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From Tobacco to Kretek:

A Success Story about Cloves*

Zusammenfassung

Die Kretek-Industrie ist im Laufe ihrer historischen Entwicklung zum zweitgrößten Arbeitgeber in Indonesien nach der indonesischen Regierung avanciert. Schätzungen für die Anzahl an Beschäftigten in dieser Branche liegen zwischen 4 und 17 Millionen Menschen und umfassen Bereiche wie Anbau, Handel, Transport, Werbung und Produktion der Nelkenzigaretten. Aufgrund der ökonomischen Bedeutung der Kretek-Industrie ist die indonesische Regierung von ihr abhängig. Der Beitrag zeichnet die historische Entwicklung der *kretek*, der indonesischen Nelkenzigaretten, unter Berücksichtigung spezifischer (markt)-ökonomischer, sozialer, politischer und Gender-Aspekte nach. Dabei wird insbesondere folgenden Fragen nachgegangen: Welche Faktoren haben dazu beigetragen, dass der Habitus des Betelkauens zunehmend durch das Rauchen von (Kretek)-Zigaretten ersetzt wurde? Welche wesentlichen Stationen hat die Kretek-Zigarette seit ihrer Erfindung durchlaufen und welche Auswirkungen hatten Faktoren wie Mechanisierung, politische Intervention und Werbung auf die weitere Entwicklung der Industrie? Welches Image haben Kretek-Zigaretten heute und welche Strategien verfolgt die Kretek-Werbung, um ihre Produkte so effektiv wie möglich am Markt zu platzieren? In welcher Verbindung steht das heutige Image von Kretek-Zigaretten mit einer Veränderung oder Bestätigung traditioneller Gender-Rollen?

Substituting betel by tobacco

<1>

In South Asia and Melanesia, chewing betel was a widespread practice for thousands of years. According to Louis Lewin, betel was the widest spread narcotic in the history of mankind.¹ In the 20th century, tobacco use largely replaced betel chewing.² This substitution happened in a relatively short period, roughly between 1900 and 1950. In 1900 still a common practice, betel chewing was almost completely replaced by cigarette smoking in 1950. As Anthony Reid has shown for the example of South Sulawesi, practically all adults chewed betel in 1900, whereas almost nobody consumed this drug in 1950.³ On Java, Bali

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¹ Louis Lewin: Phantastica: Narcotic and Stimulating Drugs, Their Use and Abuse, London 1964.

² Though this replacement is a trend, we can observe strong regional differences. For instance, betel culture still is important in some regions, especially in East Indonesia. Susanne Schröter, for instance, has observed in her fieldwork with the Ngada (1994-1998) that both elderly men and women regularly chew betel, whereas young men and women only do so on special occasions. This form of betel culture is also documented for other peoples of East Indonesia. Private communication with Susanne Schröter.

³ Anthony Reid: From Betel-Chewing to Tobacco-Smoking in Indonesia, in: An Expanding World. The European Impact on World History 1450-1800 30 (1998), 529-547, here: 538.

and Sumatra a similar tendency can be observed. In these regions betel chewing was also largely replaced by tobacco use.

<2>

Substantial causes for the replacement of betel by cigarettes are the changing image of modernity and education in the 19th century, significantly influenced by Dutch colonial policy. In the eyes of the Dutch colonial rulers, betel chewing signified the inferiority of the Indonesians. They rejected the habit of spitting betel on the roadside, and the development of bacteriological theory proved them right.⁴ In contrast, the colonial power associated cigarette smoking with modernity, cultivation and education.

<3>

In the course of changing colonial policy at the beginning of the 20th century, the Dutch placed more emphasis on the education of Indonesians. For instance, since 1900 more schools for civil servants (OSVIA)⁵ and doctoral schools (STOVIA)⁶ were built, which were not reserved to the Indonesian aristocracy anymore. The language taught at these schools was Dutch. Since 1891 Indonesians were allowed to attend European lower schools, a prerequisite for being admitted to the OSVIA.⁷

<4>

The improved access to education and the increasing influence of Dutch thoughts on young Indonesians were two factors accounting for the readiness with which young people adopted Dutch models of modernity and cultivation. Since they wished for better educational opportunities, more acceptance and prestige in society, they also replaced narcotics, which the Dutch regarded as outmoded and backward, by drugs seen as modern and trendy.

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Access to education also was a factor, which determined the consumer behaviour of men and women with regard to betel and tobacco. Men sooner gave up betel chewing than women and replaced it by using tobacco because smoking white cigarettes was a symbol of keeping pace with development. Smoking gave new perspectives for them, opportunities for advancement and prestige. In contrast, women did not see any advantage in replacing betel by tobacco. First, they felt that the tobacco could not substitute the indulgence and relaxing effect of betel. Second, smoking tobacco did not offer them any perspectives, such as social advancement, so that they saw no reason to prefer the new product. Despite the wish for education, which Raden Ajeng Kartini (1879-1904), the daughter of one of the most enlightened Javanese *bupati*, and the ethical director of education (1900-1905) J.H. Abendanon urgently put forward, women still did not have access to education.

