sinansita Arika, and my precious Anresaditha Saraswati and Anresadiva Laksmidevi: because I owe it all to you. Always love, always hugs. Ajik & Ibu, and my lovely family in Bali: finally, I finish it. Papi & Mami: thank you for taking care the kids while you are here.

My supportive and thoughtful supervisors: Antonio Traverso and Thor Kerr. I am very lucky to have wonderful supervisors who provided invaluable guidance and feedback along my PhD journey.

I am grateful to Curtin University that provides me a scholarship as well as academic support from the faculty of Humanities; Robert Briggs, Gabby Hadow, Susan Leong, Denise Wood; Curtin Library and the learning centre: John Fielder, Michael Seats, Marilyn Coen. Many thanks.

Thank you for Rita Stegeman from Nederland instituut voor Beeld en geluid in the Netherland for the access for film Berdjoang which becomes an essential material for my research.

A very special gratitude goes out to all Kamila Andini and her teams at Fourcolours who allows me to focus my creative project on her films. Thank you also for Ms. Narina Sasrawasti who assists me to access Kamila's films and all administrative issues. A big thank also goes out to Ni Kadek Thaly Titi Kasih and Ida Bagus Putu Radithya Mahijasena and their wonderful and supportive families during the production of my creative project.

Sam Anindito, Danang Dono Saputro, Gayu Widyatmoko, Mahayana Wisnu: Thank you guys!! You guys are the best and the weirdest production team ever!

Thank you for Andisuari Sucahya for becoming the wonderful narrator in my film, and of course, thank you for all Balinese-braya in Perth: Erwin-Ayu, Eka-Andi, Kurniawan-Aik, Santika-Ayu, purusha-Rida, komang-emmy, Devi, Agung-

With a special mention to Kafein – Kajian Film Indonesia (the Association of Indonesian Film Scholars) for the support, for the interesting chat, experiences and also conferences. It is fantastic to have the opportunity to know all the members.

Prof Tjip, Bu Nyoman, Bu Cicik, IOPers and ex IOPers: I have done it. Thank you for your support and our friendship.

Last but by no means least, also to everyone in the Humanities-Postgrad hub, it was great sharing many things with all of you during last four years: Ryan Quinn, Julie Lunn, Yuanhang Liu, Aditya, Hersinta, Desideria, Sebastian Davies-Slate, and Shanshan Liu. Thanks for all your encouragement!

Finally, for all humans and non-humans that supported me and always be there in my ups and downs during my journey: thank you!

Introduction

This creative production doctoral thesis examines the changing idea of Indonesia as a nation through analysis of the representation of children in Indonesian cinema. As a creative production research project, this thesis adopts the research question model outlined by Barbara Milech and Ann Schilo (2004). In this model both the written exegetical component and the creative component of the thesis attempt to answer, each in their own way and through their specific methodologies, the same central research question. The central research question that guided this research is: how does the analysis of changing representations of children in Indonesian cinema contribute to a critical examination of Indonesia's shifting discourse of national identity? In addressing this question, the thesis argues that despite the changing ideas of nation visible throughout the history of Indonesian cinema, child characters have persistently been used to represent models of the nation in films made in Indonesia between the colonial era and the period of political reform that followed the fall of the New Order, with the exception of the work of younger filmmakers, such as Kamila Andini, who have begun to challenge stereotypical ideological uses by reconstructing a more traditional and genuine children's world, showing Indonesian children as themselves, as children living in their own world.

Therefore, the thesis firstly endeavours to examine competing ideas of Indonesian national identity through the analysis of changing representations of children in Indonesian cinema. Second, the thesis aims to scrutinise the theory of national cinema through the analysis of representation of children in Indonesian cinema. Third, the thesis also seeks to explore how children are depicted in the films of young Indonesian director Kamila Andini. To achieve these objectives, the thesis is organised into five exegetical chapters and a 25-min essay film.

Chapter One critically engages with two key theoretical frameworks within the field of film studies. Firstly, the chapter applies critical theorisations of national cinema to the discursive construction of the nation in Indonesian cinema, considering in particular key scholarly studies of Indonesian national cinema. Then, the chapter analyses global theories of children's culture and theories of world cinema in view of

articulating a framework of understanding of the particular ways in which the representation of children has populated Indonesian cinema. This chapter also examines whether and how national cinema theory can be appropriately applied to the case of Indonesian national cinema. Indonesian cinema's relatively long history shows evidence of how the Indonesian state has influenced and/or controlled both the production and theorising of national cinema, and specifically the use of children's screen representations in Indonesia. In this sense, Indonesian cinema has itself had a relative ideological impact on internal politics and geopolitics in this nation.

Chapter Two examines how the Indonesian nation is discursively constructed through the depiction of child characters included within the main narrative of films made under the Dutch and Japanese colonial regimes, between 1926 and 1943. The chapter analyses selected films of the colonial era that might have presented children in their narratives, including: *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* (1926), *Poei Sie Giok Pa loey Tay* (1935), *Anaknja Siloeman Oeler Poeti* (1936), *Rentjong Atjeh* (1940), and *Berdjoang* (1943). The chapter examines how early Indonesian cinema signifies a specifically colonial form of national identity through child characters located within narratives that describe the colonial socio-cultural context. The chapter goes on to show that films made in this period presented children within fragmented family models set against the hegemonic colonial family discourse. Furthermore, the chapter identifies in early Indonesian cinema a focus on depictions of the local context and the use of Indonesian language as markers of an embryonic sense of national identity, as well as references to emerging anti-colonial and national independence discourses.

Chapter Three examines Indonesian cinema's representation of children during the early period of the Indonesian nation state, following the Declaration of Independence (1945-1965). During this period, known today as the Old Order, the Indonesian government created a state film body *Perusahaan Film Negara* or The State Film Company (1950) to fund and support national film production. Film *Darah & Doa* (1950), made during this period by prominent Indonesian filmmaker Usmar Ismail, which has been identified as the film that would mark the beginning of Indonesian national cinema. The chapter analyses the films *Si Pintjang* (1951), *Djenderal Kantjil* (1958) and *Bintang Ketjil* (1963) in order to discuss the way in which the Old Order's cultural politics influenced filmic discourse and children's representation in the spirit

of encouraging an Indonesian national cinema industry. During this period, child characters are primarily present in the films to mobilise fictional narratives embedded in historical or actual events in Indonesia. These films emphasise the adult's role in front of the children as representatives of the supremacy of the state to restore order. Films with child characters during this period illustrate the post-colonial Indonesian state's discursive relationship with its citizens through allegories of adult-children interactions within the school and the family.

Chapter Four discusses representations of children in Indonesian films made after the end of the Old Order, during the regime known as the New Order (1966-1998). As the New Order's cultural politics profoundly affected Indonesian society, the chapter examines the state's ideological agenda's influence on the representation of children in Indonesian cinema. The New Order regime purposely contributed to the creation of the material and ideological conditions that encouraged the production of films with child characters in the main narratives in order to promote the regime's ideology of national identity, social development, and political stability. Although most Indonesian films made during the New Order continued the previous period's practice of using depictions of children as part of a broader discursive strategy to promote the state's version of national identity, this chapter shows that some films made during the New Order used child characters and representations of children's world to voice alternative versions of Indonesia. Thus, the chapter examines the following films: *Ratapan Anak Tiri* (1973), *Ratapan si Miskin* (1974), *Ari Hanggara* (1985), *Harmonikaku* (1979), *Juara Cilik* (1980), *Cita Pertiwi* (1980), *Hadiah buat si Koko* (1980), *Serangan fajar* (1981), *Si Doel Anak Betawi* (1973), *Langitku Rumahku* (1989), and *Daun Di Atas Bantal* (1998). Through close analysis the chapter demonstrates that, in spite of the emergence of elements of difference, the relative diversity of the child characters in these films is ultimately collapsed into a homogenous model of the New Order's ideal citizen, one who strictly adheres to order and authority, and regards disobedience as a moral problem. The chapter goes on to show that in the late period of the New Order, this constructed hegemonic ideology stimulated resistances which were articulated as critique through the voice of key characters in some of the films.

Chapter Five discusses Indonesian cinema's representation of children after the fall of the New Order and during the Reform era (1999-present). Considering the state's overpowering political and ideological hegemony during the New Order, the key question with respect to the nation's cultural politics during the Reform era is: what has remained amidst the change? This chapter shows that in Indonesian national cinema of this period the New Order's ideological practices have continued, in particular the use of images and tropes of children in the main narrative as models of the nation within narratives articulating nationalist discourses. Through the close analysis of the films *Jermal* (2008), *Kita Punya Bendera* (2008) and *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan* (2006), the chapter shows that although many post-New Order films have favoured depictions of cultural, ethnic and racial diversity, allegedly to challenge the New Order's mono-cultural ideological legacy, child characters have nevertheless continued to be used as symbols to project ideals of Indonesia as a nation.

The thesis creative component, the essay film, entitled *A Reading of Kamila Andini's Films*, explores the representation of children, in particular their performance on screen, in the following films directed by Kamila Andini: *The Mirror Never Lies* (2011) and *The Seen and Unseen* (2017).¹ The essay film argues that Kamila Andini's films challenge stereotypical, ideological uses of children as a model of nation by depicting children in a more traditional and genuine children's world. In her films, Andini shows Indonesian children as themselves, as children living in their own world, consistently creating borders and distances between the children and the adults. Andini's films constitute a fascinating cinematic look into the adventures and imaginaries of childhood, often also addressing the struggle of Indonesian children against personal and social loss. The essay film includes interviews with director Kamila Andini, child actors, voice-over narration, and footage from children's films and other media sources. The motivation behind this cinematic essay in the context of this thesis is to allow for a comprehensive visual understanding of the thesis's central argument about the representation of children in Indonesian films. An appendix after

¹ The original Indonesian titles of these films are, respectively, *Laut Bercermin* and *Sekala Niskala*. In this case, I'm using Andini's official English titles in the main text here because these are the titles used in the essay film.

the exegesis includes bibliographical details of Kamila Andini, production details of her films, the film essay's full narration script and the film essay's production credits.

This doctoral research project was conducted through the application of two key methodologies: close film textual analysis and creative film production (documentary/essay film). As a result, the thesis analyses selected films made in Indonesia within a rather broad historical spectrum, which have as a common feature the use of child characters in the main narrative, to consider how images and tropes of children are deployed in the films to engage with changing ideas of Indonesia as a nation. I take an account of Bordwell & Thompson's criteria for selecting the films that will be the primary sources for this research. The criteria will be: intrinsic excellence, influence, and typicality.

Intrinsic excellence: Some films are, simply, outstanding by artistic criteria. They are rich, moving, complex, thought-provoking, intricate, meaningful, or the like. At least partly because of their quality, such films have played a key role in the history of cinema. Influence: A film may be historically significant by virtue of its influence on other films. It may create or change a genre, inspire filmmakers to try something new, or gain such a wide popularity that it spawns imitations and tributes. [...] Typicality: Some films are significant because they vividly represent instances or trends. They stand in for many other films of the same type. (2003: p. 7)

All films in this thesis are narrative-fiction films that place children in its main narrative, despite the film's intended audience. The textual analysis of the films focuses on how the screen text, through narrative content and film form, produces ideological meaning. For this purpose, the thesis uses formal and narrative film textual analysis approaches as endorsed by Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis (1992), in which the focus is put on such elements as "story outline, plot structure, characters, point of view, and narration" (p. 70). In its analysis, the thesis examines the hermeneutic codes within the films' acting, audio and visual style, and narrative strategies. Brannigan (1984) states that the process of identification of hermeneutic codes depends on the acknowledgement of classical elements of interpretation, which enable a broad description of characters and audio-visual movement that come together to create a narrative in film.

Furthermore, Stuart Hall (2003) explains that a representational system constructs signs and interconnects them within a narrative to produce meaning. Hall describes several representation approaches, but it is the third, namely, the constructive approach that refers to the ideological meanings that are constructed within language, which constitutes the focus of this thesis analysis in regards to the construction of meaning in Indonesian films within the context of social-political conflict in Indonesia. Narrative analysis is also utilised in this thesis to explore the way Indonesian cinema depicts children through story outline, plot, point of view and narration. Story is defined as a “pattern of relationships between characters and the pattern of actions as they unfold in chronological order” (Stam et al, 1992:71). Thus, the story outline in narrative film analysis visualises a narrative structure and maps it against a chronological pattern. Stam explains that point of view is a general perspective of the filmmaker that is delivered through events and characters in the films. The point of view, furthermore, conveys the elements of films into the narration. The narration refers to the communication process from filmmaker to the audience through a set of selected, constructed images, the editing process, verbal dialogue, as well as performance. This thesis also relies on the notion of connotative coding introduced by Roland Barthes (1973). For Barthes, the connotative meaning of a particular sign system in cultural texts relies on spectator contextual knowledge and familiarity with the specific code. In this thesis’ close analysis of films, connotative and ideological meaning, which in Barthes’s theory refers to a higher level of connotation in complex sign systems, are interpreted both in relation to the films’ formal and narrative elements, and their position as products of a specific contexts both within Indonesian film history and Indonesian national politics and geo-politics.

In addition, the thesis also addresses its central research question creatively through the production of an essay film that explores Indonesian film director Kamila Andini’s construction of images of children in her films. This thesis’ production of an essay film as a creative form of film analysis contributes to the limited use of the cinematic form as a research tool in Indonesian cinema studies. The thesis uses the essay film form as a creative research methodology to provide a cinematic critical narration of the use of child images and stories in Indonesian films. The essay film form integrates documentary, fiction and experimental styles (Thompson, 2005). Philip Lopate (1996) explains that a cinematic essay voices the views of the filmmaker in the discussion of

a particular issue. This thesis' essay film also applies John Caldwell's (2008) model of analysis of film culture that combines textual analysis, interviews, observation of production spaces, and analysis of economic, political and industrial issues. Furthermore, Adrian Martin's collection of essay films² and Mark Cousins's *The Story of Children and Film* (2013)³ are two of this thesis' key essay film referents. Adrian Martin's essay films provide excellent illustrations of the multiple ways in which essay film can be utilised as a form of academic discourse. Meanwhile, Cousin's documentary provides an important example of an essayistic film that addresses the way child representations are featured in world cinema; particularly significant is Cousin's technique of blending the essay-like narration with the audio-visual elements.

² See his essay films at: <http://www.filmcritic.com.au/essays/index.html>

³ See film trailer at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZX9Z9oP85_w

Chapter 1

Theorising the Indonesian nation through the screen representation of children

1.1 Introduction

Indonesian history reflects political turnmoils that begins with Dutch and Japanese colonialism, follows with the establishment of the Old Order and then the New Order, and finally with the collapse of these systems and the transformation of the nation by the Reform Order. During these social and political changes, Indonesian cinema was constantly being developed, producing films within a wide range of genres. Many of these films present children in their stories, including the first feature film made in Indonesia, *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* (1926). Some scholars have found that the Indonesian state has politically utilised images of children to construct an idealised form of the Indonesian citizen (Kitley, 1999, 2000; Allen, 2011). Furthermore, the politics of culture in Indonesia has also institutionalised a notion of national cinema, which has been formalised and regulated, and which commonly appears in public commentary, scholarship, and institutional discussions of film and the film industry. The Indonesian discourse of national cinema was first formulated in the 1950s, being strongly linked to the institutional formation of Indonesia's independence (Barker, 2011). Thus, the idea of a national cinema continues to be exerted in Indonesia both as a form of recognition of the quality of domestic film production and as representation of the nation. This chapter, therefore, begins by conducting a comprehensive examination of how national cinema theory can be applied to Indonesian cinema in view of understanding how the Indonesian nation has been constructed in its cinema principally through representations of children.

Veronique Benei (2008) proposes an interesting relation between the nation and children as its citizen, incorporating the national value of good citizenship (p. 72). In her perspective, amidst the changes of the Indonesia's political regime, children are consistently forced to convey the constructed identity of ongoing regime. Thus, Indonesian cinema's relatively long history within the dynamic of political events in this nation has influenced both the theorisation of Indonesian national cinema and the utilisation of children's images in it. This chapter argues that the application of global

national cinema theory to the analysis of Indonesian films shows that the representation of children in Indonesian cinema consistently supports the discursive construction of the nation in spite of this nation's ongoing and significant historical transformations.

The chapter starts by examining critical theorisations of national cinema in relation to the specific problem of the construction of the nation. It contextualises the concept of national cinema by considering how the use of images of children on screen relates to a nation's social and political change. In this sense, the chapter analyses global theories of children's culture and world cinema in view of understanding the particular ways in which the representation of children has populated Indonesian cinema. Furthermore, the chapter examines how the concept of national cinema might be relevant in the study of Indonesian cinema and the way representations of children have been deployed within it as a discourse of Indonesian nationhood.

1.2 Cinema and the projection of nationhood

National cinema has been deployed as a critical category for the analysis of the work of filmmakers known for representing the culture of a particular nation. However, while some film scholars have used the idea of "nation", they have often failed to critically engage this concept through their analysis of the film text (Hjort & Mackenzie, 2000). In addition, due to the weakened primacy of the nation-state ideal in an increasingly globalised world (Anderson, 1991; Hall & Gieben, 1992; Gu  henno, 1995; Balakrishnan, 1996; van Kersbergen, 2000), the concept of national cinema also appears to have lost its relevance. Therefore, a critical reassessment of this area of study is required.

A critical discourse on national cinema will acknowledge the limitations of this concept, which can reduce the complexity of cinema to a set of national boundaries. Andrew Higson (1989, 2000, 2006, 2007) and Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (2006) challenge the notion of national cinema by underlining its limited capacity to explain the complexity of contemporary cultural production. Higson states that "cinema never simply reflects or expresses an already fully formed and homogenous national culture and identity" (1989, p. 44). He proposes to understand national cinema

in terms of an active process of construction of national identity, arguing that the concept of national cinema often turns the diversity of a nation into “a finite, limited space, inhabited by a tightly coherent and unified community, closed off to other identities besides national identity” (2000, p. 66).

Furthermore, the current complexity of industrial processes of film production contributes to the problematic nature of the national cinema concept. According to Ezra and Rowden, with the increasing cross-border character of film production, financing, distribution and reception, there is less engagement with a particular national identity. Thus, they suggest that the notion of “transnational cinema” should be considered as a preferable “conceptual tool within the evolving field of film studies” (p. 1). They argue that the concept of transnational cinema recognises film publics who “go beyond the desire for [...] consumption of national narrative[s] that audiences can identify as their ‘own’” (2006, p. 3). These critical discourses have placed the concept of national cinema in a dynamic position, moving beyond unproblematic ideas of fixed narrative, audio-visual representations of a nation’s cultural heritage. Thus, with the increased globalisation of the world, a process that includes the film industry, a critical discourse of national cinema opens up the possibility of exploring what is beyond the national in cinema.

National cinema theory, indeed, is less useful in the examination of films co-produced by two or more countries or made in one country by foreign film directors. However, Higson’s and Ezra and Rowden’s accounts of national cinema theory can also be utilised to study film production and consumption within national boundaries. Ezra and Rowden, for example, acknowledge the idea that a national cinema can function in a “dialectical engagement” with transnational cinema. Similarly, while Higson challenges the limited framing of the national cinema model, he suggests that national cinema can be articulated through a film culture that “accommodates diverse identities, images and traditions” (2006, p. 23). Higson’s thesis makes an important point about national cinema’s restricted scope; however, there are limits to how far this thesis can be taken. Indeed, Higson fails to consider the extent of the great diversity of film cultures in different countries. Higson’s argument also fails to consider that in some countries film culture might change as a consequence of social and political changes. On the contrary, national boundaries should be seen as one of the outcomes of a

dynamic social and political process that constantly affects the cultural practices of a nation, including its film culture. In addition, a nation's own film culture is not a homogenous expression; countries rather have diverse internal film cultures, which might be different to and even conflicting with one another. However, Higson's account provides a fundamental transformation of perspective in defining national cinema as a wider and more flexible framework of interpretation. As a result, the theory of national cinema should not limit its discursive scope merely to a restrictive national border paradigm. It also provides a view to accommodating contemporary issues in the analysis of a nation's film production. Thus, the notion of national cinema in this thesis will not merely refer to a particular construction of national identity but also to a range of discourses on local, regional, national and transnational identity as these are engaged with in the cinema.

As discussed by Higson, while the discourse of national cinema is not entirely adequate in describing contemporary film cultures, it is still useful on the condition that it "accommodates diverse identities, images and traditions, and it is undoubtedly important to promote films that deal with the culturally specific" (2006, p. 23). There are several justifications for Higson's argument. First, the term "national" in national cinema should have greater flexibility in order to prevent a mere ideological alignment of cinema with nationalism. Second, national cinema should be understood as a dynamic process. Higson explains that the traditional notion of national cinema fails to account for contemporary international film co-productions, transnational filmmakers, worldwide film distribution, and global audiences, as well as the fact that a nation's cinema is not merely one particular period in that nation's film history. Therefore, Higson seeks to reframe the notion of national cinema in a more accommodative and holistic way. Indeed, national cinema should be seen holistically as an open, diverse cultural practice, always influenced by its changing social and political context. Thus, Susan Hayward's (2000) discussion of national cinema can be considered as a useful contribution to the debate.

Hayward points out that national cinema "should not conceal structures of power and knowledge but [...] should function as a *mise en scene* of scattered and dissembling identities as well as fractured subjectivities and fragmented hegemonies" (2000, p. 101). According to her, national cinema should be seen as a mixture of the elements

of national culture, which is “a product of nationalist discourses and is based in the principle of representation and (of course) repression” (p. 98). Hayward traces the discourse on national cinema by proposing the idea of the nation as a “collective individual” (p. 89) with “shared memories of some past or pasts that can mobilize and unite its members” (p. 90). Like Higson, Hayward proposes a new understanding of national cinema as “a subject and object of knowledge” (p. 101), reframing the concept of national cinema as the site of a discursive national identity. Furthermore, Hayward highlights the way a nation and its national cinema can function as subject and object, whereas a cinema reflects a nation’s conundrum through a set of narratives, thus projecting Benedict Anderson’s idea of a nation as an imagined community (1991). According to Anderson, the nation is socially and culturally constructed by the people who identify themselves as part of that group. Amidst the nation’s diversity, its members acknowledge their connected similarities; a recognition that is an essential foundation for the nation (Anderson, 1991). Thus, the nation in national cinema is a hybrid territory that occupies many cultures, discourses, ethnicities, and the various elements of society.

Hayward’s (2000) reframing of the theory of national cinema will be significant in this thesis in view of reclaiming this concept for the analysis of Indonesian cinema. Following Hayward’s suggestion to write national cinema “deep[ly] into the pathologies of national discourses” (p. 101), this thesis analyses Indonesian film texts considering both the critique of an essentialist idea of cultural identity (Hall & Du Gay, 1996) and the cultural, social and political context of Indonesia’s troubled contemporary history (Anderson, 1990; Sen & Hill, 2000; Anderson, 2001; Hill & Sen, 2011; Jones, 2013; Bourchier, 2014; Heryanto, 2014). Hayward’s conceptualisation provides a flexible framework for the analysis of the cinema of socially and culturally complex nations, such as Indonesia, a multicultural nation that has different film cultures. Additionally, Hayward’s account of national cinema provides this thesis with a critical framework to elaborate on the way the use of images of children in Indonesian cinema has contributed to the discourse of Indonesia’s national identity.

Hayward’s idea of national cinema, in this regard, borrowing Paul Willemen’s (2006) expression, becomes the representation of a “delineated set of practices caught within, among others, the dynamic besetting and characterising a national configuration” (p.

42). Willemen proposes to see national cinema as “a question of address rather than a matter of the filmmaker’s citizenship or even of the production finance’s country of origin” (2006, p. 36). He suggests a transformation of the classical terms used to describe national cinema into a more adaptable expression of contemporary issues in film production. Furthermore, Willemen suggests that, while nationalism refers to the rigid, firm, and permanent boundaries of nation, national cinema refers to subjectivity and the fluid boundaries of cultural practices. However, Willemen also underlines the fact that each nation will have its own issues and range of complexity. In his words: “what may be cinema in one country may not be so in another” (2006, p. 4). Willemen’s idea of national cinema demands a dynamic understanding of the relationship between cinema and nation, one that acknowledges the diversity of the social, cultural and political domains. Hence, understanding the socio-historical context of the Indonesian film industry is significant for this thesis’ textual analysis of national identity discourses in Indonesian films. Whereby most scholars of national cinema rely on the discussion of European and US films, Indonesian cinema reflects this nation’s own specific historical experiences and socio-cultural characteristics.

In addition, Jung Bong Choi (2011) argues that it is essential to understand the complexity of national cinema as it conveys the holistic values of film cultures representing the dynamic discourse of a nation. According to Choi, national cinema reflects a complex discourse of plurality and diversity of identity against the classical conception of the single, sole identity of the nation. Choi argues that

National cinema is undoubtedly an idea capable of animating individual subjects, whose beliefs and actions can/do materialize what the idea of National Cinema represents [...] National Cinema in this respect, is a compound of subject-constituting ideologies, institutional embodiments of those ideologies and a host of organized practices enacted by the conceptual and institutional establishment. (2011, p. 184)

Choi proposes that national cinema should be directed to focus on the “cultural labour of nationalizing cinema” (p. 186). Furthermore, arguing in favour of the national cinema concept, Choi suggests that “national cinema gives birth to subjects who [...]

set national cinema in motion through their organised actions, practices and rituals” (p. 184). Thus, Choi’s discussion also highlights the necessity of understanding national cinema as a complex discourse. He proposes the idea that “nationalising practices of cinema register the patterns, traces, and symptom of transnationality” (p. 189). Choi suggests that national cinema could be discovered as an idea that represents the perspective of the nation in the cinema. Thus, by applying Choi’s argument to this thesis’ analysis of Indonesian films, the discourse of national cinema in this nation involves collective perspectives, including the filmmakers’ and the state’s definitions of nation.

Thus, in this thesis the concept of national cinema is not defined as the filmic representation of a nation’s distinctive identity, but rather as the composite amalgamation of a nation’s film culture with the nation’s diverse, competing identity discourses, which, as stated by Anderson, are populated by the nation as an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991). The nation in national cinema is then to be understood not merely as a banal national symbol, but as this complex of identity discourses that appears in the cinema.

Changes in the state’s political ideology often are reflected in changes to a nation’s politics of culture, and these shifting orientations are also negotiated within the nation’s cinema. This process is not merely caused by the direct political intervention of the state, but also by the influence of commercial and business forces. The wide range of potential orientations of the discourse of national cinema is accommodated in the seven models or types of national cinema proposed by Stephen Crofts (2006).⁴ In this sense, the idea of national cinema should be interrogated not only through theoretical discourse but also the consideration of historical and political perspectives both within the nation and in intercultural relations with other nations. To underline the co-existence of multiple ideas of nation within a critical conceptualisation of

⁴ Stephen Crofts categories national cinema into: European art cinema; third cinema; third world and European commercial cinemas; anti-Hollywood intervention cinema; Hollywood imitation cinema; totalitarian cinema; and regional and ethnic cinemas. Crofts’s models of national cinema represent seven diverse types of film production that differentiate themselves from Hollywood’s method of mass production. Croft’s framework is not only useful to understand the diverse models of national cinema emerging around the world, more generally, but also how some of these models are particularly recognisable in countries with very dynamic socio-political structures and film cultures, such as Indonesia.

national cinema, Nanna Verhoeff's (2006) thesis on national cinema offers some insightful reflection.

In her study of early cinema, Verhoeff describes the concept of the nation in national film as a dynamic overlap of three ideas: "the national, the nationalist and the nation-ness" (2006, p. 19). While Verhoeff's thesis initially only applied to the study of early western films, these three semantic layers are conceptually useful to understand film culture's complexity within all national cinemas. According to Verhoeff, the national refers to the place of origin of the film narrative, which is a result of the interaction between nations. This means that Indonesian films can be identified as such because of the fact that they are produced by Indonesians or in Indonesia. Within this framing, Verhoeff argues, a nation's interaction involves "a sense of belonging and of cultural ownership," which as a result produces the nationalist and the value of nationalism (p. 160). Furthermore, the nationalist and the value of nationalism develop into a sense of identity, which can be understood through the concept of nation-ness and can be used to distinguish one national film from another. Verhoeff's notion of the national in film clearly indicates that there is a relationship between nationality and identity. She underlines how film holds a "constant interaction between nationality of films to identity in films" (pp. 160–161). Expanding Verhoeff's argument, there is a definite need for exploring the specific ways in which national identity is represented in the cinema of particular nations. In this thesis, Verhoeff's theorisation of nation, nationalist, and nation-ness offers a critical perspective through which to understand Indonesian national cinema, which, accordingly, is not only about Indonesia as *a locus in quo*, that is, the location of the film being produced, but also about the socio-historical context of the emergence of film narrative that projects a sense of Indonesian-ness.

Nation-ness, in this context, can be projected through the image of children in cinema. In her study of children and nationalism, Sharon Stephens (1997) suggests that "just as childhood, national identity does not develop naturally or inevitably out of pre-existing commonalities of territory, language, religion, customs or world views" (p. 6). On the contrary, the state utilises cultural elements created in the community to achieve an idea of national identity. In view of propounding a critical national cinema perspective on the representation of children in cinema, the next section considers

theories of children's representation in world cinema that articulate ideas of the child in terms of discourses of nationhood.

1.3 Children, cinema and nationhood

Children have been represented in cinema through a wide range of depictions, from the classical innocent creature to the state political agent. Henry Jenkins (1998) asserts that the myths of children's innocence disconnect real children from their own will, thus turning the image of the child into the perfect form to symbolise adult desires and concerns. Traditionally, children in film and television have been represented as innocent creatures (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 1995; Konigsberg, 2000; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004). In fact, numerous academic studies describe the idealised representation of innocent children as common in mainstream cinema and television, which mostly depict traditional values of children and the family (Konisberg, 2000; Kramer, 2002; Tanner, 2003; Giroux, 2004). Despite this traditional image of the child as an innocent figure, scholarly works on children's representation in cinema demonstrate that children have been portrayed in a rather diverse range of forms. Contemporary films with children as central characters often explore complex issues that are traditionally defined as adults' problems (Kummerling-Meibauer, 2013). This complexity informs the use of representations of children in film as a strategic approach for the expression of adults' authority (Burman, 2008).

Similarly, Stephen Kline (1998) underlines that children's culture is dynamic, fluid, and easily changed or intervened upon by society. Taking account on Henry Giroux's argument, children's culture refers to a domain where "entertainment, advocacy and pleasure meet to construct conceptions of what it means to be a child occupying a combination of gender, racial, and class position in the society" (1994 ; p. 65). Children's culture, both according to Jenkins (1998) and Kline (1998), depends on how society constructs and projects its ideas of children. While children's culture refers to children's artefact and social negotiations, the representation of children refers to the way the images of children are used and constructed through cinema to deliver articulated messages. The changes in the structures of society will always affect children's culture, with the political society readily embodying ideology through

depictions of children and the state promoting children as the most representative citizens, while often using them to deliver nation building messages.

In her examination of the theme of missing children in non-mainstream, commercial cinema, Ema Wilson (2003) argues that in these films child characters are utilised to represent the fears as well as the desires of the contemporary family. Meanwhile, Timothy Shary (2012) demonstrates a trend by which films in the United States feature child characters within stories that represent complex issues. He outlines a progression from depictions of well protected children within the family to wild, rebellious children within their social milieu, and to responsible adolescent characters facing complex circumstances and experiences. The work of Wilson and Shary suggests a sophisticated understanding of how children are portrayed in cinema; however, they are respectively limited to analyses of Western arthouse and independent films, and commercial US films, all of which have markedly different characteristics in relation to films with children as central characters from other nations, particularly those with different socio-historical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Vicky Lebeau (2008) discusses childhood's historical meanings and its impact on contemporary cinema. She argues that children in contemporary cinema feature as attractive figures that invite questions about the adult desire that is involved in the construction of ideas of childhood. Similarly, Karen Lury (2010a, 2010b) describes children in film as the means to an exploration of complex issues about adults' troubled childhoods and sexuality. In their respective studies of children and film, Lebeau and Lury conclude that child characters are used in cinema mostly to represent social otherness and powerlessness. However, they do not attempt to discuss the broader cultural and ideological context of the representation of children in film but limit their understanding of children's portrayal as a product of the filmmaker's perspective. For Lebeau and Lury, depictions of children on screen do not contribute greatly to symbolising or constructing nationhood.

Peter Pozefsky (2010) describes the father-child relationship as depicted in Russian films as a symbol of the unhappiness of the generation who grew up under Stalin.⁵

⁵ Pozefsky examines several Russian films within the period of transition of the former Soviet Union to contemporary Russia, such as *My Friend Ivan Lapshin/Moi drug Ivan Lapshin* (1984),

According to Pozefsky, the discourse on fatherhood and childhood in Russian Cinema can indeed be linked to the notion of nationhood. He also details how Soviet cinema portrayed children as innocent individuals who go on to learn a life-lesson imbued in Stalinist ideology. In a similar study, but on German cinema, Ute Wolfel (2013) argues that father-child relationships are extensively used in DEFA-Germany films to symbolise the state-citizen relationship, whereby a child protagonist represents an idealised citizen within a changed state.⁶ Both Pozefsky and Wolfel suggest that a connection between nationalism and childhood is the most common ideological foundation of the use of child characters in film.

Thomas Sobchack (1989) describes how onscreen children in Early British cinema symbolise a depressed social power set against the powerful, authoritarian upper class that deludes national identity. This cinema presents rebellious child characters who confront the rich to symbolise the struggle of British citizens to reclaim their political right and restore their identity as a nation. Children, claims Sobchack, are pictured in these films as pure, with no political intention, but as the new hope for the nation. Similarly, Jaimey Fisher (2001) argues that children in German cinema represent the value of anti-conservatism, which projects the nation's historical foundation into the future. Children in German cinema, Fisher adds, are pictured as the bond between the various components of the nation, while being used to project the state's message that the nation belongs to the loyal citizen. Both Sobchack's and Fisher's studies focus on ideological aspects of the cinematic depiction of children, which serve to connect the different internal elements of the nation. In the context of Indonesian cinema, this ideological function of children as central characters is also one of encouraging a bond among the different social and political segments of the Indonesian nation; they are positioned in the narrative to emphasise national unification, which might potentially reduce social and political conflict.

Furthermore, the focus on screen children represented as a model of nation can be found in: Donald, 2005; Coenen, 2011; Weng, 2012; and Rajagopalan, 2013. Stephanie H. Donald (2005) argues that since late 1980 Chinese cinema has presented

Repentance/Monanieba (1984), *The Inner Circle* (1991), *Burnt by the Sun/Utomlennye solntsem* (1994), *The Thief/Vor* (1997) and *Khrustalev, My Car!/Khrustalev, mashinu!* (1998).

⁶ Ute Wolfel examines German films made by DEFA from the 1980s.

children as ideal citizens and projected as role models for the future of the country. These idealised citizens, according to Donald, seek economic success, display a strong ideological loyalty to their nation, and express an iconic sentiment for a better future for China. The narrative of childhood in Chinese cinema, Donald goes on, also represents a dynamic of social and economic growth in China and, therefore, a greater China is symbolised by successful children. While Donald does not explicitly claim that China's authoritarian policy directly initiates this image, it is plausible to assume that the Chinese state's ideological apparatus strongly contributes to the shaping of depictions of children in cinema. Given that in Indonesia similar ideological policies were developed, mainly during the New Order's regime (1967-1998) (Sen, 1994; Jones, 2013; Heryanto, 2014), in some cases the Indonesian state has deliberately used children characters in film to convey the state's model of ideal citizen, as this thesis will show.

Similarly, Miaowei Weng (2012) challenges the classical portrayal of children as the weakest and least reliable segment of society and finds that Spanish cinema of the Franco era projects independent and resourceful children in the narrative to signify Spain as a strong post-conflict nation. Childhood is, according to Weng, framed in these films as a challenging territory where competing powers struggle, while the state occupies the dominant role in order to educate the child-citizens. In this sense, children are constructed as strong and independent characters, moving beyond the period of reconstruction and the painful memories of Spain's civil war. In the films, states Weng, children spread positive values and contribute to building a new future for the nation. In addition, Jayashree Rajagopalan (2013) proposes that children in Indian cinema in the period 1980-2000s are avatars for the nation's new hope for a better future. Rajagopalan argues that child characters in Indian films are "primary focalizers and radical action-takers. They delve into themes inspired by socio-political realities, revealing ideologies that are essentially hopeful" (p. 11). Rajagopalan shows that children in Indian cinema project the complex issues that challenge the nation through their subversion of the image of innocence and powerlessness. He states: "Adults need not always control children, because children are capable of seeing beyond everyday assumptions; they can visualise a world without social inequalities and moral corruption; they can make their own choices". (2013, p. 18) Both Weng and Rajagopalan argue that the traditional stereotype of children as powerless and innocent

is transformed in cinema into a less controlled figure within the adult society, one that equally represents a dynamic, developing nation. These studies also suggest that child characters are utilised in these films to represent narratives of nationhood, recollect the memory of the nation's past, and project the future of the nation. While these studies focus on one particular era in the history of a nation, this thesis proposes comparatively to explore how in the case of Indonesian cinema children have been pictured across different periods of the nation's tumultuous modern history.

