

Sexual Exploitation and Resistance: Indonesian Language Representations Since the Early 1990s of the Japanese Occupation History*

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Over the last fifteen years, scholarship of Indonesians related to the Japanese occupation period has been minimal, with the attention of many scholars drawn towards the postwar period or to the present political situation. There seems to be no motivation for Indonesians to take on the challenge of reexamining this period of history, the outline of which is already well known to scholars and the Indonesian public as a whole. The fact that the Japanese quickly became abusive, banned the flag and anthem, recruited Indonesians to be *heiho* and *rōmusha* laborers who died in large numbers, caused starvation, but created the Javanese defense force PETA and provided a period for Indonesians to build strength to protect their independence is well known to all Indonesians. Nonetheless, public representations of the occupation could potentially change dramatically with the gradual disappearance of people who directly experienced the war, the political changes following the demise of the Suharto regime, and new types of international interactions. If for no other reason, this provides a reason for us to continue to follow developments in Indonesian representations of the period.

Despite their modest numbers and generally limited audiences,

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scholarly writings about the occupation period are of special interest, both because of the likelihood that Indonesian scholars could obtain interesting materials and insights into the occupation from interviews and other sources not easily found outside of Indonesia, and because scholarly works frequently provide other writers with source materials, including perspectives. In this context, even the appearance of an Indonesian translation of an English language work can be significant, although textbooks, articles in newspapers and magazines, other popular non-fiction works, and fiction directly address larger sections of the Indonesian public and are thus of even greater significance for the circulation of knowledge. While films and television are increasingly critical to the circulation of ideas in Indonesia, due to difficulties in obtaining such materials, this article will address written materials only, using them as a means of assessing current representations of the Japanese occupation.

I. Contemporary Scholarship and Memoirs on the Occupation

Scholarly works by Indonesians dealing with the occupation period have never been particularly common, and despite a boom in publishing with the political changes in Indonesia and financial support for publication from various international foundations, there have been very few new publications on the occupation during the last fifteen years. Such support for translation of foreign scholarship has resulted in the appearance of several significant monographs, most importantly a translation of Aiko Kurasawa's dissertation on rural Java and the mobilization of the peasantry which was constructed in part from interviews with Javanese and Ken'ichi Gōto's work on interactions between Japan and Indonesia during the 1930s-1940s (Giebels 2001; Gōto 1998; Hering 2003; Kurasawa 1993). Such translations expand the readership of these works, but on occasion they can actually reduce the dissemination of information and perspectives from this foreign scholarship which do not fit well with standard Indonesian

understandings; the omission of information related to the Chinese which had been included in the Japanese and English editions of Gōto's book is a case in point, as Indonesians are now very unlikely to consult a foreign language edition.¹

The importance of foreign scholarship can be understood even more clearly through examination of the bibliographies and citations in different works. This is illustrated well by an essay written by A. Dahana which tries to explain the paradox of Sukarno's wartime collaboration in the context of his prewar non-cooperative stance. This well written study, in concluding that Sukarno's tactics were not mistaken while his personal reactions understandable, depends largely on English language secondary sources (A. Dahana 1996).

As has been the case for several decades, one of the most active areas of publication is related to the Japanese trained defense force for Java, PETA, and its contribution to an independent Indonesia. Among others, these include Purbo S. Suwondo's *PETA* (1996), Sanusi Wirasoeminta's *Rengasdengklok, Tentara Peta, dan Problemasi 17 Agustus* (1995), Ahmad Mansur Suryanegara's *Pemberontakan tentara Peta di Cileunca, Pangalengan, Bandung Selatan* (1996), and a children's biography of the commander of the PETA unit at Blitar, Supriadi (Suwondo 1996; Sanusi Wirasoeminta 1995; Ahmad Mansur Suryanegara 1996; Harjana H. P. 2003). Another work focuses on another military unit, the Hizbullah Sabilillah, while yet another focuses on the *rōmusha* (Suwarno 1999). These works all reflect preoccupations which will be discussed in the section on textbooks.

