An Animated Revolution

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An Animated Revolution: The Remembrance of the 1945 Battle of Surabaya in Indonesian Animated Film

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes how the 2015 animated film *Battle of Surabaya* negotiates with what Edward Aspinall has coined 'the new nationalism' in Indonesia (2016), by focusing on four key aspects of the film: 1) the narrative of the Indonesian National Revolution that it addresses as a *film perjuangan*; 2) the film's story of the *Kipas Hitam*–a secret ninja organization founded during the Japanese occupation; 3) its unique position globally as one of the few Indonesian animated films released in cinemas; and lastly 4) the film's media franchise and style of animation. By positioning the film within Indonesia's contemporary cultural sphere, this article illustrates how cultural memories of the Indonesian National Revolution are constructed through Indonesian animation and in particular *Battle of Surabaya*. It argues that the film functions as a space for negotiation within Indonesia's contemporary memory culture and advocates the necessity for critical analyses of Indonesian war-themed films.

Keywords: Cultural memory, Indonesian National Revolution, Animation, *Film perjuangan*, 'New nationalism', Prosthetic memory, Production context, Narrative structure

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BATTLE OF SURABAYA, BATTLE OF SURABAYA

Three days after the seventieth anniversary of Indonesia's independence, the animation studio MSV Pictures released the 2D animated war film *Battle of Surabaya* (later also released as *November 10th*) in national theatres in Indonesia. The film is about the eponymous battle that lasted roughly from the 27th of October until the 20th of November 1945 and which was part of the Indonesian War of Independence (1945–1949), also known as the Indonesian Revolution. The film revolves around Musa (Ian Saybani), a thirteen-year-old shoeshiner. After allied forces have entered Indonesia following the Japanese capitulation in 1945, locals are organizing resistance to defend the independence that was declared on the 17th of August that year. Musa is recruited by the Indonesian resistance as a messenger and delivers secret letters to the Indonesian militia fighters. His missions are problematized by a secret organization called *Kipas Hitam* (Black Fan), which is a ninja-like paramilitary organization formed by the Japanese and which, following the Japanese capitulation, is working with the Allied forces. Musa and his friends Yumna (Maudy Ayunda) and Danu (Reza Rahadian) start their contribution to the Indonesian resistance, but eventually both Yumna and Danu turn out to be members of *Kipas Hitam*. Musa is betrayed and tortured by the British but rescued by Yumna who double crosses the *Kipas Hitam*. When Yumna dies, Danu also switches allegiance and helps Musa escape the *Kipas Hitam* and allied forces. The secret letters that Musa carries turn out to be 'If I die-letters' from Indonesian revolutionaries - letters that were to be delivered to their families if they were killed in battle. In the epilogue of the film, an older Musa remembers his contribution to the revolution.

During the war the Javanese city of Surabaya became the site of the heaviest battle of the Indonesian War of Independence (hereafter IWI) and is therefore considered as a national symbol of resistance (Ricklefs 2001, 266). Although several thousands of Indonesians died and many more fled the city, the sacrificial resistance of the Indonesians in Surabaya "created a symbol and rallying-cry for the Revolution" (Ricklefs 2001, 267). This battle that started on the 10th of November is to this day commemorated in Indonesia as *Hari Pahlawan* or Heroes' Day. Within various cultural forms, this day holds a noticeable place in remembering the National Revolution. It reappears as a subject in pop songs, traditional *wayang* performances[1], television variety shows, historical re-enactments, fashion and also cinema.

Since the early beginnings of Indonesian cinema in the fifties, the IWI has been a significant subject for films. The earliest films of independent Indonesia addressed this war, taking up a prominent and controversial position within the country's national film history (Said 1991, 39-40, 51-57; Heider 1991, 17, 102-204; Van Heeren 2012, 82).[2] The subject of the revolution has remained popular ever since the fifties. Striking is how Indonesian popular culture for the past few years has been structurally and continuously referring to its colonial past and particularly to the IWI. As the Indonesian people who have lived experiences of the time are growing considerably old and scarce, contemporary and future discourses of the war rely increasingly on other sources than testimony. More than seventy years after the event, the transition of memories of the war shifts from communicative memory (i.e. memory exchanged by people) to cultural memory (i.e. memory exchanged through documents, archives, images and objects) (Assmann 1995). This cultural memory works as "a collective symbolic order through which social groups and societies establish their knowledge systems and versions of the past ('their memory')" (Erll 2011, 99). Today, media and memory are considered inseparable within the field of memory studies, particularly in the case of cultural memory. As Astrid Erll states:

"Cultural memory is unthinkable without media. It would be inconceivable without the role that media plays on both levels – the individual and the collective" (2011, 113). Various scholars have argued that visual images today take center stage in how we represent, identify, and make memories of the world (Landsberg 2004; Pattynama 2014).