Someone who has studied the transformation of children's identity across three different periods of a national cinema's history is Jennifer Coenen (2011), who argues that children's images in German cinema have been used to symbolise national identity and the idealised citizen through narratives of national reconstruction and collective social memory. She explains that German filmmakers have consistently utilised depictions of children as part of a discourse about the emerging family's mission to rebuild society and re-establish the nation's identity within a global context. Coenen examines the transformation of children's identity in selected films from three different periods of contemporary Germany, suggesting that in the films children are pictured in various ways depending on the period of the filmmaking. According to Coenen, children in post-war German films, for example, are placed within the narratives as spiritual guides for German audiences, while at the end of the Cold War children are pictured in the films as ambassadors for a unified German nation moving into the future. In terms of national identity, Coenen argues that depictions of children are used in German cinema as a bridge for the experience of a collective social memory of Germany as a transformed nation. Coenen's study is a useful reference for this thesis as it shows that social and political turmoil influences the way children are represented in a national cinema. Thus, in regards to Indonesian cinema, this thesis also argues that a process of transformation of the representation of children's identity can be identified throughout the history of Indonesian cinema vis-à-vis Indonesia's own history of social and political turbulence. Accordingly, the analysis of Indonesian cinema can be placed within specific intra-national historical circumstances and amidst a broader international context of geopolitical conflict and transformation, as it will be addressed in the following section.

1.4 Defining Indonesian national cinema

The historical perspective, as suggested by Anderson (1991), provides a fundamental understanding of the narrative of the nation state. In this thesis, national cinema is thus located as a social practice within Indonesia's shifting social structure through a long history of ideological and geo-political unrest. In this sense, through a historical chronology structure the thesis will examine the changing narrative and formal ways in which Indonesian cinema has represented children. Thompson and Bordwell (2003) argue that analysing film from a historical perspective provides the opportunity for a comprehensive understanding of cultural practice within society. They claim that "by studying the social and cultural influences on films, we understand better the ways in which films may bear the traces of the societies" (2003, p. 1).

In order to explore the representation of children in Indonesian cinema from a historical perspective, this section will first outline a historical chronology of Indonesian cinema. Two key references to be relied upon here, among few existing sources on the history of Indonesian cinema, are Misbach Yusa Biran's *Sejarah Film 1900 – 1950: Bikin Film di Jawa*⁷ (2009) and *Shadows on the Silver Screen: A Social History of Indonesian Film* by Salim Said (1991), both of which address Indonesian cinema's history comprehensively.

Misbach Jusa Biran (2009) claims that film culture started in Indonesia when the first film was screened in 1900 in Batavia (Jakarta). Film production in Indonesia began later on, with the establishment of the first film house in 1905 and the first film production company in 1911 in Indonesia. The film company mostly produced documentaries, and the film theatres showed foreign films. The first feature film made in Indonesia, *Loetoeng Kasarung* (1926), which was based on traditional Sundanese folktales, was unsuccessful in catching the local audience's attention. Salim Said (1991) claims that this was so because during the gap between the first film screening in Indonesia in 1900 and the first locally made film in 1926, the preferences of

⁷ This book is currently available only in Indonesian language. The title translates as: "Making Film 1900-1950: Making Film in Java". The publisher claims that this is the first comprehensive book on the history of Indonesian cinema and that its author started his career in the early period of Indonesia's film industry. All English translation in this thesis are mine.

audiences under the Indonesian-Dutch colonial regime were already shaped by western and Chinese-style films. Chinese-owned companies started the expansion of the film business in Indonesia in 1928 by producing films locally and establishing more film theatres. For this reason, most of the films they made were based on stories of the local Chinese community, such as *Lily van java* (1928) and *Si Tjonat* (1929). *Si Tjonat* is claimed to be the first locally made box-office success (Said, 1991). In 1929, the film *Nyi Dasima* was also recorded as a box office hit, and, in addition, as the first Indonesian film with sequels: *Nyai Dasima II* (1930) and *Pembalasan Nancy* (1931) (Biran, 2009).

The silent movie period in Indonesia ended in 1931 with the screening of several locally made films based on Chinese folk stories. In 1938, Het Algemeen Nederland-Indische Film Syndicaat (ANIF) was established by Balink, Wong Brothers, and Saerun (Said, 1991). Saerun was a well-known Indonesian journalist, who wrote several theatre plays, before going into film production with his company. A Hollywood film, *The Jungle Princess* (1936), was a hit at the Indonesian box office at that time and so ANIF decided to copy its formula. They produced *Terang Boelan* (*Full Moon*) in 1938 and the film became the first major box office hit in Indonesian film history. The film attracted audiences not only from Indonesia but also Malaysia and Singapore. This film's successful formula was copied by other film companies until the Japanese invasion of 1942 (Said, 1991).

It is extremely difficult to find any official records of the depiction of children in Indonesian cinema during this period. However, it is possible to identify several films that include child character or present the role of children in the narrative, such as *Poei Sie Giok Pa loey Tay* (1935), *Anaknja Siloeman Oelar Poeti*⁸ (1936), and *Rentjong Atjeh* (1940). In examining the records about Indonesian cinema from this period one is reminded of Tom Gunning's (2008) statement that "early cinema is a global cinema" (p. 11). Gunning asserts that all early cinema expresses a global sense implied in the complexity of cinema exhibition at the time. A filmmaker made films in a country and then created an exhibition program both across that country and even overseas. Accordingly, Indonesian film culture in this early stage included countless overseas

⁸ Literally translated as A son of the white snake ghost.

film screenings both from western countries and China. At the same time, foreign production companies made films in Indonesian and then showed their films in other countries. Thus, the image of Indonesia as a nation presented in these early films was the image created by foreign filmmakers. These representations included images of nature, people, artefacts, food, visual culture and symbols acknowledged as “Indonesian”. Dutch and Chinese filmmakers making films in Indonesia thus produced depictions of Indonesia largely based on foreign perspectives, which can be said to convey an inauthentic sense of Indonesian nation-ness. However, according to Frank Kessler (2008), in addition to those representations of a nation that are constructed from a tourist point of view by means of cultural clichés, “nation-ness, that is nation-as-image, [is also] a construction, which may or may not be linked to nation-as-belonging and nation-as-origin” (p. 24).


Since the 1942 invasion, the Japanese colonial regime closed down all film production in Indonesia, especially the Chinese-owned companies. The Japanese government realised the power that audio-visual expression can have as a tool for war propaganda and, as a result, established the film company Nihon Eigasha to produce propaganda films. They utilised the former ANIF studio and started to recruit indigenous Indonesians for the film crews. In fact, the Japanese invasion opened up new opportunities for Indonesians to learn filmmaking professionally (Said, 1991). Nihon Eigasha trained Indonesians as professional filmmakers, and endorsed the use of standard Indonesian language in the films. The latter was realised as a significant point by Indonesian filmmakers, such as Usmar Ismail. Usmar Ismail recognised that film could be used as a political tool, not only as entertainment (Said, 1991). While Nihon Eigasha produced mostly information and anti-western propaganda films, the opportunity for professional technical learning was maximised by Indonesian filmmakers. The only feature film produced during this period is *Berdjoang (Struggle)* in 1943. Aiko Kurosawa (1987) explains that Indonesian filmmakers were trained to produce war propaganda films, which had the most vital role within the Japanese propaganda machine in Indonesia (1987, p. 66). Even though the films reflected aspects of the local culture and situation, the content had to fit ideologically with the moral precepts of the national film policy (p. 73).

Towards the end of the Second World War, film production activities stopped temporarily until the Indonesian declaration of independence in 1945. An historical event for film culture in this period was the official establishment of the first state film company under the newly formed Indonesian government. The company was named *Berita Film Indonesia* (BFI) and utilised Nihon Eigasha's studio and properties. Then, when the Dutch recolonised Indonesia in 1948, they established the South Pacific Film Company (SPF). BFI moved its operations to Jogjakarta, because SPF had taken over the Nihon Eigasha or ANIF studio. The Dutch colonial government in Jakarta also endorsed the re-establishment of Chinese-owned film companies. According to Said (1991), during the Dutch attempts at re-colonisation, film was endorsed for entertainment purposes only, while political or ideological uses were prohibited. SPF produced several films alongside the Chinese-owned film company. Usmar Ismail was involved in his first films as a director in 1949. He made two films, respectively entitled *Tjitra (1949)* and *Harta Karun (1949)*, even though he did not acknowledge them as his as he felt these films did not reflect his idealism. However, he recognised this period as preparatory for his film career (Biran, 2009; Said, 1991).

As the Japanese Government established Nihon Eigasha and the Dutch established SPF as their respective state film production companies, it is important to examine their films to understand how the colonial governments used cinema as a political tool both to constrain Indonesian resistance and portray their own representations of Indonesian identity. According to Marina Dahlquist (2008), films are effectively utilised as political tools to support and create moral values and political identities. While the Japanese and the Dutch focused on different aspects of film production and culture in Indonesia, both colonial governments used cinema as a political tool.

In 1950, Usmar Ismail both established Perfini (*Perusahaan Film Indonesia*), or Indonesian Film Company, and made *The Long March* (figure 1). Said claims that Perfini was “the first indigenous Indonesian film company” (1991, p. 104), with which, according to Biran, Usmar Ismail aimed to produce films that had artistic integrity and reflected national identity. Both Said (1991) and Biran (2009) argue that *The Long March*, which was influenced by the Italian neorealism movement and used a mostly

amateur cast, is the first Indonesian national film.⁹ Meanwhile, in the same year, Djamaluddin Malik established Persari. Said places Persari as the direct opposite of Perfini, explaining that while Perfini produced “art quality films”, Persari focused on Hollywood-style films (p. 104). Both Said and Biran argue that Perfini took a serious way to produce films representing the Indonesian nation, while Persari focused on profit and economic benefit. In the early period, the Indonesian film industry was challenged by unlimited numbers of foreign films imported into Indonesia. In 1954, Djamaluddin Malik and Usmar Ismail agreed to establish an association for Indonesian film producers (PPFI) and then urged the Indonesian government to limit the number of imported films. During this political period, known as the Old Order, the Indonesian



The image has been removed
for copyright reasons

Figure 1. The poster of the Long March. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50757312>

⁹ The film features the story of the Indonesian army’s long march from Yogyakarta to Jawa Barat. Led by Captain Sudarto, the long march is a remarkable journey of soldier and civilians who suffer from enemy air strikes.

government re-established the BFI as the official state film company, renamed as *Perusahaan Film Negara* (PFN), which started to produce feature films.

While having issues with imported films, Indonesian cinema was facing an ideological divide between filmmakers and producers, along with turmoil around Indonesian political ideology. Communist political parties grew and secured significant voters and members, rivalling nationalist and religion-based parties.¹⁰ In the film sector, communist-affiliated filmmakers produced significant numbers of films in order to contest ideologically their nationalist rivals. The Indonesian film industry thus became divided between pro-communism and anti-communism. Pro-communism filmmakers accused their rivals of diminishing the national film production by supporting Hollywood's capitalism in Indonesia. On the other side, the anti-communists blamed their rivals of abolishing national cinema by forcing Marxist ideology on the audience. Meanwhile, Sukarno's Old Order regime attempted to maintain the balance between nationalist communism and nationalist-religious ideologies. Film was only a part of larger Manikebu issues that reflected political rivalry using art and cultural aspect between communist party versus nationalist religious parties at that period.¹¹

In his book *Sinema pada Masa Soekarno* (2016), Tannete Pong Masak describes the ideological conflict between the two sides that appeared openly in 1964 when the nationalist-religious faction urged the government to formally declare the Indonesian National Film Day on 30th of March, because on a day like that the Perfini was established in 1950 and also this was the first day of the production of *Darah dan Doa*, the acclaimed first "indigenous" Indonesian film, in 1950. Conversely, the communist faction proposed the 30th of April, because that was the establishment day of the *Panitia Pemboikotan Film Amerika Serikat* (The Committee of Boycott Hollywood Film) initiated by this faction in 1964 (Masak, 2016).

¹⁰ The rivalry between communist party and nationalist-religioust parties was clearly shown as the result of the first democratic election in Indonesia in 1955. See details in Feith, H. (1957). *The Indonesian elections of 1955*. Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University

¹¹ Keith Foulcher describes detail of the issue of Manikebu as a reflection of political rivalry between communist party against nationalist-religious parties. See details in Foulcher, K. R. (1969). A Survey of Events Surrounding Manikebu: The Struggle For Cultural and Intellectual Freedom in Indonesian Literature. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde*, (4de Afl), 429-465

After the fall of the Old Order in 1966, Indonesia entered a new political era, known as the New Order. This political transition is known as the bloodiest political transition in Indonesian history. It was started by a combination of economic's issue, ideological clash and military's frictions, then it led to a political massacre that caused more than millions Indonesians died or lost in 1965-1966. Soeharto, an army high officer – then the President – who took control over the army and then the political power, blamed this chaotic situation on the communist party. Thus in the following months, a very large number of communist party member or anyone who are allegedly as a communist were slaughtered in Sumatra, Java and Bali¹². General Soeharto then emerged as the new president and hold the strong power out of the political chaos in 1966.

Under the new regime, Indonesian cinema continued to be challenged with few domestic films produced amid an increasing quota of imported foreign films. However, in this period the prominent position of Indonesian national cinema was established through the production of a series of state-funded films. The new regime displayed an authoritarian model of government during this period, which included the enforced regulation of the cinema industry. The Indonesian government forced filmmakers to be formally registered at government-approved institutions, and applied a strong censorship policy to all aspects of film production, including film scripts and screenings (Sen, 1994). Indonesian national cinema during this period tended to be less political than mainstream, commercial cinema. While foreign films were influenced majorly by Hollywood and Indonesian films were dominated by horror and erotica, the censorship policy only applied strictly to social and political issues in cinema. However, several films that presented children in the main narrative were hits at the Indonesian box office, such as: *Rataplan Anak Tiri*¹³ (1973) and *Ari Hanggara* (1985).

In 1990s, Indonesia under Soeharto experienced the worst economic crisis, combined by the New Order's authoritarian policy that sparked days of massive protest in the street around the country led by university's students. Meanwhile, racial sentiment on

¹² See details in Cribb, R. (Ed.). (1990). *The Indonesian killings of 1965-1966: studies from Java and Bali* (p. 25). Clayton, Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University

¹³ Literally translated as 'The Lament of Step-children'.

Chinese Indonesia that has been accused as dominant cause of Indonesia's economical-gap, was growing led to the worst racial-riot in Jakarta that caused thousands of people died. Soeharto then stepped-down from his presidency and gave the power to his vice-president, Habibie. Indonesia's political uncertainty remained until the first democratic election after the fall of the new Order in 1999. The new government was established in 2000¹⁴.

The new government reformed many regulations and policies including those affecting the film industry. A new generation of filmmakers produced fresh film ideas and occasionally presented an alternative to mainstream Indonesian film. However, considering the state's powerful political hegemony during the New Order, many of the same conditions continued after the change of the government. At this point, it is important to ask: how does Indonesian cinema project a sense of Indonesian-ness, given Indonesia's complex multicultural makeup? Anderson's definition of the nation provides a useful framework applicable to the task of understanding Indonesia as a nation. According to Anderson: "the nation [...] is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1991, p. 6). Anderson's definition provides the basis for an idea of national cinema as a place for "imagining the nation" as an "imagined community" (Abel, Bertellini & King, 2008, p. 2).

In this context, if national cinema is simplified by defining it as films produced within a particular nation, then defining Indonesian national film becomes a challenge. The idea of Indonesia as a nation, officially stated in 1928, when youth activists and academics representing several Indonesian ethnic groups had a nation-wide meeting and raised the idea of Indonesia as a single, unified source of language and identity. Meanwhile, as a state, Indonesia officially proclaimed its independence from Dutch colonialism in 1945, and the Dutch government officially acknowledged Indonesian independence in 1949. However, as stated earlier, film culture in Indonesia started in the 1900s, and film production in the 1920s. Adding to the complexity, the first film produced in Indonesia in 1926 was made by a Dutch filmmaker but presented local Indonesian folklore with Indonesian actors and settings. If Indonesia as a nation-state

¹⁴ See details in Forrester, G., & May, R. J. (Eds.). (1999). *The fall of Soeharto*. Select Books (Singapore)

officially started in 1945, how can we integrate the (Indonesian) films that were made before 1945?

Numerous scholars have studied Indonesian national cinema (Said, 1991; Heider, 1991; Sen, 1994; Robert, 2000; Biran, 2009; Barker, 2011; Van Heeren, 2012; Paramaditha, 2014, Heryanto, 2014, Hanan, 2017). Karl Heider (1991) states that "Indonesian cinema is a powerful vehicle for the development, shaping, and diffusion of a national Indonesian culture" (p. 134). He explains that Indonesian cinema constructs a national Indonesian culture, despite the variety of Indonesia's local cultures. In fact, one of the aims of this thesis is to interrogate this perception that Indonesian cinema tends to gravitate toward a single national identity while failing to depict the diversity of Indonesia's cultural identities. As Heider states, "there are no regional film industries in Indonesia. Although regional settings may be used as local colour, the language of the films is always Indonesian with at most occasional local phrases thrown in" (p. 11). Heider goes on to state that: "Film is made in the Indonesian language by people drawn from across the nation and is intended to be understood and appreciated by audiences in every province. This is what it means to speak of a national cinema" (p. 11). Furthermore, Heider's perspective on Indonesian cinema is that it "present[s] a particularly well-rounded and accessible picture of the emergent national culture" (p. 139). Heider also suggests that Indonesian films construct the idea of a national cinema through their use of the Indonesian language to attract Indonesian audiences. He suggests that the Indonesian audience can identify "Indonesia" on the screen from the appearance of Indonesian culture, such as language, music, and traditional dance.

Furthermore, Heider argues that in Indonesia films are a national, not regional, cultural product, which can be viewed, recognised and understood by a nationwide audience through the use of the Indonesian language and culture. In this way, Indonesian national culture and a specifically Indonesian style of narrative would contribute to the identification of this national cinema as Indonesian. However, it seems that Indonesian-ness is for Heider reduced only to banal depictions of Indonesian cultural heritage. Therefore, while Heider's perspective can be used to understand the way early Indonesian cinema tended to represent Indonesia through clichéd cultural elements, it may no longer be applicable to the critical examination of contemporary

Indonesian cinema. Whereas Heider proposes the idea of a national Indonesian cinema, he focuses only on standard elements of film form and narrative but does not attempt to articulate this cinema's precise social and political context of emergence.

In as much as early Indonesian cinema produced films predominantly shaped by colonial politics and culture, modern Indonesian cinema is also greatly influenced by the ideology of the regime. The New Order, the longest regime in Indonesian political history, held its authoritarian policy, strongly controlling and utilising Indonesian cinema as a political tool. Krishna Sen (1994), in her book *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*, argues that this nation's cinema is shaped by national politics. In her view, Indonesian cinema manifested the state's political interests, especially during the New Order regime. Sen states that "almost every film produced in New Order Indonesia has a narrative structure that moves from order through disorder to a restoration of the order" (p. 159). She contends that the New Order controlled and managed Indonesian cinema to fulfil its political agenda. Sen asserts that the New Order used cinema to represent its own version of Indonesia, and that this representation might have concealed the reality of Indonesians' social experience. In her argument, the New Order made Indonesian cinema more ordered and easy to control in view of delivering the image of Indonesia required by the regime. In regards to the period since the end of the New Order, Sen adds: "the [Indonesian] government seems less interested in national cinema in the 1990's than it did in the two preceding decades" (p. 161). While acknowledging that Sen's discussion is focused on one particular period in the history of Indonesian politics, this thesis proposes that in spite of changes of regime, governments will always seek to influence Indonesian cinema. Unlike the film industries of other nations, Indonesian cinema does not stand independently as a business-led industrial sector but is always sought as a political tool by the state, regardless of who holds the authority to represent Indonesia as a nation.

In line with Sen's argument, Martin Roberts (2000) suggests that during the New Order the relation between cinema, nation and state was such that the state sought to construct the idea of an Indonesian nation through cinema. Roberts describes the New Order's national cinema as films that recognise "the nation's diverse regional and ethnic cultural tradition while affirming their unity within the modern nation of Indonesia" (p. 177). Thus, Roberts deploys the idea of a national cinema to develop the notion of

an official cinematic image of New Order Indonesia. The sense of Indonesian-ness, then, was during the New Order politically determined, despite the fact that the films were made by Indonesian filmmakers. However, what is the role of the filmmaker in all this? This question has been addressed by Misbach Jusa Biran, who discusses Indonesian national cinema discourses in order to determine degrees of Indonesian-ness in films made in Indonesia.

Misbach Jusa Biran (2009) suggests that films made in Indonesia before 1949 cannot be considered as Indonesian national cinema, because, as he argues, those films were made without any nationalist sense. Biran also asserts that those films could not be categorised as Indonesian because the producers were not Indonesian, and, as a result, the stories were mostly adapted from western or Chinese films, as their main interest was material benefit only. For this reason, Biran argues that Indonesian national film started in 1950 when “Indonesians” made their films from a spirit of “Indonesian-ness”. Biran claims that Indonesian national films are films made by “indigenous” Indonesians and present stories emerging from Indonesia and created by Indonesians. Biran’s definition of Indonesian national cinema is contextual to the 1950s when Indonesia was in a political transition after centuries of colonialism. This definition also supports this thesis’ contention that social and political circumstances, such as political turmoil, regime change, and mass social movements, significantly affect how to define Indonesian cinema. However, while Biran, Roberts and Heider rely on banal cultural elements to identify Indonesian-ness, some scholars suggest that the discourse of national cinema in Indonesia depends largely on Indonesian narrative traditions as these have been engaged with in cinema. In addition, it is important to consider that defining Indonesia as a nation through its cinema is not limited to the idea of an indigenous cinematic culture, which may contain political biases, but can be seen in the dynamic process of how this national cinema depicts and projects its society as a whole.

Moreover, Thomas Barker (2011) proposes that national cinema in Indonesia has looked for new film perspectives and that new generations of Indonesian filmmakers have produced analogous ideas about national culture and identity in their works. Barker argues that the individual filmmaker, as part of a cultural elite, always takes a stand on re-developing national cinema in this country. Barker examines the discourse

of Indonesian national cinema as a dominant narrative that continuously develops Indonesian cinema's political culture. He describes the formal idea of Indonesian national film starting in 1950, before being institutionalised in the 1970s and 1980s. He goes on to argue that the narrative approach of Indonesian national cinema contributes to how the films are positioned within Indonesia's politics of culture. Barker also underlines the history of Indonesian cinema as continuously representing the dominant agenda of the cultural elites. National cinema in this country, following Barker, would be positioned within Indonesian film culture on one side of a formal line between commercial films and non-commercial or idealistic films. While Barker makes no attempt to define Indonesian national cinema, he suggests that the idea of a contemporary national cinema in Indonesia remains as aligned today to the cultural elite as it was in the 1970s and 1980s. Barker also implies that the debates on Indonesian cinema are not merely a top down confrontation of the government with the filmmakers, but, in a broader sense, also a lateral confrontation among filmmakers: those who still actively produce films against those who have become part of the government's bureaucracy.

In addition, Intan Paramaditha (2014) describes the complexity of defining national cinema in regards to Indonesian films by underlining the consensus among Indonesian filmmakers that national cinema would differentiate between commercial and non-commercial films. She acknowledges that national cinema as a discourse in Indonesia is not the same with filmmakers, the government, and film scholars. Paramaditha argues that Indonesian filmmakers propose a concept of national cinema to resolve their concern with versions of national identity found in early Indonesian cinema. She adds that the idea of national cinema exists due to the "anxiety over the vulnerability of the idea of nation itself" (p. 179). The Indonesian government, on the other hand, formalised the idea of a national cinema as a tool for unifying the diversity within the nation and to help stabilise the discourse of national security within the state's changing political ideology. In support of Paramaditha's argument, one finds Indonesia's Act no 33/2009 on Indonesian cinema, which outlines that film has a strategic role for national resilience and that, therefore, the state has an obligation to develop (national) cinema in Indonesia. The regulation, while not declaring restrictions, reflects an authoritarian type of cultural policy.

In his extensive study of Indonesian cultural policy, Tod Jones (2013) argues that the authoritarian character of the government's cultural policy remains consistent despite the diverse changes of regime in Indonesia. This ongoing authoritarian definition of cultural policy allows the state to manage cultural development in ways that provide more authority to the dominant political elites. During the periods of colonialism, Indonesian cinema was heavily controlled by the colonial government. The post-colonial Old Order government, in order to retain its dominance, continued to control Indonesian cinema through its cultural policy, as did the subsequent New Order regime. In view of what has been discussed so far in this chapter, it is easy to acknowledge that the discourse of national cinema, as part of Indonesian cultural politics, has been continuously utilised by the Indonesian state. Jones, however, seems only to focus on the state's role in this context. Barker and Paramaditha, on the other hand, also consider the role of non-governmental political actors, such as filmmakers and film producers. However, this section has shown that while the Indonesian state has intentionally utilised cinema as a political tool, filmmakers have also played a role, using cinema as a medium to convey different political narratives, including alternative versions of nationhood represented through images of children on screen. The following section will discuss how children's images and narratives have been used in Indonesian cinema to figure the nation.

1.5 Constructing nationhood: Children in Indonesian cinema

Numerous Indonesian films have presented children in their main narratives since the early period of Indonesian cinema. However, a thorough record of screen representations of children doesn't exist in the literature on Indonesian cinema. Therefore, in order to answer the question of how the image of children has been deployed in Indonesian films to engage with changing ideas of Indonesia as a nation throughout its countless political transformations, this section will survey the scholarly literature on Indonesian cinema to identify the level of attention given to the use of children as central characters in the films of various periods, relying principally on Kristanto's *Katalog Film Indonesia, 1926 – 2005*, to date the most comprehensive catalogue of Indonesian film.

Indonesian cinema offers a rich field for the analysis of the relationship between the figure of the child and the idea of nation for two reasons. First, Indonesian filmmakers have regularly placed children as central characters in their films' main narratives since the early periods of the history of Indonesian cinema. Second, there is only limited academic work, both in Indonesia and internationally, that has focused specifically on the representation of children in Indonesian cinema. Two essential studies on Indonesian film, by Karl G. Heider (1991) and Krishna Sen (1994), respectively, help this thesis to engage with the cultural and political aspects of Indonesian cinema. Both Heider and Sen categorise Indonesian cinema into a variety of periods and explore cultural and political contexts. Heider (1994) divides Indonesian film history into three different periods up to 1991. The first period comprises the Dutch colonial era to 1942; the second period goes from the Japanese invasion of 1942 to the start of the Indonesian independence era in 1949; and the third period goes from the start of the Soekarno regime in 1950 and continues through the Soeharto era. Sen (1994) also divides Indonesian film history into three different periods but she sets the first one from the early 1900s to 1956; she defines the second period as one of "political polarisation" in cinema, from 1956 to 1966; and she describes the third period, from 1967 to 1994, as "Institutions of New Order Cinema". While Heider discusses mostly the cultural aspects of Indonesian cinema, Sen focuses on the political impact of the New Order regime on Indonesian cinema.

Recent works provide further details in the discussion of Indonesian cinema. Katinka Van Heeren's *Contemporary Indonesian Cinema* (2012) discusses a broad variety of film practices in Indonesia, mainly in the post-New Order period. She argues that after the New Order regime's collapse, its legacy remains and continues to interfere with not only the new governments but also with how Indonesian cinema grapples with the idea of cultural identity and nationhood. Intan Paramaditha (2014) discusses in her PhD dissertation the new generation of Indonesian cultural producers, particularly young filmmakers that emerged in the political reformation period, focusing her study of national identity on the analysis of cultural production, cinema in particular. Similarly, Christopher A. Woodrich (2014) examines four films written by Saroen, an acclaimed Indonesian journalist who went into screenwriting during the Dutch colonial period. Woodrich argues that Saroen's screenplays positively represent the expectation of Indonesians to become independent, claiming that Saroen's texts resist

Indonesia's status as a Dutch colony by "representing the Dutch East Indies through the duality of dynamic cities and stagnant villages, in which the forces of colonial law and order created more conflict than they solved" (2014, p. 8). Woodrich concludes that through the representation of colonial Indonesia in his writing for film, Saroen's key concern is the dilemma of Indonesia's modernisation, which he sees both as a necessity for the future of the nation and a devastating threat to tradition. Significantly, Woodrich's research provides an insight into the fact that a sense of Indonesian nation-ness developed since the early periods of Indonesian cinema.

Even though, as Kristanto (2005) notes, since the 1950s Indonesian films have consistently portrayed children in different settings,¹⁵ the abovementioned studies give limited insights into children's representation in Indonesian cinema. Heider, for example, presents a particular argument on the term 'kid films,' which he defines as films about children, although not explicitly made for children. Likewise, Sen (1994) discusses *Langitku Rumahku* that features child characters, but does not focus on the theme of children's representation in any depth. Van Heeren, while directing her attention to several acclaimed films by Indonesian director Garin Nugroho that feature children as central characters, does not make the representation of children a significant part of her critical discourse. Paramaditha does not examine the use of child characters in her thesis while discussing Indonesian youth in cinema and cultural practices. Similarly, Woodrich does not focus on children characters in Saroen's screenplays at all.

However, among the limited corpus of academic studies of Indonesian cinema a few do put a specific focus on the screen image of children: Kitley, 1999; Strassler, 1999; Spyer, 2004; Wibawa, 2008, 2017; Allen, 2011; and Noorman & Nafisah, 2016. These works provide an interesting discursive space for this thesis, as all of them reveal that Indonesian filmmakers use children's images to convey political messages. Philip Kitley's (1999) study on the Indonesian children's television program *Si Unyil* shows how the New Order constructed its idealised citizen through the images of this

¹⁵ A website specialising on Indonesian films, www.filmindonesia.or.id, shows 74 entries for the genre of children's films among 3,345 entries from 1926–2015. This unofficial site is perhaps the most comprehensive source, even compared to the official site for Indonesian cinema. However, the number of titles listed as children's films in this site does not represent the actual number of Indonesian films that present children in the main narrative. For example, I could not find films by Garin Nugroho on the list of children's genre films although most of his films present children in the main story.

program.¹⁶ *Si Unyil* presents a narrative about a boy namely Unyil as the main character represents typical Indonesian family lives with his dad, mom, and his brother and sister in a rural area in the fictional Sukamaju Village. Kitley argues that while *Si Unyil* figures a diverse culture in Indonesia, the program politically reduces cultural diversity and uniqueness through a constructed national identity. Kitley specifically describes how the use of children's representation on screen shows the government's political and ideological strategies. Kitley's comprehensive study on *Si Unyil* is useful in this thesis to understand the importance of the extensive state-sponsored propaganda shown on television, especially since *Pusat Produksi Film Negara* (PPFN), or Centre for National Film Production, the state-sponsored producer of *Si Unyil*, took an important role producing films (figure 2)



Figure 2. Screenshot opening scene of *Si Unyil*. Retrieved from <http://amin-raha.blogspot.com/2015/09/foto-film-boneka-si-unyil.html>

In addition, the child figure has also been utilised by filmmakers to convey their own ideas. Karen Strassler (1999), who examines the Indonesian docudrama series

¹⁶ *Si Unyil* was a famous puppet television series from the government television company: TVRI (Televisi Republik Indonesia), aired from 1981 to 2003.

Children of a Thousand Islands (1996), claims that this series depicts children as cultural subjects representing the process of rebuilding the nation.¹⁷ While acknowledging an improvement in this film series' depiction of Indonesian cultural diversity compared to the films made during the New Order regime, Strassler argues that the representation of children in this film series is nevertheless used to convey an enormous amount of political propaganda. She describes the series' depiction of children as "more pseudo than the actual documentary" (p. 4), especially when it deals with sensitive issues, such as politics and religion. However, as Strassler' study focuses only on a particular film series produced during the political transition period, it is thus insufficient to draw general conclusions on Indonesia's national cinema's use of children's images. Similarly, Patricia Spyer's (2004) study on the film *Viva Indonesia!* also covers only a limited period in the long history of Indonesian cinema. Spyer finds that child characters in this film are often presented on screen to criticise sensitive contextual issues in Indonesia, "rallying recognition and sentiment for certain positions and views" (p. 224).¹⁸ However, according to Spyer, the use of child figures in the film eliminates the possibility of a political threat because of its reliance on the myth of their innocence.

A recent study of the representation of children on Indonesian screens by Pamela Allen (2011) and Safrina Noorman and Nia Nafisah (2016) underline similar ideas. Allen, who examines the films *Laskar Pelangi* (2008) and *Denias* (2006), states that both films depict children as a political metaphor for modelling a good citizen for Indonesia as a nation. She argues that "presenting an essentialised and frequently sanitised account of education and nation building, seems somehow too idealised, too propagandised" (p. 186). While Allen focuses on the depiction of children as idealised citizens in Indonesian films, she also identifies other significant sources of national identity in Indonesia, such as the school and the family. Noorman and Nafisah explore *Garuda di Dadaku*¹⁹ (2009), *Di Timur Matahari*²⁰ (2011), *Serdadu Kumbang*²¹ (2011)

¹⁷ This docudrama series-presents Indonesian children from various social backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities.

¹⁸ *Viva Indonesia!* is a film consisting of four stories about children that has four different young directors.

¹⁹ Literally translated as Garuda on my chest

²⁰ Literally translated as the Sun shines from the east

²¹ Literally translated as Beetle troop

and *Tanah Surga ... katanya*²² (2012) to discuss the representation of nationalism in cinema. They argue that the idea of Indonesian nationalism is delivered through child characters and local stories. Children are placed in the narrative to express nationalism and figure Indonesia as a nation through interconnections with social and political issues. Noorman and Nafisah (2016) describe that these films provide strategic instrumental roles for children to convey Indonesian nationalism on screen.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, the studies that focus on selected Indonesian films with child characters suggest that children are used on screen to convey political messages and project various images of Indonesia, which range from official and mainstream representations of the state and the nation to alternative images of Indonesia. These studies support the idea that children's images are widely preferred to articulate social and political issues in film because children are constructed as innocent. Children's images are given a significant place in the way a film represents social practice, whether it is used to convey dominant power or simply represent ongoing social practice. Therefore, children's screen images can be understood either as representing actual children in society (often targeted at child viewers) or adults who speak from the perspective of children (as a representation targeting adult viewers).

As adult representation, the child characters of Indonesian films have been used to circulate ideological discourses to adult audiences. This representational tactic is efficient because, as Amal Treacher (2000) states, "children are more knowing, active, perceptive and fantasising beings than is generally understood" (p. 150). In this regard, scholars have described the four essential elements usually used in constructing national identity, namely, the family, the school, the society, and the state (Parker, 1992; James, 1993; Wilkin, 2000; Scourfield, Dicks, Drakeford & Davies, 2006; and Wyness, 2006). In this thesis, these broad ideological elements involved in national identity construction, in particular, the family and the school, will be applied to examine the ideological significance of children's representations in the analysis of Indonesian films that follows in later chapters.

²² Literally translated as The land of paradise, they say

Michael Wyness, Lisa Harrison, and Ian Buchanan (2004) argue that the family system and school programs influence the identity of children in society. The family and the school occupy most of the children's time, preparing them to become adults and citizens, leaving behind their image as innocent and incompetent. The parents take a role as the children's representative for decisions that involve the children's acting in society and guide them in the proper direction as citizens, with the children positioned as apprentice citizens. Additionally, a study by Jonathan Scourfield, Bella Dicks, Mark Drakeford and Andrew Davies (2006) suggests that national identity is not naturally given. They argue that the state constructs the identity of children in two stages. In the first stage, the closest society includes the family, which provides a cultural identity to the children. This family-based cultural identity might include religion, ethnicity, race or local community. Thus, in the second stage, the state conducts political education through the schooling process. In the schooling system the state constructs children's identity through textbooks, academic curricula, and teachers. They conclude that children's national identity as a construction of the state is "gendered, classed and racialized" (p. 149). Keith Darden and Harris Mylonas (2016) also argue that the system of mass schooling takes an important part of the process of creating citizenship culture. Mass schooling, they claim, takes an indoctrinated mass of uneducated people and shapes them into "a coherent, shared national identity and establish a common, durable national loyalty" (p. 447). Darden and Mylonas also underline that the state intentionally designs standardised national curricula to be applied into the mass schooling system to encourage national identity and loyalty towards the state. The most important aim of schooling, especially in countries that apply centralised education curricula, is to create a common identity, and the same rule applies to the family system. Allison James (1993) and Chris Wilkin (2000) equally assert that the family system contributes to children's learning about nationhood by disseminating the nation's values. Wilkin suggests that to be identified as a member of the nation, as a citizen, implies loyalty and a sense of belonging to the nation by accepting general values and practising the system of life that matches the national identity. All these studies emphasise the essential role of the family and the school as they have been utilised by the state to perform nationhood.

In the context of Indonesian studies literature, numerous scholars have attempted to explain how images of innocent children were used to represent an ideal of citizenship

during the New Order's regime (Leigh, 1999; Parker, 1992; Keane, 1997; Shiraishi, 1995, 1997; Vicker & Fisher, 1999). These studies show that the Indonesian state during the New Order developed images of children to convey a sense of nationhood through the family system, the schooling program, and the media. These elements are interconnected and have been built as a holistic ideological system. An idealised family culture was constructed through the schooling system and the media, with the schooling process created by imitating the family environment. The patronage culture that is represented in the father's image as the supreme member was applied in the classroom by positioning the teacher as the patron and primary figure, and students as subordinate. Utilisation of the mass media supported this patronage culture as acceptable national identity by disseminating the state's ideology, principally through film and television. The notion of nationhood depicted in the image of children as citizens, and influenced by dominant ethnic cultures, was deliberately constructed through the New Order's ideology to support the regime's political purposes. Lyn Parker (1992) specifically argues that the New Order urged its citizens to be engaged in informal education through the family, and provided the formal curricula through the schooling system. The New Order endorsed the concept that the children should be educated and be trained to become good citizens; therefore, explains Parker, mass schooling curricula was designed within a paternalistic and authoritarian culture to guide and to direct the children into the adult society. For example, under the centralised curricula, the New Order created an official textbook that delivered the state's messages, official "facts" and national values (1992, p. 216). For almost three decades, Parker adds, the New Order was successfully spreading a homogeneous perception of national identity by constructing "regimes of obedience and silence" through school education (1992, p. 245).