Unpublished theses which have been produced at Indonesian universities are a potentially significant body of new scholarship. While not great in number, such theses do continue to appear regularly. Since 1990, Gadjah Mada University has produced at least two undergraduate theses

¹ Chapter 13 of *Returning to Asia': Japan-Indonesia Relations 1930s-1942* (Gōto, 1997), entitled "Overseas Chinese in the History of Japan-Indonesia Relations," does not appear in the Indonesian translation.

directly related to the occupation, with several others on related topics.² One thesis deserves special mention, Didi Kwartanada's 700 page undergraduate theses on the Chinese of Yogyakarta during the occupation. Particularly rich in the data which he collected over a number of years, this thesis examines the case of Yogyakarta whose Chinese population was perhaps even more cooperative than in many other areas. The author views the Chinese as a minority which was trapped into collaboration with the Japanese, and concludes that as a result of the economic pressures and social restructuring during this period, there was an increasing sinification of the Chinese in Yogyakarta, with Chinese schools becoming increasingly prominent and *totok* businessmen becoming dominant.³ In another significant study produced in Jogja, P. J. Suwarno examines several institutions (the *rukun kampung* [village association] and *rukun tetangga* [neighborhood association]) originating in Japanese systems of social control which were deployed on Java during the Japanese occupation period (Suwarno 1995).

Such theses are generally local in their focus, and thus frequently utilize local sources, most importantly oral interviews. While a wider survey of Indonesian universities would likely interest scholars working on this period precisely because of this local focus, these works are difficult to obtain, generally requiring a visit to the faculty or department which accepted the thesis in order to examine them. The most common readers are therefore faculty members and the next generation of students writing on a related topic.

Memoirs and biographies which tell about the Japanese occupation period from one person's perspective and experience have continued to

² See, for example, Aris Nartanta (1992), Meta Sekar Puji Astuti (1994) and Didi Kwartanada (1997).

³ Didi Kwartanada has also published several other short articles related to the Chinese minority during 1942-1945, as well as an unpublished article related to the *ianfu*, entitled "'Momoye', Ianfu Kamar 11: Kisah Hidup Mardiyem, 1942-1945" (1995). The 700 page thesis was reduced by roughly one half before final submission to UGM in accordance with the directions of the examination committee. Only the longer, examination version was available to me during the writing of this article.

appear throughout this period, although this type of publication seems to have become less common with this generation's advancing age.⁴ One example is the [auto]-biography of Didi Kartasasmita published in 1993 (Tatang Sumarsono 1993). This former KNIL officer describes his own experience, emphasizing his preference for the "bad among the worst," that is the Dutch over the Japanese, and mildly damning those who chose to collaborate with the Japanese, especially those like Sukarno who helped to recruit *rōmusha*. There would be no benefit to cooperation with the Japanese, he concludes repeatedly. Thus while this narrative does describe a little of his personal experiences and activities, and briefly discusses the *rōmusha* and people dying of hunger, the narrative really serves to criticize Sukarno and validate Didi Kartasasmita's own decision to protect himself by remaining uninvolved in either pro- or anti-Japanese activities.

Priguna Sidharta's 1993 autobiography describes the West Javanese village in which he lived during the first part of the occupation, describing the poverty, the odd uniforms of the Japanese, and other points which he remembered (Priguna Sidharta 1993). This provided the opportunity to describe the slogans and speeches of Bung Karno and Bung Hatta, and his frustration that they seemed to be unaware of the situation of their people. He also mentions the establishment of the *rōmusha*, *heiho* and PETA as a prologue to his own experience. Being of Chinese descent, Priguna was obligated to participate in *Seinendan* [youth corps] training at the *Kakyōsokai*⁵ in Cirebon, and then in Linggarjati until mid-1945 when he was sent to Jakarta for additional training in communications until the end of the war.

Writing a year earlier, Aboe Bakar Loebis is stronger in his criticism of Sukarno, whom he holds responsible for the recruitment of youth to be

⁴ The 1980s saw private publication of memoirs, as well as both government publication of biographies covering the occupation and the publication of 40 interviews on the Japanese occupation as part of the National Archives Oral History project. On the Oral History project, see Ethan Mark (1999).