Traditional forms of testimony such as oral history differ from the Indonesian memory culture that has been emerging in recent years, which is based on fictional popular culture. When speaking about Indonesian memory culture, this study thus focuses on contemporary images of the period of decolonization, as depicted in the commercial popular films called *film perjuangan*– a strand of films explored later on in this article. It contributes to earlier work in Indonesian film studies in a threefold manner: first by studying the phenomenon of *film perjuangan* from a new angle, that is that of 'new nationalism'; secondly by studying the–within Indonesian film studies– understudied genre of animation; and lastly by highlighting the untold story from the revolution that is the *Kipas Hitam*. In doing so the article helps to understand how and why Indonesian *film perjuangan* structurally return to the IWI, but it also broadens the field of Indonesian film studies by focusing on Indonesian animation and understudied aspects of Indonesian war-themed films since their inception. This study is also informed by memory studies as the idea that cinema can function as both carrier and constitutor of memories is crucial for exploring how films such as *Battle of Surabaya* (hereafter *BoS*) shape memories of the IWI. This article sees films as constitutors of *prosthetic memory*, which is "…a new form of memory, which […] emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or museum" (Landsberg, 2004, 2). As Alison Landsberg argues, a person's *prosthetic memory* "…has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics" (2004, 2). He or she does this through the appropriation of a historical narrative (such as the Indonesian Revolution) that is experienced through for example cinema, but "takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live" (2). These *prosthetic memories* are artificial memories (as opposed to memories based on lived experiences) that are sensuous and based on the experience of mass-mediated representations (Landsberg 2004, 20). Contrary to other cultural expressions of the war, such as representations in *wayang* performances, Indonesian war-themed cinema as a form of mass-mediated representations is a source for *prosthetic memory* par excellence. Seeing the decline of Indonesians who were alive during the war, the remembrance of this war-time past in Indonesia will focus increasingly on media and become prosthetic. As Thomas Barker has argued, Indonesian cinema has gone mainstream since the nineties, made possible by *reformasi* (Barker 2020, 8). This has made Indonesian cinema effectively part of Indonesian pop culture and "as pop culture, Indonesian cinema provides insights into the workings of post-authoritarian Indonesia" (Barker 2020, 214). Films such as *BoS* can thus function as the foundation for prosthetic memories about the IWI and here lies its value for the study of memory in Indonesia.

Considering the film as a source of memories requires the understanding of what kinds of memories are constructed. This article will focus on the narrative structure of the film because it analyses the film as a memory film–a film that leads to the powerful global dissemination of images of the past (Erll 2011, 137). It has been widely accepted that memory has a reconstructive nature (Freeman 2010, 263), with narrative as an act that can form incohesive memories into a cohesive whole (Bal 2017, 145). The film can be seen as building upon both historical events and a longer tradition of Indonesian war-themed films, which both create memories that intertwine. Through a process of narrativization, memories are transformed into narrative

(Freeman 2010, 263). It is the process of how memory is transformed into narrative that will be analyzed in this article, but conversely also how narrative transforms the film into memory. In order to do that, the broader production context needs to be considered since narrative form is constructed during the production process. Rather than focusing on specific production tactics, this article analyses the broader cultural context in which the production came to be as to show how the moment of production impacts the narrative form of the film text and how they are thus deeply intertwined (Hall et al. 2013). Hence, by analyzing *BoS* on both the level of the narrative structure and the broader cultural context in which it came to be, this article explores what kind of prosthetic memories are forged and which politics are underlying these constructions. More importantly, this article fills a lacuna within memory studies as it connects the genre of animation to the process of memory making. An important connection that has not yet been made within cultural memory studies focusing on cinema.[3] This article contributes to the field of memory studies not only by studying the understudied aspect of animated film within memory studies but also by explicitly connecting this understudied aspect to how memory is constructed from within a broader political and cultural context.

The aim of this article is to show what kinds of cultural memories of the Indonesian National Revolution are constructed through *BoS* and what kind of politics underlie these memories. I argue that *BoS* functions as a space for negotiation within Indonesia's contemporary memory culture. The film negotiates with Indonesia's current nationalist mood through a remembrance of the IWI. By first using a narrative analysis I will illustrate that the return to the nation's inception showcases both a nationalistic contentiousness and a way to resist foreign countries. The contribution of the analysis of the film's narrative form lies in narrative's relation to memory-making. Although Indonesian cinema has shown a shift from being "peripheral to mainstream culture" to being fully incorporated in pop culture (Barker 2020, 208-214), the genre of Indonesian animated film is currently within that transition from periphery to mainstream. The article therefore moves to an analysis of the film's production context to argue that the broader cultural sphere matters as much as specific production tactics in the memory culture of contemporary Indonesia. The novelty of animation together with the film's franchise and style lays bare how the film engages with a globalized cultural context.

FILM PERJUANGAN: REMEMBERING THROUGH A CINEMATIC HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

The IWI is quite literally a formative event in the history of Indonesia. As Katinka van Heeren has underscored, "certain genres emerge in certain times and reflect contemporaneous socio-political inclinations" (2012, 103). War-themed films emerged shortly after the independence of Indonesia and were an important group of films during the New Order as they were linked to New Order discursive practices. Because of this, these films contained New Order ideologies and versions of the past (Van Heeren 2012, 104). In recent years, war-themed films about the Indonesian National Revolution have made a comeback in theatres, opening up new sets of ideologies and versions of Indonesia's past. Coined by Karl Heider as *film perjuangan*, these films about the independence struggle against the Dutch address the period between 1945 to 1949. A period commonly known as the *Perjuangan*, or period of struggle. These films have been part and parcel of the Indonesian film industry since its origin (Said 1991, 37–40). When describing the genre of *film perjuangan*, Heider remarks that "the mandate of every Indonesian government

rests firmly on the events of the Struggle" (1991, 43). With this, Heider explains how the specific representations of the IWI vary due to the control certain Indonesian governments have on it. The representations in contemporary films can thus be understood from the conditions of production of the films, which is the era of political reform (the *Reformasi*) set in motion by the resignation of Suharto in 1998. After years of dictatorship and censorship this change promised more democracy. To a certain extent the mandate of the Indonesian government may thus rest less on the representations of the struggle for independence than before. In media a plurality of ideas on nation, gender, class, and ethnicity were produced and contested in this era of Reform (Paramaditha 2007, 42). This raises the question of which underlying politics and ideologies helped to shape *BoS*. In other words, Indonesia's contemporary cultural sphere needs to be understood.