The Indonesian mass schooling system during the New Order, according to Barbara Leigh (1999), worked as the state's fundamental political tool to "constantly assert and structurally assist in the maintenance of the unity of the nation-state" (p. 37). Leigh asserts that the schooling system reproduced a mass factory system that forced the students to speak the same language and obediently accept without challenging the school's standardised knowledge and guidance. The idea of Indonesia as a nation-state and a sense of Indonesian-ness were forcibly built into school students' minds and perceptions. The mass schooling system was designed, Leigh states, to produce "a non-

textured and smoothly appropriated adolescent Indonesian graduate” (p. 52). The national education system was directed to serve political goals to support the state’s economic development. The students were constructed as passive learners with little opportunity for discussion in the classroom. In the end, the obedient student was expected to enter the adult society as the state’s ideal citizen.

Furthermore, Sarah Moser (2016) explains how the Indonesian school system’s symbols of uniformity have been designed to shape students as ideal citizens, to project a commitment to national identity through an image of “common goals, symbols and assumptions about proper conduct” (p. 249). Besides academic content through textbooks and teaching, Moser argues, the Indonesian state indoctrinates about Indonesian-ness through banal symbols such as school uniforms and school activities. Moser explains that the use of the school uniform by all students is part of mandatory practices to identify good Indonesian students, while a compulsory morning exercise for all students at school rehearses obedience and following orders, and practices harmonious working together. Moreover, the student’s flag ceremony represents “the most formal and consciously nationalistic of the embodied activities” that indoctrinates the state’s expectation of Indonesian students (p. 255). These school performances produce the common acceptance of the student’s subordinate position to the authority of the state.

In a similar analysis of the Indonesian schooling system, the importance of the family in constructing Indonesian nationhood is underlined by Saya S. Shiraishi (1995). Shiraishi argues that the family and the schooling system have reciprocal roles through which both institutions place children as the subordinate subject. Shiraishi underlines that during the New Order figure of the family was heavily used to emphasise the state’s power in order to develop a sense of Indonesian-ness in children. The ideological framework of the family allowed the authoritarian state to educate and also punish the “disrespectful” family member, while representing the inequality between the state and its citizens. Indonesia’s concept of family is traditionally influenced by the dominant Javanese culture that highly respects hierarchy, with the father figure at the top among the other members of the family. In this family concept, each family member has its own duties and children, the lowest rank in the system, are obliged to be obedient and have no authority (Shiraishi, 1995). Shiraishi argues that this concept

of family has been applied in Indonesia, especially during the New Order, and that it reflects the way the state indoctrinates its citizens with national identity ideology. The relationship between people is affected by the degree of responsibility or willingness to do something of each individual. Based on this, the state builds the relationship between citizens and the state as reflecting the relationship between children and their father. The children will obey their father, as the father will protect and take care of them. This relationship thus contains a notion of the nation as a family in which the citizens (children) and the state (father) work together. The family culture is then applied into the term *kekeluargaan* or family-ism, which is prevalent within every crucial aspect of the nation, such as the school, the government, or political institutions, permeating the modern bureaucratic system of Indonesian institutions (Shiraishi, 1995).

Shiraishi also proposes a strong linkage between the family system, the schooling system and politics in the Indonesian context. He explains that during Dutch colonialism, a nationalist movement used young children education as a primary tool for the dissemination of a discourse of Indonesian independence. In fact, the *Taman Siswa* School, directed by Ki Hadjar Dewantoro, was a model for Indonesian nationalists on how to challenge the Dutch colonial government through education. The colonial government developed schools and education institutions based on the Dutch education system, thus the primary language at those schools was Dutch. The nationalist group, including Dewantoro, established a school that utilised Indonesian culture and language and a family-style system to challenge the established Dutch's school system and allow young Indonesian children, especially those who did not have an opportunity to join the colonial school, to have a proper education (Shiraishi, 1995, p. 176). Jan Newberry (2010) argues that this school was also "a productive site for the introduction of a new family model" (p. 405). The family culture applied by *Taman Siswa* educational system in the classroom was adopted by its graduates into their own institutions, including the government, after independence.

As Indonesians faced political turmoil, Shiraishi argues, "family-ism provided the alternative model for national politics" (1995, p. 178). The New Order regime then adopted this model for their political patronage. The family-ism originally used as a nationalist independence movement turned under the New Order into an authoritarian

and paternalistic regime of politics. Mass schooling and the educational system, which were strongly supported by the media, reproduced the culture of family-ism into textbooks, curricula, and the way of life (Siraishi, 1995, p. 179). Family-ism, was utilised as a political tool by the New Order to maintain their power for almost three decades. Family-ism culture in Indonesia can be seen as the most important linkage between discursive constructions of the nation-state and the family. As discussed by Hearst (1997), the significance of the family is marked by the state as an important institution to produce proper citizens, and as a mediator in socialising people towards the state's values (p. 203).

The New Order took control and affected with its authoritarian policies almost every aspect of Indonesia as a society. Even after the fall of the regime in 1998, the influence of its policies still remains. Todd Jones (2013) concludes that:

the authoritarian cultural policy model established during the New Order remains relevant to Indonesia in the Reform era, although its influence has substantially declined due to the fracturing of cultural policy. Its influence is still strong in the national cultural bureaucracy, in national policy, and in particular regions where there is strong continuity between the Suharto and post-Suharto eras in political and policy approaches. (p. 175)

Thus, the important roles that schooling and family-ism had during the New Order can still be traced in Indonesia after the fall of the regime. Moreover, since family-ism had already been applied in Indonesian schools during the colonial regime, a deep connection can be found to exist between nationhood and schooling in Indonesia as it will become apparent in the child characters seen at school, with their families and within their social surroundings in the Indonesian films to be discussed in later chapters. Graeme Turner (2006) argues that film as a social practice can be seen as a reflection of the process of culture; thus, it is possible that Indonesia as a nation might be seen through the representations of children in Indonesian cinema.

1.6. Conclusion

This chapter began by describing the relevance of national film theory in order to examine Indonesian cinema and argue that the representation of children in Indonesian cinema consistently supports the discursive construction of the nation in spite of historical change. Thus, by examining critical theorisations of national cinema, the chapter focused on the specificity of discursive constructions of the nation. Critical theorisation of national cinema is framed to examine national cinema in a particular country, Indonesia, a cinema that has distinctive characterisations compared to western cinemas. As the central subject in this thesis, the depiction of children in Indonesian cinema suggest the idea that children's images have been utilised for several ideological purposes, such as a reflecting future and hopes, conveying ideas of nationhood, and representing the state's political identity. Furthermore, by analysing global theories of children's culture and world cinema, the chapter has articulated a critical understanding of the particular ways in which the representation of children has populated Indonesian cinema.

The academic discourse of national cinema in Indonesia is still developing amidst the fact that national cinema has been politically institutionalised by the Indonesian state since national independence. The state's articulation of national cinema has sought to represent the nation-state's values and reflect Indonesian nationhood and citizenship. This concept tends to eliminate the diversity of Indonesia as an imagined community by homogenising the idea of nationhood. Thus, considering that child characters have been placed in the main narrative since the first film made in Indonesia, this chapter has shown that the use of children in Indonesian cinema has been deliberately used to represent constructed versions of nationhood, both official and alternative, particularly in the films made during the New Order regime. The next chapter will discuss how films made during the Dutch and Japanese colonial periods represent child characters in opposition to the dominant colonial ideology

Chapter 2

The representation of children in Indonesian films made during the Dutch and Japanese colonial periods (1930–1950)

2.1 Introduction

Positioning film as a representation of social practice suggests that a film is closely related to the communities of its production and consumption. Graeme Turner explains that film represents a dynamic discursive construction of a nation that is determined by power and ideology, as well as the objectives of film production (Turner, 2006). Films of any given period construct a version of reality that can be understood as an historical ideological framework that may reveal the discourse of the nation. In addition, Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell (2003) state that analysing film from a historical perspective provides a comprehensive understanding of social practice because cinema “bears the traces of the societies” (p. 35). Accordingly, Christopher A. Woodrich claims that during Dutch colonialism in Indonesia, four films written by Indonesian scriptwriter Saroen depicted Indonesia’s hope of becoming an independent nation-state (Woodrich, 2014)²³. Woodrich further explains that using the contrast between a vibrant city against a monotonous village, Saroen attempted to portray a better future for the Dutch colony as a modern nation. This reading of Saroen’s film scripts suggests that the idea of Indonesia as a nation-state developed in film culture while Indonesia was still a Dutch colony. For this reason, it is important to examine how early Indonesian cinema already shows evidence of an engagement with Indonesia’s complex history of social and political turmoil through the placement of children in the main narrative. Thus, this chapter argues that Indonesian films made

²³ Most films that written by Saroen were made between 1939-1941, such as *Terang Boelan* (Full Moon; 1937), *Fatima* (1938), *Gagak Item* (Black Crow; 1939), *Harta Berdarah* (Bloody Treasure; 1940), *Bajar dengan Djiwa* (Pay with Your Soul; 1940), *Wanita dan Satria* (The Woman and the Hero; 1941), *Ajah Berdosa* (Father Sins; 1941), *Pah Wongso Tersangka* (Pah Wongso the Suspect; 1941), *Asmara Moerni* (True Love; 1941)

during the Dutch and Japanese colonial periods use central child characters as signifiers of an emergent Indonesian national identity in opposition to the dominant colonial ideology.

In order to contextualise the discussion in this chapter, it is important to explain first the historical development of early Indonesian cinema under Dutch colonialism, when Indonesia was known as the Dutch East Indies. According to R.E. Elson (2005), Indonesia was conceptualised as the Indian archipelago in 1850 by George Windsor Earl. The word “Indonesia” was first used in 1918 by Dirk van Hinloopen Labberton. Later, in 1919, Dr Cipto Mangunkusumo, an acclaimed Indonesian independence activist of the colonial period, popularised the name “Indonesia” (Elson, 2005). Furthermore, the term “Indonesia” came to dominate nationalist discourse in the independence movement in 1945, even though Dutch authorities did not acknowledge Indonesia as a nation-state until 1950. Meanwhile, Indonesia’s film culture started as part of the colonial film industry under Dutch authority. Wolfgang Fuhmann (2002) defines colonial film as a non-fiction cinematic form that provides visual documentation of the nature, culture, and ethnicity of a region that has been colonised by a foreign country. However, film culture in Indonesia started in 1900 when the first European motion pictures were screened in Batavia (now Jakarta) under the Dutch colonial government. Pong Tanette Masak (2016) describes how these early films featured the Queen of the Netherlands and daily life in Paris. These imported non-fiction films were regularly screened in Indonesia as part of colonial lifestyle. The Dutch, in fact, used cinema to promote their colonies, particularly the Dutch East Indies. Nico de Klerk (2008) explains that the Dutch produced cinematographic records to disseminate images of a vibrant every day and good social conditions of the Dutch colonies in the early 1900s. However, positioned as the lowest class in colonial life, Indonesians were not allowed to watch films in cinema houses until the 1920s, when the Dutch authorities released an ethics policy (Arief, 2000; HM Biran, 2009). The policy acknowledged Indonesians’ right to obtain formal education and introduced film as part of modern culture. Thus, from the 1920s, Indonesians were able to watch films at the theatre, although subject to segregation (Arief, 2000; Biran, 2009; Masak, 2016).

Film production in Indonesia started in 1910 when the Dutch colonial government invited [Dutch filmmakers G. Krueger and L. Heuveldorp to produce documentary films about Indonesia. After several documentaries, in 1926 Krueger and Heuveldorp produced what has been considered to be Indonesia's first feature-length fiction film, entitled *Loetoeng Kasaroeng*.²⁴ However, it has come to light recently that in 1914 the French film company Pathe Frere produced the fiction film *Mina het Dienstmeisje In Koopen Doen* in Indonesia (Masak, 2016). This film is about a servant, Mina, who returns home late because she has a date with her boyfriend. But despite this new information, *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* is still seen as the first fiction film to have been made in Indonesia featuring a local folk story and local actors.

Charlotte Setijadi-Dunn and Thomas Barker (2010) explain that, as an industry, Indonesian cinema during the colonial periods was affected, first, by the domination of the United States as the world's main supplier of films and, second, by the Chinese businesses that acquired most of the theatre houses and film companies in Indonesia. During this period, Indonesians were involved as employees of the film companies or hired as cast. Masak (2016) notes that those film companies were very productive, with 113 films made in Indonesia. Most of these films were produced during Dutch colonialism from 1926–1941, and only eight were produced during the Japanese Occupation (1942–1945). Furthermore, all film production stopped during the revolution era (1946–1947) and then only ten films were made until 1949.

One of the first challenges encountered during the archival research conducted for this thesis was the fact that the film archive system in Indonesia is in great need of attention. It is almost impossible to get access to the early films mentioned here, even though some of these were commercially popular films, and considered as breakthroughs in Indonesian film history. Other scholars of Indonesian films have also expressed experiencing similar difficulties (Sen, 1995; Heider, 1991; Woodrich, 2014; Ruppin, 2014). Consequently, the discussion of early Indonesian film in this chapter, in the absence of copies of the films, had to rely on secondary printed sources, such as reviews and references. Before the existence of Indonesia as a nation-state, early films made in the colony reflected an inherent national consciousness appearing through

²⁴ Translated as the Enchanted Monkey

symbols in the films. Following Karl G. Heider's argument that "Indonesian movies are profoundly Indonesian" (1994) and by elaborating Nanna Verhoeff's idea of a nation's semantic layers (2006), the following sections will show that in early Indonesian cinema a national consciousness was developed through narratives of children depicted within their social and cultural environment.

2.2 Finding the children in Indonesian cinema under colonialism

Among the few works examining Indonesian cinema during colonialism, one can find only limited discussion of the representation of children on screen. The most useful of these sources is *Katalog Film Indonesian 1926–1995* (Kristanto, 1995), which describes Indonesian films with a short synopsis and production details. This catalogue, which was digitalised and made into a website (www.filmindonesia.or.id), covers Indonesian cinema from early films to the most recent. It is one among few resources that provide information on Indonesian films produced during the periods of Dutch and Japanese colonialism, which might have presented child characters in their narratives, including: *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* (1926), *Poei Sie Giok Pa loey Tay* (1935), *Anaknja Siloeman Oeler Poeti* (1936),²⁵ *Rentjong Atjeh* (1940),²⁶ and *Berdjoang* (1943)²⁷

Identifying early Indonesian films that use children in their main narrative is also a challenge. As only the more famous actors are detailed in existing film reviews, along with the director and the film production company, one is left only with the film's synopsis to find any indication of child characters in the selected films. However, semantic aspects in the use of Indonesian language in the written review or the film reference creates a further challenge to decide which films present children. For example, the Indonesian word *anak* cannot be necessarily translated as *child* as it could also refer more broadly to someone's son or daughter.

²⁵ Translated as The son of the white snake ghost

²⁶ Translated as Aceh's knife

²⁷ Translated as Struggle

While *Terpaksa Menika* (1932)²⁸ is not one of the selected films in this chapter's discussion, it is important to highlight that Kristanto explains that children were permitted to watch it, despite the fact that during that time there was a censorship policy that prohibited children to watch certain categories of films. In the 1920s, the Dutch colonial government released an act that categorised films into those that were allowed for audiences under seventeen-years old and films only for audiences above this age (Arief, 2000). It is plausible to assume, based on Kristanto's notes, that *Terpaksa Menika* was either a film targeted at children or one that did not contain any prohibited images or scenes for children. In 1940, the Dutch colonial government released a new act that regulated film exhibition based on the age of the audience (Arief, 2010). This act stated that a film not intended for children could not be screened to audiences under thirteen years unless permitted by the film commission. Children were also permitted to watch the abovementioned *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* (1926), as it will be discussed later in this chapter. The existence of this film regulation in 1940 suggests that there might have been some films with child characters in the early period of Indonesian cinema.

Kristanto (2005) indicates that the first inclusion of children in an Indonesian fiction film was in *Loetoeng Kasaroeng*. Although, he explains that the children of Bandung's mayor, Wiranatakusumah, played several roles in this film, Kristanto does not elaborate on the children's involvement in the film's production nor on their role in the narrative. He only states: "Ikut membintangi, anak-anak Wiranatakusumah (Bupati Bandung)" (p. 1), which is translated as: "Also starring, the children of Wiranatakusumah". As explained earlier, the term "anak-anak" does not necessarily refer to the figure of a child, as it could also translate as the adult son or daughter of Wiranatakusumah. However, since the story of *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* is taken from children's folktales in Sundanese, Indonesia, it is feasible to assume that the film presents child characters.

The films selected for this chapter's analysis, *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* (1926), *Poei Sie Giok Pa loey Tay* (1935), *Anaknja Siloeman Oeler Poeti* (1936), *Rentjong Atjeh* (1940), and *Berdjoang* (1943), belong to a specific genre and present children in

²⁸ Translated as Forced marriage

various ways. Although some might not clearly foreground the figure of a child, they do imply the involvement of children in the story. The title of *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* can be literally translated as the “Enchanted Monkey” or the “Disguised Monkey”. It originated from a famous Sundanese folktale from West Java. The story is about two girls, Purbasari and her sister Purbararang, competing for love. Purbararang proudly has a handsome lover, Indrajaya, while Purbasari has a monkey as a boyfriend. Purbararang mocks her sister, contrasting her handsome human boyfriend with the ugly monkey. Later, Purbasari finds out that her monkey lover actually is a handsome prince, named Guru Minda, who is not only much more handsome than Indrajaya but he is a reincarnation of the god Sunan Ambu. The moral of this film is the familiar wisdom of not judging a book by its cover, as in the Western Folktale *Beauty and the Beast*. *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* was produced by the Java Film Company, owned by L. Heuvelcorp, marking the growth of film production in early Indonesian cinema by featuring a local cast in a Western or Chinese film.

The second selected film, *Poei Sie Giok Pa loey Tay*, is about a boy, Poei Sie Giok, who is trained in martial arts by his mother, Tjoei Hoa. She is a prominent figure in a local martial arts school. Sie Giok defeats a martial arts student from another school, owned by Loei Lo Ho. When Loei Lo Ho is killed in a fight, his wife, Lie Siow Hoan, takes revenge. This film is based on a famous Chinese legend, known as ‘Lan Liang Koen Yoe Kang’, and aims to promote martial arts among the local youth. More broadly, the film promotes the child hero, who is presented as a master of martial arts. While the film’s narrative is based on a Chinese martial arts hero story, the use of local language, cast and locations highlights the film’s cultural hybridity.

Another example of cultural hybridity between local Indonesian and Chinese culture is *Anaknja Siloeman Oeler Poeti*. This film, with its title literally translated as “Son of the White Snake Ghost”, is about a child that feels as if he lives in a dream. His human father is unknown while his mother is the white snake ghost. He has been verbally and physically abused by people around him. He runs away and tries to find his mother. However, he gets lost in a scary, unknown forest and is caught by a giant monkey. Katinka Van Heeren (2007) categorises *Anaknja Siloeman Oeler Poeti* as a horror movie because this film is a sequel of *Ouw Peh Tjoa* (1934), which is the first successful horror film of Indonesian cinema. In addition, *Rentjong Atjeh*, translated as

“Aceh’s Knife,” is the first Indonesian blockbuster action movie. It features the story of a pirate captain named Bintara, who sails the Malacca Straits. He plunders ships and murders their crews. Three children survive one of his attacks: Maryam, Rusna, and Daud. Maryam is taken by Bintara to be his dancer, while Rusna and Daud escape to the jungle and live there with the animals.

Even though Karl G Heider (1994) suggests that all Indonesian films produced before 1950 are either lost or not documented by any film archive, in *Sinematek Indonesia* one can find two lists of films. The first lists the films that can be viewed, and the second those films that are only preserved or merely documented in a database. All the above films are considered lost or untraceable and are not found on those lists. It is only possible to find secondary sources, such as film posters, synopses or short news articles in an old Dutch newspaper. For example, there is a booklet about *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* available from Museum Bronbeek in the Netherlands,²⁹ a museum that focuses on the colonial history of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, especially of the Royal Dutch East Indies Army. This booklet is the only comprehensive source of information about one of the early Indonesian films discussed in this chapter. It includes background details of the making of *Loetoeng Kasaroeng*, a complete film script and flyers regarding the film’s screenings. The booklet is written in old Dutch language and one of the flyers is in old Sundanese language, which is another challenge to translate the document into English. As *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* is acknowledged as the first film made in Indonesia, this document is the most important source available to examine an Indonesian film of the early period.

During the period of Japanese colonialism, most of the film companies in Indonesia were closed by the Japanese colonial government. The few that were allowed to continue production were strictly controlled and were used to produce propaganda films (Heider, 1994; Kristanto, 1995; Masak, 2016). Furthermore, it is unclear as to the number of films produced in Indonesia during this period. Aiko Kurosawa (1987) explains that during the occupation, the Japanese government endorsed large-scale local film production, especially documentaries, cultural films and news. On the other hand, Kristanto (1995) notes that only eight films in total were produced in Indonesia

²⁹ Please see details in <http://museumbronbeek.nl/>

during Japanese colonialism. All these films were produced by Nippon Eiga Sha, the Japanese colonial government's film company in Indonesia. There are very few synopses suggesting that there were children in the narrative of these films. *Berdjoang* is the only fiction film available today, and it includes some representation of the Indonesian youth. The title *Berdjoang* translates as "struggle," but this film is also known as *Hope of the South*. *Berdjoang* is a propaganda film that tells the story of Anang, Saman, and Ahmad, three best friends from a village in Subang, West Java. Anang and Ahmad fall in love with the same girl, Hasanah, who is Saman's sister. One day, the Japanese colonial government calls all young men from the village to enrol to become soldiers. Anang and Saman voluntarily register, but Ahmad decides to stay at the village. This film will be discussed later in this chapter.

As expressed earlier in this chapter, films made in Indonesia during the Dutch and Japanese colonial periods use child characters to signify an emergent Indonesian national identity in opposition to the dominant colonial ideology. This developing national consciousness was conveyed through the portrayal of family images that were alternative to the colonial family ideal, thus localising the context of the films and utilising the Indonesia language as a platform for national identity.

2.3 Contesting the colonial ideological construction of the family

The narrative of *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* is based on a myth of the Sundanese ethnic in West Java. The central character is a monkey (Loetoeng means monkey) who lives in the jungle in the kingdom of Pasir Batang. He is not a common monkey but the metamorphosis of a handsome prince named Guru Minda, who is also a reincarnation of the god Sunan Ambu. He has a duty to find and save a girl who will become his future wife and will bring prosperity to the world. Meanwhile, the king of Pasir Batang, Mas Prabu Tapa Agung, decides to resign his kingdom and transfer his throne to one of his eldest daughters: Purbararang. To accept the throne, Purbararang must find a husband. The king organises a competition, which is won by a handsome prince, Indrajaya. Purbararang accepts Indrajaya as her future husband but as she is jealous of her sister, Purbasari, who is much more beautiful than her, she accuses Indrajaya to have fallen in love with Purbasari. Thus, Purbarang curses Purbasari, who becomes diseased and ugly. Purbasari is then banished to the jungle in the mountain of Handala

Ajoe, where she meets a monkey who helps her every time she is attacked by her evil sister. Purbasari falls in love with the monkey and asks him to be her husband. Feeling unthreatened, Purbararang allows her cursed sister to go back home with her monkey lover. But the monkey returns Purbasari to her real beauty and makes her to be accepted by the people of the Pasir Batang kingdom.

In *Loetoeng Kasaroeng*, the girls are depicted as independent females, who are given the responsibility to manage a kingdom. The father is not involved in his daughters' lives, including their love lives, as reflected in the traditional Javanese family system where the father takes complete control of the family. In the film, Purbararang is given the throne and she can select her own husband. She also banishes her sister without any consent from her father. This independent, active image of women reflected a contradiction with the model of family dominant at the time of the film's production.

The notion of the family dominant during Dutch colonialism was constructed within an ethical policy developed from a colonial metaphor of a happy family of brown-skinned Asian children under the guidance of their White-Caucasian, strict-but-nice father (Gouda, 1993; Loomba 1998). The Dutch projected their image as a colonial empire onto the family culture in the colonies. Family ties were politically utilised to justify colonial rules and practices. In this way, Indonesians were positioned as children within a family-like social structure, hence seen as needing to be guided and nurtured. According to Akiko Sugiyama (2007), the Dutch colonial government applied a series of policies to enhance Indonesians' social welfare, where the family was conceived as a comprehensive nuclear social system. This system was centred on monogamy, rejected polygamy and underage marriage, common practices then, and defined women's social role as mothers and as confined to a domestic sphere.

The two child characters in *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* are depicted as independent children whose parents give up control to fulfil their own interests. The father, Mas Prabu Tapa Agung, choose exile in the jungle seeking spiritual interests, leaving the kingdom to his eldest daughter who then fragments the family by evicting her own sister. The mother figure in the narrative can be seen through the character of Niti Soewari, mother of Purbararang and Purbasari. The narrative places Niti Soewari in a small role and she seems insignificant as a mother and a wife. This film's depiction of the children and the family clearly challenged the colonial construction of the family.


Similarly, Japanese colonialism in Indonesia supported the idea of the Japanese empire as a big family controlled by the emperor. This idea sought to encourage local support for the Japanese colonial program. One of the tactics was popularising the term *saudara tua*, which means “big brother,” to make the locals acknowledge the Japanese as brothers who help Indonesians to fight against Western colonialism. The Japanese also mobilised Javanese family units to provide support to soldiers in wartime (Sugiyama, 2007). The family was constructed by the Japanese as a functional social unit, where the father is the frontline leader, who has full support from the mother or wife, who has the domestic responsibility. Furthermore, the Japanese utilised the typical Indonesian term “kekeluargaan” (family-ism) to form a neighbourhood networking system within the Indonesian community by placing the father at the top.

While the father no longer holds a dominant role in *Loetoeng Kasaroeng*, the loss of parental figures can be seen in *Rentjong Atjeh*. This film’s narrative presents two orphaned children whose parents have been killed by Bintara, a pirate who hijacked their ship. The children, Daoed and Roesna ran away from the pirate and manage to swim and hide on an island in Sumatera, where they start to live with wild animals and act likewise. They want to survive and take revenge on Bintara. To judge from this narrative, it can be suggested that this early Indonesian film might have been inspired by the popular Hollywood films *Tarzan, the Ape man* (1932), an issue to be discussed in the next section. Daoed and Roesna encounter a soldier, Panglima Ali, who is lost in the jungle and agrees to collaborate with them to take revenge on Bintara. Thus, child characters in this film are depicted as independent individuals, while the parents’ figures disappear from the narrative, creating a fragmented family system. Meanwhile, colonial ideological constructions of the family placed children as the lowest and the weakest members of the family, thus needing to be guided by the father as the family leader (Gouda, 1993). This idealised colonial image of the family, which conceived parents as the solid members with their children as followers, was challenged in this film by opposing protagonist child characters and antagonist adults in the narrative. The family system in the film is presented as a dysfunctional family where the children must take control in order to manage their lives. Daoed and Roesna, with help from Panglima Ali, defeat Bintara and free his hostages, including Marjam, a childhood friend of Daud and Roesna.

In both Dutch and Japanese colonial discursive constructions of the family women are placed in the subordinate role of wife and mother, to serve her husband and to nurture their children as “a child bearer and child educator” (Locher-Scholten, 2003, p. 39). However, in *Poei Sie Giok Pa loey Tay*, the mother figure is presented as the primary parental role model. The film’s narrative focuses on Poei Sie Giok’s fight, who has been trained as a skilled martial arts fighter by his mother. This film shows the role of mother as “child educator” while also replacing the father with the mother as the leader of the family. The father figure is also absent in *Anaknja Siloeman Oeler Poeti*. The boy in this film never knows his father and comes to realise that his mother is a ghost; and despite knowing that his mother is not human, he tries to meet her. The special bond between the child and the mother in this film’s narrative significantly reduces the role of the father. The absence of a strong father figure and the film’s emphasis on the bond between mother and child can be interpreted as aspects of a nationalist, anti-colonial discourse (Loomba, 1998; Pollard, 2005). This perspective can be seen in the film’s poster (figure 3), which focuses on a mother holding a baby while a man, assumedly the father, sits besides looking up at them. Even though the colonial perspective on the father figure has many similarities with the father figure in Javanese culture as a strict, dominant one, the films discussed in this chapter provide alternatives to the patriarchal colonial model of the family, including absence of parents within children’s life; strong, independent, and self-sufficient child characters, and a dominant mother figure.

2.4 Reflecting Indonesia-ness through story and context

As most early Indonesian films adapt Indonesian or local oral traditions, such as myths, legends or folktale (Heider, 1994), the films selected for this chapter's analysis also build their narratives on adaptations of local stories. *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* is clearly based on Sundanese folktales with the same title. The promotion poster of *Loetoeng Kasaroeng*, which was originally written in old Sundanese language (figure 4), states that the film is "a story that happens in Indonesia". This poster also states: "Loetoeng Kasaroeng, njaela nembean pisan aja film ngalalakonkeun Tanah Indonesia, kaloeran Ned.Ind. Film Industri di Indonesia" (Loetoeng Kasaroeng, a new film that features a story of Indonesia, produced by the Netherland-indonesia film industry in Indonesia)³⁰. The use of Sundanese language and the term "Indonesia" in this poster suggest that the producer attempted to attract the local audience. Furthermore, as "Indonesia" is used to refer to the region, instead of Dutch East Indies or in local terms, "Hindia Belanda", it suggests the idea of an early, developing sense of communal nation-ness. Furthermore, although the narrative of *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* originated



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Figure 3. The poster of Anaknja Siloeman Oeler Poeti.
Retrieved from <https://cinemapoetica.com/when-east-meets-west-american-and-chinese-influences-on-early-indonesian-action-cinema/>

³⁰ My own translation. This poster's text can be translated from Sundanese to Indonesian language as "Loetoeng Kasaroeng, yaitu baru ada film yang menceritakan tanah Indonesia, keluaran Ned.Ind. Film Industri di Indonesia".

from Sundanese myths in West Java, as stated earlier, this poster uses “tanah Indonesia” (land of Indonesia) to refer to the location of the story.

In contrast, in another version of this poster (figure 5), with the text written in Dutch language, the word “Indonesia” disappears from the text while still underlining that the origin of this story is Java. This Dutch version states that the Loetoeng Kasaroeng story is “de beroemde sage uit het roemrijke verleden van java verhalend van hat verbond tusschen hemel en aarde”³¹ This poster illustrates Java in a colonial perspective as a beautiful, fertile place “between heaven and earth”. It is plausible to assume that with this the film producer or distributor attempted to preserve their relationship with the colonial government. This poster also focuses on the film’s production process, underlining the involvement of the local school, teacher and students, and including a statement that children have access to watch this film.

³¹ My own translation: ‘the famous saga from the glorious past of Java, narrated the pact between heaven and earth, the source of all fertility.

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Figure 4. Loetoeng Kasaroeng's promotional poster in Sundanese (1926). Reproduce from Loetoeng Kasaroeng's promotional booklet.


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for copyright reasons

Figure 5. Loetoeng Kasaroeng's promotional poster in Dutch (1926).
Reproduce from Loetoeng Kasaroeng's promotional booklet

The contradiction between these two promotional posters of *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* depicts how some Indonesian films during colonialism helped to develop a communal sense of nation-ness and, specifically, Indonesian-ness. The use of term Indonesia,

instead of Hindia Belanda, does not merely refer to the location of the production but indicates the acknowledgement of a nation, especially among the local audience. By using Sundanese language and emphasising Indonesia as both context and content of this film, the Sundanese language poster suggest a communal place of origin and a developing sense of belonging (Verhoeff, 2006).

Aside from these promotional posters, the idea of an Indonesian nation manifests in a different form in *Loetoeng Kasaroeng*. The film is a European production yet includes a local story, which is not about Indonesia as a nation-state but it is presented as a story that happens in Indonesia. “Loetoeng Kasaroeng” is widely known as a Sundanese folktale, not Chinese or Dutch. In addition, the film’s cast was completely Indonesian, and most of them were the *priyayi*, or royal family members, who were trained by a school teacher, Kartabrata. As mentioned previously, the children of Wiranatakusumah, the regent of Bandung City at that time, also starred in the film. The production deal involved that Wiranatakusumah would introduce this story to promote Sundanese culture and he would help fund the film’s production. Other aspects of local culture in *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* can be seen in another poster (figure 6). It shows a girl in a traditional salute pose, wearing traditional Sundanese clothes. She sits on, what appears to be, a box with traditional Javanese ornamentation.




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for copyright reasons

Figure 6. The poster of *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* (1926). Retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20839844>

The traditional visual style of *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* also appears in *Rentjong Atjeh*. Traditional costume also becomes a focal point in the *Rentjong Atjeh* promotional poster (figure 7). The expression “Rentjong Atjeh” actually refers to a traditional knife or sword from the Aceh region in Sumatera but this seems to not be the focus of the poster. Instead, it is a couple and a dancer who wear Aceh traditional clothes. While these local elements dominate the poster’s visual arrangement, the head of a man holding a knife, or *rencong*, in his mouth on the bottom right corner reflects the film’s

adoption of a popular Hollywood film icon of that period: Tarzan. In fact, the Indonesian film industry took advantage of Hollywood's domination of the film market by regularly adapting well-known Hollywood icons in local films.



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Figure 7. The poster of *Rentjong Atjeh*. Retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21127347>

While *Sie Giok Pa Loey Tay* and *Anaknja Siloeman Oelar Poeti* were based on Chinese stories, the location of the narrative in these films was Indonesia, and the characters were presented as Indonesian. As mentioned above, adapting foreign stories to a local context and cast was part of a strategy to attract more local audiences (Setijadi-Dunn

and Barker, 2010; Misbach, 2007; Masak, 2016). This formula was very successful amidst a context characterised by large numbers of imported films from Western countries. These locally made films were produced by non-Indonesian filmmakers; however, the text and the context were Indonesian. “Indonesia” was in them as the main cultural content: an imagined nation in the form of a local narrative, which indirectly also challenged the dominant narratives of colonialism. Locality in these films was expressed through local story and cast, developing a sense of cultural belonging and ownership of an imagined nation of Indonesia, which did not yet formally exist. As argued by Benedict Anderson (1991), Indonesia was indeed firstly formed as an imagined community.

Likewise, *Rentjong Atjeh* adopts the local story of a pirate in Aceh, Sumatera, while *Poei Sie Giok Pa loey Tay* and *Anaknja Siloeman Oeler Poeti* blend Chinese stories with a local cultural context. This blending of stories thus continues as a standard formula by the local film industry, especially for Chinese filmmakers. In some cases, Chinese filmmakers adapted Chinese folktales to local Indonesian tastes by using local landscapes and contexts, and a mixture of local and Chinese casts with foreign cinematic styles. Setijadi-Dunn and Barker (2010) argue that the local Chinese producers and filmmakers tended to attract audiences from both the indigenous Indonesian population and Chinese Diasporas. Therefore, they combined many film genres and themes with local stories and actors using international filmmaking techniques.

As a result, early local films were diverse, cosmopolitan, and projected an image of an Indonesia that is complex, idiosyncratic, and unique, yet connected to global flows and modern practices. We argue that such an image of Indonesia is different from later insular indigenist imaginings of Indonesian belonging. (Setijadi-Dunn & Barker, 2010, p. 27)

Furthermore, Setijadi-Dunn and Barker argue that films made by diasporic Chinese filmmakers presented a combination of indigenous Indonesian stories with the Indonesian *stamboel* theatre style and Mandarin cinematic style. They add that,

these kinds of idiosyncratic and rather fantastical films proved to be popular, particularly among lower class indigenous audiences who found the style to be entertaining. More importantly, however, these films are always set in the local landscape, using a combination of both indigenous and ethnic Chinese actors, and spoken or at least subtitled in the Malay language. (2010, p. 30)

Matthew Cohen (2006), in his book *Komedie Stamboel: Popular Theatre in Colonial Indonesia, 1891–1903*, explains that *Komedie Stamboel* was not originally part of Indonesian culture but it was established as a performance theatre in 1891 by a European, Auguste-Mathieu, in Surabaya. In the beginning, the theatre was closely related to European and Chinese diasporic culture in colonial Indonesia. However, triggered by personal and public interest, *Komedie Stamboel* grew into a popular performance reflecting Indonesian culture. The basic narrative was taken from the stories of *The Arabian Nights*, but mostly featuring a contemporary Indonesian context, while the performance was delivered in the Malay language, so the audience had more freedom to express their feelings during the performance. Sometimes the *Komedie Stamboel*'s performance included informal interaction with its audience, which departed from classical formal colonial culture. Furthermore, by its smooth way of shifting from Euro-Asian dominant culture to local, Indigenous cultures, *Komedie Stamboel* articulated a developing Indonesian identity.