<6>

Furthermore, smoking cigarettes symbolised masculinity and was thus associated with the male sphere. In contrast, women still preferred chewing betel for a long time, although men often did not approve of this habit, arguing that chewing betel affects the looks because it colours the teeth black.⁸ Whereas chewing betel was a habit which both sexes shared,

⁴ Reid: From Betel-Chewing to Tobacco-Smoking in Indonesia (FN 3), 538.

⁵ Opleidingscholen voor inlandsche ambtenaren, School for training civil servants.

⁶ School tot opleiding van inlandsche artsen, School for educating native doctors.

⁷ M.C. Ricklefs: A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1300, Stanford 1993.

⁸ The concern about the black coloured teeth of the lover or wife is also found in different Indonesian narratives. An example of pre-war literature is *Tenggelamnya Kapal van der Wijck* (The sinking of the

consuming tobacco symbolised men's access to education and their control of the economy.⁹ In this sense the replacement of betel by tobacco also indicates a gradual shift from an agrarian market economy to a modern industrial economy. In many regions of Indonesia this shift happened within the time frame of 1900 until 1950.

Tobacco and the beginnings of the *kretek* industry

<7>

Tobacco was introduced to Asia in 1575, when the Spanish brought it to the Philippines from Mexico, and in 1601 it was introduced to Java. In the mid-17th century the Javanese started to use tobacco in pipes and in indigenous cigarettes. Both women and men throughout Indonesia used it as an additive to the betel squid.¹⁰ The indigenous cigarettes were made of shredded tobacco wrapped up in dried cornhusk, banana or palm leaves. They were later called *klobot* or *kelobot* (husk, bracts of the corn ear) in Javanese or *strootje* in Dutch.

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The first Western cigarette wrapped in paper was imported to Batavia in 1845.¹¹ The British American Tobacco (BAT) company opened the first factory for the local manufacture of conventional cigarettes in Cirebon in 1924, and a subsequent one in Semarang¹².

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The *strootjes* made a comeback by mixing tobacco with clove buds. Although there is evidence that in the 17th century cloves were already mixed with tobacco, clove cigarettes did not turn into a merchandise success before the 20th century. The first person making a step in that direction was an inhabitant of Kudus, who popularised clove cigarettes among his friends around 1870.¹³ After he had first rubbed clove oil on his chest, attempting to alleviate his asthma, he had the idea to mix tobacco with cloves and to inhale the mixture. When he realised that he could breathe more easily, he propagated the new product as an efficacious remedy against asthma.

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He started to sell the handrolled cigarettes through pharmacies and coined the new product *rokok cengkeh* (clove cigarette). However, he did not have the chance to further commercialise these cigarettes because he died in 1880. After his death several other Kudus

ship van der Wijck, 1938) by Hamka, in which the protagonist Zainuddin ponders on forbidding Hayati to chew betel if they marry.

⁹ Reid: From Betel-Chewing to Tobacco-Smoking in Indonesia (FN 3), 542.

¹⁰ Freek Columbijn / Hans Columbijn / Max Columbijn: Kreteks Crackle in Children's Hands. The impact of advertisements and peers on smoking behaviour of adolescents in Bandung, Indonesia, in: Frans Hüsken / Dick van der Meij (ed.): Reading Asia: a research of Asian Studies, Richmond 2001, 49-63, here: 53.

¹¹ Columbijn: Kreteks Crackle in Children's Hands (FN 10), 53.

¹² Budiman / Onghokham: Rokok Kretek, Lintasan Sejarah dan Artinya bagi Pembangunan Bangsa dan Negara, Kudus 1987, 173; Reid: From Betel-Chewing to Tobacco-Smoking in Indonesia (FN 3), 539.

¹³ There are different versions of this name in different sources. Exact details of his life are likewise unknown. Lance Castles gives the name as Hadji Djamasri, referring to an interview with an informant. Parada Harahap gives the name as Djamhari, Budiman / Onghokham and Hanusz call the inhabitant Jamahri. See: Lance Castles: Religion, Politics, and Economic Behavior in Java: The Kudus Cigarette Industry (= Cultural Report Series No. 15), Yale University 1967; Parada Harahap: Indonesia Sekarang, Jakarta 1952; Budiman / Onghokham: Rokok Kretek (FN 12); Mark Hanusz: The Kretek Industry. The Culture and Heritage of Indonesia's Clove Cigarettes, Jakarta / Singapore 2000.

inhabitants started to produce their own clove cigarettes. Other than in the current *kretek* industry the clove cigarettes of that time were not wrapped in paper but in cornhusk. A variant of *kelobot* were *klembak menyan*, which used tobacco leaves, *klembak* (a kind of root) and incense.¹⁴ At that time there were no brand names or packaging associated with special brands. People rolled the *kretek* at home and disseminated them in the immediate environment. However, they did not exclusively try them for medical purposes only anymore but started to use them as a new relaxant and narcotic.¹⁵

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The new product gradually became popular outside Kudus. It was mainly a home industry, which used hand-operated rollers. The factories were the places where the product was collected, controlled, packed and distributed. At first, the Javanese dominated the *kretek* industry, most of them Muslims living in Kudus and environment. Later, Chinese entrepreneurs were attracted, too. The increasing competition among the companies led to an outbreak of violence in 1918: factories and houses were destroyed and some people even killed.¹⁶ After the indigenous culprits had been imprisoned, the Chinese manufacturers were able to strengthen their position.¹⁷ Thus, the Chinese firms gained a competitive advantage at an early stage of the *kretek* industry. At present, Indonesian Chinese entrepreneurs are the owners of the largest *kretek* companies (Djarum, Bentoel, Gudang Garam, Sampoerna).