In his work on Indonesian politics, Edward Aspinall has elaborated on what he calls Indonesia's 'new nationalism'. He recognizes that "a mood of assertive nationalism" has entered Indonesia's public discourse and domestic policies after the overcoming of the Asian economic crisis in 1997-1998, Indonesia's resumed economic growth, and its establishment as a stabilized democracy (2016, 72). This assertive nationalism is oriented outward to foreign countries, blaming them of insulting, exploiting and mistreating Indonesia. These accusations towards foreign countries come from both ordinary citizens and people in power - either politically, intellectually, and/or religiously (Aspinall 2016, 72). Although Aspinall recognizes that nationalist discourses have always been present in post-Suharto governments, he asserts that a more prominent nationalist discourse has come into existence after the inauguration of President Joko Widodo in October 2014 (2016, 72). This 'new nationalism' functions within territorial, economic, and cultural arenas and represents a "widely shared and distinctive feature of Indonesia's contemporary political landscape" (Aspinall 2016, 73). That is not to say that Aspinall does not recognize that Indonesians interact, articulate, and contest this 'new nationalism' in different ways. The same can be said about Indonesian cultural products. In what ways does *BoS* negotiate with this sphere of 'new nationalism'?

The first two concerns of Indonesia's 'new nationalism' -maintaining Indonesia's territorial integrity and creating nationalist policies to protect domestic markets- are to a lesser concern in this article than the last: cultural nationalism. Within Indonesia's cultural arena nationalism is also mobilized and, according to Aspinall, especially by the Internet and social media (2016, 75). By extension, however, cinema has been used similarly to position Indonesia in opposition to foreign influences. The genre of *film perjuangan* has done so continuously, placing Indonesian freedom fighters opposing the Japanese occupiers, the recolonizing Dutch military, and the Allied troops. It is to no surprise that Aspinall's 'new nationalism' has similarities with earlier forms of Indonesian nationalism as, and he mentions Benedict Anderson here, "nationalism always functions to connect individual citizens to a wider national narrative and birth myth" (Aspinall 2016, 75-76). For Indonesia, this birth myth focuses on the IWI against the Dutch colonizer. As Aspinall remarks: "Contemporary nationalists, as in earlier periods, draw heavily on the terminology and symbols of the anti-colonial struggle" (2016, 76). This nationalistic tendency starts early on in the education of children, but continues through cultural productions such as dioramas in museums, historical re-enactments, and films. The emphasis within these cultural products is the *semangat perjuangan* (struggle spirit) in general and often that of the *pemuda* (revolutionary youth) in specific. Similar to Heider, Aspinall argues that Indonesian nationalism has different specificities in different periods. Heider emphasizes the role of the government in

how the independence struggle is 'utilized' and Aspinall focuses on changing political imperatives (Heider 1991, 43; Aspinall 2016, 76).

Aspinall links the 'new nationalism' to the historical roots of nationalism in Indonesia and thus specifically to the National Revolution, which the narrative of *BoS* focuses on. However, the film negotiates this form of nationalism in different ways. The slogan of the film is "There is no glory in war". Asked to explain the title to me, director Aryanto Yuniawan emphasized that they wanted to make a war film that persuades people to be peaceful. In order to show this, he explained, they planned to make a balanced film, illustrating both good and bad traits of the characters. An example he gave was that he incorporated Japanese characters that he considered as good persons, but also those that were bad. He made the same argument with the Indonesian character Danu.[4] Indeed, the narrative initially appears to cater to the discourse that there is no glory in war. A discourse that comes close to what former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain famously declared: "In war, whichever side may call itself the victor, there are no winners, but all are losers" (*The Times*: 4 July 1938). Early on in the film, the audience learns through a flashback -the cinematic technique par excellence to indicate a memory- that the Japanese military officer Captain Yoshimura is the one who gave Musa his distinctive cap. Musa considers him as his substitute dad since his biological father died fighting the Dutch. During the film Captain Yoshimura is shot dead by KNIL soldiers (Royal Netherlands East Indies Army); his mother dies in a fire; his best friend Yumna sacrifices herself; and colleagues perish in battle.

The slogan however does not rule out the possibility of glory. In fact, Yuniawan explained that the film initially promotes peace, but also the message that if war is necessary, the Indonesian nation will not back down (*"tidak mundur"*).[5] He elaborated on how he considers the people of Indonesia as peaceful, or humane, but if there is a war, they can do this also (*"tapi kalau ada perang, bisa juga"*). The film shows, as he explains, that the nation possesses bravery and courage in the situation of war.[6] Thus, contrary to the film's slogan, the film focuses intensely on the *semangat perjuangan*, or struggle spirit. Although it does focus on the losses induced by war, it mainly positions these as sacrifices for freedom. The birth myth that is created in *BoS* revolves around the role of the *rakyat* (the people) and their contribution to the nation's independence. This is illustrated by the choice to have the narrative of a war film center on an 'ordinary' shoeshiner who is still a teenager. This is especially evident in the denouement of the film where Musa enters a destroyed Surabaya with bodies scattered throughout and where the secret letters that Musa was carrying -and which got him into a lot of trouble- turn out to be multiple letters written by revolutionary soldiers. These seem to be unimportant letters—at least strategically or in military terms—but it appeals to the idea of ordinary citizens fighting for their independence. This is underscored by Yuniawan who stated that he wanted to create a new definition of a hero by using a main character that appeals to ordinary citizens of Indonesia. To illustrate that everyone can become a hero, one does not have to be born a hero.[7]