⁵ Literally translated, this means "Overseas Chinese General Meeting," but in practice this was a local "Overseas Chinese Association" which was structurally independent of other such organizations.

rōmusha, the forced planting of *jarak* for oil, and generally manipulating the masses for the Japanese regime (Aboe Bakar Loebis 1992). Key to Aboe Bakar Loebis' argument is the rebuttal of the well-known story about an agreement between Sukarno, Hatta and Syarir in 1942, whereby Sukarno and Hatta would cooperate to promote nationalism and Syarir would engage in underground resistance. Blending historical background and citation of sources with his own detailed narrative about the events and people he knew, Lubis describes the medical school in Jakarta, the student's strike over forced hair-cuts, the dorm at Prapatan 10, and the preparations for independence. Thus while framing the discussion with the acknowledgment that the Japanese wanted Indonesian resources, and thus divided Indonesia rather than offering it independence as it did for other Western colonies, the theme is that a fierce nationalism leading to Indonesian independence characterized the activities of the elite in Jakarta.

Other recently published memoirs include Iwa Kusuma Sumatri's memoirs (2002) which were written before his death in 1971 and Teuku Moehammad Hasan's very detailed *Dari Aceh ke Pemersatu Bangsa* (1999).⁶ Iwa Kusuma Sumantri criticizes the cruel, vicious, greedy Japanese, and singles out the founding of the *rōmusha* as particularly unfortunate. He also found three major points in which the Indonesian people benefited from the occupation: First, bravery and self respect with leadership and technical knowledge as a result of the hunger and cruelty they faced; second, knowledge, including of weapons; and finally, the physical and mental health due to exercise (despite poor nutrition). Unfortunately, there is very little detail in his discussion of the period. Moehammad Hasan's memoir presents a Sumatra/Medan-centered description of the occupation period while recounting the unique experiences of this elite colonial-era official. A significant amount of space is also devoted to the viciousness of the Japanese, although again this is almost entirely outside of his own experiences which

⁶ A book published in the immediate postwar period has also been recently republished, see Tjamboek Berdoeri (2004).

were mostly in the government offices of Medan.

Almost all such narratives invoke the familiar clichés about *rōmusha*, reminding readers of the suffering of the people, although it has very little to do with the authors' own experiences. This also leads smoothly into a usually mild criticism of Bung Karno for participating in the labor recruitment schemes and failure to help the people. Other descriptions, such as of forced crop deliveries and Japanese behavior upon arrival in Indonesia smack less of personal memories than of appropriated clichés. Some other descriptions diverge somewhat from this picture, like the Priguna Sidharta's recruitment into a Chinese branch of the *Seinendan*. Overall, these divergent images seem to either fit loosely in the established pattern or by virtue of appearing alongside stereotyped testimony, are allowed to coexist. These narratives seem to both invoke (or reinforce) the dominant popular images of the occupation, but also offer the possibility of expanding or changing the picture due to these individuals' experiences.

Slightly different are the collections of notes and memories of the alumni of various schools which have appeared during the last two decades. Associations of personnel from local military units also seem to have continued to issue collections, although I only was able to locate a few examples from the late 1980s-1990s.⁷ Predictably, many of the fragmentary narratives describe the momentous events of the declaration of independence or the revolutionary struggle placing the occupation as a prelude to the heroic struggle, but some sections do describe a bit more about the occupation itself. Two of the best distributed are *Jembatan Antar Generasi: Pengalaman Murid SMT Djakarta 1942-1945* and *Aku Ingat: Rasa dan Tindak Sekolah Kolonial di Awal Merdeka Bangsa* (Tim Redaksi SMT 1998; Imrad Idris, et al. 1996). *Aku Ingat*, in presenting many essays focusing on August 1945 places the occupation in the shadow of the declaration of independence. The description of the Japanese occupation is thus background, and for these elite students, it did not involve much suffering,

⁷ For example, see Tukidjan Pranoto (2001) and Sutopo Jasamihardja (1988).

thus the Japanese occupation looks almost as “ordinary” as the Dutch period sometimes appears.

