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Youthful warrior masculinities in Indonesia

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Introduction

This chapter looks at contemporary masculinities in Indonesia, the fourth most-populated country in the world. Theoretically, this chapter makes use of the work of Honneth on recognition and Horrocks on the formation of masculinities. Horrocks proposes that dominant ideas about ideal masculinity are influential in the shaping of male subjectivity and are communicated through myths, heroic narratives and legends. These abound in the traditions of the Indonesian archipelago, along with a range of beliefs and superstitions about the gendered body and warrior invulnerability. At the same time, global discourses of gender equity, gay rights, hypermasculinity and Islamist activism are also influential, although we do not discuss them here. Nor is there any claim that the masculinities described below are in any way normative for Indonesia. We use accounts taken from our ethnographic research and some relevant studies to look specifically at how warrior mythology and concepts of the male body inform some current constructions of youthful masculinity.

The topic of men and masculinities in the region remains under-researched (Ford & Lyons, 2012). Studies of masculinity in Indonesia have not been numerous to date, although they have addressed a variety of male identity constructions (for example, Adian, 2001; Clark, 2004, 2010; Elmhirst, 2007, Boellstorff, 2004; Harjito, 2002; Oetomo, 2000; Sunardi, 2009; Van Wichelen, 2009; Ian Wilson, 2012). Here we focus on the topic of youthful masculinity constructed through implicit reference to warrior mythology and supernatural invulnerability. We consider how the flow of chthonic forces through the male body may be triggered by the symbolic or actual absence of recognition.

Indonesian masculinities

In much contemporary gender theorising it is acknowledged that there is no consistent and fixed 'self' and the human individual does not constitute a coherent entity. Rather, 'the concepts of the unconscious, the ego and the superego in psychoanalysis formalize the idea that we are made up of contradictory parts, each of which may "speak" at different times, or simultaneously' (Horrocks, 1995: 35). The subjectivity of male persons then, is constituted within historically-located discourses both social and cultural. The varied extent to which men may take up or repudiate, ignore or synthesize, amplify or challenge, this plenitude of discourses means that there is no one definable form of masculinity *per se*, and that even for the same man, he may manifest very different constitutions of being masculine at different times, and at different life stages.

This view implies the synthesis of many cultural sources: historical archetypes, media and popular culture icons, sporting and military heroes, revered leaders, even prophets. Such sources are not just aspects of culture that surround men but an integral part of the way they take themselves up as men, the way they produce themselves as masculine persons. 'Culture constantly tells us who we are' (Horrocks, 1995: 37). Thus cultural discourses construct the position of phallogentric power to which men aspire, although not without contradiction. Male myths and icons are therefore central to both the imagined and the physical masculine self, especially if a Jungian viewpoint is taken (Horrocks, 1995). So for example, the figure of the hero can be understood as a symbol of the ego 'struggling with the forces of the unconscious' (Horrocks, 1995: 41). Yet in the psychology of masculinity this symbolic struggle is also a quest for 'recognition' (Honneth, 1997) because men benchmark their own accomplishment of masculinity against that of other men (Horrocks, 1995). Perceived 'disrespect' (Honneth, 1997: 93) cuts deeply into the successful constitution of a legitimate masculine self. Moreover, this 'recognition' through the appropriation of male myths and icons is a double movement relevant to subjectivity.

For Honneth, subjectivity is founded on intersubjective relations, in which the individual ideally perceives himself to be recognized in his dignity and autonomy, a necessity if he is to maintain a positive relation to himself. Enacting a warrior/hero scenario therefore, constitutes strong self-recognition even as it forces the recognition of the self by social others, especially through fighting or confrontation.

This framing of recognition is a useful heuristic for understanding how violence between men may arise from feelings of inferiority, 'the social standing of subjects is indeed measured in terms of what they can accomplish for society within the context of their particular forms of self-realization' (Honneth, 1997: 127). Where this accomplishment is thwarted or under-valued, men may fight with other men and thereby be forcibly recognized through gaining status and even income (Messerschmidt, 1993). Physical struggles between men may be referenced directly to male myths and icons, even to the superhuman hero's quest for victory. In a country like Indonesia, steeped in tales of conquering kings, rogue princes, and unassailable warriors that changed the course of history, discourses of military heroism and supernatural prowess are never very far away.