Kretek recipes: Tobacco plus saus

<12>

The currently produced *kretek*¹⁸ consist of tobacco, crushed cloves and *saus* (sauce), which serves to give a special aroma to the cigarettes. The idea of mixing cloves with spices is not new in Indonesia. This practice was (and in some Indonesian regions still is) part of betel culture and serves to intensify the taste of the product.

<13>

The earliest recipes of the sauce are unknown. Scholars disagree about whether or not the *saus* was added to the mixture of tobacco and cloves right from the beginning of their production. Whereas Tarmadi assumes that originally *kretek* were produced from tobacco and cloves and that larger firms added the sauce later to give them a special taste, Freek, Max and Hans Columbijn indicate that *kretek* already consisted of tobacco, clove buds and *saus* in the 1870s.¹⁹

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However, the reason why *kretek* firms nowadays add the sauce to the clove-tobacco mixture is that the unique flavour of the cigarettes gives them a chance to get a competitive advantage over other companies. In addition, the sauce serves the purpose to moderate the bitter taste of tobacco leaves and to stabilise and preserve the tobacco taste as a whole. The

¹⁴ Bambang Nuswantoro: Pemasaran Rokok Klembak Kemenjan, Jakarta 1983.

¹⁵ Hanusz: Indonesia's Clove Cigarettes (FN 13), 30.

¹⁶ Columbijn: Kreteks Crackle in Children's Hands (FN 10), 54.

¹⁷ Budiman / Onghokham: Rokok Kretek (FN 12), 105-108; Lepi T. Tarmidi: Changing Structure and Competition in the *Kretek* Cigarette Industry, in: Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies 32 (1996), 85-107, here: 86.

¹⁸ The word 'kretek' is onomatopoeic and derives from the crackling sound the cloves cigarettes produce when smoked.

¹⁹ Tarmidi: Changing Structure (FN 17), 86; Columbijn: Kreteks Crackle in Children's Hands (FN 10), 53.

respective mixture of the spices used for the sauce is different and especially depends on the sales strategies of special *kretek* brands.

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At the beginning of the *kretek* industry the producers mainly used natural flavours such as banana, cinnamon, vanilla and jackfruit. As the industry grew and diversified, the firms increasingly added artificial flavours from Europe because they hoped for a competitive advantage. Since the recipe for the sauce is seen as an important aspect deciding on the success or failure of a *kretek* brand on the market, the firms keep the detailed recipe of the sauce secret.²⁰ The companies only disclose parts of this secret. The *kretek* company Djarum, for instance, gives the following ingredients for the sauce: licorice, chocolate, maple candy, plum skin, coffee, dried jackfruit and other dried fruit.²¹

The '*kretek* king' Nitisemito and the role of marketing concepts

<16>

Nitisemito was the first Indonesian who produced *kretek* cigarettes on a larger scale. Since he set standards for the later development of the *kretek* industry with his company Bal Tiga ('Three Balls'), today he is known as '*kretek* king'.²²

<17>

Nitisemito was born in 1863 as the eldest son of the family of Haji Sulaiman, a village head in Jagalan, Kudus. As a young man he went to Malang, East Java and worked there as a tailor. Although his business expanded, he contracted more debts than he could pay back and was forced to sell his company. Back in Kudus he pursued different activities, none of which were particularly successful. Around the turn of the century he went into the *kretek* business after he had married a woman called Nasilah. She produced handmade clove cigarettes at home and sold them to workers. Twelve years after his marriage with Nasilah, in 1906, he started to sell *klobot kretek* under the brand name Bal Tiga and called his company NV²³ Bal Tiga Nitisemito in 1908.²⁴

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In addition to the quality of the product the company's concept of success was based on its innovative marketing and sales strategies. Nitisemito produced the packaging in Japan and placed great emphasis on a design appealing to the eye, for instance an attractive colouring. Furthermore, since 1920 he started to disseminate expensive and exotic promotional gifts among the people, all dispensed with the characteristic three green balls. With a large bus, in which the free gifts were stored, he toured through Indonesia. Nitisemito saw to it that on every bigger festivity or night fair (*pasar malam*) there was a stand of Bal Tiga. On occasion of festivities people could exchange Italian teapots, bikes or even a car in return for a specific number of empty *kretek* packs. Furthermore, Nitisemito hired *stambul* groups, popular theatre troupes which travelled from town to town, staged their performances and painted the

²⁰ Hanusz: Indonesia's Clove Cigarettes (FN 13), 95.