International movements related to comfort women and the *rōmusha* laborers have stimulated the production of a small number of monographs which have generally re-portrayed the Japanese occupation period through the lens of rape and sexual exploitation. One of the best known is *Derita Paksa Perempuan* (A. Budi Hartono and Dadang Juliantoro 1997), co-written by the head of the Yogyakarta branch of the LBH (Legal Assistance Bureau) which has been at the center of Indonesian efforts to support women who claimed to have been comfort women during the war and men who had been recruited as *rōmusha*. This book presents a historical and social-activist narrative related to the war, as well as a third person narrative of the experiences of the most prominent former comfort woman, Bu Mardiem. The perspective of the authors’ is clearly laid out early in the book:

Although Japan only came for the life of corn, the results which it produced were far more horrifying than those caused by the colonizer of the preceding period, where sexual violence was only one of a number of types of violence perpetrated by the Japanese military, like rice distribution, killing and forced labor (p. ix).

Jugun ianfu are the representatives who were most exposed to the vicious Japanese fascism towards the Indonesian people. The humiliation of Indonesian women only to become the satsifiers of Japanese military lust is none other than an illustration of how low Indonesian humans are to the Japanese people (p. 4).

This final quote illustrates well how the authors conceived of the experiences of the *ianfu*—their experiences paralleled the experience of the *rōmusha* and other Indonesians—an idea which is pervasive in other types of publications as well.

As part of a Ford Foundation/UGM project on reproduction, Lucia Juningsih has written an interesting report on the physical and psychological “effects of sexual violence on Jugun Ianfu.” (Lucia Juningsih 1999) This

report is somewhat limited by the author's acceptance of *Derita Paksa Perempuan* as its primary historical source and even more by its use of recruitment by force or deception to differentiate between prostitutes and *ianfu*.⁸ This is unlikely to be problematic to most readers, however. While the purpose of the study is to discuss how experiences of the war have impacted these women's lives and those of their immediate family members (and thus the author clearly notes the prevalence of each problem), a clear picture of the Japanese occupation appears not so much from historical discussion as from the systematic exploration of the physical and psychological affects of each experience, act of violence, and even coincidental spread of skin disease that developed over an approximately fifty-five year period. The obvious conclusion is that the Japanese occupation was thus a period of victimization of Indonesian women, in which the victimizers were Japanese.

In a significant departure from the aforementioned works, Pramoedya Ananta Toer has published a work related to the "sex slaves" who were "abandoned" on Buru at the end of the war (Pramoedya Ananta Toer 2001). Pramoedya and other exiles to the island of Buru in the late 1960s and 1970s accidentally discovered a number of Javanese women on the island, but as they tried to get their stories, or even to meet the women again, they found that local cultural restrictions on the women and the attitudes of their husbands' was binding these women to silence in the interior of Buru. Thus despite the author and publisher framing the book with a discussion of the contemporary *ianfu* issue, Pramoedya's trip to Japan to accept the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize in 2000, and the history of the war, this book is as much

⁸ Prostitution generally does involve some type of economic or physical pressures in both recruitment and in daily practice making such a distinction a question of degree, type of force, and goal of that force (such as to prevent women from leaving the brothel). However, even more importantly, this type of definition means that the function of the women, the institutions in which they were placed, and their "work" are all irrelevant in determining who was an *ianfu*. Essentially the authors mean to define *jugun ianfu* as victims of sexual violence in some way related to the Japanese military, with the assumption that it is possible that some women recruited were not "victims."

about post-independence cultural oppression of women and the experiences of the political exiles as it is about the Japanese period. The description of the Japanese occupation period offered by Pramoedya in his introduction is that the all-powerful *Sendenbu* [propaganda section] was able to force local administrators and others to cooperate in getting young elite women to agree to go overseas for education, when in reality they were sent off to be “sex slaves” of the Japanese military.⁹

II. History Textbooks

Schools and textbooks are arguably the most important sites for reproduction of knowledge about the Japanese occupation, as virtually all Indonesians pass through the classroom and are currently subject to sixty-eight hours of classroom instruction in history during their second year of high school, the year when the Japanese occupation is to be taught.¹⁰ While a range of textbooks are available, and a certain amount of flexibility exists for teachers in presenting material in their classes, the Ministry of Education and Culture exercises a great influence through the drafting of the official curriculum, examinations, and approval of textbooks. This seems to come in the form of subjects which must be covered, although it is possible that some suggested historical detail may be distributed to publishers as well.