The diverse approaches of early Indonesian cinema, as made mainly by diasporic Chinese filmmakers, expressed a unique, hybrid cultural mix during the Dutch colonisation era. Setijadi-Dunn and Barker suggest that the films produced by Chinese film companies in the early periods of Indonesian cinema constructed this cinema's early cinematic style, which is an adaptation and amalgamation of local stories and indigenous images, along with representations by the Dutch and other cultures present at the time. According to Heider, the Chinese "were responsible for creating the image of the common Indonesian culture" (1994:170). But, although Heider is right in regards to the international image of Indonesia as a culture, the discussion in this chapter shows that the self-image of Indonesia as a nation started to be formed in the


colonial periods as represented in early Indonesian cinema, which was only partly based on local Chinese diasporic culture. Early Indonesian cinema can be seen as embodying a developing nationalism through its representation of local people and locations, as well as local cultures and values easily understood and shared, including the use of the Indonesian language as the films' standard language. As language plays a vital role in developing nationhood, the use of the Indonesian language in early Indonesian cinema during colonialism undoubtedly contributed to developing Indonesian-ness.

2.5 Developing Indonesian-ness through national language

Language is an important element in the development of cultural identity and nationhood through film, and for this reason all the selected films in this chapter use the Indonesian language. Wimal Dissanayake (1994) argues that the discourse of nationhood both endorses immersion in local narratives and tend to unify and homogenise the diverse elements of a nation. Language is commonly used to unify the diversity within nations, and to recognise a common sense of nationhood. Indeed, language plays an important part in identifying an imagined community and binding the people in the community as a nation (Hobsbawn, 1996). As argued by Michael Billig (1995), language also plays a significant role in deploying ideology and constructing ideological consciousness, which includes nationalism. Thus, language helps to develop a nationalist consciousness within people that share the same image of the nation and, as argued earlier, becomes the primary source of national identity, despite the nation-state not yet existing (Smith, 1994). In the case of *Loetoeng Kasaroeng*, while the promotion posters use Sundanese and Dutch, the use of the word "Indonesia" in both signifies an early form of recognising Indonesian national identity through language. Thus, the Indonesian language becomes an element of national identity which appears when the first Indonesian film was made (Heider, 1994). In other words, the use of the Indonesian language reflects a recognition of nation-ness in the films that Chinese and Dutch filmmakers living in the Dutch colony made for the local audience, which were markedly different from the imported Dutch and Chinese films. While locally made films broadly targeted all local film viewers,

including Indonesians, the imported films were for specific audiences who understood the Dutch or Chinese languages (Biran, 2008; Masak, 2016).

Poei Sie Giok Pa loey Tay, for example, has in its promotional poster the words *Bitjara Melayu* (speaking Malay) to underline that this film uses Indonesian language despite the use of Mandarin words and names in the poster (figure 8). In the same poster, the words *Rame dan Heibat*, which literally mean “crowded and great” but can be contextually translated as “exciting and great,” are used to promote the film. Early movie going culture in Indonesia during Dutch colonialism was intended to fulfil the desire for a modern lifestyle in the colony. Watching films thus became an exclusive colonial lifestyle as most films were imported from European countries and had no subtitles. The audience of film in this period was limited to the Dutch and other elite members of the dominant society who spoke English or Dutch. Thus, by introducing the Indonesian language to film, local filmmakers intended to widen their audience.



The image has been removed
for copyright reasons

Figure 8. The poster of *Poei Sie Giok Pa loey Tay*. Retrieved from <http://www.indonesianfilmcenter.com/detail/index/poei-sie-giok-pa-loei-tay/3045>

And, at the same time, by using local languages, these films generated a communal sense of shared cultural identity among the broad local audience.

The Indonesian language became the language of national recognition with the establishment of Budi Utomo in 1908, a moment that is recognised as the Indonesian day of observance: National Awakening Day. Budi Utomo was the first native political society in the Dutch East Indies whose members were educated, elite upper class Indonesians (Vickers, 2005). This organisation focused its programs on education and cultural awareness among indigenous Indonesians. While the members of this society were mostly Javanese, they preferred to use Malay as their formal language, rather than the local Javanese language (Elson, 2005). Furthermore, during the second National Youth Congress in Batavia in 1928, the Indonesian language was declared the national language of Indonesia. Elson describes how “the Dutch Adviser for Native Affairs was forced to admit in 1928 that ‘the idea of great-Indonesia is gaining ground’” (p. 157). Elson also quotes Oto Kusumabrata’s speech during the 1929 Pasundan Congress: “the Indonesian language serves as a bridge to the other people” (p. 14). Since then, the Indonesian language has been developed as a form to unify the former East Indies under Dutch colonialism as a nation (Foulcher, 2000).

Whereas during Dutch colonialism the Dutch language was endorsed and utilised as the official language in government and educational institutions, during Japanese colonialism the Japanese colonial government strongly supported and encouraged the use of Indonesia’s language as the official national language. At the same time, the colonial government endorsed the Japanese language and abolished Dutch and other Western languages. In this context, the film *Berdjoang* is an example of how the identity of Indonesia as a nation is both developed during this period while, on the other hand, utilised for the Japanese colonial ideological agenda.

2.6 *Berdjoang* (1943): Developing an Indonesian national consciousness

Made under Japanese colonialism in the early 1940s, *Berdjoang* responds to a very different historical context, compared to the previous films discussed in this chapter. The discourse of Indonesia was developed in this film but as part of the Japanese propaganda program. The Japanese acknowledged the idea of Indonesia but it was

manipulated to support the Japanese emperor. Although Heider (1994) stated that all films produced in Indonesia before 1950 were lost, some films, including *Berdjoang*, have more recently been found. In fact, *Berdjoang* is the only feature film produced by Indonesian filmmakers during Japanese colonialism that having formerly been declared lost has more recently been recovered. *Berdjoang* was screened at the *Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival* in 1997 under the program “Imperial Japan at the Movies” after decades of being thought lost forever. While *Berdjoang* does not feature children in its main narrative, but Indonesian youth that make different choices for their lives, since this is the only recovered feature film made during Japanese colonialism, this chapter will analyse this film in order to provide a better understanding of how an Indonesian national consciousness was developed through cinema during that period. *Berdjoang* is currently archived in the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision,³² and in the *Sinematek* archives (Woodrich, 2014). The film is accessible, although limited to research purposes only. It has four acts, but only the first two can be seen normally. The third act has been declared lost or unknown, and the fourth act can only be seen without sound.

Made under strict supervision and having passed several approvals from the Japanese government in Japan, *Berdjoang* reflects artistic quality. The Japanese title of this film is *Minami No Ganbo*, or *Fighting*, and it was directed by Raden Arifin³³. *Berdjoang* also reflects the Indonesian filmmakers' skill and their nationalist sense. Usmar Ismail (1954), as quoted by Kurosawa (1987), argues that *Berdjoang* reflects an awareness of the essential function of film as a medium for communication among Indonesian filmmakers. Furthermore, Ismail argues that “it came to be clear that films began to grow and come closer to the national consciousness” (Kurosawa, 1987, p. 76). This national consciousness is developed through the film’s narrative which promotes Indonesian nationalism.

Berdjoang is about three young friends: Anang, Saman, and Ahmad, who live in the Indonesian village of Legowo. Indonesian nationalism is constructed in the film

³² See details in: <https://www.beeldengeluid.nl/en/about>

³³ Raden Ariffien or known as Rd Ariffien, was an Indonesian film director. He was known as nationalist activist and then decided to join the film industry in 1940 after previously focused in theatre and radio. During his 25-year career, he was involved in more than 36 films. See details in http://filmindonesia.or.id/movie/name/nmp4b9bad38c19b5_Rd-Ariffien#.XAdgDTFoTIV (last accessed 28 November 2018)

through the narrative that Indonesia as a nation needs the help of the Japanese to fight against Western that want to invade the country, and, for this reason, the Japanese recruit Indonesians. The recruits are called HEIHO, an Indonesian military support unit for the Japanese army.³⁴ The film's opening scene presents a military recruitment event for young Indonesian people, in which a recruiter states:

Kepada penduduk desa Legowo seluruhnya. Kami atas nama pemerintah agung berkenan memberikan kesempatan terhadap pemuda-pemuda Indonesia umumnya dan kepada penduduk desa legowo khususnya. Untuk turut berjuang membela tanah airnya. Tanah air kita Indonesia. Tahukah kamu, hanya di tangan kamulah terletak keselamatan tanah airmu? Pemuda angkatan baru, pasti ingatlah dengan kedudukan nusa dan bangsa-nya. Tunduk kepada musuh, hancur lebur tumpah darahmu. Berbakti kepada lawan, tamatlah riwayat keluarga kita. Bangkit, bangkitlah wahai pemuda. Berjuanglah kamu sebagai gembengan sukarela. Untuk turut membentuk susunan masyarakat baru. Di lingkungan Asia Timur Raya, di bawah pimpinan bala tentara Dai Nippon. (Berdjoang, Act 1. 02:42 – 03:48)

[People of Legowo village: We, on behalf of the great government, are pleased to give an opportunity to the Indonesian youth, female and male, in general, and to the Legowo village people, in particular, to join to defend our homeland, Indonesia. Do you know that only in your hand is held your homeland's safety? Young generation, you must remember our land and nation. Surrender to the enemy and your blood will be destroyed. Be loyal to our opponents, and you will end our family. Stand up, stand up, all of you, young men. You will fight as volunteers to form the new order of society in the Great East Asia under the command of the Dai Nippon Army]³⁵

This speech falsifies the Japanese colonial presence in Indonesia, constructing them as saviours that protect Indonesia from invasion, in this case, from the Dutch. The speech also represents the Japanese ideological colonial construction of the state as a family

³⁴ HEIHO were auxiliary troops for the Japanese army, which had only minimal training; see: Lebra, 1975.

³⁵ My own translation

(Sugiyama, 2007). The Japanese promotion of an allegory of family has a strong connection to Japan's broader political campaign developing in the Asian frontline against Western allies. However, the speech also evokes a consciousness of Indonesia as a nation, even though "Indonesia" only appears as part of a discourse about a "motherland" that needs to be defended. In fact, the recruiter says: *Indonesia tanah air kita* ("Indonesia our homeland"). The concept of *tanah air*, or homeland, is more favourable for the Japanese colonial government than *bangsa*, or nation. This distinction fits with the idea that the Japanese colonial government only utilised locals for supporting the Japanese army, but took away the idea of Indonesia as an independent country. While stating that Indonesia is the homeland, the recruiter also declares that this recruitment is on behalf of *pemerintah agung*, or the great government, which refers to Dai Nippon, or the Great Japanese, as personified by Japan's emperor (Shillony, 2013)³⁶.

The narrative of nationalism is then developed in the film through the characters of Anang and Saman. Anang is accepted as a HEIHO soldier, but Saman fails. Anang is represented as a responsible and polite young man, who expresses his love for his country by joining the Japanese army as a HEIHO. Meanwhile, Saman expresses his disappointment at losing his only opportunity to defend his country. Through Anang's narration, the film constructs a discourse of nationalism that being a HEIHO is a way to love one's country and family without any personal interest:

Bapak jangan khawatir, saya masuk sebagai bala tentara, karena saya cinta ibu bapak dan tanah air supaya tidak jatuh lagi ke tangan musuh. Karena sudah menjadi kewajiban bagi tiap-tiap putra Indonesia, harus menjaga tanah tumpah darahnya. Kapan lagi waktunya untuk turut berjuang bagi tiap-tiap putra Indonesia jika tidak sekarang. Saya masuk menjadi HEIHO bukan karena kekurangan makan tapi karena dorongan maksud hati saya yang suci. Saya ingin menyumbangkan tenaga kepada bala tentara Dai Nippon. Saya berkeyakinan, Bapak, hanya di tangan pemuda sajalah letaknya keselamatan tanah air kita, Indonesia (Berdjoang, Act 1. 05:20 – 07:10)

³⁶ Shillony, B. A. (2013). *Ben-Ami Shillony-Collected Writings*. Routledge.

[Father, don't be worried. I join the army because I love mother, you, and my homeland, so that it will not fall again into enemy's hands. Because it is an obligation of every Indonesian young man to protect the land of their blood. When will be a time for every Indonesian young man to fight, if it is not now? I join HEIHO not because I need food but because it is where my genuine heart is. I want to support Dai Nippon army. I believe, father, that only in the hands of the youth is the safety of our motherland, Indonesia]³⁷

“The enemy” in Anang’s narration refers to the Dutch, who at that time were consolidating forces with their Western allies to take back Indonesia from the Japanese. The film shows how the Japanese government tries to develop a strong network of allies among Asian countries, including Indonesia; all under the command of the Japanese emperor. The Japanese depicted the Western allies as a common enemy for all Asian countries by contrasting the cultural characteristics of the West against the East (Sugiyama, 2007).

Berdjoang further constructs the discourse that being a HEIHO soldier is a glorious way to defend Indonesia as it is done without expecting any financial reward. This is implied in the dialogue between Anang and his girlfriend, Hasannah:

Bilamana saya diterima menjadi HEIHO, bukan saja kita berjasa kepada bangsa dan negara tapi juga kita punya sumber nafkah untuk kita berdua

Kau sangat memandang rendah padaku, Nang. Kasih sayangku pada kau, belum tentu dapat ditukar dengan kerincingannya ringgit

Kalau begitu, kau tidak setuju saya menjadi heiho?

*Jauh daripada maksud itu Nang. Kau menjadi prajurit harus tetap dipandang sebagai kewajiban pemuda terhadap tanah airnya. Tetapi janganlah dicari sebagai jalan untuk menutupi kebutuhan di kampung (*Berdjoang*, Act 2. 06:04-7:45)*

³⁷ My own translation

[If I am accepted to be an HEIHO, we are not only a virtue value for our nation and country, but also we will have financial resources for the two of us.

You have underestimated me, Nang. My love to you might not be replaced with the sound of money

Then, you don't agree with me to be a HEIHO soldier?

Move far away from that thought, Nang. To be a soldier should be kept in mind as an obligation of youth to their motherland. But, don't see it as a way to fulfill our needs in the village]³⁸

Hasannah is thus depicted as an idealised woman, as she gives her support to Anang for joining the HEIHO even if it will delay their wedding. Through the character of Hassannah, the film attempts to convince the audience of the importance of nationalism over personal interest. The film also deploys an idealised family image as the natural support system for citizens. The Japanese colonial policy employed an idealised family model of society, where all members support each other just like in a biological family, and, in some cases, guiding the weaker family member in the right direction (Sugiyama, 2007). Accordingly, Anang's family members, despite their worries, support their son's decision to join the army. Similarly, Saman's family encourages Saman to be a good farmer as an alternative way to defend their country and he shows his excellent skills as a farmer. On the other hand, Ahmad chooses to be a criminal. One day, Ahmad tries to steal Saman's farm products but Anang and Saman capture him. Because of their friendship, Ahmad is let free. In the end, Saman is still a good farmer, Ahmad is a failed criminal, and Anang goes back to his duty of defending their country.

Anang and Saman illustrate loyalty to the country in different ways. Anang is depicted as the idealised patriotic citizen who becomes a soldier as part of the Japanese campaign to attract more resources for the war effort. Saman is depicted as a second type of idealised patriotic citizen who becomes a farmer to help with the Japanese

³⁸ My own translation

government's need of food for the soldiers on the frontline. Ahmad, on the other hand, is the antagonist character who rejects the calling to the HEIHO and is represented as a lazy, materialistic coward, as an un-nationalistic figure who chooses to become a criminal instead of joining his patriotic friends. The examples of nationalism in this film are presented through a binary opposition: the protagonist is a patriot with positive values and characteristics, while the antagonist is an egotistic troublemaker.

Despite the fact that *Berdjoang* is a propaganda film made to encourage the Indonesian audience's acceptance of Japanese colonialism, the film also promotes a sense of cultural belonging by introducing the use of the Indonesian language. The Japanese colonial government applied a strict cultural policy that included the abolishment of the Dutch, English, and French languages at all levels of school education. As a replacement, the colonial government introduced the Japanese language but also endorsed the use of the Indonesian language as the national language (Thomas, 1966). In addition, the Japanese consistently made references to the historical trauma of Indonesians under Dutch colonialism to encourage them to help the Japanese war effort. Thus, the Japanese propaganda strategy of prohibiting the Dutch language raised the awareness of Indonesians about their own language but instead of having Indonesian more integrated to the Japanese goal, it increased their sense of nationalism. The Indonesian language is adopted from the Malay language that becomes a lingua franca of three countries in the Malay Peninsula: Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei. Thus, differentiating them is important in view of distinguishing Indonesia from Malaysia. Armijn Pane, who states that "the language used was no longer *Bahasa Melayu-Tionghoa* (Chinese Malaysian dialect) or that of the newspaper, but a more correct form" (Cited in Kurosawa, 1987, p. 76). Pane also underlines the phrase "the correct form" to differentiate the Bahasa Indonesia.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter argued that early Indonesian cinema constructed national consciousness in opposition to a colonial ideological framework. The chapter identified that the national consciousness of early Indonesian cinema was developed through juxtaposing alternative family images that opposed the colonial discursive construction of the

family. Dutch colonialism positioned the family as a supporting social unit where the father figure stands at the centre, the mother figure nurtures their children, and the children are positioned as the weakest members. In contrast, the films discussed in this chapter present images of children as independent and self-sufficient characters either within or outside the family, and of the mother as a strong figure who takes the role of family leader with the father figure absent from the narrative. Furthermore, while opposing colonial concepts of the family, these films also construct the sense of an Indonesian national belonging by presenting localised stories, characters and culture. The films *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* (1926) and *Rentjong Atjeh* (1940) introduce traditional Indonesian stories, while *Sie Giok Pa Loey Tay* (1935) and *Anaknja Siloeman Oelar Poeti* (1936) adapt Chinese folk tales into an Indonesian cultural context.

As discussed in this chapter, the localised cultural context of early Indonesian films' narratives also depicted the local landscape, thus emphasising a sense of national consciousness. Despite the fact that some stories were adapted from Chinese folktales, the geographic setting of these films was the local Indonesian context. Furthermore, these films' use of local materials, such as traditional clothes, can be identified as another way in which the films developed a sense of cultural belonging and ownership. Additionally, a national consciousness was also encouraged in the films through the use of recognisable cultural elements of nationhood, especially the Indonesian language. Indeed, all the films discussed in this chapter used Indonesian language both in narrative and promotional material. They placed the Indonesian language as a unified language among a diverse audience at that time. The use of Indonesian language as the primary language in the films can be understood as part of a process of cultural ownership and as a recognisable, developing representation of an Indonesian nation. Finally, despite the fact that *Berdjoang* (1943) was made as a piece of Japanese propaganda, which presented Indonesia as a motherland to be defended by its citizens with the assistance of the Japanese, this film is important because it initiated a form of nationalism in Indonesian cinema both through its use of the Indonesian language and the involvement of Indonesian filmmakers in the production process. This early form of expression of the idea of an Indonesian national cinema will be expanded in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The representation of children in Indonesian films made during the Old Order (1950–1965)

3.1 Introduction

Indonesian cinema struggled in the period after the declaration of Independence of 1945, as the military and political struggle for independence continued when the Dutch attempted to return following the Japanese defeat at the end of the Second World War. At that time, the future of the early Indonesian nation-state was uncertain due to internal fighting by political factions. The armed conflict between the official government and groups of militias occurred in several areas of the country (Feith, 1963; Doeppers, 1972). This political turmoil affected the Indonesian film industry's productivity and no Indonesian film company made any films until 1948. This unproductive post-independence period is, however, considered an important phase of the developing Indonesian film industry because significant discourses emerged within the film sector about the future direction of Indonesian cinema, particularly in relation to nationalism and the role of the state (Heider, 1991; Sen, 1994; Nugroho & Herlina, 2013; Masak, 2016; Hanan, 2017).

With the resumption of film production in 1948, Indonesian films once again resorted to representing children as part of a discursive strategy to advance Indonesian nationalism within the broader ideological project of the early Indonesian state. The Indonesian films selected for analysis in this chapter were made within the period of political turmoil and rapid change of post-independence Indonesia. This period marked the beginning of Indonesia as a nation-state, which is represented through the heroism and traumatic war memories of characters within the narrative of Indonesian films, which are by now more frequently produced by Indonesian filmmakers (Heider, 1991; Sen, 1994; Masak, 2016). The insistence on heroism and war trauma themes in post-independence film production can be understood within the project of creating an Indonesian nation-state. Joshua Hirsch (2004) suggests that film is the most representative medium in depicting and experiencing real events, as it imitates and connects memory and fantasy in the aftermath of traumatic experiences. Linnie Blake

(2012) also refers to traumatic memory as a form of “wounds on the cultural, social, psychic and political life of those who have experienced them, and those cultural products that seek to represent such experiences to those who have not” (p. 1). Furthermore, Miriam Hansen (1996, 2001) suggests that film narrative depicts traumatic memories to construct national identity, while Antonio Traverso (2008) argues that the depiction of traumatic memories in film can be utilised to engage with a nation’s cultural memory. Therefore, representations of traumatic memories can also be utilised to fulfil political purposes. In this sense, this chapter argues that the use of images and stories of children in Indonesian films made during the Old Order regime embodies tropes of heroism and traumatic memory in order to develop a national identity for post-colonial Indonesia. The chapter firstly examines the film *Si Pintjang* (1951)³⁹ to reveal how the film positions children’s trauma as war casualties to develop Indonesian nationalism. Next, the chapter analyses the film *Djendral Kantjil* (1958)⁴⁰ to discuss its themes of heroism and war trauma as allegories for the nation’s stability. Finally, the chapter analyses *Bintang Ketjil* (1963)⁴¹ to reveal how the themes of heroism and the family are used to signify a strengthened view of the role of the state.

3.2 Post-independence Indonesia, national cinema and children’s films

The nationalist sentiment brought in to defining national cinema in the post-independence period largely reflects the suffering of colonialism. The free-market policy on cinema of the Dutch and the government-controlled policy of the Japanese lead Indonesian filmmakers to seek a different vision in post-independence Indonesia. This search for an indigenous national identity reflected the trauma of Indonesians becoming the lowest class citizen during colonialism. Pong Tannete Masak (2016) argues that Indonesian cinema between 1950 and 1965 worked to define the identity of Indonesia as a nation-state. According to Masak, films made within this period represent the spirit of nationalism, distinguishable from the spirit of independence of the colonial era.

³⁹ Translated as Gimán the cripple.

⁴⁰ Translated as The general mouse-deer.

⁴¹ Translated as The little star.

The spirit of nationalism represented in the post-independence films expressed cultural narratives of the “pribumi” or “indigenous Indonesian” of this period (Said, 1991; Biran, 2009; Masak, 2016). The concept of an “indigenous” Indonesia, however, is debatable, especially when it is used to define Indonesian national cinema (Sen, 1994; Barker, 2010; Nugroho & Herlina, 2013; Hanan, 2017). Indonesian national cinema is believed to have started in 1950, when acclaimed Indonesian filmmaker Usmar Ismail made *Darah dan Doa* (1950),⁴² which has been formally acknowledged as the first instance of Indonesian national cinema. In fact, Ismail is acknowledged as one of the founding fathers of Indonesian cinema. Despite the fact that *Loetoeng Kasaroeng*, the first feature-length film ever made in Indonesia, was produced back in 1926, Ismail’s *Darah dan Doa* is defined as the first case of Indonesian national cinema as it tells a story of Indonesia and is made in Indonesia by indigenous Indonesians (Said, 1991; Biran, 2009; Masak, 2016). After the free-market policy under Dutch colonialism and the authoritarian government-centric policy under Japanese colonialism, Indonesians could finally develop their own national film industry. Several key players, including Djamaludin Malik and Usmar Ismail, established their own film companies which had their own characteristics and markets. Malik established Persari, and Ismail managed Perfini. However, at the same time, they had to compete with films imported from the United States to Indonesia. Persari and Perfini agreed to establish an association of Indonesian film producers (PPFI) in 1954 to resolve this issue. PPFI then urged the Indonesian government to limit the large volume of imported films, which was seen to be un-nationalistic. Thus, the concept of the nation was utilised by Indonesian film producers to advocate for Indonesian films that were loyal to the country (Masak, 2016).

At the same time, while competing against imported films, an ideological divide among Indonesian filmmakers and film producers was emerging amid the country’s ongoing political turmoil. The Indonesian Communist Party grew, securing significant numbers of votes and members that rivalled nationalist and religion-based parties in the 1955 general election. This affected the Indonesian film industry as it became divided between pro-communism and anti-communism (Ismail, 1983; Sen, 1985;

⁴² The official English title for this film is *The Long March*; but *Darah dan Doa* literally translates as Blood and prayer.

Hanan, 2017). Both sides of this ideological divide claimed their segment was more nationalistic than the other. From this rivalry, several significant issues emerged, including deciding a date for celebrating national film day. This political rivalry ended violently in the 1965–1967 period as the New Order regime took control of Indonesia and declared communist ideology forbidden. As a result, of a total of 317 Indonesian films produced during this period (Masak, 2016), most of the copies of films made by Indonesian filmmakers seen as leftists were physically destroyed by the New Order regime (Sen, 1985).

Kristanto (2007) notes that there were several films produced during the 1950-1965 period that can be categorised under the children's film genre, such as *Si Pintjang* (1951), *Mardi dan Keranya* (1952),⁴³ *Si Dudung* (1956), *Kunang-kunang* (1957),⁴⁴ *Djenderal Kantjil* (1958), *Si Djimat* (1960), *Di Balik Dinding Sekolah* (1961),⁴⁵ and *Bintang Ketjil* (1963). Out of all these children's films, which Masak (1986) lists as existing at Sinematek Indonesia, only three remain available today: *Si Pintjang*, *Djenderal Kantjil*, and *Bintang Ketjil*. All the other films have been declared lost. *Si Pintjang* tells the story of a boy who is a victim of war. He has lost his family and lives as a street child in Jogjakarta. This film won an international award in the Karlovy-Vary Film Festival Czechoslovakia in 1952; however, it received little attention in Indonesia. *Djenderal Kantjil* was recorded as one of the most commercially successful films in Indonesia cinema. It is about a boy who wants a toy gun as a birthday present and then becomes a local hero after being involved in a fight against criminals in his village. *Bintang Ketjil* is about the friendship of a group of children from different family backgrounds on a trip to the zoo; and about how their parents fail to fulfil their promises.

Kristanto (2007) also notes that among the lost reels are children's films produced by *Perusahaan Film Negara* (PFN), the Indonesian government's film company: *Ni Gowok* (1958), *Tiga Nol* (1958),⁴⁶ *Lajang-Lajangku Putus* (1958),⁴⁷ and *Kantjil*

⁴³ Translated as Mardi and his monkey.

⁴⁴ Translated as Firefly

⁴⁵ Translated as Behind the school wall.

⁴⁶ Translated as Three-zero.

⁴⁷ Translated as My broken kite.

Mentjuri Ketimun (1959).⁴⁸ *Ni Gowok* tells the story of a greedy girl, Ni Gowok, who is never satisfied with her achievements, blaming her failures to her female gender; God then turns her into a male. *Tiga Nol* is a short film with a story about a soccer game where children learn about team work, solidarity, and also the experience of being cheated in the game. *Lajang-Lajangku Putus* is about a boy, Amat, whose kite flies away after the kite's string breaks. The kite flies across the Indonesian islands from Sumatera to Maluku and after Amat gets his kite back, he suddenly wakes up. Finally, *Kantjil Mentjuri Ketimun* is based on the traditional children's folktale of a mouse-deer that keeps stealing cucumbers from a farm before being caught by the farmer.

There are also films made during the 1950-1965 period with child characters in their narrative but which are not categorised as children's films, including *Kekasih Ajah* (1955)⁴⁹ and *Anak-anak Revolusi* (1964).⁵⁰ *Kekasih Ajah* is about Usman, a man who left his wife and daughter, Tati. Tati is told that Usman died, but when he comes back home, she rejects him. This film won an award for the best children's performance in the Asian Film Festival in Hong Kong in 1956 (apparently, this film has also been lost).⁵¹ *Anak-anak Revolusi*, directed by Usmar Ismail, tells the story of a reckless boy who becomes the leader of a group of Indonesian soldiers in the fight against the Japanese and causes one of his men to die.⁵²

A film catalogue released by PFN in 1969 contains a list of films produced by PFN during the 1962-1968 period, including a document of *Dirdjen Pendalu – Direktur Djenderal Penerangan Dalam dan Luar Negeri Departemen Penerangan* (Director General – Domestic and Foreign Information Section – Ministry of Information), which contains the list of films that were approved to be released and films that should be destroyed. Most of the children's films, for example, *Ni Gowok*, *Tiga Nol*, and *Mardi dan Keranya*, are referred to as: *Jang harus dibekukan - boleh beredar ssd lolos re-sensoring* ("must be restricted – release is permitted after re-censor"). The film

⁴⁸ Translated as The mouse-deer steals a cucumber.

⁴⁹ Translated as Dad's lover.

⁵⁰ Translated as The children of revolution.

⁵¹ It is not included on the list of available films provided by Indonesia Sinematek.

⁵² While this title appears on the list of available films provided by Indonesia Sinematek, I was not able to locate it there; I only found the original scenario written by Usmar Ismail.

Lajang-Lajangku Putus is categorised as *diusahakan izin beredar* (“considered as permitted for release”) but a copy of this film cannot be found. While *Si Pintjang* actually was categorised as *Jang harus dihantjurkan* (“must be destroyed”), a copy of this film, as mentioned previously, can be found at Indonesia Sinematek⁵³.

As stated earlier, all the films mentioned above were made within the dynamics of political turmoil in post-independence Indonesia. In the sections below, the chapter will show how Indonesian films made during the 1950-1965 period sought to represent a national identity for post-colonial Indonesia. This proposition will be demonstrated below through the close analysis of three of the abovementioned children’s films, which deploy representations of heroism, war trauma and the family to encourage Indonesian nationalism: *Si Pintjang*, *Djenderal Kantjil* and *Bintang Ketjil*.

3.3 *Si Pintjang* (1951): Children trauma, war casualties, and Indonesian nationalism

Si Pintjang (1951) starts with a statement on screen which describes director Kokot Sukardi’s intention of making this film as his personal ideal:

Tjerita ini digubah sebagai persembahan dan pernjataan turut duka kepada anak-anak jang mendjadi korban keganasan pendjadjahan dan bentrokan-sendjata, pula sebagai hormat kepada mereka yang telah membuka hatinja untuk anak-anak itu.

[This story is adapted as a retrospective statement of condolences for children who became casualties of colonial brutality and armed fighting, and also to respect those who open their heart to these children]⁵⁴

This statement becomes the filmmaker’s manifesto in this film in that it focuses on how children have been traumatised by war. *Si Pintjang* tells the story of Gimán, a

⁵³ There is no official information about why *Si Pintjang* survived, although it is included on the list of films to be destroyed by the New Order government in 1969.

⁵⁴ My own translation

disabled boy who lives with his father, his big brother and his grandmother. The setting is the beginning of the Japanese invasion in Indonesia. The family discusses the Japanese soldiers' cruelty towards Indonesians by sending them as *romusha*, from what they will never come back⁵⁵. It is Grandma's greatest fear that his son and grandson might be taken away. Unfortunately, this fear becomes true when Gimán's father and brother are sent out as Japanese *romusha*. Grandma fears they might not survive. Gimán, despite his condition, takes care of his grandmother but both live in very poor conditions. This story takes place in the period after Indonesia declared its independence, when the Dutch attempted to take the country back as its colony, but Indonesians fought against them. In the film, Gimán manages to escape the invasion alive, but his grandmother dies. The whole village, including Gimán's family's house, is destroyed by the Dutch attack in the War of Independence in 1948. In order to survive, Gimán decides to go to the city, where he struggles to survive alone as a street child in Jogjakarta. He works hard to ensure he has food and befriends other street children in the city. The street children unite as a family and help each other to ensure that none starve. Living in the street with beggars, criminals, and other street children develops Gimán's sense of solidarity and he helps his unlucky friends. One day, Gimán falls sick and his friends try to find food and medicine for him, which leads to them ending up in jail after being caught stealing food. Meanwhile, Yudono, a former independence fighter, has sympathy for these street children. As most of them are casualties of the war of independence, losing their families like Gimán, he wants to do something for them. He decides to create a shelter for street children, where they can become a family and fulfil their basic needs, such as food, home, and education. Yudono retires from the military and seeks support from the military, the police, the media, and the local government to open the shelter. This is depicted in the film as a massive social movement, which leads to Gimán and his friends being accommodated in this shelter. Yudono hopes these street children will be good citizens when they grow up. Gimán still hopes to see his father and brother again. Surprisingly, his father and brother managed to survive among thousands of *romusha* casualties. They find

⁵⁵ *Rōmusha* is a Japanese language word for "laborer", but it is denoted as a forced laborers during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia in World War II. The U.S. Library of Congress predicts that in Java, it was almost 2-4 million Javanese were forced to be a *rōmusha* by the Japanese military. Most of them worked under harsh conditions, which ended died or were stranded far from home. See more details in Sato, S. (2000). *Labour Relations in Japanese Occupied Indonesia*. CLARA.

that the village is gone, are given information about the shelter, and finally they meet Gimán again.

Si Pintjang's director Kokot Sukardi has been acknowledged as a pioneer of the children's genre in Indonesian cinema.⁵⁶ Most of his films present children's themes and child characters in the main narrative. His films were mostly produced by PFN. Almost all films made by alleged leftist filmmakers were destroyed by the New Order government. Only two films survived and were preserved in Sinematek Indonesia, albeit in a poor condition. One of these films is *Si Pintjang*. Because of its poor material condition, Sinematek Indonesia was only able to partially digitally restore the film and currently it is only possible to access a sixty-minute segment.

Among the activities of commercial film production companies, the State Film Company's (PFN) decision to produce children's films was appreciated by the press:

Dalam soal film anak-anak ini, Perusahaan Film Negara telah memelopori membuatnya untuk ikut memberikan gambaran sebagian dari watak anak-anak yang beribu-ribu macam watak. (Minggu Pagi, 9 September 1951)⁵⁷

[In this children film's release, the Perusahaan Film Negara [the State Film Company] has pioneered creating [children's films] to give cinema some of the characters found among thousands of diverse Indonesian children.]⁵⁸

On the other hand, *Si Pintjang* was appreciated by Usmar Ismail who was known as Sukardi's political rival. Usmar Ismail was known as one among filmmakers who claims themselves as part of nationalist-religouist movement. In contrary, Kokot Sukardi was positioned as leftish because his films used a socialist-approach theme. Later, by the New Order regime, leftish-socialist filmmakers then were generalised as pro-communist and also pro-Indonesian communist-party. Despite their political

⁵⁶ See <http://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/ditwdb/2015/11/25/sutradara-film-sang-perintis-pembuatan-film-anak-anak/> (retrieved 17 May 2017).

⁵⁷ See <http://historia.id/film/film-anak-riwayatmu-dulu> (retrieved 11 August 2017).

⁵⁸ My own translation

rivalry, Ismail appreciates Sukardi's choice in making children's films. Ismail states that:

Si Pintjang film Kotot Sukardi yang pertama sebagai sutradara mempunyai arti penting karena pemakaian anak sebagai pemain dengan secara efektif. (Ismail, 1983; 60)

[*Si Pintjang*, Kokot Sukardi's first film as a director, has an important meaning because it effectively uses children as cast]⁵⁹

However, he also criticises this film, stating:

Belum dapat melepaskan dirinya sama sekali dari pengaruh karangan-karangan sandiwara di saat pendudukan Jepang yang sangat bersifat propagandistis sehingga merusak tendensi social yang ingin dimajukan dalam Si Pintjang. (Ismail, 1983; 60)

[The director has not been able to liberate himself from the propaganda effect of Japanese colonial narratives, therefore, damaging the social message that is proposed in *Si Pintjang*]⁶⁰

Despite Ismail's critique of this film's propaganda content, the official government news agency, *Antara*, in its 10 June 1952 edition, proposes this film as one of the best in the era and categorises it as belonging to the neorealist style in Indonesian cinema.

*Oleh banjak kalangan di Djakarta film Si Pintjang dianggap salah satu film terbaik diantara film-film Indonesia jang pernah dipertandingkan, suatu film jang realistik dan jang mempunjai tjorak lain daripada film-film Indonesia lainja jang pernah dihidangkan kepada masjarakat Indonesia.*⁶¹

⁵⁹ My own translation

⁶⁰ My own translation

⁶¹ See <http://www.antaraneews.com/berita/566508/antara-doeloe--si-pintjang-ke-film-festival-di-praha>.

[For many audiences in Jakarta, *Si Pintjang* is one of the best Indonesian films that have been screened. [*Si Pintjang*] has a realistic style, different from other films screened to Indonesian people.]⁶²

According to Antara, Kokot Sukardi is known as the founder and leader of *Barisan P*,⁶³ which is a community that handles street society, including street children, thieves, pickpockets, and child criminals in Jogjakarta. Sukardi based *Si Pintjang* on these street children's true stories. He also cast these children in his film as part of his neorealist approach. The director also features some documentary footage of the Indonesian independence war against the Japanese and the Dutch. Meanwhile, the film narrative emphasises Gimán's devastated life as an entry point to the director's argument that the war traumatised children and made them the primary casualties. In fact, since the beginning of the film, Gimán is depicted as an unlucky child. He is crippled, and lost his father, brother, and grandma. Then, he has to leave his destroyed shack to go to an unfamiliar city where nobody knows him and nobody is able to help him. This dramatic narrative brings up the idea that Gimán and the other street children are victims of war. While Gimán is depicted as a survivor, the film's narrative also suggests that Gimán and the other children are war traumatised.