Indonesian understandings of what it is to be a man

Gender refers to ideas of masculinity and femininity in relation to what men and women do and how they appear to others (Horrocks, 1995). However, since gender is socially and culturally constructed, what counts as masculine in a man and feminine in a woman depends on both time and place (Gelfer, 2012). While the ideals of masculinity and femininity in Indonesia have much in common with the rest of the world, some differences strike the foreign observer. For example, both men and women work as labourers on roads and construction sites. This has nothing to say about the femininity of the female labourers, which it might in the West, but points to the class position of male and female labourers. On the other hand, male politicians and other public figures frequently croon sentimental songs to their electorate, or even shareholders, a practice that would diminish their masculine standing in the West, but increases their seductive masculine charisma in Indonesia.

However, if you ask Indonesians about masculinity and femininity, regardless of religion, you will most often get an answer that refers to God's work in making men and women different so as to create harmonious complementarity (Adian, 2001). This difference is understood to be not just physical, or reproductive, but is perceived as an interior essence of maleness or femaleness respectively, and therefore bound

up with important spiritual ideas of polarity and balance. The western terms masculinity and femininity are understood to refer to this separation of inner essences into the hard and soft characteristics of men and women respectively. The notion of *kodrat* (a role pre-determined and destined by God) is usually employed to explain gender differences. So in Indonesia the usual understanding of masculinity is *kodrati* - God's plan, rather than *konstruksi* - socially constructed (Adian, 2001). The role of a mature man – *kodrat pria* - is to be a husband, father and provider (Nilan, Donaldson, & Howson, 2009). The term *kodrati*, like *kodrat*, implies a deterministic discourse of gender (Adian, 2001).

Nevertheless, Indonesian thinking about gender is not necessarily anchored in determinist gender concepts (Clark, 2010). Fixed discourses about the *kodrat* (role) of men and women were actively promoted during the thirty years of the authoritarian New Order government (Clark, 2010). There are some older concepts and understandings of gender fluidity (Peletz, 2009) that to some extent still inform ideas about gender and sexuality. For example, sexual attraction is commonly understood as a kind of magnetic draw between contrasting yet complementary inner masculine and feminine essences, which may or *may not* correspond to male and female bodies (Wieringa, 1999; Boellstorff, 2005; Grahame, 2002; Blackwood, 2007). Many Indonesian cultures recognize masculine females and feminine males, which is why the topic of homosexuality *per se* is so vexed. People struggle with the logic of how two persons who are the same sex in both physicality *and* in essence, could be attracted to each other (Boellstorff, 2005). Transgendered identity is much easier to understand.

In short, gender appears to be traditionally understood as embodied subjectivity in which various opposing essences may battle it out for control and harmony. For instance, young unmarried men in Java are more or less expected to behave towards the *kasar* (coarse, flamboyant) end of the masculine continuum because they are closer in non-material essence to animals, while older married men are expected to behave in a more *halus* (refined, controlled) fashion because they are closer in non-material essence to divine entities. The youthful male body is therefore popularly imagined as a conduit for powerful emotions - *nafsu* (Van Wichelen, 2009; Peletz, 1995), that might explode into violence. This is neither a biological nor a

social model of the body, but a physical body of a certain age through which either a primal chthonic power or a refined higher power is perceived to move more readily (Nilan, Demartoto & Wibowo, 2011). Consequently young men are thought to be potential fighters by nature.

The New Order emphasis on all things military 'was modelled on the values of the *gagah* (heroic) caste of warriors located in the upper echelons of the *wayang* world – the *satria*' (Clark, 2010: 10). Core *ksatria* values are control of the fighting body, discipline, and the power to inspire fear in enemies through both physical strength and metaphysical capacities such as invulnerability when attacked (I. Wilson, 2002). 'Power is thus perceived to be relational, hierarchical, and instantiated through performance' (L. Wilson, 2011: 313), that is, adversarial interaction with other men in this case. Winning hints at charisma or the special power of *sakti* that is beyond that of ordinary human men. *Sakti* connotes potency; supernatural power concentrated in an individual. 'The notion of *sakti* is highly gendered, and is often used in reference to male sexual potency' (L. Wilson, 2011: 314). The term implies phallocentric authority (Brenner, 1998).