²¹ Djarum: Kretek Recipe, in: <http://www.djarum.co.id/en> <07.03.2007>.

²² Kompas: Jamahri, Nitisemito, dan Kudus sebagai "Kota Kretek", 24.09.2003, in: <https://www.kompas.com/kompas-cetak/0309/24/jateng/578076.htm> <07.03.2007>.

²³ *Naamloze vennootschap* or company with limited liability.

²⁴ This paragraph is based on the biography of Nitisemito. See: Alex Soemadji Nitisemito: Raja kretek Nitisemito, Kudus 1980.

stage in the colours of the trademark.²⁵ Here again, a specified number of empty *kretek* packs was the entrance fee for the performances.²⁶

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In 1930 the company fell into a crisis from which it never completely recovered until it went bankrupt in 1953. Among the factors accounting for the company's failure were the keen competition of other *kretek* companies, dissonance within the family, power struggle and the effects of the Japanese occupation.

<20>

In the mid-1920s the competition among the *kretek* firms became fierce, especially in Kudus, where numerous *kretek* firms located themselves. In addition, internal conflicts divided the company. Nitisemito, who wanted to retire, already had prepared his son-in-law Karmain for the top position. Nitisemito's grandson Akuan Markum, however, took advantage of the fact that the Dutch colonial government obliged *kretek* companies in 1932 to affix a tax stamp to each cigarette pack. A short time later Akuan reported Karmain to the police, arguing that he had manipulated the new regulations. When Karmain was released from prison, his reputation had suffered badly and he had to leave the company.

<21>

Since Nitisemito did not trust in Akuan, he took Bal Tiga over again until he decided in 1945 that his son Soemadji should become head of the company. At that time, however, the firm was already in a desolate condition; during the Japanese occupation the greatest part of the company's property had been confiscated. From this desolate starting position Soemadji did not succeed to continue the former success of the company so that in 1953 Bal Tiga filed for bankruptcy.²⁷ Although the company did not survive until the present, it was an important model for later strategies of advertisement, as will be shown below.

Effects on the *kretek* industry: mechanisation and governmental intervention

<22>

Until 1968 *kretek* cigarettes were rolled by hand. Even nowadays this kind of production is still practised: handrolled *kretek* account for one third of the market share for clove cigarettes. In Indonesia three kinds of handrolled *kretek* are available on the market: customary handrolled *kretek* without filter²⁸, handrolled *kretek* with filter²⁹ and *klobot / kelobot*.

<24>

In 1968 the *kretek* industry started mechanising. Three smaller companies located in Solo and Kudus had begun to mechanise at that time, as well as Bentoel, one of the current brand

²⁵ Budiman / Ongkokham: *Rokok Kretek* (FN 12), 128-129; Ratna Saptari: The political economy of smoking; the case of the *kretek* industry in Indonesia, in: P. Boomgard / R. Sciortino / I. Smyth (eds.): *Health care in Java; past and present*, 171-189, here: 182.

²⁶ Hanusz: *Indonesia's Clove Cigarettes* (FN 13), 42.

²⁷ Hanusz: *Indonesia's Clove Cigarettes* (FN 13), 47-49.

²⁸ *Sigaret Kretek Tangan* (SKT).

²⁹ *Sigaret Kretek Tangan Filter* (SKTF).

leaders. Most of the larger enterprises started mechanising in the 1970s and 1980s: Djarum 1976, Gudang Garam 1978 and Sampoerna 1983³⁰.

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Three main reasons explain why the *kretek* companies decided to mechanise. First, at the end of the 1960s some firms, such as Bentoel, faced a labour shortage. At that time many new *kretek* companies were established and the request for workers increased considerably. Second, filter cigarettes, which could only be produced by machines, became more popular among the consumers.³¹ Third, mechanisation promised to be an effective method to increase production.

<26>

Mechanisation had a significant impact on the further development of the *kretek* industry. One important result of mechanisation was that the gap between large- and small-scale *kretek* producers was further widened.³² Whereas big companies were able to strengthen their market position, smaller enterprises were affected by the negative consequences of governmental intervention in the field of mechanisation. Large companies especially profited from mechanisation, since they were able to significantly increase production and cut down labour costs. Gudang Garam and Djarum each held 31 percent of the market share in 1989, Bentoel 12 percent, and Sampoerna 5.5 percent.³³

<27>

The success of the large enterprises was at least partly based on governmental policy. Indonesian governments have generally supported the local tobacco industry, particularly under General Suharto's authoritarian regime³⁴. However, large firms, which significantly contribute to the government's tax revenue, often benefited more from governmental intervention than smaller companies, rarely being affected by governmental regulations. For instance, the regulation issued by the Directorate General for Customs and Excise in 1979, limiting the production of machine *kretek* to a proportion of 1:2 machine to handrolled output, did not include large enterprises.³⁵ They, in contrast with the small *kretek* companies, were still allowed to mechanise. The firms Gudang Garam, Bentoel, Djarum and Sampoerna, which were among the first to mechanise, profited from the regulation. Until the early 1980s they were the only *kretek* companies which had a licence to mechanise, giving them a competitive advantage over other firms.³⁶

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³⁰ Edward Soaloon Simandjuntak: *Raksasa-raksasa Kretek Makin Melangit*, Jakarta 1982; Tarmidi: *Changing Structure* (FN 17), 90.