A survey of some textbooks used in the 1990s and 2000s suggest a

⁹ Not surprisingly, this book has yielded very different responses. One review which appeared in *Kompas* was quite sophisticated in its reading of the book, seeing immediately that in looking at these Japanese military sexual slaves’ experiences up through 1978, Pramoedya goes far beyond the responsibility of the Japanese military and to the problems of Indonesian societies as well (Maria Hartiningsih 2001). Another reviewer saw the problem of Buru society simply as an obstacle to interviews and the problem of the women as entirely related to the Japanese military (Rika Suryanto 2002).

¹⁰ The Japanese occupation is also included in the curriculum for elementary and middle schools. With the exception of one middle school text and questions for the elementary school examinations (including one question on the definition of “*rōmusha*”), I have not examined this material.

reduced importance of the Japanese occupation in the curriculum of high schools. Although some history textbooks from the early and mid-1990s devoted 8-10% of their space to the occupation itself (in addition to discussions of Japanese nationalism and imperialism, and the work of the BPUPKI and BPPKI in preparing for independence),¹¹ a textbook designed for the 1994/1999 curriculum devoted a mere three percent of its space to the occupation. The fact that this section in the subsequent edition prepared for the 2004 curriculum was further shortened to around two percent seems to point to a trend in history teaching (I Wayan Badrika 2003, 2004). However, there are textbooks circulating which place a greater emphasis on the period, such as the Bumi Aksara textbooks co-written by Siti Waridah Q. and others in 2000 and published in 2003 (Siti Waridah Q., Sukardi and Sunarto 2004). This textbook devotes twenty pages to the Japanese occupation (approximately nine percent), with additional discussions of Japanese nationalism, the war itself, and preparations for independence provided in other chapters. A comparison of even the most detailed texts, the textbook written by IKIP Sanata Dharma faculty members for Grasindo in 1992 (G. Moedjanto et al. 1992) and the Bumi Aksara text from 2003 with several books from the 1980s shows a significant decrease in detail.

Three foci seem to remain important in textbooks: resistance, organizations during the Japanese occupation, and the preparations for independence (usually the activities of the BPUPKI and BPPKI). These are organized in a variety of ways, but most generally with the section on preparations for independence in a separate section.

The National Education Department textbook designed for the 1994 curriculum was subsequently reissued by Balai Pustaka in 2001 (Amrin Imran and Saleh A. Djamhari 2001). Thirteen pages of the 185-page book

¹¹ The Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (Body for the Investigation of Efforts to Prepare for Indonesian Independence) or *Dokuritsu junbi chosakai* first met on May 28, 1945 and was succeeded by the Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (Preparation Committee for Indonesian Independence) or *Dokuritsu junbi iinkai* in early August 1945.

(seven percent) are devoted to the occupation and the preparations for independence in its chapter on the Indonesia National Movement, although the “Rise of Japan” (three pages) was dealt with in an earlier chapter. While this text included sections headings, the presentation of most information was organized into questions and answers. These include:

E. The Indonesian National Movement during the Japanese Occupation Period	
	What was the relationship between nationalists and Japan?
	Japan closed down political parties even though they needed mass movements. What were the movements that they created?
F. The Impact of the Japanese Occupation	
1. The Economy	
	In managing plantations, Japan followed two policies. There were plantations which received special attention, and others that were disregarded. Why did this occur?
	One of the needs of the people is food. What was the provision of food like in that period?
2. Education	
	In what ways were there changes?
	What about private schools?
3. Military	
	To continue the war, Japan needed a lot of human resources. The number of Japanese soldiers had decreased because many had fallen in battle. What was done by the Japanese to overcome this labor shortage?
4. Use of Indonesian	
	What was the attitude of the Japanese towards literature and literary writers?
G. The Struggle Activities in Preparing Independence	
	Were there other strategies followed by mass movement leaders?
	What Japanese efforts were made to gather the strength of young intellectuals and what was their reaction?
	How did the Japanese military government guide their attention?
	In what other ways did the youth act to prepare for the proclamation of independence?
	Why were the soldiers of the Peta army deeply touched seeing the suffering of the <i>rōmusha</i> ?