In any culture, ideals of masculinity must have 'exemplars who are celebrated as heroes' (Connell, 1990: 83). Male heroes abound in Indonesian iconography. Every November historical war heroes are celebrated for their bravery (Bertrand, 2010), including the Sumatran king *Sisingamangaraja XII*, renegade soldier *Kapitan Pattimura* of Ambon and Betawi resistance fighter *Si Pitung*. Legend has it that all of these Indonesian heroes were magically invulnerable to a greater or lesser extent. Many Southeast Asian cultures share such beliefs (O'Reilly, 2007). This warrior/hero iconography resonates to some extent with 'hypermasculinity', a mediated global discourse that sets 'the standard' (Ling, 1999: 278) of toughness, physical prowess and distance from the feminine by which young men everywhere may evaluate their behaviour. As men grow up they seek to become what they admire in other men (Horrocks, 1995). Certainly western global media sources relentlessly peddle the seemingly indestructible tropes of 'hard' masculinity that feed this quest, but so also do Asian media sources such as Kung Fu films and Manga cartoons. Nevertheless, the 'magical' warrior/hero has a long history in the Indonesian archipelago and provides a local point of reference.

Methodology

The interview transcripts discussed below come from a mixed-method study of masculinities and violence in Indonesia (and India) in 2009–2010¹. Quotes are taken from interviews about men and violence with 86 men aged 17 to 28 in the Indonesian cities of Jakarta, Pekanbaru, Solo, Makassar and Mataram. The informant code designates the city (J=Jakarta, P=Pekan Baru, S=Solo, MK=Makassar, MT=Mataram), and a number designates the interview. So S5 means the interviewee was the fifth person interviewed in Solo.

Interviews with men for the project were arranged using a ‘snowballing’ research strategy (Berg, 2006) by male Indonesian postgraduate research assistants who had been coached for effective interviewing on sensitive topics. The snowballing approach accesses interviewees through social links to obtain complementary accounts. A semi-structured interviewing approach was taken. The value of semi-structured interviews lies in the combination of structure and flexibility. Project aims direct the questions asked in semi-structured interviews, yet at the same time the technique allows ‘some probing’ into deeper meanings due to an informal interviewing style and variable interview time (Silverman, 2006: 110). Here interview questions were fixed to the extent that they elicited accounts to directly address project aims. Yet at the same time, the questions were open enough to offer the men freedom for reflection and elaboration of responses. Interviews were transcribed and coded in Indonesian². Quotes were excerpted under coding categories, and then translated into English.

The invulnerable hero

We are proud of how tough we are. When we win, we get the reputation. That makes our enemies respect us. Around here if you have a few supernatural

¹ Funded by an Australian Development Award (AusAID). See www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/research/research-grants/masculinities-and-violence.html

² Bahasa Indonesia.

powers (...) you get respect (MT14, 34, gang member, Hindu, married, Mataram, 17 June 2010).

Possession of supernatural powers is a feature of warrior/hero iconography in Indonesia. Several researchers on Indonesian martial arts have similarly noted the mythical hypermasculinity of advanced practitioners. For example, in a study of the Javanese fighting art *pencak silat*³, Ian Wilson (2002: 28) maintains that historically, 'fear and awe' was inspired by those men 'who had mastered fighting arts and obtained physical invulnerability'. One of our interviewees named 'strength in fighting, magic invulnerability' (MT7, 30, student, Muslim, married, Mataram, 16 June 2010) as characteristics of local strongmen.

Invulnerability (*ilmu kebal*) does not come only from physical strength and mastery of fighting skills, but represents inner power; a metaphysical dimension in this martial art, sometimes known as *debus* or *dabus*. For example, Ian Wilson personally witnessed a public display of invulnerability when pious and highly trained *silat* combatants challenged political followers of President Habibie in 1999,

To a crowd of several hundred this group performed feats such as withstanding blows from an iron spike, washing themselves with sulfuric acid, slicing their tongues with machetes without shedding blood and regurgitating live bats, all done without suffering any physical harm (I. Wilson, 2002: 265).

Elsewhere, Lee Wilson (2011: 303) records public displays where practitioners shatter 'concrete slabs and stacks of iron pump handles with their hands and feet'. Strong and impervious to physical harm, *silat* heroes are thought to have developed 'inner power' through pious, esoteric and ascetic practices.