³¹ Ratna Saptari: *Buruh dalam Industri Rokok*, in: *Prisma* 21 (1992), 3-21, here: 14.

³² This was not the first time that the small *kretek* companies were more heavily affected by governmental intervention than big enterprises. Governmental regulations had already harmed small-scale *kretek* production in colonial history. For instance, in 1932 the Dutch colonial government had already issued a regulation, demanding that both small and big companies had to separate the sales location from the place of production. Since family enterprises did not have the financial resources to build a separate location, many of them went bankrupt. See: Saptari: *Buruh dalam Industri Rokok* (FN 31), 8.

³³ Tarmidi: *Changing Structure* (FN 17), 97

³⁴ S. Lawrence / J. Colin: *Competing with kreteks: transnational tobacco companies, globalisation, and Indonesia*, in: *Tobacco Control* 13 (2004), 96-103, here: 98.

³⁵ Since the enterprises often violated this regulation, the Directorate General revised the ratio in 1983 to 2:3.

³⁶ Soaloon Simandjuntak: *Raksasa-raksasa Kretek Makin Melangit* (FN 30), 88.

This regulation, originally meant to secure employment and to protect the market segment of the small and medium-sized handrolled *kretek* companies by inhibiting growth in machine *kretek* production, in fact constrained the growth of small and medium-scale *kretek* firms because they were not permitted to mechanise.³⁷

<29>

Furthermore, corruption and nepotism influenced the *kretek* industry, again mostly harming small enterprises. One prominent example is the effort of President Suharto's youngest son Hutomo Mandala Putra to get the monopoly on cloves in Indonesia. He established the BPPC³⁸ in 1990, arguing that it would protect farmers from wide fluctuations in clove prices.³⁹ *In realitas* the BPPC bought up cloves at a much lower price than their market value but charged the *kretek* manufacturers nearly five times as much for their supplies.⁴⁰ Their practice of dramatically underpaying clove farmers and mismanaging the supply of cloves led to the BPPC being disbanded under pressure from the International Monetary Fund in 1998.⁴¹ The effect on the *kretek* industry was that smaller *kretek* manufacturers went bankrupt due to the short supply of cloves and the corresponding hike in prices. In contrast, the large enterprises, which had reserves of the spice set aside, survived the practices of BPPC.

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This imbalance was mitigated to an extent in the 1980s and 1990s. For instance, in 1987 the government introduced a tax regulation that had a negative effect on big companies. Machine-made *kretek* were far higher taxed than handmade *kretek* (35-37% of the price tag for machine-produced *kretek*, 5-7% for handmade *kretek*).⁴² In addition, a regulation passed in 1991 required the *kretek* industry to put more *kretek* cigarettes into each pack. Due to these new regulations, especially the large companies were forced to raise the prices for their products so that many consumers chose firms of middle or small size.

Consumption, image, and advertisement

<31>

The example of the *kretek* industry reveals that patterns of consumption are closely related to the changing image of the product. This depends on the meanings of the product to the people, which are determined by various factors, reaching from income, concepts of nationalism and modernity to political aspects. It is part of the strategy of *kretek* advertisement to influence these meanings. Vice versa, the people's connotations of the product also affect the slogans.

<32>

The changing image and prestige of *kretek* cigarettes can clearly be seen when we compare consumer behaviour of the 1960s, the 1970s and the present. From independence to the early 1960s the income was comparably low and many people smoked cheap brands of locally made cigarettes. Mostly men of the lower classes (*becak* drivers, workers in the informal sector) consumed *kretek* cigarettes. The handrolled cigarettes wrapped in white

³⁷ Tarmidi: Changing Structure (FN 17), 101.

³⁸ *Badan Penyangga dan Pemasaran Cengkeh* or Clove Support and Trading Board.

³⁹ Elizabeth Pisani: Tommy Suharto Clove Monopoly, Reuters, 31.12.1990, in:
<http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1990/12/31/0005.html> <08.04.2007>.

⁴⁰ Hanusz: Indonesia's Clove Cigarettes (FN 13), 70.

⁴¹ Lawrence / Collin: Competing with kreteks (FN 34), 98.

⁴² Ratna Saptari: Buruh dalam Industri Rokok, 14.

papers were much cheaper than customary white cigarettes. The *kretek* were an efficient way to forget reality for a short time, in a society where the poor did not have promising future prospects. Furthermore they served as a way to strengthen the feeling of solidarity among the poor and their identity as Indonesians.