In guiding students, the book thus offers three perspectives which are captured in the following quotes: “The Japanese occupation period was a

period of suffering for the Indonesian people because all activities were directed towards winning the war" (p.127); "The effects which appeared as a result of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia, those which were negative as well as positive, included a variety of fields" (p.129); and "after political organizations were banned by the Japanese military government, national movement figures, the majority of whom were intellectuals, turned their political struggle to a struggle of ideas" (p.136). Thus the authors' tried to combine illustrations of the people's suffering caused by the Japanese (including the torture of literary figures, beatings, lack of clothes and food, and killings or executions) with a greater focus on the heroics of resistance and military leaders and the political activities of the nationalist elite, and thus not seem to be particularly anti-Japanese. The resistance of various figures, including the PETA rebellion in Blitar, is seen in this textbook as preparation for independence.

The I Wayan Badrika text published by Erlangga presents a somewhat different picture. The newest version follows the new high school curriculum for 2004, placing an emphasis on competence," that is to say the ability to describe processes and provide short answers to questions. Curiously, both editions examined almost completely eliminate discussions of Islam and Islamic organizations such as Hisbullah or Masyumi. In fact, the only organizations mentioned were the Tiga A, Putera and PETA. Another subject that seems to be minimized is the suffering of the people, discussion which often included mention of starvation and deaths, as well as the *rōmusha* and other labor schemes. Given the ascendancy of both Islam and Megawati during the period in which this textbook was published, it seems possible that the author or publisher saw little value in extending discussing the roles of the religious and secular elites in the labor recruitment of this period. Instead, the emphasis is on the prewar expansion of Japan, both on the ideological level and on the economic level, by emphasizing "dumping" which was a major concern of the Netherlands Indies government in trying to protect Dutch economic interests in

Indonesia during the 1930s. This emphasis means that there is at least some mention of the Japanese involvement in other areas of Asia prior to the outbreak of the Pacific War, but little the larger context during the wartime period itself. (In most other textbooks, both the economic development and the rise of nationalism in Japan as well as the war *per se* are generally dealt with in other chapters.) The Japanese occupation serves largely one half of the chapter entitled “Pendudukan Jepang dan Upaya Mempersiapkan Kemerdekaan Indonesia” [The Japanese Occupation and Efforts to Prepare for Indonesian Independence] as the framework for the drafting of the constitution. Unlike Japanese discourse on this period (and some Indonesian textbooks), there is little mention of the declaration of independence itself.

Curiously, despite the prominence of *ianfu* in the popular press as discussed in the next section, and in some other non-fiction works during this period, only two texts made reference to them. In one, the sketchy textbook published by Yudhistira (2000/2001), there is simply a vague reference to them, almost implying that women from the *Fujinkai* [women’s association] were forced into the barracks (Nico Thamiend R. and M. P. B. Manus 2000: 147). In the second, the Bumi Aksara text from 2000-2004, the issue is first introduced in describing the efforts of Bung Karno to protect the women of Bukit Tinggi by recruiting “women of no morals” to serve the Japanese soldiers. *Ianfu* are again mentioned in the context of the “impact of the Japanese occupation.”

While this article cannot adequately address the issue of what is actually taught in classrooms, as there is some room for expanding lessons and providing additional information, there are some indications that teachers turn to different textbooks or older publications for additional materials. Most of the textbooks do offer at least some unique piece of information, for example the minimalist ESIS textbook of 2003 mentions the Japanese advisors to Poetra by name (Nana Nurlina Soeyono, Sudarini Suhartono and Magdalia Alfian 2003). One individual who graduated from high school in 2003 remembered an emphasis on the organizations of this

period, including both the PETA and a variety of women's and youth movements. She also noted that the teacher used a different textbook in preparing lectures than students used.¹²

III. Newspapers and Popular Magazines

The Japanese occupation periodically makes an appearance in Indonesian newspapers and popular magazines, sometimes as mild popular interest stories telling about an aspect of the occupation or events in a given location. On occasion, these can be quite seriously written, as was the case for a discussion of the impact of the Japanese occupation on Indonesian drawing and painting which appeared in two issues of the "Khazanah" cultural supplement to *Pikiran Rakyat* in 2003 (A. D. Pirous 2003). The author, Prof. A. D. Pirous, focused on the Japanese illustrator Saseo Ono and concluded that the period was critical for the spiritual development of Indonesian painters. However, a greater number of publications are related to the activities of activists and official commemorations, generally reminding readers about the victimization of various parts of Indonesian society.