Courage, dedicated training and self-discipline are considered essential to the development of invulnerability. However, a range of other practices and devices are also employed. These include talismans and amulets (Sarwono, 2004), magic

³ *Pencak silat* comprises hand-to-hand fighting moves, dance, religious learning, mysticism and rules of personal conduct. Young men learn the art intensively from an older, experienced practitioner. The official version of *Pencak silat* is recognised as a competitive sport.

weapons (Farrer, 2009), skin implants (Kadir, 2012) and chanting the 'ancestors' (L. Wilson, 2011: 302); also prayer, meditation, sexual abstinence, not sleeping, special diets, fasting, animal sacrifice, pilgrimages and visiting sacred sites, retreats to caves, secret mantras, magic strengthening oils, and even electric shocks (I. Wilson, 2002, 2012). Skills in sensory and extra-sensory perception, even hypnotism, form part of some *silat* training (I. Wilson, 2002). All are designed to construct the invulnerable fighter; the superman who barely lifts a finger in defence,

When I was younger I was a 'cowboy'; I liked to fight and thought I was pretty tough. The first time I saw Kang Djadjat, I thought, 'who does this guy think he is?' But when I finally met him I immediately submitted to his authority. He had such charisma, he could defeat an opponent with his mere presence without resorting to physical conflict (*Silat* combatant Maryatno, Bandung, 1999, quoted in I. Wilson, 2002: 113).

Attracting loyal followers is an important sign of charisma. The logic here is that men will only follow leaders with exceptional qualities,

Men who are respected where I hang out are those who have a lot of followers. So if he heads up a gang with a lot of members, he's respected (P3, 25, street trader and motorbike racer, Muslim, single, Pekanbaru, 8 August 2010)

In ancient times, warrior training was a 'body-orientated religiosity' (I. Wilson, 2002: 34). Later the practices were incorporated in the spread of Islam and even institutionalised. Basing physical movements upon Arabic letters and elements of the Koran is 'common within *pencak silat* culture' (I. Wilson, 2002: 43). In Sumatran *silat*, Barendregt (1995) claims the Koran is associated directly with corporeality, and informs the training focus on the fighting body of the young man. Spiritually aligned patterns of breathing and movement are keys that open different 'reservoirs of energy' (I. Wilson, 2002: 146). Moving in accordance with the divine word, the fighter fluidly channels the will of God through his body and is protected from harm.

The practice of *silat* became part of the curriculum of Islamic boarding schools (Van Bruinessen, 1995) and boys in traditional *pesantren* still learn it to this day⁴. The trainees face Mecca as they learn. A direct link is thereby made between the physical learning of combat moves and divine invocation (I. Wilson, 2002: 71). A strong relationship between Islam and martial combat was certainly evident in the training and tactics of contemporary Muslim schoolboy gangs in Yogyakarta studied by Kadir (2012). This is discussed in more detail below.

The *jago* or strongman

The neighbourhood strong man, sometimes known as the *jago*, has been a feature of Indonesian community life for a very long time,

Extortion, intimidation and beatings at the hands of the *jago*, literally a 'cock' or 'rooster', but colloquially a descriptor for a type of local strongman, constitute an unsavoury aspect of everyday life in urban and rural centres throughout Indonesia (Wilson, 2012: 121).

He does not act alone, but leads a band of tough men who carry out his wishes. They may maintain security by defending and assisting the community. On the other hand, such men make their living out of violence and intimidation; they control and exploit people and territory,

Around here there are certain kinds of men who become street thugs. They most often get involved in violence because they feel they have the authority to control a certain territory, for example the market. Such men are solidly built, they look really fierce, many of them have tattoos and piercings. The main reason they conduct violence and practice intimidation is so that they will be feared in the local area (R21, 34, policeman, married, Muslim, Pekanbaru, 3 September, 2010).

⁴ The link between practices such as *pencak silat* and Islam is often questioned by modernist Muslims in Indonesia who view it negatively as evidence of syncretism and mysticism.