<33>

The author Mochtar Lubis illustrates this in his novel "Twilight in Jakarta" (1963), which is set in Jakarta in 1956. In this novel the shared *kretek* cigarette is the highlight of the day for the contract workers Saimun and Itam because the *kretek* is the only pleasure they can afford. Mochtar Lubis contrasts the *kretek* with the expensive brands of white foreign cigarettes. The message is that wealthy people do not enjoy these luxury cigarettes; they only smoke them for reasons of prestige but easily get bored by them, whereas for the Indonesian lower classes smoking *kretek* means to enhance the awareness of life. For the contract workers 'to smoke a *kretek* [...] was just like a grand ceremonial', whereas the wealthy Suryono 'took out a pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes, lit one and after only two puffs threw it on the floor and crushed it with his shoe'.⁴³

<34>

The side blow at the behaviour of Indonesians smoking white luxury cigarettes serves to highlight that after 1965, with the establishment of the New Order regime under President Suharto, the standard of living began to rise and the patterns of smoking changed as well. Wealthy people bought expensive cigarettes imported from abroad, since consuming foreign products was more prestigious than smoking domestic *kretek*.

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However, in the 1970s the emerging middle class and the upper classes started to consume *kretek* again. The *kretek* companies became more popular at that time for several reasons. First, at that time many Indonesians preferred *kretek* over white cigarettes because of protectionist policies adopted by the Suharto regime after it came to power in the 1960s. By the 1990s, *kretek* accounted for more than 90 percent of all cigarette sales and increasingly became a symbol of Indonesian culture. Second, the advertisement strategies also changed, adapting to the demands of consumers.

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The companies started to choose a fancy appearance and expensive packaging for their products, imitating Western trademarks.⁴⁴ The ideas of advertisement and its forms were copied from Western cigarette companies. This copying of Western promotion techniques *per se* gave the *kretek* a high status.⁴⁵

<37>

The concept introduced by Nitisemito in the 1920s, letting the consumers exchange a specified number of empty *kretek* packs for free gifts, was copied in the 1970s. In contrast to the 1920s the gifts were not as generous: mostly glasses were exchanged for a number of *kretek* packs. However, this concept was very popular so that in the late 1970s the glass factories in Jakarta and Surabaya could not meet other orders anymore.⁴⁶

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⁴³ Mochtar Lubis: *Twilight in Jakarta*, Jakarta 1963, 17; 29-30.

⁴⁴ Columbijn: *Kreteks Crackle in Children's Hands* (FN 10), 55.

⁴⁵ Columbijn: *Kreteks Crackle in Children's Hands* (FN 10), 54.

⁴⁶ Columbijn: *Kreteks Crackle in Children's Hands* (FN 10), 55.

At present the image of each company and their brands is carefully designed and responds to the currently existing cultural values and desires of the day. The most important images currently used in *kretek* slogans are related to modernity, hard work or leisure, respect for Indonesia, tradition and nationalism.

<39>

According to the latest research funded by the WHO and the American Cancer Society, almost 70% of Indonesian men smoke, whereas only 3% of Indonesian women do so. Since 70 percent of smokers in Indonesia start smoking before they are 19 years of age, the cigarette industries aggressively target adolescents. Although female consumers were already identified as a potentially growing market in the 1980s, until the present promotion campaigns are still mostly directed at men, especially adolescent boys.⁴⁷ Adolescent girls are not a target market. There are only some cases where advertisements show young women smoking a *kretek*, for instance on the present website of Djarum and Sampoerna.⁴⁸

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The absence of advertisements specifically directed at women can be explained with the fact that smoking is not popular among Indonesian women: only 2.6 percent of all smokers in Indonesia (occasional and regular smokers aged 20 years or older) were female in 1995 and the number of women smoking has only slightly increased, rising to 3 percent in 2007⁴⁹.

<41>

One important reason explaining the imbalance between the number of men and women smoking is that there are traditional strictures against women smoking. Many Indonesians culturally disapprove of women smoking, associating it with moral laxness⁵⁰ and Westernisation.⁵¹ Referring to advertisements in the 1990s Barraclough has revealed that although women appeared in some advertisements, they were shown in a group of men who smoked.⁵²

<42>

As Catherine Reynolds has stated, advertising is having 'a very real impact in increasing the number of Indonesians who smoke – especially those in younger age groups who are still so focused on their identity formation and who are being targeted as key contributors to Indonesian tobacco companies' future profits'.⁵³

<43>

We will now examine some selected promotion campaigns of the *kretek* company Sampoerna (meaning 'Perfect'), which is now owned by the US tobacco giant Philip Morris. We will look at the kind of images the firm has designed for which target groups, comparing

⁴⁷ Columbijn: *Kreteks Crackle in Children's Hands* (FN 10), 59; Catherine Reynolds: *Tobacco advertising in Indonesia: "The defining characteristics for success"*, in: *Tobacco Control* 8 (1999), 85-88, here: 85.

⁴⁸ In Djarum's ad a young woman is shown whose fashionable dress suggests modernity and liberation. The message is that smoking a *kretek* gives women a new feeling of liberation.