The most voluminous body of these publications deals with the *rōmusha* labor corps and the *ianfu*. This burst of activity began in 1992, in response to a request for information on Indonesian women who served as *ianfu* by an association of Japanese lawyers and the "registration" of such men and women by the Yogyakarta LBH. This was widely seen as a precursor to large cash payments from the Japanese government or other bodies, further fueling participation of elderly Javanese.¹³ As a result, popular news magazines like *Tempo* devoted space to describing the experience of comfort

¹² Interview, "S", August 2004. Her recollection that students used a text from Grasindo or Bumi Aksara while the teacher used a text from Erlangga was probably not correct, as the type of additional information she mentioned getting from lectures is not included in the Erlangga textbook.

¹³ One of the appendices to *Derita Paksa Perempuan* reflects this well. In a letter dated September 20, 1996, LBH-Yogyakarta cited incorrect information about payments of Yen 2,000,000,000 (approximately US\$19 million) to three Filipina women in 1996.

women based on interviews and foreign publications (see in particular the issues of July 25 and August 8, 1992). These early publications thus sometimes did include substantial descriptions and eyewitness reports or translations of foreign publications, while generally focusing on the oppression of these women by the Japanese. Along with these stories were others related to the *rōmusha* labor corps.

While the largest number of articles appeared in 1992-94 when stories of *ianfu* and sexual violence were given added support from the stories and interest from abroad, however articles continue to appear periodically, especially when there is something happening related to *ianfu* outside of Indonesia, such as the “Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal” held by an NGO in Tokyo in December 2000. The Indonesian delegation from the Coalition of Indonesian Women was led by a member of the upper house of parliament (MPR), Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, and included four former comfort women from West and Central Java. Due to the activism of the Yogyakarta LBH, Yogyakarta has probably produced the largest number of newspaper articles on the war, although they do appear in a wide range of periodicals. Even when these articles have no new information, they serve to remind readers of the *ianfu*, the *rōmusha*, and the oppression of Indonesians in general. Each of these is now clearly established in the popular historical memory.

The victimization of Indonesians in the war is also represented through other subjects. Rosihan Anwar has occasionally written articles related to the occupation period, including a recent article related to the Death Railway in Pekanbaru in response to a photographic exhibition by Jan Bunning at the Wisma Erasmus in Jakarta (H. Rosihan Anwar 2004). He also emphasizes the terrible experiences of the *rōmusha* and allied POWs, many of whom died in the railway’s construction, and who have been subsequently forgotten. Reports on government ceremonies are also frequently given attention, as was the case for the governor’s annual visit to a mass grave for the approximately 21,037 people who were killed in 1944 in West Kalimantan

(Media Indonesia 2004.06.30). The victims were accused of trying to establish an independent state of West Borneo.

The blending of stories of victimization and innocent description which characterized some of the publications described above can be seen in popular magazines as well, for example the August 1999 edition of *Intisari* which carried two articles related to the Japanese occupation. The first was a two-page description of the occupation by Saleh Koerdi who was an elementary school student in Bandung during the war (Saleh Koerdi 1999). The description covered the changing of various types of names, the author's attendance at school, the food shortages and starvation, and the collection of various materials for the war effort, among other things. A reader determined to see suffering could identify evidence of it in the description, but the article aimed to provide some "surprising" or interesting points about the period for the curious members of younger generations. In contrast, the second article was a shortened translation of the Eurasian Jan Ruff-O'Herne's autobiographical book centering on her life in Japanese internment camps and her experience of being forced into a comfort station during early 1944 (Ishiwara 1999).¹⁴

IV. Fiction

Kadarwati, a 1982 novel by Pandir Kelana (Slamet Danusudirdjo) featuring an ever suffering female character found renewed popularity during the 1990s "comfort woman boom" and was republished (Pandir Kelana 1982, 1992).¹⁵ A newer novel about a Menadonese girl trained to be come a Japanese *geisha* in prewar Surabaya, Remy Sylado's *Kembang Jepun*

¹⁴ Ruff-O'Herne's book has reportedly appeared in its entirety in an unauthorized Indonesian edition.