A local strongman or gang leader who has knowledge of *silat*, and is regarded as invulnerable, is often called upon by community members to 'settle disputes and deal with troublemakers'. *Jago* masculinity encapsulates 'specific notions of honour, territoriality and violence' (I. Wilson, 2012: 121). We might interpret this as a kind of protest masculinity; 'compensatory claims to imagined powerfulness on the part of marginalized young men experiencing social injury at their lack of real power, expressed through a hypermasculine style' (Poynting, 2007: 511). The *jago* lives and dies – literally – by his reputation. 'There are a number of volatile and violent traditions linked to the preservation of masculine face in Indonesia' (I. Wilson, 2012: 124), including fights to the death over matters of betrayed honour and treachery. We are reminded that 'the social standing of subjects' depends on recognition (Honneth 1997: 127). At the lowest socio-economic level the possession of money is the main measure of male honour status, for example,

Around where I live, for a man to be respected, first, he has to have money. He must have capital resources, a fixed income (J11, 28, motorbike gang member, unmarried, Muslim, Jakarta, 7 August, 2010).

Messerschmidt (1993) argued that where honour (recognition) is not available through conventional means such as steady income, violent or criminal behavior may gain men the status they want. One interviewee maintained that 'a real hard man will stare down the men below him' (J2, 40, ex-prisoner, married, Muslim, Jakarta, 12 August, 2010). The *jago* fosters belief in his magical and supernatural abilities, connoting his body as an immutable site of power; a potent masculine body which can thwart and compel the actions of other men.

The quiet menace of the hypermasculine warrior

Studying Muslim schoolboy gangs in Yogyakarta, Kadir (2012: 361) maintains that a gang leader is defined through 'his ability to dominate and influence others and build up an entourage'. Yet when Kadir met gang leaders, past and present, they were 'welcoming', 'open' and 'always smiled'. Their followers confirmed that they were 'cool'; calm and decisive (Kadir, 2012: 362). A similar view was put by two of our informants from different cities,

A man who is violent but presents a quiet but terrifying face to the world is usually more feared and even respected. He has tackled misfortune in the world of the fight and never been beaten. He has been in the police cells many times and he inspires fear in my neighbourhood (S12, 21, factory worker, unmarried, Muslim, Solo, 27 July, 2009).

Yes such men conduct violence, but the important thing is that their personality is powerful. This guy will have a certain kind of character that means we can see this is a man who will carry out violence, he has the look about him (MK3, 25, university student, unmarried, Muslim, Makassar, 16 June, 2010).

In both instances the aura of authority implies mastery of chthonic forces nascent in the male body. The capacity for a flow of explosive violence to move upward is observable, but controlled, so the body is calm. Through mastery of his own inner energies he not only controls and channels his own capacity to produce violence, but that of others; 'a leader who acts cool is seen by their followers to have a kind of "masculine power" aura' (Kadir, 2012: 362). One interviewee praised 'the man with charisma' (S3, 44, public servant, widowed, Christian, Solo, 29 July, 2009), while another mentioned that a local strongman 'has charisma and authority' (S13, 31, security police, married, Muslim, Solo, 29 July, 2009).

The attribute of invulnerability is never very far away. Kadir found gang leaders had obtained 'amulets' from shamans that made them 'immune' and 'invincible',

Hamid, for instance, had a lot of magic implants (susuk) in his wrists and fingers. Hamid got them from his shaman in Wonosari, a village south of Yogyakarta. Furthermore, he had a kind of talisman kept in his wallet that he believed would keep him safe. The task of one of Hamid's assistants was to be always ready to hold his wallet when he entered a bathroom, because his wallet held the holy talisman that had to be kept in a state of purity and could not be carried when entering a dirty place (Kadir, 2012: 362).

This example demonstrates the extent to which Indonesian men understand various paradigms of masculinity (their own and others') in terms of esoteric practices and ancient figures which still have currency in the present. In describing local strongmen who seem calm and benevolent, but are violent, an older man in our study made reference to the *wayang kulit* trickster *Sengkuni*, 'around where I live we have the kind of men Javanese would describe as a clever bad warrior - *Sengkuni* (...) The *Sengkuni* men who conduct violence have two faces, they are deceptive' (S7, 50, Local Golkar Secretary, married, Muslim, Solo, 28 July, 2009). According to the legend, *Sengkuni* was a knight from a small kingdom who rose to become prime minister to the monarch because he was smart, cunning and invulnerable. He always made his actions look good, even though they were achieved through dirty tricks. He is a favourite character among the *wayang* shadow puppets – admired yet despised.