The film indeed presents raw documentary footage showing destroyed cities after the war and a long line of refugee children living in the street. These documentary images are juxtaposed with Gimán's emotions of devastation to suggest that Gimán should face this situation. *Si Pintjang* combines raw footage, fictional narrative and real street children to produce an impression of realism, which, as Hirsch (2004) argues, creates "a tension between the witnessing of reality and the witnessing of fantasy, [which] both help construct historical consciousness and embody a contradiction within historical consciousness" (p. 7). These mixed sources, while not directly depicting Gimán's life, can be defined as having 'traumatic potential [to project] "vicarious trauma"' (Hirsch, 2004, p. 16), considering also that the film was shown to Indonesians

⁶² My own translation

⁶³ I try to translate the word "Barisan P" appropriately. Literally, Barisan P can be translated as "P March". However, contextually, Barisan P can be understood as P Community. The word "P" refers to "Pengharapan" or "hope." So Barisan P might refer to Community of Hope. I will keep the Indonesian name in this chapter so as not to lose the contextual meaning.

who experienced the war. Gimán's life then can be positioned as a metaphor that reflects the traumatic memory of the war that affected all Indonesian children's lives. There is a scene which shows Gimán advising Umar, a fellow street child, on how to manage his trauma after experiencing war:

Umar: *Kalau bapakku tidak gugur saat perang dan rumah kami tidak terbakar karena bom.*

Gimán: *Ah jangan ingat-ingat soal yang menyedihkan, Mar. AKU selalu memikirkan yang enak-enak saja. Perlunya jangan sampai sakit.*

[Umar: If my father did not die during the war and our house was not burned because of the bomb.

Gimán: Ah, don't recall the miserable past, Mar. I always remind myself of wonderful things. It is needed so we stay healthy.]
64

Trauma healing for Gimán means leaving the past behind and focusing on living happily in the present. However, on the other hand, Yudono places Gimán and the other street children as future citizens that need to be saved. In his view, they don't have a choice other than living in the street, and the main cause of this is the war that made them lose everything. This argument can be found in Yudono's conversation with his wife:

Karena keadaan, mereka mengemis. Anak dari seorang laskar rakyat. Aku yakin, di Jogja sini, bahkan dimana-mana, banyak yang terlantar, seperti anak itu.

⁶⁴ My own translation

[Because of this situation, they have to be beggars. They are the children of our soldiers. I am sure here in Jogja there are many of them living in poverty, just like that boy.]⁶⁵

Yudono compares the effort of taking care of these children to the responsibilities of a soldier in bringing Indonesia to its independence; it means to bring these children to freedom from their poverty.

At first, Gimán and the other children reject the idea of a shelter. Led by Gimán, they assume that the shelter program will take their freedom, similarly to the way the police put them in jail, stigmatised as a social disease. However, Yudono underlines a guideline to execute the program, which warns anyone who rejects this program; this includes the street children who will attract consequences if they consider to rebel against this program. Yudono's guideline evokes the authoritarianism of Soekarno's policies, which, as Feith (1963) notes, forcefully endorsed unification among the diverse members of the independence movement for the development of the new Indonesian nation-state. In this film, the state manifests its presence through the character of Yudono, who is a retired member of the military.

For Yudono, street children will become good citizens if they are treated properly, that is, children are placed as Indonesian citizens-in-training. There is a scene depicting Yudono, who leads a group of street children, lining up and marching in army style while singing heroic songs of Indonesia's war of independence (figure 9). Considering Gellner's (2006) argument that the state encourages children to accept national identity, it is possible to interpret the film's trope of Yudono's shelter as an attempt to inculcate Indonesian national identity to street children. Like Yudono, teachers must place all children as apprentice citizens that need to know why they are Indonesian.

⁶⁵ My own translation

Guru: *Siapakah anak-anaknda semua?*
Murid: *Indonesia*
Guru: *Ya betul. Kita semua bangsa Indonesia.*

[Teacher: Who are you, my children?
Students: Indonesians
Teacher: Yes, right. We are all Indonesians.]⁶⁶



Figure 9. A scene from *Si Pintjang*. Retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=46128421>

While *Si Pintjang* seems to argue that street children must be assisted, the film also shows that the state has the power to form the children as needed. While Yudono's shelter is not a formal school, it stands in for the school system as it is presented as an entry point for war traumatised children to become citizens of the nation. Leigh (1999) refers to this education philosophy as the utilisation of education for the needs of the state. Similarly, Scourfield, Dicks, Drakeford and Davies (2006) argue that the sense of nationalism, in order to develop national identity, is stimulated deliberately through

⁶⁶ My own translation


education and the schooling system, and is specifically aimed at children as the nation's youngest citizens. School education is no longer fulfilling individual needs but the state's agenda to construct a national identity (Coles as cited in Stephens, 1995, p. 3).

Through Gimán's and Yudono's figures, *Si Pintjang* critiques how the war causes children's traumatic memories, as they are the primary victims. However, these traumatised children are then positioned as future citizens that need to be indoctrinated in nationalism. Thus, Yudono's shelter for street children functions as citizenship instruction rather than trauma healing. This point is reminiscent of Sen's (1994) emphasis on a narrative pattern of order, disorder, and restoration of order found in Indonesian cinema. Street children are victims of war and represent a social disorder. Through the figure of an adult, Yudono, the state reveals its power to restore order to this situation by sending the children to the shelter and receive citizenship education. Restoration of order in *Si Pintjang*, thus, refers to the ideological constructing of these children as symbols of the nation-state's political future. A similar idea can be found in *Djendral Kantjil* (1958), which is examined in the following section.

3.3 *Djendral Kantjil* (1958): War trauma, heroism and national stability

Djendral Kantjil (1958) was produced by Ismail and directed by Nya Abbas Akup, who developed an image as a comedy specialist in the Indonesian film industry (figure 10). The film was a commercial success in that era (Kristanto, 2007). The child actor playing the central character in this film, Ahmad Albar, became a popular rock star in the Indonesian music industry in the 1990s and 2000s. The narrative of the film is about Arman, who obsesses with a toy gun and continues asking his parents for it. His father rejects the idea that Arman should have a toy that looks like a gun, as he is concerned about armed militia who are creating problems for Indonesian society. But he finally agrees to get Arman the toy if he passes his examination for the upper school. With the toy gun, Arman declares himself general and gives his friends various military ranks, and creates a boys' squad called *Berani mati* ("Ready to die"). They march around the village and physically clash with other groups, until they confront a real enemy: a thief haunting the village. Many residents have lost their valuables and

not even the police is able to catch him. After some fighting, Arman and his group eventually catch the bandit. The villagers are happy and cheer and reward Arman and his friends as heroes. Arman's father is also happy, but he disbands Arman's group.



The image has been removed
for copyright reasons

Figure 10. The poster of *Djenderal Kantjil*. Retrieved from <https://id.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=591757>

Djenderal Kantjil presents a simple narrative of a child who wants a toy gun. However, this simple toy gun links the narrative to bigger political issues in the context of 1950s Indonesia. The film was made in 1958, in an era in which the Indonesian political sphere was deeply troubled with rife military clashes between the Indonesian army and regional rebel militia; the rising tension between the Communist Party, the Indonesia Nationalist Party and Masyumi Party; and world and regional geopolitics. Despite Soekarno's strong political position, the conflict in several areas also reflects his uncertain political authority. Many of the militia have their own weapons, adding the potential of total civil war, which is shown as a concern of Arman's father in the film.

Traditionally, the family is the first habitus of power construction (Mulder, 1996; Shiraishi, 1997). Children first develop their understanding of power relations through the figures of the father, mother, and themselves. *Djendral Kantjil* reflects this relationship in the story. The film opens with Arman who imagines himself handling a pistol; however, he is too afraid to ask his father. The image of the father and his relationship with his family in this film reflect classical Javanese culture where the father stands at the top of the family hierarchy, while the wife and the children are at the middle and lowest positions, respectively (Mulder, 1996; Shiraishi, 1997). In this structure, the father has the most power, while the mother's role is to serve the father and to nurture her children. The mother figure is constructed to mediate the relationship between father and children. In the film, knowing Arman's fear of his father, the mother encourages Arman to keep asking his father. As in this conversation, she assures Arman that his father will listen to his request:

Arman: *Arman takut ayah marah*

Ibu: *Kenapa musti takut. Memangnya ayahmu macan? Kalau kau minta dengan hormat, tentu ayahmu tak akan marah. Beliau orang baik.*

Arman: *Bagaimana dong mintanya?*

Ibu: *Bilang saja, Yah, besok kenaikan kelas. Kalau Arman naik kelas, ayah belikan Arman pistol-pistol ya.*

Arman: *Kalau tidak diberi?*

Ibu: *Arman, kamu belum minta sudah bilang tidak diberi.*

[Arman: I'm afraid he will be upset.

Mother: Why should you be afraid? Do you think your father is a tiger? If you ask him respectfully, I am sure he will not be upset. He is a kind person.

Arman: How should I ask?

Mother: Just say, 'Daddy, tomorrow is the end of my school term. If I manage to pass to a higher level, can you buy me a toy gun, please?'

Arman: What if he does not want to buy it?

Mother: Arman, you have not even asked him, but you say he will not buy it.]⁶⁷

Arman's mother positions herself as a mediator between her husband and her child. She applies culturally constructed notions of mother and wife as "appendages of their husbands and casts female dependency as ideal" (Suryakusuma, 1996, p. 98). The dual position of mother in the family system is constructed to serve the children, but also to mediate between them and the power of the father as supreme figure in the family. Arman's father affirms his power among the family members, reinforcing a paternalistic culture in which the father figure takes care of and controls his wife and children. However, as Arman's mother negotiates with her husband, she is able to confront him. But she does not do this in front of Arman, who stands outside as a passive subject, waiting for his parents to make a decision between them.

⁶⁷ My own translation

Ibu: *Mas bikin perhubungan mas dengan anak jadi jauh. Jadi renggang. Bikin Arman takut pada mas. Kan bukan itu yang mas mau?*

Ayah: *Tentu saja bukan. Aku hanya ingin anak-anak itu diajari sesuatu yang dapat mengurangi ketegangan.*

Ibu: *Mengurangi ketegangan bagaimana? Kan yang diminta cuman pistol-pistol?*

Ayah: *Ibu tidak mau mengerti sih. Orang di sana sekarang sedang sibuk memikirkan pengurangan persenjataan. Mengapa di sini kita musti menambah pistol segala?*

Ibu: *Alah mas, itu kan politik.*

Ayah: *Oh bukan politik. Menurut teori ilmu pendidikan.*

Ibu: *Teori, kalau menurut teori, Mas harusnya sudah jadi kepala jawatan.*

[Mother: Honey, you make your relationship with your son more distant. It makes Arman afraid of you. You don't want that, do you?

Father: Of course, I don't. I just want to help reduce the tension.

Mother: What do you mean: 'reduce the tension'? He only asked for a toy gun.

Father: You don't understand. People now are thinking how to reduce guns among us. So why should we add a gun here?

Mother: Honey, that's politics.

Father: No, it is not politics. It's a theory of education.

Mother: Theory? Based on theory by now you should be head of your section.]⁶⁸

⁶⁸ My own translation

The debate between husband and wife in this scene is not merely about a toy. It reflects power balancing within the family. The mother reduces the tension between father and children and manages her position as mediator of conflict as well as peacekeeper. The mother in this film depicts a Javanese mother figure as described by Mulder (1996): “earthy, actively caring for things, emotional and not so restrained in their behaviour” (84). Meanwhile, Arman’s father portrays a Javanese idea of father, one who has the highest respect in the family hierarchy, represents “the world of work” and “is remote from his children” (Mulder, 1996, p. 83–84). Thus, the film’s scene ends with Arman’s mother suggesting to her husband that he might be covering up the problems in his own career. The film’s portrait of conflict depicts how adults might insist on protecting the children while concealing their own problems (Mills, 2000).

The narrative of *Djendral Kantjil* goes on to show how the power of this toy gun can cause a chaotic situation. Almost everyone in the story wants to have the gun: Arman, his opponents, and the bandit. By having a gun, Arman feels entitled to have the highest rank and to distribute lower ranks among the others. His competitors attack Arman’s squad to take the gun and their power as the only gang in the village. The bandit also eagerly wants the gun to commit crimes. In this way, the film attempts to critique the state’s absence within the chaos of political turmoil in the 1950s. It depicts how the absence of authority leads to disorder, how the boys create their own army squad to fight other groups and, at the same time, how the bandit easily terrorises the village. Even though Arman and his squad succeed in catching the bandit by taking action themselves, the village becomes anarchic without the presence of the authorities. Thus, the absence of authority leads to the rise of a new hero: the child hero. According to Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo (2011), a discourse of heroism is a social acknowledgement of courageous and risky voluntary acts (whether martial, civil, or social) taken for the benefit of the public. Meanwhile, Allison and Goethals suggest that heroism is a flexible concept, and that to identify heroism depends on which side gains the benefit, whereby someone’s hero might be someone else’s villain. Therefore, on the one hand, Arman is placed as a misbehaving child who ignores authority by doing his own act of justice, and for that, his father regrets his behaviour. On the other hand, the villagers celebrate Arman for his action. Arman is the village’s hero, but a villain to the bandit and to his father. This contradiction, as expressed in the film, suggests that the absence of authority will result in heroes that break the rules

but are needed by society. Wright (2005) argues that the hero is an essential element of the culture of a society and that stories reinforce the established social values by articulating them in the narrative and reflecting them in the heroes.

The narrative of the child hero in this film leads to the idea of representing Indonesian nationalism. After independence in 1945, and official recognition from the Dutch government in 1950, the Indonesian state was attempting to develop a unified national identity among the country's wide variety of cultures and ethnicities. After centuries under colonialism, nationalism in Indonesia mostly developed through sentiments of patriotism. From the beginning of the film, *Djendral Kantjil* shows military symbols, which become iconic for representing a spirit of nationalism. A military musical composition is played from the opening scenes with the pictures of military accessories, such as helmets, guns, and flags.

Furthermore, in the film's narrative the characters use military expressions, such as *kopral* (corporal), *prajurit* (soldier), *letnan* (lieutenant), *serang* (attack), and *pasukan* (squad or army). The film develops an idea of nationalism through associations with themes of war, heroes and patriotism. However, these military themes and symbols also reflect the uncertainty of Indonesia's political situation in the 1950s. The period of 1945–1959 is known as the Indonesian liberal period (Feith, 1963), in which the civil government, under President Soekarno, faced internal conflicts with the Indonesian arm; there were several military factions and focalised armed rebellions in some areas of the country. Thus, the government introduced martial law in 1957 and banned all rebellious military groups, a political measure that is reflected at the end of the film's narrative when Arman's father takes over, bans his son's squad and apologises to everyone:

Ayah: *Asal mulanya, Bapak-bapak. Karena pada suatu waktu, kami telah begitu bodoh untuk memberi pistol- pistolan pada anak-anak dan dari situlah timbul kehebohan ini. Padahal saya tahu, bahwa membawa mainan macam begitu dapat membawa kibat yang tidak baik.*

Arman: *Tapi, Arman tak mau lagi main pistol-pistol, Ayah. Bikin kacau.*

Ayah: *Nah, itu bagus, makin banyak orang berpikir seperti kau, makin aman dunia kita ini. Cuma, satu hal yang aku minta lagi padamu. Bubarkan saja pasukan berani-beranianmu itu.*

Arman: *Baik yah.*

Ayah: *Ayo dimulai. Dengan ini, dengan ini kami nyatakan, pasukan kita bubar.*

Father: [Gentlemen, one day we were so foolish to give this toy gun to our kid and then he started this chaotic situation. I was aware that this kind of toy would cause a bad effect.

Arman: But I don't want to play with that toy gun anymore, Dad. It only makes problems.

Father: Well, that is good. If many more people think like that, our world will be safer. But I have to ask you: please disband your squad.

Arman: Okay, Dad.

Father: Let's get started. I declare your squad disbanded.]⁶⁹

Djendral Kantjil's narrative concerns a traumatic memory of how the war harmed Indonesian society. After decades of independence war against the Dutch and the Japanese, and now with violent fighting among Indonesians, a child with a toy gun without proper adult control stands in for the nation's problems that need to be settled

⁶⁹ My own translation

by the state. This narrative of a father and his son allegorically reflects how the Indonesian state's demands the nation's stability by having to impose order on its citizens. Thus, the film constructs an allegory of the state as a family. By taking the gun back and disbanding the squad, Arman's father restores social stability after chaos and re-establishes his supreme power and authority. As a political allegory, the film proposes that the state, represented through the image of a father, should hold the supreme authority over all other social elements, including the military, in order to construct a better civil society. This powerful and wise father figure reflects a traditional model of idealised Indonesian family that presents "the authoritative, all-knowing father, the ever-giving—never angry—and also all-knowing mother, and obedient children whose mistakes start in stories and are corrected by the parents at the end" (Shiraishi, 1995, p. 170). This model of family is reflected in the state's relation with its citizens by emphasising that a disordered society will harm the whole of its membership, and that, for this reason, the state should enforce social order. While the child characters in *Si Pintjang* are the trauma sufferers, in *Djendral Kantjil* it is the adult figure that has been traumatised. However, in both films children are blamed as the cause of disorder. Therefore, the state, through the figure of a father, must show its power to restore order. This allegorical relation between adult and child characters can also be found in *Bintang Ketjil* (1963), as discussed in the following section.

3.4 *Bintang Ketjil* (1963): Children's heroism through the family, the school and the state

Bintang Ketjil (1963), directed by Wim Umboh and Misbach Jusa Biran, is about a unique friendship among three children: Nana, Maria and Susi (figure 11). They come from three different family backgrounds. Nana is an orphan who ran away from the orphanage and lives in the house of a friend, Pak Mansur; he has a sister at the orphanage and a grandmother at a nursing home. Maria is the only daughter of a wealthy family, whose parents are very busy and ignore her. Susi's mother is a single parent because her husband left them without reason. There is also a retired teacher, Akhyat, who takes care of the children as he feels it is his responsibility. The children's friendship starts when Maria and Susi, who live in the same neighbourhood, meet Nana

during a school break, and decide to follow Nana on a trip to the city centre. Maria's and Susi's parents think their children are kidnapped by Nana but Pak Mansur brings them back to their parents. This situation inspires Nana to kidnap his sister and grandmother as he thinks they are not happy where they are. He wants them to live with him and make them happy as his late mum requested. With Maria's and Susi's help, who think they're going to the zoo, Nana brings his sister and his grandmother to Pak Mansur's home. But Nana's sister and grandmother are unhappy; they prefer to go back to the orphanage and nursing home. In the end, the police find them, Nana and his sister are sent back to the orphanage, his grandmother is sent back to the nursing home, and Akhyat is sent to a mental asylum.



Figure 11. A scene from *Bintang Ketjil*. Retrieved from http://wim.perfilman.pnri.go.id/uploaded_files/jpg/photos/normal/Wim_RIF_015.jpg

The child characters in this film suggest traumatic family circumstances of various kinds: wealthy, selfish, neglectful parents; a financially struggling single mother; and an orphan's childhood. After *Si Pintjang* in 1951, *Bintang Ketjil* is the second film from the children's genre that presents children in a difficult situation and challenges the traditional idealised family in Indonesian culture: a happy family with parents and children (Shiraishi, 1997). In this traditional ideal, the family consists of a father working outside the home and a mother who stays at home accompanying their children. The children go to school and have a life with the family. *Bintang Ketjil* challenges this ideal by presenting different family backgrounds.

Bintang Ketjil, like *Djenderal Kantjil*, also proposes a simple child's wish in the centre of the narrative. If in *Djenderal Kantjil* the child desires a toy gun, in *Bintang Ketjil* the children simply wish to go to the city or the zoo. Through this wish, the narrative shows the absence of an engaged parental figure. While Maria has a complete set of parents, they only focus on themselves and keep breaking their promises. Susi's mother is too busy working to keep her family, thus leaves Susi under a maid's care. The desired parental figure for Maria and Susi is in the end Nana, an orphan child who also tries to be a father figure to his sister. Thus, Nana becomes the heroic character who connects these three family types into an alternative narrative of family happiness.

In the film, the traditional family is depicted as a difficult place for children, while, in contrast, an assemblage of incomplete families becomes closer to what the children imagine as a happy family. However, as a non-traditional parental figure, Nana also reflects his culture through his wish to have an ideal family who lives in a big house with a big yard. Eventually, as Nana focuses on his plan for his sister, he fails to take Maria and Susi to the zoo, and they conclude that adults will always break their promises to children:

Orang dewasa kok begitu ya, tak pernah menepati janji. Ndak jadi lagi deh ke kebun binatang.

[Why do adults act like that? They keep breaking their promises.
We failed again to go to the zoo.] ⁷⁰

The relation between adults and children in this film shows adults using their authority to decide everything for the children despite their decisions not aligning with the children's needs and wishes. For the adults, the actions of these children are considered as disorderly behaviour, thus it needs to be restored: Maria and Susi must return to their families, while Nana must return to the orphanage.

This narrative of conflicted families is also projected in the film through images of a massive infrastructure development during Soekarno's regime in 1960s. We see

⁷⁰ My own translation

footage of high-rise buildings as a background to the children's escape to the city centre in Jakarta. Traffic, buildings, and shops signify modern Indonesia in the 1960s. The final scene in the film shows the children hiding in the rooftop of what was the tallest building in Jakarta at that time: Hotel Indonesia, which Akhyat chooses as a place to see the whole Jakarta and also to hide from the police. In this sense, while the film criticises modern family life as ruining children's happiness, *Bintang Ketjil* also asserts the importance of the state. The film develops a positive discourse about the state through its endorsement of the school, the orphanage, the nursing home, and the figure of *Pak Inspektur* (police officer).

As the film's narrative suggests that the formal school system significantly affects children's lives, the school is constructed as a fun place to be (where students can sing their favourite songs), and as a place that will enhance their quality of life as well as supply children with materials and skills that will prepare them to enter adult life (Shiraishi, 1997; Aitken, 2001). As Wyness (2006) argues, as a social institution, the school has similar powers to those of the family to prepare children to become adults. In Indonesia, the image of a classroom filled with students who sit properly on their assigned chairs while listening to their teacher remains as an icon that flaunts the hierarchy of teacher and student (Shiraishi, 1997). This teacher-student hierarchy is reinforced by the Javanese family culture of respecting elders (Mulder, 1996). In addition, this hierarchical pattern places teachers as symbols of the state, where students are expected to give their loyalty to the teacher as representative of the state (Benninga, 1997). Students are thus constructed as passive, mechanical learners with little space for discussion. In the film, Pak Mansur, Nana's friend, regrets not finishing his studies and endorses Nana for studying:

Coba dulu aku sekolah sampai selesai, tentu sekarang 112ias bangun rumah besar. Kamu harus sekolah Nana. Biar 112ias bangun rumah besar buat kakak dan nenek.

[If I finish my studies, I might be able to build a big house. You have to study, Nana. Then you will be able to build a big house for your sister and Grandma.]⁷¹

⁷¹ My own translation

For Pak Mansur, studying at school is only a means to a short-term goal: to have a house. However, for Nana, a house is a symbol for a family. Boettiger's (1998) argument that the "adult's way" is not necessarily the "children's way" of exploring the world becomes relevant here. The school does not meet the children's needs but makes assumptions about their needs from an adult, and sometimes the states's perspective.

The role of the state is reflected mainly through the character of the police inspector. He is the one who holds the greatest authority among the other characters in the narrative. The inspector convinces Nana that staying at the orphanage is better for him and his sister, and that the nursing home is better for grandma. He convinces Nana that all their needs are provided by the orphanage and the nursing home; thus, there is no reason to escape. The state assures its child-citizens, through the character of the police inspector, that they will be protected. In the end, Nana's dream of building a happy family is fulfilled by the idea that the state will provide. Nana's unconventional way of forming a non-traditional but functional family, as well as Akhyat's alternative perspective on children's education, are presented as subversive, and therefore must be corrected. Nana, his sister and his grandmother should go back to the protection of the state, and Akhyat should be treated at a mental asylum. Children, as discussed previously, are seen as in this context as apprentice citizens who sometimes cause disorder. Thus, the state, as represented through an authority figure, a police inspector in this film, makes itself present to restore the situation.

3.5 Conclusion

Indonesia in the 1950s, according to Hanan (2017), was a country in transition "from colonial subjugation and war, to a new, emerging nation" (p. 25). As newly emerged nation, Indonesia put through a dynamic discourse of national identity that could unify its citizens. *Si Pintjang* (1951), *Djendral Kantjil* (1958), and *Bintang Ketjil* (1963) portrait Indonesia during the Old Order regime through narratives and images that express, in the words of Jennifer Lindsay (2011), an "excitement about the 'newness' of being 'born' as a new nation" (p. 15). A nationalist discourse of Indonesia-ness, according to Lindsay, was prioritised during the Old Order in order to develop the

nation despite deep ideological differences among Indonesians, violent internal conflict due to political factionalism, and the state's authoritarianism with respect to economic issues (2011, p. 3). All the films discussed in this chapter attempt to draw in their own ways a picture of Indonesia and Indonesia-ness through the deployment of common themes: traumatic memories of the colonial era and the war of independence, heroic acts, and family culture.

Si Pintjang attempts to underline how war has demoralised Indonesian society by ignoring street children, who are also victims of war. In the film, the new-born state is depicted taking responsibility in resolving this issue by literally sheltering street children and giving them proper food, house and civic education. Furthermore, by exploiting visuals of war and victims of war, *Si Pintjang* underlines war as a great evil that has victimised innocent Indonesians, like Gimán and the other street children. In fact, during the war of independence, up to 100,000 Indonesian military and 25,000 to 100,000 civilians were killed, and more than seven million Indonesians evacuated or displaced within Indonesian territories (Vickers, 2013). This damage also includes millions in infrastructure destroyed. In *Djendral Kantjil*, the narrative concerning a toy gun refers to internal political problems in Indonesia in the 1950s, whereas political factions and military rebellions created an uncertain social situation. These armed rebellions caused countless innocent civilian casualties as well as increased social instability as the government only focused on them. Indonesia in the 1950s was politically unstable as Soekarno had to share his power with the military to control the armed rebellions (Feith, 1963)

Feith (1963) argues that in the 1950s, the primary challenge for Soekarno's government was to legitimate Indonesia's political transition from colony to independent state. After ending the last armed rebellion in 1962, Soekarno focused on the economy (Feith, 1963). This gradual change can be perceived in this chapter's films. *Si Pintjang* features a former independence fighter who now contributes to his country by saving street children. *Si Pintjang* is categorised by Salim Said (1991) as a "*film kampanye pembangunan*" (a development, propaganda, campaign film) that endorses that the state will help citizens who have been affected by war. Furthermore, *Djendral Kantjil* presents the idea that given that armed rebellion has disrupted the state's agenda of national development, then it should be controlled. Finally, *Bintang*

Ketjil, while presenting children running away from their parents, it also depicts a modern Jakarta with skyscrapers and busy streets, as an image of Indonesia's economic development.

This chapter argued that the Indonesian films *Si Pintjang* (1951), *Djendral Kantjil* (1958), and *Bintang Ketjil* (1963), all made during the Old Order regime, utilise child character as part of a discursive strategy to advance Indonesian nationalism within the ideological project of the early Indonesian state. In these films, children are primarily present to articulate fictional narratives embedded in historical or actual event in Indonesia. In *Si Pintjang*, Indonesia's independence war of 1940–1950 appears as the main cause of the devastated lives of children. In *Djendral Kantjil*, internal conflict between Indonesian military factions in the 1950s are juxtaposed with a father's concern for his son's demand. *Bintang Ketjil* features children and their family's difficulties during Indonesia's economic and political turmoil in the 1960s. The insertion of established historical facts within the narrative leads to a sense that fiction is juxtaposed with real life events. By elaborating historical events as fictional narratives, these films attempt to work through themes of war trauma in *Si Pintjang*, military rebellion in *Djendral Kantjil*, and family disintegration in *Bintang Ketjil*, issues which are perceived to create disorder within society.

Although the children in this chapter's films are represented as rebellious against authority, it is their traumatic experiences that force them to find their own way of solving problems and, in addition, turn the child protagonist into a hero. In *Si Pintjang*, Gimán's survival makes him to become a role model among other street children. Similarly, in *Djendral Kantjil* Arman leads his peers to liberate their village from a bandit. And Nana inspires other children to redefine the meaning of family in *Bintang Ketjil*. However, these heroic acts are instead perceived as rebellious by the adults, as being against adult authority, because in traditional family culture in Indonesia, children should obey adult rules and respect the adult's role. Therefore, the adult-child relationship as depicted in the films can be understood as an allegory for the relationship between the state and its citizens. The children in these Indonesian films become symbols of rebellious-disobedient citizens that need to be corrected. In the newly independent Indonesian nation of the Old Order, these films express the principle that the state requires full loyalty from all its citizens.

To restore order to the situations of chaos and conflict, the films emphasise the adult's role as representative of the power of the state, which has an authority to correct a disordered situation within the nation. In *Si Pintjang*, street children are seen as improper citizens, so they need to be confined to a shelter. The children's squad in *Djendral Kantjil* is perceived as a cause of social instability, so it need to be disciplined. The children in *Bintang Ketjil* rebel against their parents, so they have to be straighten by the authority. The order-disorder-restoration pattern in the narrative of *Si Pintjang*, *Djendral Kantjil*, and *Bintang Ketjil* illustrates that in post-colonial Indonesia, the state pictured governing its citizens through an allegory of family, namely, the power relation between parents and children in which disorderly conduct is dealt with by adults, who have absolute power over the children. As it will be discussed in the following chapter, this narrative pattern of order-disorder-restoration is also strongly endorsed in Indonesian cinema during the New Order.

Chapter 4

The representation of children in Indonesian films made during the New Order (1966–1998)

4.1 Introduction

The political violence of 1965 enabled Soeharto's regime to replace President Sukarno's government, and to initiate a period of cultural change towards a New Order politics of identity. In the beginning, the New Order prioritised political stability by constructing a discourse of national development as its ideological priority (Hill & Mackie, 1994). Thus, as the regime's political strength peaked, Soeharto promoted family-ism as an ideological foundation to support national development. The discourse of national development was also framed by an attempt to define an Indonesian national character, which could then be recognised as the foundation of a national identity (Hellman, 2003), to be widely applied through the family system (Shiraishi, 1995), schooling (Shiraishi, 1997; Parker, 2003) and women organisations (Wierenga, 2003). In addition, the New Order government reinforced its cultural politics by adjusting art and culture policy to fit its version of national identity (Hatley, 1994; Lindsay, 1995; Schiller & Schiller, 1997).

As part of its politics of culture, the New Order regime also controlled the Indonesian film industry by classifying cinema as a political medium (Sen, 1994) and by restricting the potential for local filmmakers to offer ideological counter narratives (Nugroho & Herlina, 2015). As a political medium, Indonesian cinema during the New Order disseminated the regime's official propaganda of militarist ideology (Irawanto, 1999) and national identity (Roberts, 2000), and also eliminated diversity (Kitley, 1999). The New Order regime utilised PFN to produce several films that are acknowledged to contain political propaganda to encourage loyalty towards the state (Sen, 1994; Kitley, 1999; Bey, 1990; Heeren, 2012). Most of the films produced by PFN, such as *Serangan Fajar* (1981)⁷², *Janur Kuning* (1979)⁷³, *Pengkhianatan G30*

⁷² Translated as Attack at dawn

⁷³ Translated as Yellow coconut leaf.

S/PKI (1984)⁷⁴, and *Operasi Trisula* (1986),⁷⁵ develop a positive image of the nation and personify the state in the image of Soeharto as President. PFN also produced a television series, *Si Unyil* (1981-2003), acknowledged as the longest-running Indonesian children's television program. Philip Kitley (1999) explains that this series presented a model of ideal citizen by unifying differences and eliminating diversity.

While using film as a medium for political propaganda, the New Order also applied several restrictions on the industry, limiting filmmakers to express their thoughts on society (Sen, 1994; Nugroho & Herlina, 2015; Hanan, 2017). Soeharto's government, through the *Departemen Penerangan* (Department of Information), applied tough censorship policies, including pre-production and pre-screening censorship. *Lembaga Sensor Film* (LSF), the Indonesian Film Censorship Board, was established for political purposes and was given wide-ranging authority to decide which films could be screened in public. However, getting approval from LSF did not guarantee that a film could be easily screened. In fact, the government sometimes used its power to cancel a screening for different reasons, but mostly if the film was assumed to be attacking the government's policies or credibility (Nugroho & Herlina, 2015), for example, *Langitku Rumahku* (1989)⁷⁶, and also *Nyoman Cinta Merah Putih* (1989).⁷⁷

Twenty-six films categorised within the children's film genre were made during the New Order period (Kristanto, 1995). There were also twelve films that placed children in the main narrative but were not categorised as children's films. While most of the films were produced by private film companies, the official government film company (PFN) produced some films (unfortunately, most of them could not be found for the purpose of this research due to poor film archive management in Indonesia). Considering Indonesian politics during the New Order and the increased number of children's films produced in this period, it is plausible to claim that the New Order regime purposely contributed to the creation of the material and ideological conditions that encouraged the production of films with child characters in the main narratives in

⁷⁴ Translated as The betrayal of G30S/PKI.

⁷⁵ Translated as The operation of trisula.

⁷⁶ The official English title for this film is *My Sky, My Home*

⁷⁷ Translated as Nyoman loves the red white flag.

order to promote the regime's ideology of national identity, social development, and political stability.

The family allegory was integral to the construction of Indonesian national identity during the New Order. A principle of family-ism was applied as a basic foundation for Indonesia's social and political system, through the educational system (Shiraishi, 1997), school curricula (Leigh, 1999), and the village system (Parker, 1992). This chapter examines how family discourses are utilised through the representation of children in the films *Ratapan Anak Tiri* (1973),⁷⁸ *Ratapan si Miskin* (1974),⁷⁹ and *Ari Hanggara* (1985).⁸⁰ Furthermore, since as part of the New Order's cultural politics the role of Perusahaan Film Negara (PFN) was significant, the New Order regime utilised PFN to produce films or audio-visual programs that promoted the state's political ideologies (Bey, 1990; Irawanto, 1999) and encouraged national identity (Kitley, 1999). Therefore, this chapter also analyses the following PFN films in order to establish how ideals of Indonesian citizenship were constructed by the state: *Harmonikaku* (1979),⁸¹ *Juara Cilik* (1980),⁸² *Cita Pertiwi* (1980),⁸³ *Hadiah buat si Koko* (1980),⁸⁴ *Serangan fajar* (1981).⁸⁵

Although most Indonesian films made during the New Order continued the previous period's practice of using depictions of children as part of a broader discursive strategy to promote the state's version of national identity, this chapter's central argument is that some films made during the New Order used child characters and representations of children's world to voice alternative versions of Indonesia. Indeed, films such as *Si Doel Anak Betawi* (1973),⁸⁶ *Langitku Rumahku* (1989), and *Daun Di Atas Bantal* (1998),⁸⁷ present children images and tropes in the main narrative to address sensitive social issues (Allen, 2011) and promote the diversity of the Indonesian people (Strassler, 1996). While political restrictions were imposed by the state on the

⁷⁸ Translated as The lament of a Stepchild.

⁷⁹ Translated as The Poor's Lament.

⁸⁰ Ari Hanggara is the name of a child killed by his parents. The tragedy inspired this film.

⁸¹ Translated as My Harmonica.

⁸² Translated as Little Champion.

⁸³ Translated as Pertiwi's Dream.

⁸⁴ Translated as A Present for Koko.

⁸⁵ Translated as Attack at Dawn.

⁸⁶ Translated as Doel, A Betawi Boy.

⁸⁷ The official English title for this film is *Leaf on a Pillow*.


Indonesian films industry, such as a censorship policy (Sen, 1994) and limits to film crews (Nugroho & Herlina, 2015), and despite the commercial domination of imported cinema (Said, 1991), this chapter shows that these three films were capable of conveying alternatives to the New Order's politics of identity within an official ideological framework firmly dominated by theories of social development and nationalist discourses of political stability.

4.2 *Ratapan Anak Tiri* (1973 -1980), *Ari Hanggara* (1974) and *Ratapan si Miskin* (1974): Children and the ideal family in Indonesian film melodrama

Film melodrama became a popular trend during the New Order. Krishna Sen (1993) explains that the melodramatic form in Indonesian cinema consists of a narrative about relationships between men and women and focuses on family crises. While this genre was also common in Indonesian films of the 1950s and 1960s, most films made in that period that were acknowledged as good quality films or that won awards can be categorised as nationalist films, as they presented narratives based on historical events of Indonesian resistance against the Dutch colonialists (Sen, 1985s). In the 1970s, the trend in Indonesian filmmaking gradually shifted from the historical towards the melodramatic genre. The melodramatic form, thus, became an important element of a good film in this decade, especially for films celebrated at Indonesian film festivals (Sen, 1993). This aesthetic shift from the historical nationalist form to the melodramatic form happened largely after the political turmoil that led to the massacre of alleged communist party member or anyone who was accused as having a favour in communism in 1965, which caused deep trauma for most Indonesians. At the same time, the ideological battle and political turmoil of 1965 was utilised by the New Order regime to maintain its power by encouraging a fear of communism and any leftist-associated ideology (Sen, 1993). Aware of the risk that a film be interpreted as carrying communist ideology, filmmakers shifted their narratives from social towards private, domestic and family life issues (Sen, 1993).