The last part of the film—which functions as an epilogue- shows Musa when he is older. During the first parts of the film, Musa wears the typical cap on his head that he got from Captain Yoshimura. He eventually loses this cap when he is captured by British troops. In the epilogue, Musa walks past a shop to find a cap similar to the one he had, seemingly referring to the substitute father that he has lost. However, it is also a cap he wore during the IWI. The cap triggers an emotional mnemonic response in Musa, who imagines seeing Yumna (rather than

Yoshimura). This memory harking back to the Revolution is emphasized when Musa–now a grandfather–is seen walking outside. In his imagination he firstly sees his deceased mother standing in front of a group of *pemuda* as they are seen waving the Indonesian flag. Secondly, he sees his former comrades, clad in full combat gear. Afterwards he sees many more people he knew during the Revolution–both allies and enemies of his. It shows how many have been sacrificed to come to this point of freedom, but despite the losses, the film also glorifies the mythical battle for freedom. Taking Surabaya–as Ricklefs has stated a national symbol of resistance–as the location of the plot, the film preserves, or strengthens, the nation's dignity by promoting the struggle spirit. As the website of *BoS* declares, a story about Surabaya was chosen to "show how big our nation is, and the Indonesian National Military in Surabaya at that time were [sic] ready to face war."[8] The film depicts the sacrifices that ordinary people had to make to wage war against an enemy, unlikely to be beaten. That is the nation's birth myth that is constructed in *BoS* through the narrative of the Indonesian National Revolution that it addresses as a *film perjuangan*. Not only are the people who fought against the enemy a part of this birth myth, so are the enemies themselves. Whereas the struggle for independence for the ordinary Indonesians emphasized the nation's dignity, the enemy highlights another part of the 'new nationalism'.

NINJAS IN INDONESIA

One of the most notable aspects of the film's story is that of the *Kipas Hitam*. Relatively unknown in relation to the revolution, its inclusion is based on the intersection of fiction and history. I asked Yuniawan to what extent he used historical sources during the development of the film, to which he answered that he combined fiction with historical events. He explained:

> So although this is a fictional story, basic history is used. And we also research, here…one of the examples is a book like this [shows the book *Tentara Gemblengan Jepang (Japanese-trained armies in Southeast Asia)* by the American historian Joyce C. Lebra]. So there is one scene that tells about 'Kipas Hitam', which is an untold story from the history of the Indonesian nation that is not taught in formal education. There is one organization, a paramilitary organization like…what is it called? How do you say agent? Espionage, what is that called […] Well like that.[9]

During the opening monologue of the film, the narrator declares "The Netherlands was about to rule Indonesia once again. But, Indonesia had changed. Former Heiho and PETA armies from the Japanese occupation raised a sense of nationalism and patriotism. Indonesia chose to fight and defend its independence. Local people who used to be members of the Japanese paramilitary, the distorted *Kipas Hitam* organization, were another threat to the nation's struggle." Later in the film, Musa is introduced to the *Kipas Hitam* as follows: "The *Kipas Hitam* is an organization established by Hitoshi Shimizu during the Japanese occupation under the *Sendenbu*. After Shimizu was held captive by the Dutch, the *Kipas Hitam* became disoriented." A 2011 article by Hendri F. Isnaeni in the online history magazine *Historia* paints a similar picture of its origin story as it is presented in *BoS*: "After Japan surrendered to the Allies on August 14, 1945, the Department of Propaganda (*Sendenbu*) under the leadership of Hitoshi Shimizu tried to fight. He founded a secret association of Black Snakes, containing Indo-Dutch people based in Bogor; Chin Pan, accommodating Chinese people; and the most important one being the

Black Fan."[10] On his article, as was the case in the production of *BoS*, Joyce C. Lebra's 1988 *Tentara Gemblengan Jepang* is used as a source. Alongside this book, Isnaeni also uses several colonial-era newspapers in Indonesian where the *Kipas Hitam* is named. In 1945 and 1946 several Dutch newspapers also mention *Kipas Hitam* or "De Zwarte Waaier" (The Black Fan).[11][12] In the *Algemeen Handelsblad* edition of 17 September 1945, exactly one month after Sukarno had declared Indonesia independent, an article was published titled "Chaotic situation on Java"[13], with the three subtitles "Distress in former concentration camps"[14], "The 'Indonesian republic' of Soekarno"[15] and "Terrorists of the 'Black Fan'"[16]. The article talks about a dangerous Japanese-led group that wants to organize a guerrilla war against the approaching allied troops. On West-Java, the Black Fan is supposedly led by the 'Japanese Mohammedan Shimizoe' and pamphlets are distributed with the text "We do not wish to be governed by the Dutch."[17] Regardless of whether the *Kipas Hitam* existed historically or not, their representation in *BoS* is significant.