Initiation: the warrior born anew

In the story of how *Sengkuni* rose to power, and in many other legends from the *Majapahit* period in Java, there is a process of transformation where the immature boy or young man is transformed into the mature, supernaturally-endowed warrior. In the modern era this may take the form of initiation. A feature of the schoolboy gangs studied by Kadir (2012) is the recruitment and induction of new members. At a Muslim boys' high school in Yogyakarta, new boys demonstrate their aptitude for violence early on. In the canteen area aspirants tackle each other, physically bully smaller boys and use strong language to attract attention from the leader. If they impress with their tough attitude they undergo the initiation ritual. A boy has to defend himself for three minutes against seven to ten older boys at once. The point of attack is the face. The boy must show stoic bravery in enduring the attack. A senior boy acts as timekeeper. After three painful minutes of being beaten and kicked, the new member is taken on a motorbike to be shown the schools against which he will fight. Answers must be given correctly to the question – 'who is the enemy?' (Hatib Kadir, personal communication, Yogyakarta, November 2009).

This rite of initiation has a local point of reference in martial arts training. The *silat* neophyte too must pass an initiation which involves not only vows, but a period of 'physical pain' that will 'test their resolve and dedication' (I. Wilson, 2002: 50). There

are also local mythic sources like the magically reborn Javanese warrior *Gatotkaca*. As *Jabang Tutuka* (the young *Gatotkaca*) the powerless body of the boy child was still attached by the umbilical cord, which had to be cut before the mature warrior could possess supernatural strength and invulnerability. 'The weaker body, represented by Jabang Tutuka, must be destroyed; and then through supernatural forces (...) the body is brought back to life as the hero Gatotkaca' (Weintraub, 2004: 110). *Gatotkaca* has long been a popular choice for warrior symbolism in Indonesia (Anderson, 1965; Sunardi, 2009). The goal of strength and immunity in battle through a symbolic shedding of blood perhaps informs the schoolboy gang initiation rite described above.

The endurance of physical violence prepares a novice for the fear and pain of battle, shaping his mental and physical aptitude towards the paradigmatic disposition of the fearless warrior. Bruises, blood and swelling mark his body with honour. Through the transformative physical violence of the encounter, the boy is reborn as a warrior and recognised as such by a leader, who takes him up (wounded and bleeding) on his motorbike and personally gives him specialised knowledge about the enemy and territory. This is similar to the Indonesian martial arts oral tradition in which stories of past fights are told, especially by masters of the art, 'aside from describing technical elements of a style [of fighting] they are also instructional, outlining the ethics and morals of combat' (I. Wilson, 2002: 43). The same author points out that in the ancient Sundanese tradition, a warrior could become the ruler of a certain area of Java if he gained control of a 'sacred site'. In the modern idiom, Yogyakarta schoolboy gangs fight in specific urban locations near schools: train stations, bus terminals and local sport stadiums are marked as battlegrounds. Older gangs also battle for control of markets, transport hubs and leisure spaces,

An example of a local fight is between local gang one and gang two from somewhere else. When they meet face-to-face there will often be a fight because it comes down to a dispute about authority over territory (S10, 20, university student, unmarried, Muslim, Solo, 27 July, 2009).

In either case, the winning gang then 'controls' that site and defends any attempt by a rival gang to take it over. Since defence is a continuous process all year long, bringing in new recruits through initiation is vitally important.

Youth and control

As indicated above, it is widely believed the youthful masculine body more readily allows the flow through of strong emotions (*nafsu*), primal chthonic power that manifests as physical violence. In interviews we asked men of all ages what kind of men were most likely to get involved in violence. The vast majority mentioned youth,

I think it [violence] is a major tendency among young men because their ego is still unstable, because their emotions shift so easily (MT5, 27, Policeman and motor cycle club member, Hindu, married, Mataram, 15 June 2010).

Those most likely to get involved in violence are young lads still at senior high school. They are adolescents and volatile. They can't control their emotions (J5, 25, bank clerk, unmarried, Muslim, Jakarta, 3 August, 2010).