This shift can also be seen in the representation of children in Indonesian films of this period. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the 1950s and 1960s Indonesian cinema represented children as rebellious social characters. But in the 1970s and

1980s, Indonesian films depicted children in relation to their life within the family. In these films, most child characters are depicted in a difficult situation caused by their parents or having a bad relationship with their parents. *Ratapan Anak Tiri* (1973) started this melodramatic trend with a story about two girls, Netty and Susy, who are abused by their stepmother (figure 12). After their mother's death, their father, Yuwono, marries his co-worker, Ningsih, who sets up Yuwono, puts him in jail and takes over his wealth. The girls are then forced into domestic slavery and face their stepmother's physical and verbal abuse. Most of the duration of the film is filled by these girls doing household duties and crying under the harsh orders of their stepmother. The girls later ran away and live in the street as they wait for their father to be freed from jail. Finally, Yuwono is released after the police find the criminal who set up Yuwono. The criminal and Ningsih are locked up, and Yuwono finds his children and re-builds his family.



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for copyright reasons

Figure 12. The poster of *Ratapan Anak Tiri*. Retrieved from Indonesian Film Poster Archive <https://flic.kr/p/22nMXvS>

Ratapan Anak Tiri demonstrates the melodramatic trend in children's film in Indonesia by featuring scenes of children's crying, which dominate the story. While most critics gave negative reviews, the film surprisingly attracted almost 500,000 people in Jakarta alone. Following that success, this formula was copied by several other melodramatic films, which also successfully attracted large audiences. Several other Indonesian films from this period also present similar melodramatic narratives with children in the main role: *Yatim* (1973),⁸⁸, *Dimana Kau Ibu* (1973),⁸⁹ *Tabah sampai Akhir* (1973),⁹⁰ *Anak-anak Tak Beribu* (1980),⁹¹ *Ratapan Si Miskin* (1984),⁹² and *Ari Hanggara* (1985). These films also present many scenes of children crying and similar storylines: conflict between a stepmother or foster-parent with their step children, which causes the children's suffering. The films' stories tend to end happily for the children and badly for the stepmother. The characters' pattern is also similar in most films: a cruel woman in the image of a stepmother, the weak and powerless children, and the loveable but powerless father.

After the unexpected success of *Ratapan Anak Tiri*, almost ten years later, the producer made a sequel, again featuring the character Susy. In this film, Netty is poisoned by her new stepmother, Paula, which is Yuwono's third wife. Susy is now a high school student. She has a stepsister, Umi, who is Paula's biological daughter. Despite Paula's bad treatment of Susy, both girls are very close. One day, Yuwono goes to hospital for a lengthy medical treatment. Paula treats Susy like a slave at home. Susy even has to pay her own school fees, food and clothes by selling her late mother's jewellery. Eventually, Susy can't handle Paula's treatment and runs away. Umi joins her and insists on visiting their father in hospital. Knowing that Susy and Umi have not shown up at school, their class teacher, Roy, looks for them and meets Yuwono who is back from the hospital. Roy tells everything to Yuwono. The film's narrative then becomes grisly and ends with both Yuwono and Paula dying after swallowing poison.

This family melodrama trend persists until the 1980s when *Ari Hanggara* (1985) was made (figure 13). Arie is a boy who dies after being physically abused by his biological

⁸⁸ Translated as Orphan.


⁸⁹ Translated as Where are you, mother?

⁹⁰ Translated as Sincere until last.

⁹¹ Translated as Children without mother.

⁹² Translated as The poor's lament.

father and his stepmother. The film's narrative reflects a real-life event that attracted nationwide media coverage in 1984. A divorced father, Tino Ridwan, wants his children, including Arie, to be honest people. However, Tino, who married Santi as a new wife, uses harsh discipline. One day, Santi finds money in Arie's bag and accuses him of stealing. Without listening to Arie's explanation, Tino and Santi punish Arie. The punishment gets out of control and costs Arie his life.



The image has been removed
for copyright reasons

Figure 13. The poster of *Ari Hanggara*. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/ixp2g5jnaggk2t>

Ratapan Anak Tiri 1, *Ratapan Anak Tiri 2* and *Ari Hanggara* feature a similar stereotype of an evil stepmother, represented by a young, beautiful woman who hates and abuses her stepchildren. These wicked Indonesian stepmothers apply the classical negative image of the stepmother of Western fairy-tales (Brown, 1987; Johnson, 1980). In *Ratapan Anak Tiri 1*, Ningsih pretends to love her stepchildren in front of her husband, but is very cruel with them while her husband is away. Paula, in *Ratapan*

Anak Tiri 2, eventually kills one of them and regularly abuses the other. Ningsih and Paula represent the idea that a stepmother is a family's disease. The characters of Ningsih and Paula are also depicted as modern women with a contemporary lifestyle, always wearing modern fashion and makeup. Ningsih smokes cigarettes and drinks alcohol, and Paula drives her own car. Both are represented as career driven women, who are doing office work. However, they are also depicted as cruel and evil stepmothers, and as materialistic women, who want to take over their husband's wealth.

Significantly, a metaphor about a similar female character was used by Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, a prominent Indonesian nationalist activist, during the Dutch colonial period (Gouda, 1998). Tjipto's analogy of a beautiful but evil woman was used to describe the Ethical Policy as looking good but making Indonesians suffer. Similar depictions of beautiful but evil women were also used by the Japanese colonial government to represent western countries, especially the Netherlands (Santoso, 2008). Furthermore, the New Order also demonised women who joined *Gerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Gerwani, the Indonesian Women's Movement),⁹³ associating them with the stereotype of a beautiful, sensual evil woman (Dhakidae, 2003).

This antagonistic characteristic of woman as evil stepmother is juxtaposed with the protagonist's biological mother, who is depicted as a devoted wife and wholehearted mother, who spends her time at home taking care of the kids and her husband, and wearing a traditional *kebaya*.⁹⁴ This juxtaposition of female figures can be connected to the way the New Order constructed a politically correct appearance for women (Graham, 2005; Wieringa, 1992). Indonesian women's identity was constructed by the New Order regime by promoting the nuclear family, the nurturing mother and the dedicated wife (Parker, 2002). The New Order's ideal woman had five main responsibilities: as a wife, as a mother, as a procreator, as a household financial manager, and as a member of society (Sullivan, 1994, p. 129–130). In this ideological context, by promoting a stepmother figure as a family evil and the biological mother as an idealised protagonist, films such as *Ari Hanggara*, *Anak-anak tak Beribu* and

⁹³ For details on Gerwani, please see Wieringa, 2002; 1992.

⁹⁴ *Kebaya* is the name for traditional clothes for women in south-east Asian countries, Indonesia in particular.

Ratapan si Miskin, stress the importance of the biological nuclear family within society.

In addition, in these films the father appears as an innocent character who is trapped within the conflict. The father is depicted as innocent because he either does not know of his wife's ill treatment of his children, as in *Ratapan Anak Tiri*, or he is under pressure from his wife, as in *Ari Hanggara*. In spite of this initial vulnerability of the father, which is created by the evil stepmother, in the end it is the father who resolves the conflict. This protagonist father figure was aligned with the New Order's patriarchal culture that promoted the father as the primary figure, who holds the greatest power within the family (Heryanto & Lutz, 1988; Suryakusuma, 1996; Wieringa, 2003).

In the films children are depicted as vulnerable when they are without their biological father. This children's world is dependent on a father figure. The children in the narrative get help from adult male characters rather than female characters. In *Ratapan Anak Tiri 1*, saviour figures are presented through male characters: a policeman, a trader, a taxi driver. Similarly, in *Ratapan Anak Tiri 2*, adult male figures appear as saviours for Susy: a trader, a gold-seller, a taxi driver and a teacher. Netty and Susy, as the central figures in these films, represent powerless, defenceless and dependent children, who are taught to respect their parents no matter what. All they can do is to cry as a symbol of their suffering and defencelessness. The father and evil stepmother place children in the weakest position in the family.

The children-parent relationship in these films marks the shift of Indonesian cinema's narrative in this period from social issues to domestic issues (Sen, 1993). However, while depicting domestic issues, these films show the state's institutions contributing to resolving problems within the domestic domain. In *Ratapan Anak Tiri 1*, a doctor tells Yuwono to not have another child for his wife's safety:

Tuan Yuwono, semua sudah selesai dengan selamat. Tapi ada pesan saya yang harus tuan jalankan beserta istri tuan. Tuan Yowono, tuan dengar apa yang saya katakan?

Iya dokter. Eh, apa dokter?

Untuk keselamatan nyonya dan kebahagiaan tuan, terutama anak nyonya yang baru saja nyonya lahirkan, saya minta pada nyonya dan tuan, dengar baik-baik serta lakukan nasihat dokter. Nyonya masih ingat betapa gawat tadi? Ini adalah terakhir kali buat nyonya untuk melahirkan. Ingat dan jangan sekali sekali membantah atau melanggarnya. Nanti saya buat surat pengantar tuan untuk ke urusan keluarga berencana. Mintalah petunjuk-petunjuk pada mereka.

[Mr Yuwono ... I have a message for you which has to do with your wife. Are you listening to me?]

[Yes doctor. Eh, what is it about?]

[For your wife's safety, and your happiness, and especially for the baby that your wife has delivered, I ask you. Please listen carefully and follow my advice. Do you remember how critical Mrs Yuwono was? This has to be the last time you make your wife pregnant. Remember this, and don't argue with me or ignore my warning. I will write an introduction letter for you to take to the family planning program. Ask their advice there.]⁹⁵

The state, personified in the figure of this doctor, strongly warns and instructs, rather than giving advice, Yuwono to follow a family planning program. This strict welfare state is also present through the figures of a police chief and a teacher, respectively, in *Ratapan Anak Tiri 1* and *Ratapan Anak Tiri 2*. While Yuwono is in jail, his daughters want to stay with him there. The police chief offers the girls to stay at his home with his family. The police officer is depicted in a positive light by releasing Yuwono so he can find his daughters. In *Ratapan Anak Tiri 2*, a teacher stands out as the children's saviour when he informs Yuwono that his daughter has been abused by her stepmother.

⁹⁵ My own translation

In the end, this teacher figure also becomes the foster parent for Yuwono's daughter after Yuwono and his wife die.

These officials represent the state's involvement in domestic issues. The doctor in *Ratapan Anak Tiri 1* emphasises an important public message, which is to join the national family planning program. After taking over from Soekarno's regime, Soeharto's New Order focussed on developing economic and political stability until the early 1970s. According to Terrence Hull (2007), in order to support the regime's concern with economic growth and political stability, national family planning became one of the priority programs. Family planning was strongly endorsed by several parties, such as "U.S.-trained planning officials (technocrats), Ford Foundation advisers, Indonesian Planned Parenthood Association leaders, doctors, and members of World Bank missions" (p. 237). Family planning programs thus were prioritised and disseminated nationwide, and were used as compulsory programs for Indonesian families (Hull & Jones, 1997). The family planning program placed children as a family asset that should be preserved and controlled. Therefore, not participating in this program is like going against the national development program, for which there will be consequences.

Meanwhile, after the political and social instability of the 1950s and 1960s that involved armed conflict between many factions including the army and police, Soeharto took full control of all the armed forces, especially the army, through reorganisation and de-politicisation (Said, 1998). By taking full control of the army, the New Order assured citizens that the army and the police were only working for the state. Thus, this film depicts a friendly, positive police image, as police ready to serve their community. As explained by the police chief to Yuwono:

*Bung Yuwono, hukum dan aturan harus saya jalankan, tapi
peri kemanusiaan harus saya laksanakan. Terlepas dari
persoalan polisi tapi sebagai manusia biasa.*

[Mr Yuwono, I have to keep law and order; however, I also have to consider humanity. Despite being with the police, I am a human being.]⁹⁶

Similarly, the figure of Roy – Susy’s and Umi’s teacher in *Ratapan Anak Tiri 2* – shows how the schooling system is utilised to be both a cradle to enter adult life (Shiraishi, 1997; Aitken, 2001; Wyness, 2006), and a second family for children (Shiraishi, 1997; Parker, 2003). In the film, the school is shown getting involved in domestic issues within Yuwono’s family life through Roy’s curiosity. Knowing that Susy has financial and relationship problems, Roy conducts an investigation and tells the result to Yuwono. At the end, after Susy and Ummi become orphans, Roy offers himself to be a foster parent for these children.

The state’s involvement in family affairs can also be seen in *Ratapan si Miskin* (1974). This film follows the melodramatic trend but is slightly different to the *Ratapan Anak Tiri* series. This film is about the lives of Achmad and Komala, who are orphans and live with their uncle and his wife. The couple demands the children’s inheritance, and then abuse and harass them. The children run away from their uncle’s home and are saved by the head of the village, who represents Achmad and Komala in court against their uncle and then manages their inheritance and take them to the village.

These authority figures – doctor, police, teacher and head of village – are all civil servants, who need to show proper manners and good behaviour, be model citizens, and are supported by a harmonious family life (Suryakusuma, 1996). By helping the children in these films, these civil servants show that the ideal of the nuclear family is significant for the nation state. The family must be saved from instability so it can produce ideal citizens (Hearst, 1997) and so they need to be protected by the state. In this context, the New Order ensured that the family be prioritised as a theme in its official development program. Julia Suryakusuma (1996) argues that the New Order

⁹⁶ My own translation

politically integrated the family concept into its principle of the nation state, as stated in the Fifth Creed of the Fifth Development Cabinet's goals:

The family household is the smallest unit of a nation [...] The [nation] state can only be strong if it is made up of strong families. A just nation can only be achieved through a just arrangement of families. For that reason, building a family implies participation in the building of the foundation of a nation. (Cited in Suryakusumah, 1996, p. 97)

These melodrama films embody key perspectives in their narratives. First, these films signify the central position of the traditional nuclear family in society and at the same time demonise the figure of a dominant woman, who subverts the patriarchal order of the family, through the combined image of an evil stepmother and a powerless father. Second, children are depicted as the weakest members of the family and therefore need to be saved. Third, the state is presented as the ultimate saviour of both the family institution and the individual citizen. The melodramatic turn in this period, while providing narratives on domestic household issues, reflected Indonesia's hegemonic political discourse of that time. Meanwhile, the New Order regime began to use PFN, the state film company, to deliver its political agenda through locally made films in order to establish its power and, sometimes, glorify its leader, Soeharto, as it is discussed in the following section.

4.3 *Harmonikaku* (1979), *Juara Cilik* (1980), *Cita Pertiwi* (1980), *Hadiah buat si Koko* (1980) and *Serangan fajar* (1981): The child as citizen in state-sponsored Indonesian films

Most of the films produced by PFN during the New Order regime featured children in its main narrative, including *Harmonikaku* (1979), *Cita Pertiwi* (1980), *Hadiah Buat Si Koko* (1980), *Juara Cilik* (1980), and *Serangan Fajar* (1981). Even though all of these films are listed as available at Indonesia Sinematek, during the course of the research for this thesis, of the above titles only *Harmonikaku* and *Serangan Fajar* were found at this Indonesian film archive. The analysis of *Harmonikaku* and *Serangan*

Fajar below shows how these films depict idealised child characters, who embody the theme of hope for the future of the nation and project a positive image of the New Order.

In 1979, G. Dwipayana, the director of PFN, produced *Harmonikaku* and it was directed by Arifin C. Noer. This film is acknowledged in Indonesia as one of the best locally made films of that period. The film received three nominations at the 1980 Indonesian Film Festival for best film, best director, and best lead actor and while it did not win any of the nominations, it was highly appreciated by film critics. *Harmonikaku*'s narrative is about the life of an orphan, Sani, who lives in a village with his grandmother. Sani is depicted as a clever student, who cares about his grandmother but cannot continue at school because they cannot afford it. One day, Sani leads his friends to catch thieves hiding in a cemetery. Sani's action is appreciated by his teacher, who, knowing that Sani will not be able to continue his studies, invites him to move to Jakarta. The teacher's family will take care of Sani's grandmother and support Sani's studies while he works as a domestic helper for the family. At his new home, Sani lives with the parents and their three children: Tatang, Putri and Titin. The mother is a strict and conservative woman, who manages everyone with an exact schedule. Tatang has a harmonica and plays it frequently. Sani falls in love with the harmonica but he does not have enough money to buy one and Tatang's mother warns Sani against touching the harmonica. Sani finds a wallet in the street but an imaginary vision of his grandmother advises him that stealing is bad. Sani returns the wallet and even refuses the reward from the wallet's owner. He then sells lollies at school until he has enough money to buy a harmonica. Meanwhile, Tatang loses his harmonica at the zoo and then lies to his mother, saying Sani has it. Tatang's mother accuses Sani of stealing the harmonica and takes it from him. Sani cannot defend himself, as he respects the woman for enabling him to study, so he runs away and is hit by a car, and then he needs a blood transfusion. Tatang's mother realises the truth about the harmonica and donates her blood. They return home as a happy family.

This happy family concept is constructed in the film from early scenes when the teacher convinces Sani's grandmother to let Sani live with another family in Jakarta. While at first the grandmother is concerned about Sani, the teacher convinces her that everyone can become Sani's parent and take care of him:

Kita semua bisa menjadi orang tua Sani. Kita yang di sini. Kita yang di Jakarta. Kita dimana saja bisa menjadi orangtua Sani.

[We can all be a parent for Sani. Whether we are here or in Jakarta. Everyone anywhere can be a parent for Sani.]⁹⁷

This allegory conveys the message that the Indonesian state is a family. By specifically mentioning Jakarta the teacher's speech also means that the Indonesian government can be Sani's parent as Jakarta is the capital city of Indonesia. Indeed, in Indonesia often the word "Jakarta" is used to refer to the government. This familial allegory aligns with the New Order's ideology which describes the state as family (Anderson, 1983). Sani, according to his teacher, is an orphan who will have a better life with a Jakarta family than living with his grandmother in a poor village. Therefore, to strengthen the idea that living in the city is better than in the village, Jakarta is visualised through a classical image of a big city: colourful lights, high-rise buildings and cars everywhere, with the happy faces of people walking around. Thus, when Sani enters the life of Tatang's family, he also enters the city and a modern Indonesia, leaving traditional village life behind.

Tatang's family also becomes an idealised model for a modern family: a wealthy, small nuclear family, living in modern house in a busy city, with a car, a nanny and a gardener. At home, they have a family portrait, typical of the New Order: a father who works at an office, a housewife mother, and happy school children. This idealised nuclear family form is constructed by the New Order to define the national family planning program. This narrative of the ideal family promotes an ideological framework for the state's development program, the New Order's primary goal (Shiraishi, 1997; Parker, 2003). This typical family reflects dominant Javanese culture that prioritises a hierarchy of power, with the father (*bapak*) on the top, the mother (*ibu*) as a mediator to represent the father's power, and the children at the bottom who are obligated to follow the father's orders (Mulder, 1996; Suryakusuma, 1996; Chalmers, 2006). While in *Harmonika* Tatang's father is depicted as a kind father who

⁹⁷ My own translation

loves his children, his authoritarian role is represented through his wife. She sets up the rules and manages the household, financed by her husband. She applies top down communication, through which she controls her children, including Sani, telling them what to do as obedient members of the family, and with no opportunity for them to question her instructions. This situation is reflected in Tatang's father's statement:

Coba lihat kang. Semuanya serba diatur. Huh. Rumah, anak, ayam, tanaman, kursi, sampai mandi pun diatur. Cuman satu yang tak bisa diatur. Kalau saya ngorok.

[You see, brother. Everything is under control. Huh. House, children, chicken, plants, chair and even shower time. Only one thing she can't control: my snoring.]⁹⁸

Tatang's mother sets up all the family rules, including time for studying, sleeping, showering and even to teach the children what is good and bad. Allison James (1993) argues that living with a family contributes to children's learning about becoming good citizens. Even at the school, children are educated by teachers who become proxy parents outside the home (Scourfield, Dicks, Drakeford, and Davies, 2006; Wyness, 2006).

While *Harmonikaku*'s basic story is about a harmonica, the film also conveys the moral idea that stealing is a criminal act; it does so through a repeated statement: *Mencuri itu jahat* ("stealing is bad"), which is shown from the first scene, when Sani and his friends find thieves and tell the villagers. This scene stands out from the rest of the film as it is presented through a theatrical style: a mob brings torches in the dark, marching and walking together and yelling harmoniously *pencuri jahat harus dihukum* ("the evil thief has to be punished"). The theme of "stealing is bad" is replayed in other scenes, underlining the moral message of this film through the figure of Sani. This message reappears in Sani's imaginary vision of his grandmother, when he is interrogated by his teacher about stealing the wallet, and when Tatang's mother

⁹⁸ My own translation

accuses Sani of taking Tatang's harmonica. Against all those accusations, Sani defends himself by saying: *Sani bukan pencuri* ("Sani is not a thief").

The message of "stealing is bad" relates to the Indonesian context in 1970–1980 when crime and corruption was a primary concern for Indonesians. In 1977, opposition movements led by university students opposed the third re-election of Soeharto as president. The students' movement criticised several issues of Soeharto's regime. The primary issue was Soeharto's failure to resolve corruption among high-level government officials, including his own family (Pauker, 1981). While Soeharto established several commissions to show his effort to eradicate corruption, such as *Tim Pemberantas Korupsi* (TPK, Team for Corruption Eradication) in 1967, *Komisi 4* (Commission Four) in 1970, and *Opstib* in 1977, he failed to convince the opposition, led by students. Ad-hoc commissions were only able to try low-level corruption cases but failed to charge the high-level cases that involved politicians, government officers and Soeharto's family (Juwono, 2016). This opposition movement was stimulated by the financial scandal of *Pertamina*, the state oil company, which involved Soeharto's family, and other issues with state's enterprises and ministries. Furthermore, knowing *Opstib*'s failures, students pledged to oppose Soeharto's government in 1977 and their movement reached its peak in 1978 when thousands of students gathered at Institut Teknologi Bandung (Bandung Technological Institute), the oldest and biggest university in West Java, against Soeharto's re-election as president (Grant, 1979; Pauker, 1980; Lipsky & Pura, 1978).

Harmonikaku may not be intended to depict literally the context of Indonesia's corruption in the 1970s. However, the scene in the cemetery, which shows people gathering and marching with torches and repeatedly saying *pencuri jahat harus dihukum*, is reminiscent of street rallies which stated their demands with a harmonious rhyme. Considering that Soeharto's government controlled PFN tightly, the film's depiction of a dramatic scene that could be associated to the students' protests against the regime, in the context of the film's narrative and the repeated "stealing is bad" messages, this scene can actually be interpreted as a message to Indonesians that the state is working to reduce crime and corruption. Thus, PFN's moral message, "stealing is bad," is delivered through a series of adult figures, the grandmother, the teacher, the school security officer, the wallet's owner, and Tatang's mother. Their ways of

delivering this message reflect how adults see and treat children: as naïve and in need of being supplied moral values according to adult standards.

In 1980, PFN produced three films featuring children's daily life in the narrative. While these films are now considered lost, what is known about their narratives reflects notions of the New Order's ideology. *Cita Pertiwi* (1980) is about a student, Pertiwi, who has a conflict with her mother regarding her activities as a scout. Pertiwi's father faces corruption charges that cause her and her mother to move back to their village. Finally, they are reunited as a family after her father has been released from his unproven charges and Pertiwi is able to fulfil her dream to be a scout. Being a scout in Indonesia is not one among many kinds of youth activities. The Scout program in Indonesia is reported to have one of the biggest memberships in the world, with approximately 16 million registered scouts by 2002 (Semedi, 2016). This enormous youth mobilisation was utilised by the New Order as a political asset, as Scouts groups were under the total control of the government. In 1978, the government ordered all public and private schools to start their own Scout groups (Semedi, 2016). The values of the Scouts movement, such as patriotism, cooperation, loyalty and nationalism fit into the New Order's politics that required youth to become model citizens.

Like *Cita Pertiwi*, *Hadiah untuk Koko* (1980) also promotes a model scout at school, Koko. He is a smart student who creates a school library as he wants to be an expert on natural science and research flora and fauna. He decides to sell a newspaper and opens a small kiosk. One day, during a Scout outing, he notices a helicopter in an area that has a big cave and is usually very quiet and empty of people. With his two friends, Koko investigates and sneaking into the cave, he finds criminals inside. Knowing that he is a Scout member, they catch Koko and hold him in a warehouse. Koko's father works in the warehouse, sees his son captive and contacts the police, who set Koko free and ambush the criminals in the cave. For his bravery, Koko is awarded a *Supersemar* scholarship. With this story, this film juxtaposes two ideals for children in the New Order: to be a Scout member; and to win a *Supersemar* scholarship. In line with its purpose, this scholarship was awarded to smart students who found it difficult to continue their study because of financial reasons. The New Order provided *Supersemar* scholarships for Indonesian students at a variety of educational levels. This scholarship program was managed by the *Supersemar* foundation chaired by


Soeharto himself. In fact, the *Supersemar* foundation was one of several elite organisations run by Soeharto or his family (Johnson, 2007). This foundation was later accused of using government funds illegally⁹⁹.

Juara Cilik (1980) features the story of broken friendship between two boys, Rojak and Mamat, who love to play badminton. One day, Mamat breaks Rojak's racquet, they fight, and Mamat hurts Rojak badly. As Rojak needs to go to hospital, Mamat feels guilty and runs away from home. Later, the boys reconcile and continue playing badminton together. In this film, badminton is used to represent the friendship of these boys. Similarly, sport and politics in Indonesia are inseparable (Adams, 2002; Lutan, 2005). As Badminton is a very popular sport in Indonesia, Colin Brown (2006) discusses the importance of this sport in an Indonesian social political context. As the only sport that brings Indonesia to international recognition, badminton becomes an Indonesian citizenship paradox because most of this nation's prominent, frontline badminton players have a Chinese ethnic background. This is so even though they encountered difficulties in securing their Indonesian citizenship during the New Order because being an ethnic Chinese during that period meant they were suspected of being connected to communism and the New Order regime deployed military officers to manage the Indonesian badminton organisation. Arswendo Atmowiloto, who made a film on this issue, states that "Badminton is not just a sport, a hobby, or a business. It's also full of political meaning" (Brown, 2006, p. 85). Thus, through *Juara Cilik* the New Order shows that badminton plays an important part for Indonesian nationalism. Badminton then plays an important role as one of the regime's forms of political propaganda.

Similar political tendencies of the New Order can be seen in the appearance of a boy, Temon, in the film *Serangan Fajar* (1981) (figure 14). This film presents a child character within the historical setting of the war of independence. The story of Temon is in effect a fictional element within this film's true historical narrative. Temon lives in poor conditions in rural Jogjakarta, with his mother, grandmother and uncle. His father is a *romusha*, who has been sent overseas by the Japanese colonial government. Temon misses his father and believes that he will come home soon. By using Temon's

⁹⁹ For details, see <https://nasional.sindonews.com/topic/3349/supersemar>. Also <http://www.viva.co.id/berita/nasional/660744-sejarah-yayasan-supersemar-dan-kasusnya>.

story, the film presents fragments of how Jogjakarta's people contributed to Indonesia's war of independence, and the character of Temon is who connects these fragments. As he searches for his father, Temon first sneaks into a Japanese army base, and then witnesses two historical events: Indonesian fighters attacking a Japanese military base and Indonesians using Japanese planes to bomb a Dutch airbase. The Dutch counter attack and Temon returns home. He finds his home destroyed by an attack that also killed his mother and his grandmother. The film ends with Temon playing with a toy airplane, and insisting on learning how to fly an airplane so that he can fly overseas to find his father.



The image has been removed
for copyright reasons

Figure 14. The poster of *Serangan Fajar*. Retrieved from Indonesian Film Poster Archive. <https://flic.kr/p/W7oc7t>

Viewed during the New Order regime, Temon's search for his *bapak* as the key narrative theme of *Serangan Fajar* becomes an allegory of the fatherland's quest set against the stage of the Indonesian revolutionary era. *Bapak* literally means father; however, it also refers to an older male, or, in the political context, refers to a male leader. In some scenes of the film, Temon shouts *bapak!* He shouts to a train that never stops, wondering if his father is on the train. He shouts inside the Japanese army base, expecting his father to be held by the Japanese. As Temon's grandmother described his father as a fighter to him, during his journey Temon asks several Indonesian fighters to be his temporary father. At first, he finds the image of his father in his uncle, but his uncle dies in a battle. Later, he asks his uncle's friend to be his father, but the man has to leave to the battlefield. Temon then asks an airplane technician who helps Indonesian pilots bomb the Dutch airbase. And then Temon sees a young revolutionary leader, Soeharto. In the last scene of the film, in which Indonesian guerrillas lead by young Soeharto attack a Japanese base, Temon is shown calling *bapak!*, as he looks for his father, and the young Soeharto stops and looks back for a while. The scene continues by presenting the heroic actions of Soeharto leading Indonesian guerrillas against the Japanese and then against the Dutch, thus signifying Soeharto as the nation's *bapak*, in other words, as the ultimate leader for Indonesia.

However, Temon's seeking of a father figure proposes a series of paradoxes for Indonesian nationalism. Firstly, while the unclear figure of the absent father is layered within many male characters but no one in particular, and as the film actually ends with Temon's imaginary vision of flying an aircraft, the ultimate message is that the father has yet to be found. In addition, during his journey seeking his father, Temon loses all of his family; in fact, all the main female figures, including his mother and grandmother, are gone by the end of the film, leaving only men as the ones who build the nation. Furthermore, Temon's search for his father leaves him without any child companions throughout the film's narrative, apart from one scene when he plays *perang-perangan*, a war game, with three other children. With most of his journey spent with adults around him, childhood rarely appears as a part of Temon's life. In fact, despite being a child character, Temon's life is like an adult's life, which strongly suggests that the narrative of Temon's journey in this film is used allegorically to represent the adult world.

Therefore, *Serangan Fajar*'s allegory of Temon's search for his father personifies the Indonesian revolutionary pursuit of its *bapak* or leader (Irawanto, 2004), while the relationship of Temon with his imaginary father signifies children-father relations as the political relationship between a people and their leader. Indeed, during the New Order the word *bapak* literally came to mean "Soeharto." In his biography, Soeharto actually used a child-father allegory to illustrate his perspective on ministers in his government:

Di mata saya tidak ada anak emas, juga tidak ada anak yang tidak saya senangi. Tidak ada. Semua mereka itu, dalam tugas dan bidangnya masing-masing, mempunyai kepercayaan yang sama dari saya. (Dwipayana, 1989)

[In my eyes, there is no favourite child (*anak emas*), and no child (*anak*) whom I do not like. All of them, each in his own duty and field have the same trust from me.]¹⁰⁰

By using the word *anak*, Soeharto shows his supremacy over his ministers; he places himself as *Bapak Presiden* (father president). As *bapak*, or father of the state, Soeharto governed as if the state were his family, where all the citizens including the government officials are his children (Shiraishi, 1997). This family allegory illustrates a paternalistic Indonesian culture that is applied to establish political power. Soeharto also positions himself as the father president who connects his people to form strong relations within the Indonesian society (Siegel, 2002), in order to transform citizens into members of the Indonesian family (Spyer, 2004).

Surprisingly, a critical view of the nation-as-family allegory can be seen in a co-production between PFN and the private film companies PT Mutiara Eranusa Film and TPI,: *Surat untuk Bidadari* (1993).¹⁰¹ Directed by Garin Nugroho, the film features a similar narrative to the one seen in *Serangan Fajar*: the journey of an orphan boy, Lewa, who is seeking a mother figure to substitute his biological mother who died in a bus accident in a remote area of Sumba. In his search, Lewa encounters conflict with

¹⁰⁰ My own translation

¹⁰¹ Official English title for this film is *Letter to an Angel*

several adults in his village, including a local bandit who has killed everyone close to Lewa. Lewa's journey ends when he is sent to jail because he accidentally kills the bandit. *Surat untuk Bidadari* has been identified as featuring key issues of contemporary Indonesia, such as globalisation, national identity, and ethnicity (Sen, 2003; Hoskin, 2004; Hanan, 2004; Wibawa, 2008; Wibawa, 2016). In the film, the figure of the child becomes a troubadour who delivers reflections on contemporary Indonesia, criticising the New Order's ideas of national identity and the way the regime disseminates its politics of identity through schooling (Wibawa, 2008). By using the Sumbanese context and a wide range of visual symbols, the film obliquely criticises the New Order's politics of culture, especially how a particular Javanese culture is used by the New Order to construct national identity in a way that eliminates Indonesian diversity and homogenises Indonesian children. How did this film get production approval from PFN? It is likely that the production of Nugroho's film was supported by PFN management because the film makes extensive use of visual symbols and allegories, so its critical message is not literal or overt. For the same reasons, however, *Surat untuk Bidadari* was never screened in commercial cinemas as it was assumed that the film would be difficult to understand by regular film audiences. Thus, while co-produced by PFN, *Surat untuk Bidadari* represents a certain degree of resistance to the New Order's politics of identity. This resistance can also be seen in other films, including *Doel Anak Betawi* (1973), *Langitku Rumahku* (1989), and *Daun di Atas Bantal* (1998), which are discussed in the next section.

4.4 *Si Doel Anak Betawi* (1973), *Langitku Rumahku* (1989) and *Daun Di Atas Bantal* (1998): Resisting the New Order

In order to assure its political hegemony, the New Order constructed a single Indonesian identity (Roberts, 2000), while demolishing the diversity of Indonesian society (Kitley, 1999). As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, Kitley (1999) argues that the PFN-funded television series *Si Unyil* (1981-2003) collapses differences and eliminates diversity through its presentation of an ideal model of citizen. According to Kitley, *Si Unyil* sets up boundaries on how an idealised citizen should be represented: a protagonist child who lives in a happy nuclear family within his community in an established village. Despite this series featuring a variety of

children characters, Kitley shows that *Si Unyil* marginalises a wide diversity of Indonesian identities. The series' single national identity aligns with the *ideologi pembangunan* (development ideology), established by the New Order as its ideological framework (Heryanto and Lutz, 1988). *Ideologi pembangunan* asserts the nation's need of infrastructure as the main modern goal of the nation. However, some films made during the New Order depict alternative children's identities against the regime's homogenous national identity ideal. The following films provide alternative discourses of Indonesia as a nation by featuring class conflict and marginalised identities: *Si Doel Anak Betawi* (1973), *Langitku Rumahku* (1989) and *Daun di Atas Bantal* (1998).

Si Doel Anak Betawi tells the story of Doel, a boy who has been raised by his parents in rural Jakarta, within a community of indigenous people known as Betawi.¹⁰² Syumandjaya, the director of this film, has produced several films featuring ethnic Betawi, including *Si Doel Betawi Modern* (1976) and *Pinangan* (1976), in addition to *Si Doel Anak Betawi*. In *Si Doel Anak Betawi*, Doel's parents cannot afford to send him to school as he wants to. Every day, Doel has a fight and his mother often says Doel is copying his father, Asman, who was a *jawara*, a village hero. Doel has a long-time enemy, Syafei, who is son of *tuan tanah*, the village's landlord. Their rivalry reaches its peak when Syafei insults Doel's father and a traditional celebration suddenly changes to a street fight. One day, Doel's father dies in a truck accident and Doel has to bury his dream of going to school. He helps his mother by selling lolly-ice and cakes. However, Syafei never stops challenging Doel to a fight, until he damages Doel's merchandise. But his father's cousin, Asmad, comes and helps him and then marries Doel's mother. Asmad, who has financial resources and vision, registers Doel at the primary school.

In *Si Doel Anak Betawi*, a child character is used to deliver a message about how Betawi people define themselves within Indonesia (figure 15). The film articulates Betawi's existence through a series of personal conflicts, and in doing so represents the cultural struggles of ethnic Betawi in contemporary Indonesia. The first of these conflicts is within Doel's family regarding whether he should go to a formal school or his grandfather's religious school. The film juxtaposes the life of Betawi children

¹⁰² There is ongoing debate on how Betawi are defined as an ethnic group: as purely indigenous or as a mixed ethnicity; see Lance (1967), Shahab (1994), and Saidi (1997).

against the New Order's ideological framework, which emphasises that a modern child is a child who goes to a modern school with a fancy uniform. This cultural segregation affects ethnic Betawi's perception of education, which wavers between two positions: *Betawi tengah* ("centre of Betawi") and *Betawi pinggir* ("side of Betawi") (Aryanti, 2011). *Betawi tengah* consists of people who are open to modern education and the modern transformation of Jakarta. In contrast, *Betawi pinggir* are often stereotyped as more concerned with traditional Islamic education and less concerned with modernisation. Doel's father reflects this stereotype as he is depicted as preferring the local *pengajian* (religious education based on reading the Quran) rather than formal school. Going to the modern school is only a dream for Doel, as his father does not

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Figure 15. The poster of *Si Doel Anak Betawi*. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/z64hggw6fhewz4>

have the money and wants Doel to become a *jawara*. For his father, learning to live with integrity, respect for family, community and humanity is the best education.

A second personal conflict that Doel has is his rivalry with Syafei, which articulates an economic tension among Betawi. Thus, the children's rivalry in the film reflects the political clash of social classes: the poor Betawi versus the rich Betawi. Both their fight also reflects a wider social problem in big cities, especially Jakarta, where Betawi people have been marginalised economically and politically. Although in the 1970s, Betawi people were stereotypically labelled as "landlords", since the New Order's program of radical urban development in Jakarta, most of the Betawi land was bought or taken by investors, leaving most Betawi people without land and struggling economically (Muhammad, 2012).