Although the film never literally addresses it as a ninja organization in the dialogue, the *Kipas Hitam* is clearly represented as such. The narration in which their origin story is unfolded opens with a *ninjatō* (the preferred weapon of ninjas as it is commonly displayed in popular culture) flying through the air. A figure in dark clothing is seen squatted and drawing a *ninjatō*, his face covered with a *tenugui* (a thin Japanese piece of cloth made from cotton). Several of these figures are seen fighting. Hereafter, the presumed leader addresses a group of people with the battle cry "*Hakko Icchuu!*", after which the group starts chanting.[18]

The case of the *Kipas Hitam* is interesting in light of Aspinall's observation that "Indonesian nationalism today has few ideologues but many recyclers of old tropes and promoters of base emotional appeals." (77). Emotional appeals such as that of the national dignity will be elaborated on in the subsequent part, but what can be an example of the old tropes that Aspinall alludes to? In the context of Indonesia's 'new nationalism', the inclusion of the *Kipas Hitam* can be understood as a reiteration of an earlier trope, namely that of the ninja in Indonesia. At first sight a curious addition to the revolution, it is in fact an old trope that resonates from the post-Suharto era. Only a few months after Suharto had resigned in 1998, rumors spread that several sorcerers (*dukun santet*) and Muslim scholars (*kyai*) were murdered by ninja assassins (Retsikas 2006, 56; Herriman 2010, 723). This later saw a complete reversal when people who were rumored to be ninjas became the victim of violence (Retsikas 2006, 56). Konstantinos Retsikas's study examines the meanings and consequences of the appearance of ninjas and according to him, "In late 1998, deep uneasiness about the past (and uncertainty over the future) took the form of ninja" (84). In an article that appeared several years later, Henri Myrttinen focuses on the history of the ninja phenomenon in Indonesia, but also in Timor-Leste. He argues that rumor and insinuation surround the ninja's and that "it is perhaps precisely this vagueness and mystery which makes the ninja so fearsome yet also captivating to the public imagination" (473). As Myrttinen (2013) describes, the ninja "remains a shadowy phantom menace, appearing and disappearing almost at will, spreading 'terror' in the affected communities" (473).

The combination of the possibility of historical veracity; the narrative construction of the *Kipas Hitam* as a Japanese-initiated group; and the representations that associate them with ninjas, assassinations, espionage, and being a secret organization, can be understood as one of the base emotional appeals that construct the 'new nationalism' in Indonesia. In Indonesia's current political landscape "one distinctive feature of the contemporary nationalism is the

preoccupation with the notion that various (usually unnamed) foreign powers harbor nefarious and hostile designs on Indonesia" (Aspinall 2016, 77). In the case of the *Kipas Hitam*, it is clear that it has historical roots–both in terms of how they are being described in historical sources and as having the phenomenon of ninja sightings in Indonesia. The question is rather why it is used again in a 2015 animated film. Contemporary Indonesian nationalism continues to return to the nation's history having nationalist discourses that sound "very anachronistic, as if ripped straight from an earlier era and transplanted unmodified into the present" (Aspinall 2016, 78). The genre of the *film perjuangan* with its focus on the independence struggle illustrates this, but it is specifically the storyline of the *Kipas Hitam* that exemplifies how the identity of Indonesia is constantly opposed by a foreign Other (Aspinall 2016, 78). In the film, they are described as "another threat to the nation's struggle" as they fight against the independence and are considered "disoriented", thus harboring nefarious and hostile designs on Indonesia. In doing so, the narrative of the film has illustrated how Indonesia's 'new nationalism' informed the film through its genre and through the *Kipas Hitam,* but the same can be said when analyzing the broader cultural context in which the film was made.

INDONESIAN ANIMATED FILM:
FRANCHISING WAR, STYLING WAR

The interest for Indonesian animated productions has grown in recent years. This is reflected by the creation of two annual animation festivals in Cimahi and Yogyakarta, but also by the organization of several one-off events. Although popularity is rising, competition on the Indonesian film market is high. In 2004 popular culture scholar John Lent wrote of Southeast Asian animation as having a "sleeper" status, existing in the shadows of Japanese anime and Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Indian work (Lent 2004, 183). According to Lent (2004), it was in particular the competition from Japanese anime and American cartoons that made it difficult for Indonesian anime to gain ground on the local market. This was complicated by the fact that Disney's presence grew during the early 2000s. Since Lent's article, the animation industry in Indonesia has expanded and forms of local animation have appeared on television, in web series, short films, and feature films. Although several animation studios have emerged in Indonesia, the infrastructure of the animated film industry is still in development. The creators of *BoS*, for example, needed to go to Bangkok's Kantana Sound Studio to complete the post-production process. The main challenges and obstacles during the production were "the limited infrastructure and manpower competence, and also the compliance with appropriate quality standards of the global animation film industry."[19] In addition, the film is one of the few animated films that has found its way into cinemas when it was successfully released in Cinema 21, CGV cinema's and Cinemaxx.[20]

Since its release in theatres the film has been screened for high school and university students throughout Indonesia and has made its appearance at international film festivals.[21] Furthermore, the film is internationally available on the streaming service Amazon Prime Video. The film's popularity is maybe best illustrated by the fan art page on the official website of the film–where fans of the film have posted drawings of the main characters–and the cosplay archives of fans dressed as characters from the film. *BoS*'s popularity can not only be ascribed to the widespread release of the film, but also to several other elements that have evoked or can be related to a sense of nationalism. An example is the promotion strategy of releasing the film

shortly after the seventieth anniversary of Indonesia's independence. Mohammad Suyanto, executive producer of the film, said about *BoS*–"This film is a present for Indonesia's 70th birthday."[22] Another example is the use of popular high-profile Indonesian pop stars that did the voice acting such as Maudy Ayunda and Reza Rahadian.