⁴⁹ Simon Barraclough: *Women and tobacco in Indonesia*, in: *Tobacco Control* 8 (1999), 327-332, here: 327; Duncan Graham: *Smoke gets in your eyes in Indonesia*, *Asia Times*, March 08, 2007, in: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/IC08Ae02.html <08.04.2007>.

⁵⁰ This image is partly motivated by the fact that a significant part of women who smoke in public are prostitutes.

⁵¹ Barraclough: *Women and tobacco in Indonesia* (FN 49), 330.

⁵² Barraclough: *Women and tobacco in Indonesia* (FN 49), 331.

⁵³ Reynolds: *Tobacco advertising in Indonesia* (FN 47), 85.

advertisements from the 1990s and the present. The aim is to reveal how a company which is known for its remarkably diverse slogans creates different images for its manifold brands in response to changing cultural values and political climates at the same time.⁵⁴

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Both in the 1990s and in its current campaigns Sampoerna pokes fun at aspects of Indonesian society, from the annual flooding in Jakarta to police corruption, especially with its supposedly low-tar 'A Mild' brand. This filter cigarette in white paper is directed at a young market. The recurring slogan *Bukan Basa Basi* (BBB, "no chit-chat", "straight to the point"), which was already used in 1996 and 1997 and still is the distinctive feature of 'A Mild' ads, already indicates the nature of these advertisements: outspoken, bold, witty, humorous. The slogan ironically refers to a specifically Javanese cultural framework, which traditionally has valued indirect expression, allusion, politeness and refinement (*kesopan-santunan, kehalusan*).

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In 1996 and 1997 Sampoerna poignantly criticised the political oppression the people had to suffer at that time. In one ad a man is displayed, pressed down by a heavy weight, with balls and chains on his feet. The accompanying slogan: "You want to live comfortably – try!" satirically alludes to the numerous restraints the people had to deal with at the end of the authoritarian Suharto regime, caused by problems such as corruption, political mismanagement, oppression and the economic crisis.

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Other ads released at that time showed attempts to break through brick walls and mice running through a maze, expressing the people's desire for freedom. In 2004 Sampoerna's new ad displayed a chair full of bedbugs, saying: "If it is not cleaned/cleared, the bedbugs won't go". The slogan referred to the fact that although already 6 years had passed since the beginning of the reform era at that time, the government still had not honestly tried to solve the problem of corruption. Furthermore, Suharto had not been punished for the corrupt practices he had indulged in during his 32 years of presidency. The ad mirrors what many Indonesians desire: a more open, honest political and economical system. At the same time it reveals the people's discontent with the political and economical corruption.⁵⁵

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The 2007 ad, showing several young people (three adolescent boys, one girl) walking in a disciplined line on a zebra crossing, imitating the military goose step, watched by an Indonesian with sunglasses, ironically shows that people only behave in a disciplined way if authorities watch them.

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The slogan emphasises this meaning, saying: "Just obedient if somebody's watching", and one of the adolescent boys comments on this, saying: "Ask why". The ad caricatures the strong position of authorities in Indonesia, especially the military, and humorously points out that the image young people create of themselves in public greatly differs from their usual behaviour.

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⁵⁴ Sampoerna: *Bukan Basa Basi*, 1996/97, in: TC online 8 (1999), 85-88.

⁵⁵ Sampoerna: Current Theme, 2007, <http://www.amild.com/web/v5/amild.php> <14.12.2009>

Applying this ad to young people's lives, and given the fact that Sampoerna wants to sell cigarettes, it is probably not too far-fetched to say that this advertisement appeals to young people not to uncritically accept any kind of instructions (for instance their parents' order not to smoke). The 'A Mild' brand thus is designed as a symbol of non-conform behaviour, wit and criticism. The 'A Mild' campaign is very successful. There is no doubt the ads' popularity has helped the brand to stand out – and prompted rivals to follow suit.

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However, Sampoerna follows various, partly contradicting strategies to promote its products among different target groups. For instance, the brand *Dji Sam Soe* is specifically directed at young male consumers, using a macho image, as Catherine Reynolds has revealed.⁵⁶ In a *Dji Sam Soe* ad Sampoerna has once displayed a "coming of age ritual" as a reference to tradition. In one of these ads a young man shoots his first boar; his father congratulates him on becoming a man, offering him his first *Dji Sam Soe*. This advertisement draws a specific image of what traits an Indonesian man should have to be 'mature enough' to smoke *Dji Sam Soe*: fearless, strong, determined, committed, ready for action. The traditional ritual importance of "coming of age" and masculinity is presented as the attainment of these goals.

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Sampoerna advertisements, which do not promote a specific brand, also stress the importance of tradition for the development of their product. Sampoerna argues that the perfection of their product is based on its long tradition reaching back to the forefathers, a tradition which must be continued and even exceeded. The recurring slogan is: "The tradition of perfection, the inheritance of our ancestors. If we aren't the ones to continue it, who will?"