But there is a particular scene that depicts a fight between Doel and *anak-anak tangsi* (children from a military housing complex), when two Betawi students are bullied by a group from the military complex. The *anak-anak tangsi* children, who live outside the Betawi village, are depicted as physically different compared to Doel and other children in the film. They wear strange outfits, such as a cowboy hat and a soldier hat, and one of them is blonde. They also use different terms and slang words that do not acknowledge Betawi culture, especially when they swear. *Anak-anak tangsi* are most likely multi-ethnic children as their parents are soldiers or military members that come from different ethnic backgrounds. As the scene also shows huge concrete buildings in contrast with the village, it does not merely refer to a conflict between civil and military society, but also to the Betawi's struggle to compete culturally and economically against migrants from other areas, while they encounter discrimination within the development of Jakarta (Tjahjono, 2003; Hanan & Koesasi, 2011).

Despite representing the Betawi's struggle, the film proposes that all this conflict can be ended through modern education. The last scene shows this resolution for Doel: his first day at school. He wears a formal suit and looks different among other students who wear regular uniforms. When the teacher asks his name, Doel only has his one-word name. As regulation asks for at least two words or a longer word for a student's name, Doel calls himself: *Doel Anak Betawi Asli* ("Doel the Indigenous Betawi"). The teacher applauds his new name by saying: *Doel sudah jadi anak modern* ("Doel has become a modern boy"). This final scene reflects the idea that modern education is the

way to create a better future for children like Doel. It transforms him from a child of an ethnic people marginalised in their own city to a modern Indonesian child. However, the film leaves all these issues open as Betawi people and their children are still marginalised in their own land.

Marginalised children are also featured in *Langitku Rumahku*. This film is about the friendship between two boys, Andri and Gempol. Andri is a child from a wealthy family, while Gempol works on the streets as a newspaper seller. These children are shown as having contrasting lives but each envies the other's life. Andri, who lives with strict family rules, envies Gempol's freedom, while Gempol envies Andri, who has everything that modern Indonesia, constructed within development ideology, has to offer. Andri lives comfortably in a big house, listens to western music on his stereo and is assisted by a nanny and a personal driver. However, he is disappointed with his father, who is always busy with work and never has a chance to accompany him to school. Gempol, in contrast, lives in a slum in a poor area of the city, and needs to work to live. Going to school in the city is not possible for him, so he wants to go back to his village, where he could live with his grandmother and go to a local school. But his parents need Gempol to stay to help them to sell used paper.

Andri and Gempol meet at the school, where Gempol secretly watches students in a classroom. Andri befriends Gempol and they have adventures. Andri, introduced to real life on the street, is called *Bung Kecil* ("Little Mate") by Gempol. One day they find Gempol's house demolished because the government is "cleaning up" the city, especially the slum areas, ahead of the annual celebration of Indonesia's Independence Day. As Gempol's parents and sister have been taken to a government shelter, he decides to return to his village and Andri goes with him. During their journey, Andri lives like a street child and experiences a hard life. While Andri's family desperately looks for him, Gempol could not find his grandma in the village. Finally, the children return to Jakarta. Andri is back with his family and Gempol returns to his life as a street child.

Narratives of poverty were common in Indonesian cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. Krishna Sen (1994) argues that Indonesian cinema of this period developed a typical narrative of poverty into a social mobility concept. Through a narrative of poverty, films in the 1970s and 1980s depicted a protagonic type who lives in poverty but

eventually changes into a better life. This narrative formula promoted the ideology that development would create better lives for all citizens. However, in the end-1980s, *Langitku Rumahku* proposed a different idea within a similar narrative of poverty. Instead of a poor protagonist who takes opportunities to improve his life, this film states that the gap between poor and rich in Indonesia is a much bitter reality than simple development narratives can solve. According to Ariel Heryanto (1988), the New Order's development program was a political strategy directed to demonstrating the regime's capability of producing benefits for all its citizens. By contradicting the typical narrative of a child's transformation from poverty to wealth, *Langitku Rumahku* criticises the New Order's ideology that economic development, which in the film is emphasised in the physical appearance of modern buildings and schools, will necessarily enhance community welfare for all Indonesians. Despite Gempol's efforts to improve, at the end of the film he is still living on the street. Through Andri's and Gempol's lives, the narrative of *Langitku Rumahku* proposes that the New Order's development ideology does not really enhance all society but allows the rich to become richer and marginalises the poor as a social disease. Andri and Gempol represent the result of the New Order's economic policy of *pembangunan* ("development") and *kemajuan* ("progress") (Heryanto and Lutz, 1988; Beazley, 2000; Beazley, 2002). This policy created a drastic social transformation in which one side enjoyed progress, but the other fell victim of the development, thus creating a wide gap between the rich and poor, and the urbanised and marginalised citizens (Beazley, 2000; Beazley, 2003).

Similarly, Garin Nugroho's *Daun di atas Bantal* features a story of marginalised children in the Indonesian community (figure 16). The film was made in the transition period when the New Order was in crisis, both politically and economically. It was made using a realist approach that was new to Indonesian cinema, casting non-actors (actual street children of Yogyakarta who had been in a documentary by Nugroho) and with the script based on street children's true stories. The film tells the story of three street children, Kancil, Heru and Sugeng, and their foster mother, Asih, as they experience a gritty and harsh life to survive and find meaning in Jogjakarta. Kancil works as a shoe-shine boy and always helps students cross the busy street, but after stealing a pillow from a street musician, he dies as he hits a bridge while standing on the top of a moving train. Heru, who is devastated by Kancil's death, blames everyone, including Asih. As he wants to change his life, he runs away but is kidnapped by a

local mafia who sell Heru's identity for an insurance claim and throw parts of his body in a bin. Sugeng, while trying to save his fellow street children from local bandits, dies after he is stabbed by a gangster. However, his dead body cannot be buried because, as a street child, he does not have identity as a citizen; his name and existence are not recognised by the state.



Figure 16. The poster of *Daun di Atas Bantal*. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=13878871>

While *both Daun di Atas Bantal* and *Langitku Rumahku* present street children in their narratives, they have different foci. *Langitku Rumahku* contrasts the life of a rich child with a street child to criticise the New Order's development policy, by stating that instead of abolishing poverty as promised, the New Order's development establishes a status quo between rich and poor. Meanwhile, *Daun di atas Bantal* depicts the life of street children to state that these marginalised children are direct victims of the regime's development policy. These children live within a street community where

there is no border between adults and children. They have no natural family but home is the place where Sugeng, Kancil, and Heru stay with Asih and take care of each other, even though there is no family bond between them. These children's childhood consists of struggling to survive every day. Their life thus is shown as ironic: Kancil has a pillow that he needs to hold to feel secure but he dies while holding that pillow; Heru dies while attempting to change his life; Sugeng dies while trying to save his friend from the threat of death by a local bandit.

In addition, the character of Asih suggests an alternative to traditional depictions of women in Indonesian cinema. In *Daun di Atas Bantal*, Asih, who suffered domestic violence from her husband and now occasionally dates other men, becomes a tacit mother to the street children. As previously discussed in this chapter, the figure of the stepmother had been depicted as a beautiful but evil woman in Indonesian cinema. However, in Garin's film, as a kind of stepmother of Sugeng, Kancil and Heru, Asih is depicted as a strong, committed and nurturing woman, who stands up against male oppression.

Daun di Atas Bantal represents how street children are stigmatised, neglected, helpless victims of adult society. The film also reflects the Indonesian state's further marginalisation of street children (Beazley, 2002) as they do not align with a modern nation-state as the ideal of the New Order through its development policy (Heryanto, 1988). The film also conveys the intriguing idea that children might be directly victimised by the state. As previously discussed in this chapter, images of innocent children have been typically used in the narrative of children's films in Indonesia, and the state has always appeared as the saviour. In contrast, *Daun di Atas Bantal* suggests that the state is the villain that fails to help, neglecting and victimising these children. While in *Langitku Rumahku*, when Polisi Pamong Praja (Municipal Police of Indonesia) demolishes Gempol's family's house, they appear as representatives of a state apparatus that discriminates against its most vulnerable citizens, in *Daun di Atas Bantal* the depiction of the state as villain does not appear in any obvious image. However, the absence of representations of the state in the lives of these children, leaves them as stateless. In one scene, the film juxtaposes a shot of the children, who are living together as an informal family, with a shot of the television, where a news presenter is reporting on a foster parent program sponsored by the state. The New

Order regime established *Gerakan Nasional Orangtua Asuh* (GNOTA, National Foster Parents Movement Program) in 1996, as part of Soeharto's populist campaign, which was aligned with his national program of nine years of compulsory education (Pongtuluran & Lie, 1998). This scene's juxtaposing of shots, places the GNOTA as a paradox for these three parentless children, as it requires that potential participants be children from families with financial problems. *Daun di Atas Bantal* stresses the street children's lack of a legal formal status through the scene that depicts the death of Sugeng, whose body cannot be buried because he does not have a formal identity. The Indonesian government controls its citizens through the use of *Kartu Tanda Penduduk* ("identity card"). As most of the street children don't have this certificate, they are left outside of state control and officially do not exist (Beazley, 2000). According to Beazley (2000), Indonesian street children are marginalised by social apartheid (p. 475). In *Daun di Atas Bantal*, Kancil, Heru and Sugeng represent a paradox of identity: they become a victim of the state's control of its citizens by not being controlled by it.

The films discussed in this section, *Si Doel anak Betawi*, *Langitku Rumahku* and *Daun di Atas Bantal*, articulate the common idea that marginalised children exist but are forgotten within the New Order's politics of identity, which rather seeks to construct and maintain the idea of children as model citizens. While the family system is adapted to become a type of small state at home (Shiraishi, 1997) and school is modelled like a formal family system that deliberately indoctrinates children with the political agenda of the state (Parker, 1992; Leigh, 1999), these three films propose a side to Indonesian children that resists the New Order's idealisation of children and the family.

4.5. Conclusion

The New Order's cultural politics of development of national identity were applied to Indonesian films made during this period as a form of cinema politics (Sen, 1994, Hatley, 1994, Lindsay, 1995). According to this cinema politics, Indonesian films of the New Order portrayed social transformations but at the same time were utilised to reinforce the state's political and ideological agendas. The New Order conceived cinema as a medium for ideological propaganda which should and could be controlled

in order to maintain political stability. Thus, by restricting film narratives, cultures and production opportunities, Indonesian filmmakers were expected to produce what the New Order regime considered as proper and positive narratives for Indonesia's program of development as a modern nation-state. Perusahaan Film Negara (PFN), the state film company, was reinforced to support the regime's policy by producing films that disseminated the New Order's narratives and messages. As a result, most Indonesian films made during the New Order regime presented depictions of children as part of a discursive strategy to promote national identity within an ideological framework defined by theories of social development and discourses of social and political stability.

The melodrama turn of the Indonesian film industry that featured suffering children among the main characters was the result of a narrative shift initiated to avoid political problems with the regime. The typical narrative of the melodrama genre includes the representation of a family with the father figure as an apex, a demonised woman figure and helpless children at the bottom of the family structure. Primary child characters are predominantly depicted as weak, dependent and less imaginative. This melodramatic family depiction was reinforced through specific films produced by PFN. Through these films, the New Order disseminated its development ideology and glorified Soeharto's legacy. Classical representations of innocent children were also used to legitimate the regime's praise of Soeharto. These children are modelled as idealised New Order citizens that strictly adhere to order and see disobedience as a moral problem. Thus, an order-disorder-restoration pattern appears in the films' narrative as a way to show the state's power over its citizens. Melodrama films during the beginning of the regime emphasised this pattern in their narrative by presenting an image of the state's apparatus as a solver of family domestic problems, for example, in the film series of *Ratapan Anak Tiri* (1973 & 1980). Furthermore, films produced by PFN endorsed the state's domination of children's lives both by underlining the significant roles of government in the society, as shown in *Harmonikaku* (1979), *Cita Pertiwi* (1980), *Hadiah Buat Si Koko* (1980), and *Juara Cilik* (1980), and by promoting the legacy of the leader of the regime, as depicted in *Serangan Fajar* (1981)

The New Order's hegemonic ideology, on the other hand, also stimulated forms of resistance which were articulated as critique through some of the films of this period.

This resistance is shown through the image of the children's figure that contrasts the mainstream New Order's identity of children. In fact, even though the majority of films produced under the New Order insisted on utilising representations of children discursively to encourage the regime's ideal of national identity, this chapter has argued that some films of this period used child characters in the main narrative instead to propose different Indonesian experiences and identities. The chapter has shown that the films *Si Doel Anak Betawi* (1973), *Langitku Rumahku* (1989), and *Daun Di Atas Bantal* (1998) both criticised the failures of Soeharto's regime and presented alternatives to the New Order's politics of identity. These alternative figures do not offer images of marginalised children as a way to undermine the typically idealised representations of children found in Indonesian national cinema, but as a critical opening to understand Indonesia's diversity. This diversity of Indonesia is also significantly endorsed in some films produced after the fall of the New Order's regime, which will be discussed in the next and final chapter.

Chapter 5

The representation of children in Indonesian films made during the Reform Era (2000-2015)

5.1 Introduction

Philip Kitley's (1999) extensive analysis of the state-funded Indonesian children's television series *Si Unyil* (1981-2003)¹⁰³ offers a useful framework to understand how children are depicted in the narrative of post-New Order Indonesian cinema. Kitley claims that the New Order intended to develop a homogenised Indonesian identity by projecting idealised figures of children onto the narrative of *Si Unyil*. Even though this television series features child characters from different backgrounds and ethnicities, the program's dominant narrative plotline as well as its central characters represent only a single Indonesian ethnicity, namely, Javanese (Sen, 2006), as an established urban family (Kitley, 1999; Nugroho & Herlina, 2013). For Kitley, this series imposed a hegemonic New Order character type that ignored Indonesian diversity (1991). As discussed in the previous chapter, this hegemonic ideology was disseminated through the schooling system (Parker, 1992) and was criticised in Garin Nugroho's film *Surat untuk Bidadari* (1994) (Sen, 2003; Hoskin, 2004; Hanan, 2004; Wibawa, 2008; Wibawa, 2017).

The narrative of *Si Unyil* corresponds rather exactly to the structure identified by Krishna Sen in New Order discourse: order-disorder-order restoration. Likewise, Indonesian cinema during the New Order typically developed an approach to narrative that was based on a cycle of order, disorder, and then restoration of order (Sen, 1994, 2006). As cinema politics, the cinema produced during the New Order was utilised to construct an imagined, ethnically homogenous nation in order to enshrine a repressive and authoritarian policy. For example, the New Order's hegemonic ideology excluded the ethnic Chinese from Indonesian social and political dynamics, with the mass killings of 1965-1966 used to legitimise the New Order regime's positioning of ethnic

¹⁰³ "Si Unyil" is the name of a puppet character in this show. As stated in Chapter 3, *Si Unyil* was produced by the state film company, PFN, and is believed to be the longest-running Indonesian children's television program.

Chinese as prohibited (Sen, 1985, 1994; Heryanto, 2014; Hanan, 2017). Furthermore, in Indonesian cinema ethnic and cultural diversity was turned into cultural cosmetics by presenting stereotypical images of children and making fun of dialects and physical appearance. Also, by centralising social and economic development in Java and bureaucracy in Jakarta, there was little chance of a film being made elsewhere (Sen, 1994; Nugroho & Herlina, 2016). In addition, informal consensus only allowed films to be made in the official Indonesian language, so films made in local languages were extremely rare (Sen, 1994; Wibawa, 2008; Nugroho & Herlina, 2016; Hanan, 2017).

Films made by Garin Nugroho, such as *Surat untuk Bidadari* (1994) and *Aku Ingin Menciummu Sekali Saja* (2002),¹⁰⁴ challenge the New Order's homogenising construction of children's identity by depicting Indonesian children within their local communities, speaking local dialects, and having trouble with their position as Indonesians (Wibawa, 2008, 2017). *Surat untuk Bidadari*, for example, features children questioning a dominant culture that is used to homogenise a rich local diversity (Sen, 2003; Hoskin, 2004; Hanan, 2004; Wibawa, 2008). Meanwhile, *Aku Ingin Menciummu Sekali Saja* presents the character of a Papuan boy who delivers political messages criticising political and military oppression that cost Papuan lives and put Papuans against, instead of sharing, Indonesian-ness (Wibawa, 2008, 2017). But the films of Garin Nugroho are the exception. Most Indonesian films produced during the New Order featuring children within the main narrative are set in urban Java, especially in Jakarta. Local cultural, ethnic and geographic diversity disappeared during the New Order on behalf of a single, homogenous national identity. Even though during the final years of the New Order, cinema was used as a medium of political resistance, principally by Garin Nugroho (Hanan, 2004; Wibawa, 2008), the New Order's mantra of social order and political stability remains as a strong narrative agenda in Indonesian cinema. In 1998, Indonesia was hit by economical and political turbulence that sparked a massive student protest demanded a change of tyrannical and corrupt government. After days of racialism riot that killed thousands in Jakarta, the New Order regime fell, marked by Soeharto's resignation. As this thesis has been arguing so far, the socio-political context has influenced film production and cinema

¹⁰⁴ The official English title for this film is *The Birdman's Tale*.

culture in Indonesia from its beginning (Sen, 2006), so the change of regime in 1998 also had deep effects on Indonesian cinema in the New Order's aftermath.

Ariel Heryanto, in his book *Identity and Pleasure: The politics of Indonesian screen culture*, argues that Indonesians post-1998 attempted to reconstruct a new Indonesia to end the traumatic memory of the New Order (2014, p. 3). In Heryanto's words, post-1998 Indonesia needed to "confront the more difficult challenges of maintaining unity in the population in order to move forward and enjoy the fruits of their victory" (p. 3). After three decades under an authoritarian regime, a newly reformed Indonesia intended to leave its traumatic past behind, but this process is still hindered by the fact that at many levels of culture the ideas that continue to identify Indonesia as a nation are those of the New Order. This complex situation mixes with the reality that the New Order's political system fundamentally remains the same within Indonesian society (Douglas, 2006; Heryanto, 2014; Poczter & Pepinsky, 2016). Considering the New Order's powerful political and ideological hegemony, its influence on post-New Order Indonesian cinema remains visible, for example, in the continuation of a narrative structure of order, disorder, restoration of order in Indonesian horror film (Van Heeren, 2007).

However, during the transformation of the authoritarian regime into a more democratic system there have been some fundamental changes to what was previously allowed, restricted or prohibited in film narrative (Sen, 1999; Heryanto, 2014; Hanan; 2017). Indonesian cinema after the New Order re-reads Indonesia as a nation through its featuring of an ethnic and cultural diversity that had been forbidden during the New Order (Sen, 2006; Heryanto, 2014), discussing taboo subjects within a religious context (Hoestery & Clark, 2012, Huda, 2012; Izharuddin, 2015), and confronting sensitive issues on gender and sexuality (Clark, 2004; Murtagh, 2010; Murtagh 2012). Post-New Order cinema in Indonesia presents a radical change of aesthetic and artistic sense, for example, through diverse depictions of landscape, geographies and cities and other urban spaces (Sasono, 2008; Imanjaya, 2010; Paramaditha, 2011).

After 1998, the number of film productions in Indonesia drastically increased through the various genres, including the children's film genre. During the period from 1999 to 2015, Indonesia produced up to 2,300 films, and among these approximately 50

films featuring children in the narrative.¹⁰⁵ In some of these films, child characters are utilised to deliver adult messages about Indonesian diversity (Spyer, 2004), discuss sensitive issues of contemporary Indonesian life (Strassler, 1999; Wibawa, 2008; Wibawa, 2017), or suggest changes to the social role of the school and the family (Allen, 2011; Wibawa, 2016). However, post-New Order film have generally avoided using child characters to voice high sensitivity issues, such as the West Papuan conflict (Wibawa, 2008: 2017), promote banal nationalism (Norman & Nafisah, 2016), and construct models of citizen (Allen, 2011). As the previous chapters have shown, at least from the middle of the twentieth century Indonesian cinema has elaborated a nationalist discourse in its narrative (Heider, 1991); thus Masak (2016) also suggests that indeed, Indonesian cinema post-independence in 1945 presented nationalism as its main theme as a way to endorse the spirit of the newly established Indonesia as an independent nation (Masak, 2016). After years of political turmoil and as part of creating the new Indonesia post-1998, some films continued to feature a spirit of nation building (Allen, 2011) but by exploring national identity through the diversity of Indonesia (Heryanto, 2014) as well as more through discourses on local richness, which contribute to diminish the traumatic memories of an authoritarian, homogenised Indonesia (Sen, 1999).

Therefore, after the New Order ended as a political regime in 1998, many of its ideological practices continued active, for example, the habit to use images and tropes of children as models of the nation within nationalist discourses. Indeed, this ideological use of representations of children in the main narrative of films has also remained during Indonesia's reform era. As consequence, this chapter argues that although many post-New Order films have favoured depictions of cultural, ethnic and racial diversity, seemingly to challenge the New Order's mono-cultural ideological legacy, child characters have continued to be used as symbols for projecting ideals of Indonesia as a nation.

This chapter offers an analysis of selected films that depict children delivering discourses on contemporary Indonesia as a nation. First, the chapter discusses *Jermal* (2008), a film that focuses on child workers, a theme of marginalised Indonesian

¹⁰⁵ For details see <https://beritagar.id/artikel/laporan-khas/sejarah-3595-film-indonesia>.

children rarely exposed in the media in Indonesia. Next, the chapter analyses *Kita Punya Bendera* (2008),¹⁰⁶ which is allegedly the first Indonesian children's film that places an ethnic Chinese child as the main character in the narrative, focusing on the complex situation of being a Chinese child in Indonesia. Finally, the chapter discusses *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan* (2006),¹⁰⁷ which features a Papuan child who wishes to become a student in his village.

5.2 *Jermal* (2008): A discourse of fatherhood and child work

Previous chapters have shown that Indonesian cinema has told stories of children and poverty from various perspectives. For example, in *Si Pintjang*, street children are depicted as victims of war, while in *Langitku Rumahku* they are represented through a clash of social classes. The role of the state is also questioned in some films, such as *Bintang Ketjil* and *Daun di Atas Bantal*. In the post-New Order era, some films also feature street children in the main narrative, for example, *Joshua oh Joshua* (2000) and *Rindu Purnama* (2011). These films, however, only focus on poverty as experienced by homeless children, but poverty also affects other children; it is also related to child labour (Alisjahbana & Yusuf, 2003; Suryahadi, Priyambada, & Sumarto, 2005). Thus, a few films intend to connect the themes of children and poverty through different perspectives, such as *Untuk Rena* (2005), which features children in an orphan house; and *Jermal*, which presents a story of child workers.

Jermal, directed by Ravi Bharwani,¹⁰⁸ is the first and only Indonesian film to date featuring the lives of child workers in a *jermal* (figure 17). *Jermals* are floating fishing platforms, commonly used in western parts of Indonesia, which have been found to be sites of illegal child labour (White, 2004). While *Jermal* is not classified under the children's film genre (Kristanto, 2007), this film uses a neorealist approach by casting real Indonesian child workers in a real *jermal*, juxtaposing it with a focus on the relationship between one of the child workers, Jaya, and his father, Johar. Jaya, a

¹⁰⁶ Literally translated as We have a Flag.

¹⁰⁷ This film's official English title is *Denias, Singing on the Cloud*.

¹⁰⁸ This film won the best feature film at the Window of the World Asian, African and Latin American Film Festival 2009 in Milan, Italy. It also won several categories at the Indonesian Movie Awards 2010.

twelve-year-old boy, lost his mother and has been sent to the only family he has, his father, who never knew he had a son. Twelve years ago, Johar escaped from the law after killing a man who had an affair with his wife, Jaya's mother, and now he manages illegal child workers in the remote *jermal* out in the sea. Jaya and Johar start their new phase of life awkwardly. Jaya expects Johar's acknowledgement, while Johar refuses to accept Jaya as his son. Meanwhile, Jaya tries hard to adapt to life in a *jermal*.



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Figure 17. The poster of *Jermal*. Retrieved from <https://id.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=371847>

The story of Jaya and Johar and the larger narrative of child workers are both depicted in the same location: a *jermal* which is floating in the sea. Jaya and the other child workers are shown interacting in their hut and around the *jermal*, while the father-son

interaction only happens inside Johar's room, isolated from the whole space of the *jermal*. Jaya, as the central figure in this film, connects these two places within the narrative, and also connects the bigger themes of fatherhood and child work.

Pia Markkanen (2005), in a comprehensive report on child exploitation in *jermals*, explains that a *jermal* is a floating, elevated platform supported with tree trunks and constructed near the seashore. This construction will be a temporary living place for fishers and "temporary" could mean overnight, days, and even months. There are several separate spaces in a *jermal*: an enclosed working space where the fishers do their main duties daily; an open space that also becomes a working area; a workers' sleeping hut combined with amenities; and the supervisor's hut. The workers are usually provided with some logistics. Glen Perusek (2004) describes that in 2004 there were up to 2,000 *jermals* in Indonesia of which only 400 were officially registered by the government. Perusek also mentions that there were approximately 5,400 children working in *jermals*. The *jermal* depicted in this film becomes a home, or even a little village, for the children, who live in very poor conditions and under constant pressure by one or more adult supervisors. Through the figure of Jaya, the film explores the child worker's culture.

For Jaya, arriving in the *jermal* becomes the worst experience of his life. He only wanted to see his father but instead Johar makes him become one of his workers. Living in an extreme situation in the middle of the sea with a group of boys that keep bullying him was completely beyond his expectations. Jaya used to be a student, thus his luggage is full with proper clothes and books, but the *jermal* children take it all away, leaving Jaya to wear his school uniform. While the culture developed by child workers is not exactly the same as street children's culture, their social and survival mechanisms are similar. Street children in Indonesia are part of the marginalised society; they are stigmatised by the media and politicians, alienated by the state, and perceived as a social disease by the public. Harriot Beazley (2000, 2003) explains that street children's cultures are developed from communal living and surviving in the street, as they protect themselves physically and psychologically from threats inside or outside their worlds. Thus, in the film Jaya soon understands that he should learn how to survive as none will teach him. He should watch and learn what to do and how to do it.

The *jermal* becomes a separate state with its own rules. The leader is Johar who only cares for his own comfortable life, always putting on earplugs to block all noise. His assistant is Pak Badrun, who can't speak and always writes what he wants to say. At first, Jaya is introduced to the *jermal* by Pak Badrun. Kamal is the oldest child among the workers and Johar's lieutenant. He is depicted as a tyrant, a greedy teenager who takes advantage of the other children. Kamal applies his own rules to initiate Jaya, commanding everything that Jaya should and should not do. Jaya is expected to learn to adapt to the *jermal* society by himself, through a process similar to that observed among homeless children: to adapt to the group's code of conduct, normal patterns of behaviour and bodily styles (Beazley, 2003). The group of child workers decide where Jaya should sleep and assign him his first duty: standing up all day until night on top of the hut to watch for any police ships.

Jermal's focus on fatherhood places the figure of the mother in an antagonistic position by depicting Jaya's mother, who cheated on her husband, as the cause of Johar's fatal violence and escape from the law. Through Johar's refusal to accept Jaya as his son, this film addresses fatherhood issues. The theme of fatherhood, that is, the role of fathers within the family, is not often visited in Indonesia cinema. In contrast, the role of the mother in the family is frequently depicted as idealised housewives and family caretakers while husband figures are breadwinners (Sunindyo, 1998; Sen, 1998; Sulistyani, 2010; Hoesterey & Clark, 2012; Paramaditha 2014; Izharuddin, 2015). While these studies also show that gradually women are being depicted as equals and sometimes as more powerful characters in Indonesia media, the depiction of the male role within the family remains upheld as breadwinners (Clark, 2004).

When Jaya looks for an answer as to why Johar left him and his mother, the film places this part of the narrative only in the specific setting of Johar's bedroom. All conversations between Jaya and Johar, or between Johar and Badrun about Johar's family issues, only happen in this room. Johar creates this room as a personal space to keep his past and his memories secret. Here Johar keeps all the letters he received from his wife with pictures of Jaya, which he has never read. By isolating this personal narrative level in Johar's room, the film separates the family theme from child worker issues. Jaya draws a picture depicting Johar in the front of a class and writes the word *pengkhianat* ("traitor") next to the drawing of Johar. For Jaya, Johar is an irresponsible

father who leaves his family with no intention of coming back. Thus, Johar does not represent the traditional figure of father as breadwinner. However, while Johar is depicted as a failed father, Jaya's journey in the film's narrative implies that the father figure is still a significant one within the family.

As all workers are male, the film shows a purely masculine environment. No women or female figures visually appear in the film, although a vague idea of mother emerges in the letters these children want to send to their own mothers. This blurred, distant mother figure connects through their desire all the male characters and their individual stories within the film. Since Jaya's arrival, the other children mock him with the nickname of "professor" because of his appearance as *anak sekolahan* ("school boy"), who has books as well as school uniform and is the only child able to write and to read. This *anak sekolahan* thus becomes a minority among the child workers. However, at the same time, his uniform signifies Jaya's citizenship and separates Jaya from the other children and their different social and political status. Sarah Moser (2016) argues that uniforms signify children as citizens as well as national identity. Thus, children in uniform perform themselves as "participants in the modern nation-state" (Nordholt, 1997, 14). Jaya's uniform marks Jaya's identity as an Indonesian citizen in this film, although one neglected by the state. At the same time, Jaya's uniform also signifies that the state does not include child workers as members of the nation. Because only Jaya is able to write and to read, the other children ask Jaya for help in writing letters to their mothers. By helping them, Jaya soon gains credibility and respect from them. They send their letters in an empty bottle, throwing it to the sea, which symbolises the uncertainty of ever seeing their mothers again.

Their uncertainty and insecurity are also represented in a scene in which an unknown ship approaches and a child jumps into the sea, trying to hide. As previously explained, only a few *jermals* are operated legally in Indonesia and child workers are illegal under Indonesian and international law. Thus, being caught by the authorities is their biggest fear, both for the children, who work illegally, and Johar, who is a fugitive of the law. However, the film depicts the authority as insignificant and ineffective, and largely absent from the narrative. Thus, the *jermal* is constructed as a place where the habitants hide away from their problems and create their own culture and rules, separate from


the state, but also placing themselves as a forgotten a minority. Similar ideas also can be found in *Kita Punya Bendera*, as discussed in the following section.

5.3 *Kita Punya Bendera* (2008): Contemporary ethnic Chinese nationalism

Kita Punya Bendera, directed by Steven Purba, tells the story of Timmy, an ethnic Chinese boy, who always accidentally falls down during the school's Monday morning flag-raising ceremony (figure 18). One day Timmy is told in class that he cannot say that he is Javanese and he begins to question why he should be treated differently from other children in the school. Discussions of issues of Chinese cultural identity were prohibited during the New Order. However, after the New Order, some films focused their narrative on Chinese social and political issues in Indonesia (Sen, 2006). *Kita Punya Bendera* is acknowledged as one among few films made after the New Order that are openly concerned with the difficult position of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesian society (Setijadi-Dunn, 2009). Among these films, *Kita Punya Bendera* is the only within the genre of children's film. At the start of the film, Timmy's teacher asks the class to fill out a form which requires them to show their ethnic origin. Timmy was born and has always lived in Java like the other children so he answers that he is Javanese. Surprisingly to him, his teacher tells him that he is Chinese, not Javanese. This event triggers Timmy's quest to define his identity as an Indonesian.

The story of Timmy in this film reflects the idea of how complicated it is being an ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. He is physically identified as Chinese, but he cannot speak Chinese nor does he have a Chinese name, and he rarely practises Chinese culture, such as celebrating Chinese New Year. The character of Timmy depicts how the New Order regime applied assimilation programs that forced ethnic Chinese Indonesians to change their personal and business names or to be more "Indonesian-sounding" (Chua, 2004; Hoon, 2006; Aguilar, 2001; Heryanto, 1999). During his presidency, Soeharto applied his own interpretation of national identity to achieve the New Order's political goals. The New Order's ideological charter of *Pancasila* did not accommodate ethnic minorities within its constructed homogenous national identity. Chinese and other minorities were placed as what Stuart Hall (1997) identified as the "significant others", which were forcefully incorporated into the constructed national

identity (Rosaldo, 2003; Hoon, 2006). Consequently, ethnic Chinese Indonesians assimilated themselves into the New Order's identity by changing their names and covering their Chinese customs and cultural practices. After decades of social and political restriction and cultural assimilation, Timmy represents a new generation of ethnic Chinese Indonesians who physically look Chinese but have been alienated from Chinese culture.



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Figure 18. The poster of *Kita Punya Bendera*. Retrieved from <https://id.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=467401>

Ethnic Chinese Indonesians have been depicted in the Indonesian media through stereotypical identity markers, such as funny accents, banal physical features (small

eyes and funny hairstyle), and wearing traditional Chinese clothes in everyday situations. Charles Coppel explains that:

Indonesian Chinese is a Chinese ancestry who either function as members of, and identify with, Chinese society or are regarded as Chinese by indigenous Indonesians (at least in some circumstances) and given special treatment as a consequence. (Cited in Sen, 2006, p. 172)

In the television series *Si Unyil* (1981-2003) during the New Order, three ethnic Chinese characters had stereotypical characteristics. They were Engkong (which literally means “grandfather” in Indonesia-betawi dialect), Mei Lan and Bunbun. Engkong is represented as a nice character but not fully assimilated within Indonesian society; he only thinks of money and dreams of his Chinese homeland (Kitley, 2000). Mei Lan and Bunbun are child protagonists also stereotyped within the New Order’s image of the ethnic Chinese as permissive and with a lot of money. All of these characters speak with a funny accent, which marks these characters as different. Kitley (2000) argues that this non-standard Indonesian accent spoken by ethnic Chinese characters constructs them as improper citizens who lack competency. The New Order regime placed regional and minority languages and accents as a threat to the homogenous national identity, which required the ability to speak Bahasa Indonesia as the official national language (Kitley, 2000).

Timmy’s journey to find his identity is supported by his friends who have different ethnic backgrounds: Bataknese, Balinese and Javanese. *Si Unyil* also featured several protagonists from diverse ethnic backgrounds but left the main character, Si Unyil, without ethnic affiliation, thus standing as the model for Indonesian national identity, which diminished Indonesian pluralism and diversity of identity (Kitley, 2000). Additionally, in the post-New Order era, some films also present protagonists with various cultural and ethnic backgrounds in their narrative, such as *Brandal Ciliwung* (2012). Pasaribu (2012) argues that the stereotypical depiction of children’s cultural diversity in *Brandal Ciliwung* is intended to deliver a narrative of nation-building. Thus, like *Si Unyil* and *Brandal Ciliwung*, *Kita Punya Bendera* also positions these

cultural backgrounds as banal symbols of diversity. The teacher triggers the issue but it is Timmy and his friend who elaborate the discourse of national identity. For Timmy's friends, an identity can be recognised through the ability of a person to practise a specific cultural background, such as speaking their ethnic language. In one scene of the film, each child but Timmy shows that they can speak in their ethnic language. This scene becomes a parody of Indonesian diversity and is reminiscent of the New Order's way to frame national culture by showing ethnic minorities and religious diversity in fashion parades during Independence Day. Thus, Timmy's friends decide that one way to help Timmy develop his identity is by celebrating Chinese New Year. Rodgers and Kipp (1987) note that the New Order regime developed the political idea that ethnic plurality is not naturally acknowledged. Rather, the New Order maintained, a homogeneous national identity required the assimilation of specific minority groups (Foulcher, 1990; Taylor, 1991; Hoon, 2006).

Parker (2003) argues that the New Order's way of developing the nation's cultural diversity failed to develop inclusive multiculturalism. However, the New Order also restricted the use of local languages in formal or national events and stereotyped those who spoke local languages as incompetent citizens (Kitley, 1999). The children's diversity in *Kita Punya Bendera* appears to imply the second layer of nationalism (Verhoeff, 2006) by featuring symbols that refer to a sense of belonging and cultural ownership, such as red-white uniform and flag. These symbols are often used to identify children protagonists in nationalist narratives in Indonesia. The narrative of nationalism in this film begins with the flag ceremony in which Timmy falls down accidentally. As Timmy seems to not place the flag ceremony as an important event, his society questions his status as a citizen. When he finds the answer, the film ends with another flag ceremony but now with Timmy as an active participant. Timmy now knows that he is an Indonesian-Chinese who loves and gives his loyalty to his country. Thus, his teacher chooses him to be one of the flag bearers at the ceremony, in which he shows that he is proud to be an ethnic Chinese Indonesian, while his friends cheer him and celebrate him as *China beneran* ("the real Chinese").


In *Kita Punya Bendera*, the discourse of national identity is mainly brought up by the child protagonists. These children are depicted hanging out together, at school or outside the school, always wearing the red-white uniform, a symbol that constantly

highlights Timmy's search for identity and his desire to become a proper citizen. The red-white uniform is the obligatory uniform for Indonesian students, especially in primary school. Jennifer Craik (2003) argues that, politically uniforms signify control of social self and inner self. Uniforms send a discourse of identity, norms, rules as well as obligatory behaviour. Sarah Moser (2016) argues that the use of uniforms and the regular flag ceremony in Indonesia reflect how schooling activities are significantly utilised to build a sense of nation. By featuring these child protagonists always wearing their school uniform and being actively involved in the flag ceremony, the film suggests that school conducts its role as a complete institution that transforms the students into members of the Indonesian nation and devotees of national symbols and goals (Ramirez & Rubinson, 1979). This film reflects the idea that children acquire their sense of nationalism not only through their interaction with teachers but also through repeated performance (Woronov, 2007), such as the flag ceremony and wearing their uniform (Moser, 2016). Indeed, the central symbolic function given to the flag ceremony and the red-white uniform in *Kita Punya Bendera* signifies the film's insistence on the use of banal markers of nation to convey a nationalist discourse (Billig, 1995). A similar use of banal symbols of nation also appears in *Denias, Senandung di atas Awan*, as it will be discussed in the following and final section.