The film's popularity is also due in part to the novelty of being an animated film created in Indonesia. Based on the records of online Indonesian film catalog FILMINDONESIA.OR.ID[23], there are only 20 animated films made in Indonesia.[24] These include short films and feature films. *BoS* is the only of these films about the revolution and the only with a big release in cinemas throughout the country. Its ability to garner international attention has been emphasized by the creators of the film and has been publicly shared through the press and social media.

When the film was nominated for Best Animation or Animated Sequence at the London International Filmmaker Festival 2018, the Indonesian Embassy in London organized a free screening. Their Facebook post was closed with the sentence: "SUPPORT INDONESIAN MOVIE!" [caption in the original post].[25] It is this proudness for the international achievements of the film that can be understood as part of preserving *martabat bangsa* (the dignity of the nation) or establishing the nation's dignity in a globalized world, through international standards. Aspinall sees the 'new nationalism' as un-ideological and un-theorized and sees it rather based on old tropes and promoting base emotional appeals (2016, 77-78). One such trope is that of the preservation of *martabat bangsa*, or the 'national dignity' (Aspinall 2016, 78). It concerns both resisting foreign pressures–such as foreign requests to not execute drug criminals–and preserving a dignified image such as banning the import of secondhand clothing to 'save face' (Aspinall 2016, 79). In the highly competitive field that is the Indonesian film industry, *BoS* needed to position itself by withstanding both national and international competition.

When I asked Yuniawan whether other *film perjuangan* were an inspiration for his film, he answered:

> Oh I didn't look at films. I looked more at documentaries. So documentary films. Because in Indonesia, Indonesian films, yeah, sorry that I have to say that Indonesian historical films are too…yeah what is it called…shallow ("tidak dalam"). What is the term? […] Let's say they do not carry weight.[26]

He considers *BoS* as more profound and argues that the film has already proven this ("We have many, many awards for this movie"). The awards he refers to were awarded not only in Indonesia, but also overseas. Here a form of proudness, of *martabat bangsa*, is constituted on the basis of the national and international awards the films received, but it is not only through this that the dignity of the nation is strengthened by *BoS*. It is done through the broader cultural spectrum that is the world of animation, which is in part commercial and in part stylistic.

An increasingly important area of activity for the manifestation of Indonesia's 'new nationalism' has been that of the cultural arena. One of the most visible manifestation hereof has been Indonesian accusations of cultural theft by neighboring countries such as Malaysia (Aspinall 2016, 75). *BoS*, however, is an animated film similar in style with Japanese anime films, thus making it easy to classify it as committing cultural theft itself rather than the other way around.

The film is made in "anime style" (Napier 2005, 25), which in the case of *BoS* entails for example the *mukokuseki* quality, which suggests "the mixing of elements of multiple cultural origins, and to imply the erasure of visible ethnic and cultural characteristics" (Iwabuchi cited in Ruh 2014, 167). Moreover, the film has presented itself on the commercial market not exclusively through their cinematic product, but also by selling official merchandise. T-shirts, mugs, and plush toys based on characters of the film are sold online and at *Matahari*.[27] In addition, MSV Pictures made a spin-off series released on YouTube with one to two minute episodes based on the characters of the film. Unlike the film, the series does not emphasize the Revolution nor the Battle of Surabaya. Rather, the series seem to be focused on a younger audience, presumably toddlers, because of the simple storylines, the entire lack of dialogue, and the enlarged features of the characters such as large eyes. The franchise of *BoS* is currently still expanding with the most recent addition being a 192 page book based on the film that was sold in 2018 at *Gramedia*.[28]

This media franchise is not in line with Indonesian accusations of cultural theft by neighboring countries. How then does *BoS* negotiate within this cultural arena? Interestingly, rather much of the opposite seems to occur. The film navigates within the world of animation through mimicry, by imitating the global leaders of animated film. In terms of franchising Aryanto Yuniawan has taken Disney as his main inspiration, admitting he wants to build a business such as Disney. Comparing MSV Pictures with Disney, he told he was much like John Lasseter in terms of heading the creative department.[29] In terms of style, Yuniawan adopted that of Japanese anime. In fact, he has stated that the 2004 anime film *Steamboy* was an inspiration for the style of the film.[30] *BoS* appropriates the style of anime to imagine the nation within contemporary discourses of the 'new nationalism'. It shows to the world what Indonesia can do on the anime market and thus affirms the *martabat bangsa*, or nation's dignity. Rather than being specifically hostile towards (neighboring) countries, it uses the style of others as inspiration to claim position. Furthermore, it uses the creation of a media franchise to position itself globally.

REMEMBER, REMEMBER

As the genre of *film perjuangan* illustrates, the historical narrative of the struggle for independence is a frequent one in Indonesian popular culture. Understudied in earlier years, Indonesian popular culture has now gained the interest of academics studying its political, moral, and ideological qualities (Heryanto 2008, 3). In 2005 Mary Zurbuchen published an edited volume on how Indonesia began to remember its past after the authoritarian rule of President Suharto. In the volume *Beginning to Remember*, she and her fellow authors "seek to examine how and why particular narratives, whether local or national, group or individual, have come to be written or represented [in Indonesia]" (5). A similar objective underlined this article as it tried to understand why the Indonesian National Revolution was used as the basis for a 2015 film. The answer lies in Indonesia's contemporary nationalist mood.