MT5 and J5 were young men in their twenties apparently talking about men younger than themselves. However, some young men talked directly about themselves and why they conducted violence, 'I am still young, so my emotions can easily be provoked' (R2, 22, public order officer, Muslim, single, Pekanbaru, 6 August 2010). Many interviews mentioned control, for instance, 'men who get involved in violence are temperamental, highly emotional and unstable. They can't control themselves' (R9, 37, clerk, Muslim, married, 10 August, 2010), and 'if they [men] can't keep control of emotions that just overwhelm them, then violence is like a reflex' (J9, 48, bus driver, married, Muslim, Jakarta, 9 August, 2010).

This seems a different notion to the common western idea of a man becoming violent because he has 'lost' his temper. Here it is more that the powerful flow of energy through the less refined male body cannot be controlled by the mind, especially when the man feels that he is not being given due recognition (Honneth, 1997), 'he always feels like he has nothing, and violence is the main way of getting satisfaction'

(J2, 40, ex-prisoner, married, Muslim, Jakarta, 12 August, 2010). This was also implied in the following comment,

The men who get involved in violence around here are stubborn and easily overcome by their emotions. They are easily provoked, they cannot just laugh off an insult and they want to win at all costs (SI, 24, university student, unmarried, Muslim, Solo, 24 July, 2009).

The idea of explosive pressure (corporeal and emotional) is frequently inferred in Indonesian public discourse about violence. For example, the Indonesian term *amok* refers to a mob in a murderous frenzy (Colombijn, 2005), as if their bodies were possessed by a demonic force. Boellstorff (2004: 469) describes *amok* as a 'masculine and often collective enraged violence' triggered by shame or threat. Both recognition and flow are implied in those interpretations.

Recognition, flow and pleasure

Recognition emerged as the strongest claim as to why men constructed themselves as the warrior/hero, for example,

[Men] want to defend their honour (...) If they feel that their honour is threatened or they feel insulted or whatever, they will revolt against that and oppose the perpetrator (R14, 25, private sector clerk, Muslim, unmarried, Pekanbaru, 16 July 2010).

The initiation ritual described above is another intense form of recognition. The flow of violence directed at the schoolboy neophyte causes his blood to flow and through endurance identifies him as one who has the potential to control the flow of volatile energy through the youthful body; in other words the warrior. However, not only is he recognised by other gang members through the brave display as one who can potentially control the 'flow' through inner strength of mind, he implicitly recognises himself in the moment too, along with his new responsibilities. Territory and honour may be lost if the Muslim schoolboy fighters cannot control their violence. The new recruit's future fighting career will not be in random tussles but carefully planned and

executed battles (Kadir, 2012).

The Muslim schoolboy gangs studied by Kadir drew upon another famous warrior paradigm enshrined in Islamic iconography in devising strategies to control the flow of the fight. For example, *shaf* was both an attack and a defence strategy. The first line of troops attacks directly; the second line is for defence, and the third for control and back-up. The leader is in the third line, controlling the attacking line, and defending against an attack from behind. *Shaf* refers to orderly rows of Muslim men at prayer. It is believed the strength of *shaf* determines victory in *tawuran* (fighting), just as the orderliness of prayer lines is believed to bring greater blessing (Kadir, 2012). In another combined strategy, *kloter*, a group of fighters forms a garrison or attack/defence position, so that the garrison nearest the school has the strongest *kloter*. Attack then takes place in waves, like pilgrims arriving at Mecca. Another strategy - *ishlah* (reconciliation) is a temporary tactic of ceasing hostilities for some larger strategic purpose, like combining to attack a third group. These military strategies are taught to new boys every year in September (Kadir, 2012).

For gang members, whether Muslim schoolboys or motorcycle racers, libidinal satisfaction is gained by winning. This might be counted as the ultimate experience of recognition according to Messerschmidt's (1993) thesis, for example,

In a gang fight I feel at the time that we are in a position to win. I feel a sense of superiority at the moment of victory. I feel amazing and very powerful (MK5, 19, motorbike gang member, unmarried, Muslim, Makassar, 21 June, 2010).

We might read this as follows: in the brief moment of victory MK5 experiences himself as the invulnerable fighter; the superman. This demonstrates the ubiquity of the extolled masculine paradigm; the male body as site of power; a potent body that controls the flow of violence and repels the actions of other men, 'he is the *jago*, he has the capacity to conquer, he is the bravest' (J2, 40, ex-prisoner, married, Muslim, Jakarta, 12 August, 2010).