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The motifs chosen are generally associated with tradition, beauty and energy.⁵⁷ Among others, advertisements show a gamelan⁵⁸ at night, illuminated in red, a sasando⁵⁹, an ikat weaving, a shadow play and an Acehnese dance called Saman. In all of these advertising slogans the line of argument is similar: the depicted forms of high art represent tradition, knowledge, hard work and the wish to achieve maximum results. Sampoerna indicates that their *kretek* has become a 'masterpiece' because several generations have already worked hard to bring it to perfection.

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The advertisements intentionally do not exclusively display typically Javanese art forms, but also show musical instruments, dances and weaving from different regions of Indonesia. The aim is to address potential customers in the whole Indonesian archipelago, not only in Java. Furthermore, the slogans stress the fact that people from all over the world find Indonesian forms of art attractive. In this way Sampoerna tries to increase exports to the West.

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Having compared different advertisements and brands of Sampoerna we can clearly see that the company's strategy is to play with a contrasting pair of terms: tradition/nationalism (for instance, traditional perspectives of masculinity and the heritage of Indonesian arts as a part

⁵⁶ Reynolds: Tobacco advertising in Indonesia (FN 47), 86.

⁵⁷ See:

<http://www.sampoerna.com/default.asp?Language=English&page=Communication/PublicAdverts>, <22.03.2007>.

⁵⁸ A set of traditional musical instruments making up an orchestra.

⁵⁹ Musical instrument from the Island of Rote, Lesser Sundas.

of national consciousness) and modernity, as reflected in non-traditional behaviour such as self-confidence, criticism, humour and readiness to question authorities. Identifying tradition/nationalism and modernity as key issues, motivating consumers to buy their products, Sampoerna places high value on customising and attractively visualising these themes.

Conclusion

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The cultural tradition of adding spices to drugs, as was the case with betel leaves, has also born the first *kretek*. In contrast to betel chewing, however, smoking *kretek* primarily was a male custom from its very beginning. From its origins, where a Kudus inhabitant used *kretek* as a medicine against asthma, the *kretek* industry has experienced great historical, cultural and political changes. In the course of its history the handrolled *kretek* has mostly been substituted by machine-produced *kretek*. Governmental intervention has significantly influenced the development of the *kretek* industry, often giving large enterprises a competitive advantage over small-scale companies.

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Like former governments, the present Indonesian government still is supportive of the *kretek* industry, since tobacco-related revenues are crucial to the national finances, ranking as the third-largest revenue source.⁶⁰ Recently there have been some efforts to restrain smoking, mainly in response to the WHO convention. The House of Representatives is drafting a bill to ban advertising and sponsorship by tobacco companies and increasingly support medical research on the health impacts of smoking. However, it is not likely that this law will be successfully implemented, since the tobacco lobby in Indonesia is particularly strong and the government fears loss of jobs, taxes and investment.⁶¹ Furthermore, given the weak implementation of laws in Indonesia it is fairly improbable that the law would be policed, even if it was passed.

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A further important factor that has strengthened the dominant position of the *kretek* industry is advertisement. Starting with a free gifts system, promotion campaigns already were a significant strategy for the 'kretek king' Nitisemito to promote his product in the first half of the 20th century. The advertisement strategies have become more sophisticated in the 21st century. They carefully direct ads at specific target groups, mainly adolescents (particularly boys but sometimes also at girls), coaxing them with witty and humorous slogans. As research carried out by the National Commission for Child Protection has shown promotion campaigns have a strong influence on teenagers in Indonesia. According to them, more than 90% of young teens are affected by late-evening smoke ads carried on mainstream television. Second to exploring issues associated with modernity, *kretek* ads still rely on the value of tradition to promote its products among a different target group.

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⁶⁰ On March 1, taxes on cigarettes in Indonesia were raised by 7%, and another hike of Rp7 a stick, or less than 1 US cent per unit, is scheduled for July. Total tobacco-related tax income is expected to exceed Rp42 trillion (\$4.6 billion) this year. See: Duncan Graham: Smoke gets in your eyes in Indonesia, Asia Times, March 08, 2007, in:

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/IC08Ae01.html <08.04.2007>.

⁶¹ Opus citatum

The *kretek* industry, which in its beginnings chiefly was in Indonesian hands, now is dominated by ethnic Chinese companies. They try to boost their image through socially responsible campaigns, paying for signs urging people not to litter, for instance. Another strategy is to fund educational institutions and scholarships, a step other *kretek* companies have taken as well.

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Although *kretek* are said to have even worse effects on people's health than regular cigarettes due to their higher percentage of tar and nicotine (the average *kretek* has 56.0 mg tar and 2.8 mg nicotine per cigarette)⁶² the *kretek* remains dominant in Indonesia. 83 percent of smokers still prefer clove cigarettes to so-called white cigarettes (17 percent).⁶³ Taken together it can be assumed that despite further future changes the *kretek* will remain an important symbol of Indonesian culture and identity.

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⁶² Adam Schwarz: Battle of the brands, in: Far Eastern Economic Review, 148, 16 (1990) 32-33.

⁶³ Duncan Graham: Smoke gets in your eyes in Indonesia, Asia Times, March 08, 2007, in:
http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/IC08Ae01.html <08.04.2007>.