Indonesia's 'new nationalism' "points to deep insecurities among both the Indonesian elite and public about Indonesia's own record of achievement and its place in the world at this particular historical juncture" (Aspinall 2016, 80). It is therefore a form of nationalism that has an outward orientation, but also looks inward as for Aspinall it is a reflection of the troubles of the nation. Analyzing *BoS* first through its narrative as a *film perjuangan*, showed how the film constructs the nation's birth myth by emphasizing the *semangat perjuangan* (struggle spirit) within the film. The

position that *BoS* occupies within the world of animation as a rare Indonesian animated film is perpetuated in the film's distribution strategy; through the media franchise that was constructed around the film; and by the style of animation. By emphasizing these unique qualities through a form of proudness, a form of *martabat bangsa* (the dignity of the nation) was constructed. By imitating the likes of Disney and Japanese anime, *BoS* appropriates the means necessary to be successful nationally and globally. In doing so, it demonstrates what Indonesian animation is capable of, thus again underscoring the trope of *martabat bangsa*. The ways in which the storyline of the *Kipas Hitam* is represented shows how within a context of 'new nationalism', nationalist discourses hark back to the historical roots of the nation. Moreover, this narrative of foreign hostility through an ambiguous enemy is a recycled base emotional appeal. This shows how the construction of the film reacts to these insecurities about Indonesia's achievements and place in the world. The goal of this article has been to analyze what kind of cultural memories of the Indonesian National Revolution are constructed through *BoS* and what kind of politics underlie these memories. It is made clear that the underlying politics can be described as a 'new nationalism' as in Aspinall's sense.

Aspinall acknowledges, however, that he discusses Indonesian nationalism in "sweeping terms" and that there is "variety in how Indonesians articulate, combine and act upon nationalist ideas" (2016, 73). This study of *BoS* has focused on precisely that–this space for negotiation. It has argued how the film negotiates with Indonesia's 'new nationalism', thus giving insights in how the revolution period is remembered and how these memories relate to current politics, morality, and ideology. This space for negotiation also exists between a person and the prosthetic memories as constructed through cinema. Although this article elaborates on how the prosthetic memories that are constructed through the film came about within Indonesia's 'new nationalism', the ways in which Indonesians interact with these memories are diverse. Landsberg's idea of *prosthetic memory* clarifies what the effects and consequences can be for a subject that has engaged with a memory film. She writes that the experiential nature of the spectator's engagement with the cinematic image might be as formative and powerful as other life experiences: "What people see might affect them so significantly that the images would actually become part of their own archive of experience" (Landsberg 2004, 28–30). They may even act on this memory. The creation of *prosthetic memory* is thus based on the possibilities and boundaries that a film such as *BoS* constructs.

When following Landsberg's argument that *prosthetic memory* can shape a person's subjectivity and politics, one must also consider what the specificities of the medium are (Landsberg 2004, 2; Landsberg 2009, 224). Although animation harbors the "particular qualities of the [cinematic] medium–point of enunciation, point-of-view shots, close-ups, etc." (Landsberg 2009, 224), the cinematic form of animation also offers different ways of representation in comparison to other modes of cinema. And these ways of representation in relation to memory-making similarly offer differences in comparison to other more common cinematic modes. Animation seems to take a more problematic stance in the creation of *prosthetic memory*. Similarly to fiction feature films, the function of realism in *BoS* is to "make a plausible world seem real" (Nichols 1991, 165), but the question arises of what to make of the memories you see in an animated film when the mode of production is so clearly constructed. Animated films seem to evade the problem of the realism claim that feature films normally have. If clearly constructed, how then can it become prosthetic? The answer lies in the role of empathy that Landsberg ascribes to the creation of *prosthetic memory* and how it relates to subjectivity. For prosthetic

memories to be constructed on the basis of a film, the most important part is to look "through someone else's eyes" and engage with them "both intellectually and emotionally" (Landsberg 2009, 221). This is regardless of their differences in "life experiences, convictions, and commitments" (Landsberg 2009, 225). By using Musa as the focal point of the film's narrative, *BoS* engages with the historical events of the battle as subjective reality. In doing so, the animators focus more on Musa's subjective response to events, rather than "claiming to represent official or purportedly objective accounts of an event" (Walden 2018, Chapter 7). Through animation, the creators–who do not necessarily have bodily first-hand experiences of the events of the battle–can engage with and remember the past. This does not afford them factual knowledge about real events from the past per se, but it helps them connect to it. This is also true for the viewer of the film. Through Musa's subjective viewpoint, contemporary audiences can connect to the memory of the battle more generally, returning to the birth myth of the nation. As the creators state on their website, they chose to make Musa a reserved, honest and brave boy because for them "a hero doesn't appear just like those who are born with super powers. Heroism grows from a process."[31] How an individual's subjectivity and politics are shaped by *BoS* is fluid, but the film still creates "a preferred vantage point for us as viewers" (Landsberg 2009, 224), one that has been shown to be rooted in Indonesia's 'new nationalism'.