Comments often hinted at the intense pleasure of winning. Another interview pointed out that, 'the character of a man who conducts violence is that he wants to control the

other man. From conducting violence against the other man they get the satisfaction of control over him' (MK4, 22, student and sportsman, unmarried, Muslim, Makassar, 20 June, 2010). Kadir found similar fondness of remembered pleasure among ex-schoolboy gang members,

In Indonesia it is a common sentiment that being a high school student (siswa SMA) is the most beautiful 'moment' in a young person's life. It is striking then, for the young men studied here, that the sweetest memories of high school are (...) being involved in mass fighting (Kadir, 2012: 352).

We argue that pleasure is not constituted so much in the commission of violence *per se*, but in control of the flow of violence through collective strategies of success. Intense joy is experienced in moments of victory, of winning, which might be termed the epitome of recognition achieved in the circumstances of these young men's lives.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the shaping of youthful Javanese male subjectivity for some groups of young men still takes place in reference to heroic narratives and legends, especially those regarding the invulnerable warrior who defeats his enemies. Yet by no means do all Javanese (or Indonesian) young men favour violence, especially 14 years after the birth of democracy. Obviously socio-economic status, piety and personal preferences are relevant. Nevertheless, if culture tells us who we are, or might be, then time-honoured discourse about the invulnerable warrior who can control the flow of violent energies constructs one authoritative position to which young men in Indonesia might aspire. This is not the same as western paradigms of hegemonic masculinity, and reminds us how differently Asian masculinities might be constructed in terms of the body and the operation of force. Notably, in the person of the gang leader the trope of warrior/hero may involve no physical violence at all, yet be the most admired form of masculinity in this constellation because the capacity for violence is potently sheathed.

In the trope of the warrior/hero the youthful masculine body is imagined as a conduit for powerful forces to achieve victory, whether physical or magical. Common perceptions in Java and other parts of Indonesia of why men do as they do often differ from common ideas in western thought about men and masculinities. For example, the concept of male child socialisation is generally understood as the family or local community environment encouraging or discouraging certain kinds of identified male behaviour, such as aggression, rather than teaching the child to be a 'boy', as such, or even a person. In many quarters still the new baby is commonly believed to embody – in part or whole - the spirit of a previously deceased family member, entering the physical plane again through the grace of God. Therefore certain forces and traits are usually considered to be already present in the male child, as well as essences – male and female, chthonic and refined - which may or may not be in balance according to the time, date and circumstances of his birth. So if a boy grows up to be an admired and seemingly invulnerable young 'warrior', he is unlikely to be understood, or understand himself, as the product of either socialisation or genes/hormones, as he probably would be in the West. He will most likely see himself, and be seen by others, as 'meant' (by a higher power and auspicious timing) to be that way.

In terms of identity, we emphasise that the isolated self as a reflective, striving entity constitutes much less of a focus than in the West. Rather, individual identity is attained far more palpably in collective moments of social practice and activities with others. In a culture where almost no-one spends time alone, individual identity is highly contingent upon belonging to distinct groups of people: family, clan, peers, religious or ethnic group, and so on. Moreover, with regard to gender identity, the patriarchal order of Indonesia for boys and men inheres in hierarchical patrimonial relationships with men (Nilan & Demartoto, 2012). Boys compete and strive for recognition from their seniors, for the right to legitimately claim identity membership of the powerful and respected group to which they aspire. Those for whom the warrior/hero paradigm is most attractive can experience intense pleasure when that full identity recognition is attained in the moment of battle, in heroic deeds and self-sacrifice for the greater cause of defending territory and honour. However, this is rarely a permanent identity. As the boy matures he starts to approximate a more refined and family-oriented masculine subjectivity, and this construction of self also

refers to Indonesian cultural icons of exalted masculinity, especially the benevolent yet autocratic father figure – *bapak*.

As Horrocks argues, male myths and icons are central to both the imagined and the physical masculine self, and this chapter has amply demonstrated that point for young men in the non-western context of Java. The lads' youthful warrior masculinities would seem to reference not only heroic stories of the Hindu-Buddhist Golden Age, but the twentieth century struggle for independence from colonial control, and contemporary tropes of the Muslim fighter. In all the sources, the sweet victory of the warrior is achieved only after torment and denial. This is a youthful masculine identity formed at the intensely engaged nexus of pleasure and pain.

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