5.4 *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan* (2006): National identity and nationalist stereotypes

Denias, Senandung di atas Awan (hereafter *Denias Senandung*), directed by John De Rantau, is one of the few films made in Papua after the New Order, and one of only two among those that attracted wide attention (figure 19). The other film was *Aku Ingin menciummu Sekali Saja* (2000), which is acknowledged as the first film made depicting Papua's culture in the main narrative (Sen, 1993; Wibawa, 2008). *Denias Senandung* was awarded prizes at several film festivals, including Best Children Feature Film at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards in 2007, and was selected as the official Indonesian entry to the 80th Academy Awards, in the Best Foreign Language Film category, in 2008. The narrative of *Denias Senandung* is based on a true story: a Papuan village boy who wanted to study at a school located far away from his home. The family of the film's protagonist, Denias, is part of the Moni tribes, who are shown

to live in poverty and place little value in formal education for children. The people of this small village are segregated according to social and economic condition. For example, only the children of the rich, such as the chief of the tribe, will be able to access education. At Denias's village there is a temporary school managed by a teacher from Java, Pak Guru, who sees potential in Denias. While Denias's father prefers the boy to stay home helping him, Denias's mother and Pak Guru agree that he should be sent to study at a school located in a faraway city on a different part of Papua. After his mother dies in a fire accident, Denias runs away from his village to get to the distant school, but when he gets there he finds that the school is only for children from the surrounding villages. However, with the help of one local teacher, he manages to become a student at that school.



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Figure 19. The poster of *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan*.
Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1045831/>

The opening scene in *Denias Senandung* shows a tribe's initiation ceremony with boys who start wearing a *koteka*.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the *koteka* and Papua become inseparable symbolic elements in this film. The *koteka* has been constructed as a symbol of Papua as an uncivilised society (Anderson, 2015; Akhmad, 2017). Between 1964 and 1973 the Indonesian government conducted a program called *Operasi Koteka* ("Koteka Operation") (Anderson, 2015; Akhmad, 2017), which targeted highland tribes in the mountains of Papua and consisted in dropping tons of clothes to modernise and civilise Papuan society, while diminishing the use of *kotekas* among Papuans. Ironically, *koteka* literally means "clothes" (Anggraeni, 2011). More generally, *Operasi Koteka* also reflected the New Order's ideology of constructing canons of acceptable public appearance and performance for Indonesian citizens. This constructed national identity, as discussed previously, tended to ignore Indonesian cultural and ethnic diversity, in general; and it revoked Papuan cultural identity, in particular. *Denias Senandung*'s opening scene is reminiscent of a similar depiction used by Garin Nugroho in his film *Surat Untuk Bidadari*, where he uses an ethnographic approach to visualise the narrative, including actual documentary footage of traditional ceremonies in Sumba. This approach intends to juxtapose a social reality with narrative fiction; and it highlights a sense of authenticity for the audience (Hanan, 2004; Hoskin, 2004; Wibawa, 2008). However, while Garin Nugroho's film uses this anthropological footage for almost the whole duration of his film, in *Denias Senandung* it appears only occasionally, such as the mentioned opening scene and another scene that shows a grieving ceremony consisting in cutting one finger. However, the documentary footage in *Denias Senandung* seems not included holistically within the narrative. After the *koteka* opening scene, no primary characters in this film wear *kotekas*, including Denias. However, this film contains a paradox: while encouraging authenticity through the use of documentary footage of a *koteka* ceremony, the New Order's binary opposition of developed versus uncivilised citizen remains active in the narrative. In the New Order's discourse, the term "development" was also used to refer to physical appearance, which was to be planned and constructed by the state.

Thus, following the *koteka* scene, the film places an agent in the narrative whose function is to initiate a development process since, at first, it seems that only Denias's

¹⁰⁹ Koteka is a penis sheath traditionally worn by local men in certain tribes in Papua.

mother is concerned with the boy's education, while other family and community members have no intention of endorsing it. Therefore, it is Pak Guru, the Javanese teacher stationed in this village that takes control and supports Denias for study at the city school. Other characters that Denias encounters and help him are also described as persons from outside Papua, most likely, from Java. They all stand as outsiders in relation to Denias's Papuan identity. This becomes a pattern in this film: Denias's search for education is supported by outsiders. When Denias finds that the school at the city is supposed to be only for local tribes or villages, Bu Sam, a female teacher at the city school, criticises this rule:

Pertama kali saya injakkan kaki di pulau ini, banyak keluh kesah yang saya dengar tentang ketidakadilan yang diterima oleh warga di sini. Tadinya saya berpikir ketidakadilan itu dilakukan oleh orang-orang di luar pulau ini saja, tapi ternyata, warga di sini pun bisa berlaku tidak adil bagi sesamanya.

[When I first arrived on this island, I heard protests from locals about unfair treatment. I thought that behaviour had only been done by outsiders but eventually I realised that local people also did the same to their own.] ¹¹⁰

Thus, the film constructs an opposition through which a process of development of Papua, personified in the character of Denias, is supported by outsiders to Papua, represented as modern Indonesians, while most Papuans around Denias are depicted as against the idea of formal education. Pak Guru, the Javanese teacher, is the first one who endorses Denias to study at the city school. Another outsider living in Denias's village, Maleo, a character that will be discussed below, stands as the main figure who cares for the village's children's future and convinces Denias to go the city school. Meanwhile, Bu Sam, the teacher at the city school, positions herself as a surrogate mother, who understands Denias's needs and protects him against his own people. In addition, Angel, a child character clearly depicted as non-Papuan, becomes

¹¹⁰ My own translation

Denias's friend at the city school and offers an oasis of friendship after much conflict he's had with other children.

These outsider characters in *Denias Senandung* are reminiscent of a similar depiction in Garin Nugroho's *Aku Ingin Menciummu Sekali Saja* (1999), in which the main child character, Arnold, falls in love with a strange woman who is physically depicted as having a lighter skin colour with straight hair. This makes Arnold's girlfriend, Sonja, jealous, and she expresses her jealousy as a feeling of hatred towards non-Papuan outsiders, which can be interpreted as a reflection of Papuans' subaltern feeling towards Indonesians.

In *Denias Senandung*, the characters of Bu Sam and Angel represent similar effect of Denias for female strangers. Bu Sam and Angel have physical similarities: straight hair and lighter skin. They also have a non-Papuan cultural background: Angel speaks with a Jakartan accent, and Bu Sam, while she speaks with a Papuan accent, describes herself as an outsider during a debate at a school management meeting. Despite Indonesia's population's racial diversity, in this film a binary opposition between Indonesians and Papuans is built on their physical differences. When Denias first arrives at the city school, the first person he meets is Angel. In this scene, the camera focuses on Angel from the perspective of Denias's gaze, which creates a "spectacle of the other" (Halls, 1997; p.225). The friendship between Angel and Denias creates tension between Denias and Noel, the son of the chief of Denias's village, who has been sent to study to the city school thanks to his father's privileged position. Similarly, Bu Sam's support of Denias creates tension between her and school management. These tensions between Papuans and non-Papuan outsiders extends the binary opposition between insiders and outsiders of Papua to become an opposition between blackness and non-blackness. Here the term "non-blackness" is preferred to the term "white" as the concept of "whiteness" has traditionally referred to Caucasian people. While Bu Sam and Angel in this film physically are not "white," as Caucasians are, Dyson (1999) argues that ideologically a binary opposition is constructed with "whiteness as the positive universal versus blackness as the negative particular" (p. 220). Thus, by placing non-Papuan protagonists dominantly against Papuan antagonists, the film postulates that "the darker the skin, the greater the subordination" (Miron, 1999, p. 82).

This depiction reflecting mainstream Indonesians' dominant position towards Papuans is also experienced in the economic and educational systems (Kivimaki & Thorning, 2002). While the film characterises outsider figures as protagonists, this depiction reinforces political stereotypes of Papuans as helpless and powerless (Anggraeni, 2011). As mentioned previously, the outsider protagonists actively endorse Denias's desire for education, with Denias strongly believing in them more than in his father or other village community members. It is also significant that the character of Bu Sam in the film's script was used to replace a local Papuan figure in the original, real-life story on which *Denias Senandung* was based, which tells the experiences of Janias Miagoni.¹¹¹ In the original story, Janias is actually helped by a Papuan priest and religion teacher in the city school, named Sam Koibur. Janias was also helped by other members the school and did not receive any obstruction from local Papuan tribes in contrast to the narrative in the film. Anggraeni (2011) argues that "the remove of real Papuan Mr. Sam Koibur seems reinforcing the powerless of Papuans, as if they can only be saved by kind-hearted outsiders who would happily lend them a hand" (p. 82). The positive depiction of outsider protagonist set against a negative depiction of Papuan characters in *Denias Senandung* suggests that Papuans continue to be seen as significant others in the official discourse of Indonesian national identity. Therefore, the film's narrative proposes that Papuan modernisation needs to be developed by encouraging a sense of nationalism towards Indonesia among Papuans through education. This ideological reinforcement is mainly carried out in the film through the character of Maleo.

Maleo lives in a hut near Denias's village. "Maleo" is this character's nickname, as this is actually the name of the *kopassus*, or special force squad, deployed in this village. From early on he becomes an important person for Denias and will be for the whole film narrative. Maleo arrives to the village by army helicopter, bringing food supplies, and develops close relationships with the village people, including Denias's father and the village's chief. The film does not depict openly Maleo as a soldier. He does not wear a regular military uniform, nor does he carry a gun. He only wears a t-

¹¹¹ Janias Miagoni's story can be accessed through: <http://www.ebahana.com/warta-3-%20Menembus-Batas-Kemustahilan.html> (last retrieved on 19/03/2018)

shirt with the printed words: “Souldier.”¹¹² But in one scene, there is a parcel sent to his name as Serma Hartawan (Sergeant Major Hartawan). In the film, it is unclear why he lives alone and so close to the village. The Indonesian army has been known to place military personnel within civil society, a method called “territorial strategy,” through which, the army will assign at least one officer to live in a district. This New Order policy remains active today despite the change of regime in the 1998 (Kingsbury, 2015; Reza, 2017).

As a central character, Maleo is the film’s principal state representative to deliver a discourse of nationalism. When Pak Guru, the Javanese teacher, leaves Denias’s village and goes back to Java, Maleo is the one who continues to teach Denias and the one committed to helping the Papuan boy to achieve his dreams. Maleo teaches Denias Indonesian geography by creating miniature islands with carton from empty boxes of military supplies. Then, Denias shows these miniatures to his family. When he says *Ini Indonesia, bapa* (“this is Indonesia, father”), the camera focuses on the text printed on the cardboard, where the miniature map corresponds to Kalimantan and Papua, which says: *Ransum TNI* (“Logistic of the Indonesian National Army”). Within the narrative context of a geography lesson, this shot conveys a discourse about the powerful geo-military position of the Indonesian state holding the nation together.

Papua is known as an island where the biggest Indonesian mining company, Freeport, was established since the New Order. This company has also maintained good relationships with the Indonesian army in security issues. In a scene of *Denias Senandung*, Denias arrives in the city and he must find a way to cross the border that separates the remote area of his village with the modern Freeport-managed city, which is heavily guarded by the army. The official reason for establishing military power in Papua is securing Indonesian sovereignty from Papua’s rebellion (Pakpahan, 2017); as a result, up to three decades of violence have been experienced by Papuans (Anderson, 2015). This is why when in the film Maleo replaces Pak Guru as a teacher at the village’s temporary school, Denias’s friends are afraid to join his class. Despite the fact that Maleo’s character is depicted as a friendly and caring person and with a good relationship with the community, he is still a soldier. While having soldiers or police

¹¹² It seems the director intends to show the word Souldier instead of Soldier. Souldier is an obsolete spelling of soldier.

officers teaching in Papuan schools is a common practice (Mollet, 2011), most people in Papua have been traumatised by the brutality of the Indonesian armed forces (Kirsch, 2002).

Through the character of Maleo, the film's narrative juxtaposes the theme of Indonesian nationalism with issues about formal education. Nationalism appears in banal symbols, such as the Indonesian national anthem (*Indonesia Raya*), the Indonesian flag, and the red and white school uniform. These national symbols convey a blunt affirmation of national identity and work as "modern totems" to reconfirm the state's identity and territory (Cerulo, 1993, p. 244). Cerulo (1993) argues that national symbols work similarly in all nations as forms of bonding, legitimising the state's formal authority on its citizens, who are expected to show loyalty and effort to the state. In *Denias Senandung*, the Indonesian national anthem is heard in the scene when Denias shows his island miniatures to his family. This is a paradoxical scene since there is a long history of violence and political turmoil between the Indonesian military and Papuan people's movements. Denias's and his family's acceptance of this official national identity is strengthened in Denias's and his friends' request for a school uniform. After Denias's friends have been persuaded to join the temporary village school, Maleo requests red and white uniforms from his commander, and then gives them to all the students, who wear them proudly, feeling as true Indonesian students. Jennifer Craik (2003) emphasises that "[u]niforms are all about control, not only of the social self but also of the inner self and its formation" (p. 128). Through the school uniform, the state controls and transforms these children into representatives of the nation. Thus, through these depictions in the film, Indonesia's national anthem, national flag and national red and white school uniform reinforce attachment to the nation and encourage patriotism and loyalty from Papuans towards the Indonesian state.

A depiction of the flag-raising ceremony appears in the film's closing scene, when Denias makes peace with Noel as they wear their red and white school uniforms. Raising the Indonesian national flag and wearing the red and white uniform become important symbols in this scene to counter the Independent Papua movement rising up against the Indonesian government. The Independent Papua movement, accused of separatism by the Indonesian government, has similarly symbolised their resistance to

the Indonesian government by raising the morning star flag.¹¹³ For the Indonesian government, raising a flag other than the official Indonesian national flag is considered as separatist and a serious crime, even though during Abdurahman Wahid presidency, the morning star flag was allowed (Webb-Ganon, 2014). Despite a perceived uncertainty among scholars of Indonesian Studies regarding the ending of the West Papua-Indonesia conflict (Kanas & Martinovic, 2017; Philpott, 2018; Viartasiwi, 2018), *Denias Senandung*'s closing scene establishes with great confidence the eager assimilation of the Papuan children into the Indonesian nation. In this scene, Denias and his friends walk to the mountain close to Denias's village in an attempt to see Maleo, but are only able to see his helicopter flying past, suggesting that these children have been already educated and accepted as citizens by the Indonesian state.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that although post-New Order Indonesian cinema, produced during Indonesia's reform era (2000-2015), has favoured diversity in its representation of children to challenge the New Order's mono-cultural ideological legacy and its homogenous version of national identity, child characters have continued to be placed within the main narrative in order to be used as symbols to project Indonesian national ideals. In the films of this period, children are depicted within diverse identities of culture, race, and ethnicity and through various social and political themes but their depiction continues to overlap with traditional discursive habits in regards to the family, the school and the nation. Therefore, while engaging with contemporary themes of Indonesian society, post-New Order Indonesian children's films remain reflecting older ideological practices and ways of thinking, which have been historically associated with New Order nationalism.

Thus, *Jermal* (2008) introduces child labour issues to public discussion rarely addressed in Indonesian cinema before. By separating its narrative into scenes of child labour and scenes of father-son relationship, *Jermal* addresses the problem of child labour in all-male Indonesian industries as well as the family's and the state's neglect

¹¹³ The morning star flag is claimed as the official flag of Independent Papua; see Viartasiwi, 2018.

of vulnerable and underprivileged children. The film also signifies education as a survival strategy for these children within a society that appears to have completely forgotten about them. Similar issues of forgotten children appear in *Kita Punya Bendera* (2008), which addresses the complex position in which ethnic Chinese children find themselves when they seek to be acknowledged as Indonesian at school after being discriminated against and systematically stigmatised as “other.” Similar issues of “otherness” are found in *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan* (2006), which sets up a binary opposition between Papuan and non-Papuan identities within the ongoing history of political conflict in that province.

The analysis of these three post-New Order Indonesian films has clearly shown that these child characters carry responsibilities of nation-building through their roles within the respective film narratives. These child protagonists are made to promote national identity through national symbols, such as the school uniform and the national flag. These national symbols appear in the films as signifiers of a bond between the children, their peers, their families and their society. Jaya, who wears his school uniform at a *jermal*, is both separated and connected among his fellow child workers as the school uniform signifies his status as educated and therefore as citizen and leader. A confusion of identities is reflected in ethnic Chinese Timmy even though he wears the same uniform as his school friends. Once he finds his national identity, he celebrates it as an Indonesian child-citizen by participating in the ceremony of the raising of the Indonesian flag. Papuan boy Denias seeks an official acknowledgement of being an Indonesian student by asking for a school uniform, without which, he feels he does not belong to Indonesia. His search thus ends with his participation in the school’s flag-raising ceremony wearing his brand new red and white Indonesian national school uniform.

Conclusion

Hamid Reza Sadr (2002), in the context of children's representation in Iranian cinema, argues that Iranian filmmakers depict children in the main narrative for reason of personal safety due to the country's tight national security and religious restrictions on public representation. Child figures are chosen to substitute adult roles in Iranian cinema because, as Sadr emphasises, "children were freer than adults; they could go anywhere and do more or less anything" (2002, p. 235). Sadr's assessment is also relevant to understand the use of children's figures in Indonesia cinema. Despite the traditional image of children as innocent, the analysis of children's representation in Indonesian cinema demonstrates that child characters have been portrayed in a rather diverse range of forms, including as a way of addressing complex issues that are traditionally defined as adult.

In order to understand this complexity, this thesis has applied critical theorisations of national cinema to the specific socio-historical context of the use of children's representation in Indonesian cinema. As the Indonesian state's articulation of a national cinema has strived for a film industry functional to the ideological production of Indonesian nationhood, the thesis has argued that the representation of children in Indonesian cinema has persistently supported the state's discursive construction of the nation in spite of historical change. By analysing selected films made in Indonesia between the colonial era and the period of political reform that followed the fall of the New Order, this thesis has demonstrated that despite the changing ideas of Indonesia as a nation visible throughout the history of Indonesian cinema, child characters in Indonesian films have consistently been represented as a model of Indonesia as a nation.

Despite the fact that the idea of Indonesia as a nation-state did not exist yet, films made during the Dutch and the Japanese colonial periods had developed a sense of national consciousness in opposition to the dominant colonial ideological framework. This early idea of nationhood was depicted in films made in Indonesia through images of independent children, depictions of strong mothers, and the absence of a father figure in the family. This sense of Indonesian nationhood was also developed by localising

the setting, narrative and child characters of the films. Indeed, the films *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* (1926) and *Rentjong Atjeh* (1940) introduced traditional Indonesian stories, while *Sie Giok Pa Loey Tay* (1935) and *Anaknja Siloeman Oelar Poeti* (1936) adapted Chinese folk tales into an Indonesian cultural context. In addition, national consciousness was significantly developed through the use of the Indonesian language on screen, especially in the film *Berdjoang* (1943), which was also one of the first to involve Indonesians in the production process.

Post-independence Indonesian cinema, the cinema of the Old Order, presented children characters in an attempt to disseminate a sentiment of Indonesian nationhood through the narration of traumatic memories, heroic acts, and family culture during the war of independence. Films such as *Si Pintjang* (1951), *Djendral Kantjil* (1958), and *Bintang Ketjil* (1963) depict child characters as part of a discursive strategy to advance Indonesian nationalism within the ideological project of the early Indonesian state. Child characters are depicted as both rebellious against authority and heroic through family allegories. This family allegoric is used to metaphor the struggle of children which undermined by the absolute power of parents. This narrative pattern suggests an idea of order-disorder-restoration, which later is also strongly endorsed in Indonesian cinema during the New Order.

New Order Indonesian films depicted social and cultural transformations juxtaposed by a reinforcement of the state's political and ideological agendas. The regime considered cinema as an ideological propaganda which had to be controlled in the name of political stability. Indonesian films in this period presented children's depictions as part of a discursive strategy to promote national identity within an ideological framework defined by social development and political stability. A melodramatic genre that was heavily used in the Indonesian film industry in this period, which featured suffering children among the main characters, was the result of a narrative strategy aimed at avoiding the regime's political intervention.

Protagonist child characters are modelled as idealized New Order citizens that strictly adhere to order as in the films *Ratapan Anak Tiri* (1973 & 1980), *Harmonikaku* (1979), *Cita Pertiwi* (1980), *Hadiah Buat Si Koko* (1980), *Juara Cilik* (1980), and *Serangan Fajar* (1981). However, the New Order's hegemonic ideology also triggered forms of resistance, as shown in the images of children found in some films, such as *Si Doel*

Anak Betawi (1973), *Langitku Rumahku* (1989), and *Daun Di Atas Bantal* (1998). These films depict the images of marginalised children as a critical opening to understand Indonesia's diversity that has been homogenised by the New Order.

Post-New Order Indonesian cinema's representation of children focused on depictions of diversity as a way of challenging the New Order's mono-cultural ideological legacy and its homogenous version of national identity. However, child characters in this period continued to be projected as symbols of an ideal Indonesian nationhood. Despite their diverse identities, cinematic depiction continued to overlap with the established discursive habit of representing children as idealised citizens. While engaging with contemporary themes of Indonesian society, post-New Order children's films continued to reflect older ideological practices and ways of thinking, historically associated with New Order nationalism, as shown in *Jermal* (2008), *Kita Punya Bendera* (2008), and *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan* (2006).

Indonesian cinema has portrayed children in various backgrounds, narratives and changing political regimes. Child characters have been depicted through diverse forms: as independent individuals within the family, as rebellious characters within public society, and as powerless innocent, and submissive figures. Among this diversity, child characters, despite constantly changing ideas of nation in the larger political context, have consistently and persistently been used to represent models of the nation in Indonesian films. While a large number of films present child characters in the main narrative, and, interestingly, most of those characters are boys, the selected films discussed in this thesis does not intended to highlight specific discourses or depiction based on gender perspective.

The thesis further claims that a break with the above rule is found only more recently in the work of a younger generation of filmmakers—for example, Kamila Andini—who challenges ideological uses of child characters in narrative film through the cinematic exploration of a more genuine children's culture, depicting Indonesian children as themselves, as children who live in their own world in spite of the turmoil and pain of the adult world. The thesis has sought to demonstrate this further claim through the creative production of an essay film attached to this exegesis, which is focused on an interview with and an analysis of the films of Kamila Andini. Moreover, further discussion and analysis of Andini's films can be done in relation to other

similar films of the late New Order. Given the limitations of all research conducted for the purpose of the production of a thesis, such as this one, a broader theoretical and methodological perspective, or a discourse on a gendered nationhood may encourage further critical insight on the topic of the representation of children in Indonesian cinema, particularly in regards to the films of recent and emerging Indonesian filmmakers.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Kamila Andini's Biography

Kamila Andini was born in Jakarta, May 6th 1986. She started her path as a professional diver and a photographer. She graduated from Sociology and Media Arts in Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. Her career as a filmmaker began as a documentary filmmaker for WWF, and Coremap about sea turtles and corals. Andini made her first feature film, *The Mirror Never Lies* in 2012. This film is a story of a twelve-year-old Pakis who lost her father when he went fishing at sea and didn't return. She only has a mirror given by her father as a way to memorise him. By using the Bajo tribes' ritual using a mirror and water, Pakis keeps on waiting to see her father's reflection but it never appears. The film has won several awards, such as the Earth Grand Prix Awards in Tokyo Int'l Film Festival, Bright Young Talent in Mumbai Int'l Film Festival, Fipresci Awards in Hongkong Int'l Film Festival. Andini's second film *The Seen & Unseen* (2017) is about a young girl, Tantri, who seeks out imaginative ways to cope with the death of her twin brother, Tantra. Tantri realises that she has very little time to farewell Tantra, thus she retreats to an imaginative journey to experience an emotional relationship through dance and body expressions, bordering children reality of grief and imagination world of hope. This film received the Hubert Bals Script Development Funds and APSA Children Film Fund, best film at Busan International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, and Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival. Also is awarded the Grand Prize at Tokyo FILMeX International Film Festival 2017 and Best Youth Feature Film di Asia Pacific Screen Awards 2017.

Her filmography:

The Seen and Unseen (Sekala Niskala) - 2017

Memoria - 2016

Following Diana (Sendiri diana sendiri) - 2015

The Mirror Never Lies (Laut Bercermin) - 2011

More details on her biography can be seen through

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamila_Andini

Appendix B. Production Details: *The Mirror Never Lies*

100min/HD/Colour/Indonesia/2011

A mirror and the sea sustains the life of 12-year old Pakis, who lives on the small Indonesian island of KampungBajo. The mirror is a gift left by her father who was lost at sea, and the sea is where she and her mother make their living. With a Bajo ritual using mirror and water, she keeps on waiting to see her father's reflection, which never appears. One day, Tudo, a dolphin project researcher, came into their lives. When her mother breaks the mirror and falls for young Tudo, Pakis steals the island mirror and despairs. However, she must learn to overcome her sadness on her own.

Acknowledgements:

1. **Honorable Mention Awards**, Global Film Initiative, 2010.
2. **Selected in 'New Currents' Competition**, Busan International Film Festival, 2011.
3. **'Bright Young Talent' from Young Critics Award**, International Competition, Mumbai International Film Festival, 2011.
4. **'Earth Grand Prix' Award for Best Environmental Film**, Nature TIFF Competition, Tokyo International Film Festival, 2011.
5. **Special Mention Award**, Wind of Asia – Middle East Competition, Tokyo International Film Festival, 2011.
6. **Special Mention Award**, Main Competition, Cinemanila International Film Festival, 2011.
7. **Piala Citra**, Festival Film Indonesia, 2011:
 - **Best Original Story** (Kamila Andini)
 - **Best Music Direction** (Thoersi Argeswara)
 - **Special Jury Prize: Best Upcoming Director** (Kamila Andini)
 - **Special Jury Prize: Best Talent** (Gita Novalista)
8. **Selected in 'Generation K-Plus' Competition**, Berlinale International Film Festival 2012.
9. **Asian Film Awards Nominations 2012:**
 - Gita Novalista for Best Newcomer
 - Rachmat Syaiful for Best Cinematography
10. **FIPRESCI award** from The International Federation Film Critics, Hong Kong International Film Festival, 2012.
11. **Best Children Film**, Asia Pacific Screen Awards 2012.
12. **Film Terpuji Festival Film Bandung 2012:**

- **Best Film**
- **Best Director** (Kamila Andini)
- **Best Art Direction** (Tony Trimarsanto and Motty D Setyanto)
- **Best Cinematography** (Rachmat Syaiful)
- **Best Poster Design** (Tri Wahyu Jatmiko)

13. **Selected as Opening Film** for Cines Del Sur Film Festival, Granada, Spain 2012.
14. **Special Mention Award**, International Competition, Festival Femme de Creteil, France, 2013.
15. **Best Directing**, International Competition, China International Children's Film Festival 2013.

Production credits

Directed by Kamila Andini

Writing Credits Kamila Andini & Dirmawan Hatta

Cast (in credits order)

Atiqah Hasiholan	...	Tayung
Reza Rahadian	...	Tudo
Gita Novalista	...	Pakis
Inal	...	Kutta
Darsono		
Eko		
Halwiyah		
Zainal		

Produced by

Asaf Antariksa (associate producer)
 Nadine Chandrawinata (associate producer)
 Efransjah (executive producer)
 Gita Fara (line producer)
 Hugua (executive producer)
 Garin Nugroho (producer)
 Anastasia Rina (associate producer)
 Wiwid Setya (line producer)
 Devy Wildasari Suradji (producer)

Cinematography by

Rahmat Syaiful (director of photography)

Film Editing by

Wawan I. Wibowo (film editor)

Sound Department

Wahyu Tri Purnomo (dialogue editor)

Camera and Electrical Department

Angela Andreyanti Rikarastu (first assistant camera)

Source: <https://kamilandini.com/films/>

Appendix C. Production Details: *The Seen and Unseen*

– 85min/HD/Colour/Indonesia,Netherland,Qatar,Australia/2017

As the moon dimmed and replaced by the sun, so does Tantra and Tantri – Twins who experience magical journey and emotional relationship through body expressions; between reality and imagination, losing and hope.

One day in a hospital room, Tantri (10 years old) realizes that she will not have a long time along with her twin brother Tantra. Tantra's brain weakened and he start to lose his senses one by one. Tantra is now spending most of his time lying in the hospital room while Tantri has to accept the reality that she is now has to face life alone. This situation opens up something in Tantri's mind.

Tantri keeps waking up in the middle of the night from a dream and seeing Tantra. The night becomes their playground. Under the full moon Tantri dances, she dances about her home, about her feelings. As the moon dimmed and replaced by the sun, so does Tantra and Tantri. Together, Tantri experiences a magical journey and emotional relationship through body expressions; between reality and imagination, losing and hope.

Acknowledgements:

- **World Premiere at PLATFORM competition**, Toronto International Film Festival 2017
- **Hubertbals Fund**, Script Development 2011.
- **Asia Pacific Screen Awards Children Film Fund**, Script Development 2012.
- **Wouter Barendrecht Award**, Fortissimo Foundation, Hong Kong Asia Film Financing Forum, Co-production market 2012.
- **Ties That Bind**, Asian European Co-production workshop 2012
- **Cinefondation, The Residence du Festival de Cannes** 2012 – 2013.
- **Doha Film Institute**, Post Production Grant 2017
- **Best Youth Feature Film**, Asia Pacific Screen Awards 2017
- **Grand Prize winner**, Best Feature Tokyo Fimex 2017
- **Hanoman Award**, Best Feature Jogja Asia Netpac Film Festival 2017
- **International Jury Grand Prix**, Best feature Berlinale Generation Kplus 2018
- **Best Cinematography**, For Anggi Frisca, Malaysian Golden Global Awards 2018
- **Critics Choice Award**, Fribourg International Film Festival 2018
- **Special Award of Premio SIGNIS**, Festival cinema Africano d'Asia e America Latina 2018

- **Best Feature Film**, Avant-garde and genre competition, Buenos Aires International Film Festival 2018
- **Media Choice Award for Filmmaker**, For Kamila Andini, Shanghai International Film Festival 2018
- **Best children Actor award**, For Thaly Titi Kasih, Indonesian Movie Actor Award 2018
- **Best Film**, Bangkok Asean Film Festival 2018

Casts

Ni Kadek Thaly Titi Kasih (**Tantri**), Ida Bagus Putu Radithya Mahijasena (**Tantra**)
 Ayu Laksmi (**Mother**), I Ketut Rina (**Father**), Happy Salma (**Nurse Ida**)
 Gusti Ayu Raka (**Gandma**)

Written and directed by

Kamila Andini

Director of Photography

Anggi Frisca

Editor

Dinda Amanda, Dwi Agus

Music

Yasuhiro Morinaga

Sound Design

Yasuhiro Morinaga

Sound

Trisno

Production Design

Vida Sylvia

Costumes

Retno Ratih Damayanti

Make-up

Eba Sheba

Assistant Director

Pritagita Arianegara

Executive Producers

Garin Nugroho, Trisno, Anggi Frisca, Vida Sylvia, Retno Ratih Damayanti,
 Eba Sheba, Yasuhiro Morinaga

Producers

Kamila Andini, Gita Fara

Co-producer

Ifa Isfansyah

Co-production

Fourcolours Films, Jakarta. Hubert Bals Fund, Rotterdam
 APSA Children Film Fund, Brisbane. Doha Film Institute, Doha

Source:

<https://kamilandini.com/films/>

https://www.berlinale.de/en/archiv/jahresarchive/2018/02_programm_2018/02_Film_datenblatt_2018_201815725.html#tab=filmStills

Appendix D. Production Details *A Reading of Kamila Andini's Films*

Executive producer	Antonio Traverso
Producer	Satrya Wibawa
Director	Satrya Wibawa
Script Writer	Satrya Wibawa
Script Editor	Antonio Traverso
Camera Persons	Danang Dono Saputro Sam Anindito Gayu Widyatmoko Mahayana Wisnu Wardhana
Editor	Satrya Wibawa
Essay Writer	Satrya Wibawa
Essay Narrator	Andisuari Sucahya

Appendix E. Script *A Reading of Kamila Andini's Films*

<u>TIME</u>	<u>Essay</u>
01:11	<p>Soeharto celebrates Indonesian children's day in 1994</p> <p>During the New Order, former Indonesian president Soeharto persistently used images of the family and children to represent the relation between the state and the Indonesian people.</p> <p>Soeharto ran the state and guided the nation as a Father-President; his officials and the citizens followed him as if they were his children; Indonesia was imagined as a great family.</p>
01:27	<p>The image of the Child as an ideal citizen continues to be used in Indonesia for the purpose of strengthening the state's power.</p> <p>In this, the school plays a significant role.</p> <p>The Indonesian state's highest priority with respect to the school system is to encourage a sense of national identity in the population.</p>
01:50	<p>Understood as they are, as future citizens, children in Indonesia are not absent from political agendas.</p> <p>On the contrary, it is likely that they will experience national politics in their everyday lives.</p> <p>Indonesian children are often used to convey political agendas to the nation. They are represented as innocent but their lifeworld is far from the classical tales of purity and fantasy</p>
02:11	<p>Sometimes the forced involvement of children in adult political life can go too far.</p>
03:08	<p>But how have children been depicted in Indonesian cinema?</p>
03:20	<p>The history of Indonesian cinema suggests that films often use child characters to convey political messages and project images of the nation.</p> <p>The metaphor of Children as innocent citizens is widely used to present social and political agendas on screen.</p> <p>Indonesian films made during the Dutch and Japanese colonial periods presented child characters as signifiers of an Indonesian national identity that opposed colonialism</p>
04:00 04:22	<p>When Indonesia became an independent nation in 1945, the films of the post-colonial period began to depict children plainly to advance Indonesian nationalism.</p>

	<p>Post-colonial Indonesian films used banal nationalist symbols, such as flags and images of military marches, as part of a nation-wide strategy to build patriotism. Child characters were depicted as patriotic citizens in waiting, and their world was filled with hope, happiness and optimism about the emerging Indonesian nation.</p>
05:00	<p>During the New Order, children were represented as uniform and submissive, as fully integrated into the social structure of the family, the school and the state. Childhood was depicted as gloomy, stressful and traumatic.</p>
05:08	<p>In 1982, Soeharto sought political legitimation by presenting himself as the father of the nation in the state-sponsored film <i>Serangan Fajar</i>. The identity of the nation is imagined through the figure of the war hero</p>
06:23	<p>After the fall of the New Order in 1998, Indonesian filmmakers started to favour diversity in their representations of children. However, the tendency to construct representations of children as ideal citizens remained strong.</p>
06:48	<p>The memory of post-colonial patriotism re-appears. Once again, banal nationalist propaganda is heavily used: images of the cheerful life of children are used to deliver messages about the idealised future of the nation .</p>
07:30	<p>Then, something different appeared: Kamila Andini's films. Andini's films do not use images of children as representations of the nation.</p>
08:36	<p>They show Indonesian children as themselves. Children living in their own world.</p>
12:10	<p>Andini's films <i>The Mirror Never Lies</i> and <i>The Seen and Unseen</i> present nuanced tales about the hardships of parental loss. These films are a spellbinding cinematic excursion into the confusing adventures and imagined worlds of childhood.</p>
12:47	<p>Both films depict the relationship between a mother and her daughter through narratives of desire, loss, jealousy and care. They present their stories by moving on the boundary between childhood's reality and imagination.</p>
13:20	<p>In <i>The Mirror Never Lies</i>, the conflict between a girl and her mother shades a narrative of loss. In <i>The Seen and Unseen</i>, the loving relationship between a mother and daughter colour the sorrow of their mourning.</p>

13:52	<p>Andini often uses framing doorways and depth of field to separate her child characters from the adults and their conversations.</p> <p>She places Children in open landscapes, setting them against the adults, who are generally inside their houses.</p> <p>Creates borders and distances between the children and the adults.</p>
16:15	<p>Andini's soft and natural colour palette underlines the delicacy of feeling of the children's view of the world.</p> <p>Children are only able to see from the border what the adults do.</p> <p>The home is an adult territory that might not fit into the children's world of symbols and imagination.</p>
16:51	<p>Andini's films are dedicated to the struggle of children who have experienced personal loss.</p> <p>She personifies this struggle through symbolic images, such as that of a girl who insists on looking out for her father in a mirror.</p> <p>A mirror in this film stands in for both self-reflection and the power of hope.</p> <p>By using the mirror, the girl can see her own struggle and is able to decide which path she must choose.</p>
17:38	
19:18	<p>In <i>The Seen and Unseen</i>, eggs become a symbol of struggle.</p> <p>The egg is used in this film to represent the chillingly tight relationship between twins,</p> <p>Also the ambiguous relation between reality and imagination.</p>
20:10	<p>The loss of an egg signifies the loss of one of the twin brothers but also loss of faith in life due to pain and loneliness.</p>
1:14	<p>Andini's films seek to unveil a liminal zone within the children's world between the spiritual and the embodied.</p>
22:22	<p>Through a mirror, a girl can dream without limits and hope for the return of her lost father.</p> <p>Through an egg, a girl can get to accept the loss of her brother.</p>
23:00	<p>In her films, Kamila Andini challenges the stereotype of the child as the nation's ideal citizen, reconstructing a more traditional and genuine children's world in which happiness and sorrow, loss and hope coexist .</p>

Appendix F. Still images from the production *A Reading of Kamila Andini's Films*