The creation of a national history of Indonesia was an ideological tool during the Sukarno era and developed into a centralist historiography under Suharto's rule (Schulte Nordholt 2004, 4-5). After the fall of Suharto, Indonesians became "a people without history" (Schulte Nordholt 2004, 11). Since then, a plurality of perspectives have contributed to the formation of Indonesian historiography. Seeing the role that the state has had on the writing of history, the role that prosthetic memories inhabit within historiography becomes more urgent for Indonesia. The prosthetic memories that find its foundation in films such as *BoS* can create critical historical perspectives and counter-narratives to official historiography, or contrarily, reinvigorate older tropes. A critical stance towards these films is thus necessary and a starting point is to understand how and why certain memories are shaped in Indonesian films today.

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NOTES

[1] Shadow puppet theatre.
[2] Said's research offers a social history of Indonesian film and a critical look at the political and social forces that have shaped Indonesian film from a historical viewpoint (1991), whereas Heider views them as typical Indonesian products that reflect pan-Indonesian cultural patterns (1991). Van Heeren discusses how *film perjuangan* represent New Order ideologies and discourses about the past (2012).

[3] A notable exception is the edited volume *Animation and Memory* (Van Gageldonk, Munteán and Shobeiri, 2020), which explores how animation can function as a representational medium though not focusing specifically on animated feature films.

[4] Interview with Aryanto Yuniawan, 29th of August 2017.

[5] "Bangsa Indonesia itu love of peace. But if we- tapi kalau kita ditantang untuk perang, kita juga tidak masalah dengan perang itu. Tetapi begitu, sebenarnya kita akan lebih memilih jalan damai daripada jalan perang. Tetapi begitu terpaksa untuk jalan perang, kita tidak akan mundur".* *Yuniawan here interchanged Indonesian with English.

[6] "Kita akan menjadi bangsa yang, apa namanya, berani untuk menghadapi apapun." ["We will be a nation that, what is it called, is brave enough to face anything."]

[7] "For figure of the common people to be hero. Because yang jika yang kita jadikan contoh atau figure itu pahlawan yang sebenarnya, rakyat akan excuse. Artinya, dia sudah terlahir sebagai pahlawan. Opo jenenge? (Apa maksudnya?)" […] "Ya ya, tidak born to be hero, tapi everybody can be hero." […] "Jadi mendefinisikan makna hero yang baru. Jadi apa itu? Nek bahasa Inggrise opo? (Bahasa Inggrisnya itu apa?)." […] "Ya, make a new definition about the hero".* *Yuniawan here interchanged Indonesian, Javanese and English.

[8] battleofsurabayathemovie.com/faq/).

[9] "Jadi tetep ini walaupun cerita fiksi, tapi basic sejarah ada. Dan kita juga research, nih, salah satu contoh buku-buku yang kayak gini. . Jadi ada di satu scene bicara tentang "Kipas Hitam" yang itu untold story dari sejarah umum bangsa Indonesia, yang tidak diajarkan di dalam formal education. There is one organization, para militeris organization like opo jenenge kae? Agen itu apa namanya? Spionase iku opo?" […] "Nah seperti itu."

[10] https://historia.id/politik/articles/kipas-hitam-P1p2v

[11] All of which were published in the Netherlands, with the exception of *Het Dagblad*.

[12] https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/results?query=%22zwarte+waaier%22&page=1&maxperpage=50&coll=ddd and https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/view?query=kipas+hitam&coll=ddd&identifier=MMNIOD05%3A000133234%3Ampeg21%3Aa0014&resultsidentifier=MMNIOD05%3A000133234%3Ampeg21%3Aa0014

[13] "Chaotische toestand op Java"

[14] "Nood in voormalige concentratiekampen"

[15] De "Indonesische republiek" van Soekarno"

[16] "Terroristen van den "Zwarte Waaier""

[17] https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/view?query=%22zwarte+waaier%22&page=1&maxperpage=50&coll=ddd&identifier=KBNRC01%3A000043196%3Ampeg21%3Aa0001&resultsidentifier=KBNRC01%3A000043196%3Ampeg21%3Aa0001

[18] *Hakkō ichiu* is a Japanese political slogan which is in the film translated as "The world under one roof.".

[19] Answer and question found at the FAQ section of their website. http://battleofsurabayathemovie.com/faq/

[20] Respectively the three largest cinema chains in Indonesia.

[21] The film has, for example, been screened at the Holland Animation Film Festival and the Milan International Filmmaker Festival

[22] "Film ini adalah hadiah ulang tahun Indonesia yang ke-70." http://www.tribunnews.com/seleb/2015/08/18/battle-of-surabaya-film-animasi-untuk-hari-kemerdekaan-ri

[23] Which offers in their own words "complete data and information about Indonesian film".

[24] http://filmindonesia.or.id/movie/title/list/genre/animation

[25] https://id-id.facebook.com/indonesianembassylondon/posts/november-10th-battle-of-surabaya-is-nominated-as-best-animation-or-animated-sequ/1724009720994328/

[26] "Oh, nek saya lihatnya bukan film. Saya lihatnya lebih ke dokumenter. Jadi film-film dokumenter. Kalo di Indonesia, film Indonesia, ya, sorry I have to say that the Indonesian film for history is terlalu apa ya namanya, tidak dalam. Apa istilahnya?" […] "Tidak berbobot gitulah."

[27] A retail corporation with large department stores found throughout Indonesia.

[28] A large Indonesian bookstore retailer.

[29] Interview with Aryanto Yuniawan, 29th of August 2017.

[30] Interview with Aryanto Yuniawan, 29th of August 2017.

[31] battleofsurabayathemovie.com/faq/

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