¹⁵ The first edition featured a cover illustration with a woman in Javanese dress kneeling in front of an officer and soldier in Japanese military uniforms. The cover illustration for the second edition shows a woman lying down in a glamour pose with sleeping clothes vaguely reminiscent of a Japanese *yukata*. This novel was adapted for the screen in 1983.

reproduces very similar images (Remy Sylado 2000).¹⁶ These include lack of work, lack of food, *rōmusha* (who were in turn watched by PETA), arrests and interrogations by the Kenpeitai, and the virtual guarantee that if seen any attractive young woman would be raped by Japanese soldiers. Excepting Japanese soldiers' uncontrolled lust, all are "negative" elements described in the Department of National Education textbook's description of the war, that is to say they relate to the victimization of the Indonesian people. Especially when images overlap with textbooks or the press, these stories can be significant in shaping the historical understandings of the public.

V. Conclusion

Given the state of Indonesian archives and libraries, as well as the gradual passing away of the generations which experienced the occupation, domestic scholarship is likely to remain minimal. Thus as limited as it may be, foreign scholarship continues to be extremely important to the development of Indonesian historical knowledge of the Japanese occupation of Indonesia. The relative dearth of Indonesian historical studies on this period points to the importance of the public images produced by publications aimed at a wider, lay audience: textbooks, fiction, biographies, autobiographies, activist oriented publications, and journalism. Along with these are television and film which have not been discussed in this article.

There seem to be three types of important elements in the varied narratives on the occupation period: descriptions of the exploitation and suffering of the Indonesian people, descriptions of "resistance" and the heroic struggle of the not-yet independent Indonesian nation, and a wide variety of fractured descriptions of daily life and individual experiences. Some descriptions are so common that Stoler and Strassler even observed that the well rehearsed, "oft-repeated stories of the Japanese occupation"

¹⁶ A second edition was published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2003, reportedly carrying a new sensational cover.

appeared in interviews about the Dutch period (Stoler and Strassler 2000: 15). In fact, we can consider these descriptions of the suffering of the Indonesian people and individuals, along with participation in preparations for the defense of the nation as narrative frames. Any description which fits those frameworks is unlikely to be interrogated with respect to its verity or ulterior motives. This makes the Japanese occupation a “safe” subject for Indonesians as long as they focus on their own “victimization” which then places them within the heroic nationalist script, even if it was simply hunger from which they suffered. The linking of these two frames seems to be accomplished by articulation of framing elements and the other assorted historical detail, as illustrated by most of the textbooks from this period, as well as biographies and autobiographies.

While *rōmusha* continue to be one of the strongest symbols of the victimization of Indonesia by Japan, *rōmusha* seem to be somewhat less common in descriptions during this period than in earlier periods, perhaps because most Indonesians have already accepted that the *rōmusha*'s suffering was the most extreme example of the suffering of all Indonesians. Rather, the sexual victimization of comfort women, extended to Indonesian women as a whole, has emerged as a somewhat newer focus. Of course this is not a new image either, as it has been used in the past and was a major feature of several films in the early 1980s (Raben 1999). The increased emphasis on *ianfu* and sexual violence since 1990 is only very rarely tied to contemporary society as a social problem which exists in various forms, rather it is generally located in the past and associated with outsiders, the Japanese.

If representation of the occupation is marked by memories of suffering, victimization and national struggle towards independence, it is also marked by what is never mentioned. The mass organizations established by the Japanese military government for the mobilization of the people of Java (Poetera and Djawa Hokokai [Java Public Service Association]) are almost viewed as a government, albeit without responsibility for the bad affects of the occupation. The activities of the native administrators, even when they

are mentioned as gaining experience, are ignored, while the Japanese administration is given scant attention. The end of the occupation as experienced in Java and Sumatra, that is a sudden surrender of the Japanese rulers, is totalized as the experience of all Indonesians. The fighting in Kalimantan and other areas of Eastern Indonesia is rarely mentioned, if ever, making the war very distant, and even unreal for *all* Indonesians. This is a primary reason why references to shortages and policy decisions due to the Japanese focus on winning the war (especially in textbooks) always seem to ring false.

Given the importance of the frameworks mentioned above, it might be possible to argue that the representations of the Japanese occupation are grounded in popular historical ideologies as much as they are grounded in historical evidence and experience. In any case, the importance of these themes and the continuing circulation of certain older publications serves as a brake on the development of new perspectives in at least print representations of the Japanese occupation.

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