

# Introduction

Causing harm and death when used as intended, the cigarette is no ordinary commodity.<sup>1</sup> The kretek, in turn, is no ordinary cigarette.

The Indonesian government makes a simple distinction between kretek and “white cigarettes” (*rokok putih*): kretek tobacco filler contains cloves, while white tobacco filler does not. The difference is also communicated through product packaging; kretek must be sold in packs of twelve or sixteen and white cigarettes in packs of twenty, and three-letter acronyms on the side of Indonesian cigarette packs indicate whether they are kretek or white (*sigaret kretek* or *sigaret putih*) and hand rolled or machine rolled (*tangan* or *mesin*). Hand-rolled cigarettes must be made with hand-operated tools like wood-handled rollers with canvas belts.

In everyday vernacular, Indonesians often reserve the term *kretek* for hand-rolled clove cigarettes and classify machine-rolled cigarettes, whether or not they contain cloves, as white. Machine-rolled kretek are made on European machines and look like white cigarettes with their uniform rod shape, synthetic filters, and decorative flourishes (brand names, colored bands, white or faux-cork filter covers).

All kretek afford a distinct sensory experience, beginning with their powerful clove scent and saccharine-coated tips, which deposit sweetness on smokers’ lips. When clove fragments ignite as smokers inhale, kretek sometimes make the crackling sound that is the source of their onomatopoeic name. Smokers associate kretek with sensations of warmth and heat (*hangat, panas*), tastes of sweetness and spice (*manis, pedas*), and, especially in the case of the hand-rolled kretek and its smoke, qualities of thickness and heaviness (*tebal, berat*). The white cigarette, by contrast, is bland, tasteless, and light (*rasa tawar, enteng*) and tends to disappear quickly; once lit, the wind stealthily consumes it even if it’s not actively smoked. A white cigarette takes about five minutes to smoke, compared to ten minutes for a machine-rolled kretek and a half-hour time commitment for a hand-rolled kretek. The latter weigh two grams, whereas machine-rolled cigarettes weigh a single gram or less.

The kretek industry and its supporters celebrate kretek in museums and books and on social media as embodying a valuable cultural heritage. In the new millennium, as government regulations over tobacco have modestly tightened and civil society restrictions have significantly loosened, a kretek nationalist movement has gathered around the claims that the commodity is culturally distinct due to its combination of indigenous cloves and New World tobacco and that the industry provides employment and government revenue crucial to national development. Well-resourced kretek nationalist organizations and advocates work to contest tobacco control, which they portray as a foreign, neocolonial threat.

Indonesians smoke over three hundred billion cigarettes a year. The world's fourth most populous country, Indonesia has the second largest cigarette market, made up of approximately 75 percent machine-rolled kretek, 20 percent hand-rolled kretek, and 5 percent white cigarettes (World Bank 2018, 4). In addition to its colossal size and unique product composition, the market features striking gender disparities; two thirds of men smoke compared to only about 5 percent of women. Mass cigarette consumption produces mass debility and death, with tobacco-related diseases claiming an estimated 290,000 Indonesian lives each year, over 50,000 of which are attributable to secondhand smoke exposure.<sup>2</sup>

This book asks how kretek capitalism—understood as the accumulation of capital through the making, exchange, and consumption of clove cigarettes—enlists Indonesians to labor on its behalf in fields and factories, at retail outlets and social gatherings, and online. I focus on the efforts of Sampoerna, a Philip Morris International (PMI) subsidiary that claimed about one third of the Indonesian cigarette market during the 2010s. *Kretek Capitalism* charts how Sampoerna uses contracts, gamification, self-improvement logics, and class, gender, and age hierarchies to extract overtime, shift, seasonal, gig, and unpaid labor from workers, influencers, artists, students, retailers, and consumers.

By centering labor, I develop an account of kretek capitalism that acknowledges but goes beyond the addictive hold of nicotine over individual smokers. Scientists have found that tobacco is harder to quit than alcohol, cocaine, and opiates, underscoring the lively and agentive potential of plants and their significant role in shaping human life (Bennett 2010; Galvin 2018; Langwick 2021; Myers 2017; Russell 2019). The younger a person is when they start using tobacco, the more likely they are to become addicted. Adolescent nicotine exposure disrupts normal brain development, changing how synapses are formed and harming the brain's capacity for attention and learning. Scientists have explicated the physiological mechanisms through which nicotine is absorbed, moving from the lungs into the blood and altering the chemistry of the brain and central nervous system by flooding the brain's reward circuits with dopamine and sparking an adrenaline rush that increases heart rate and raises blood pressure.<sup>3</sup>

This kind of universal biochemical rendering of nicotine addiction is critical but insufficient to understanding kretek capitalism because it rests on an individualizing, internalizing, and often pathologizing logic that neglects “broader

issues of context, history, power, meaning, violence, inequality, and subjectivity” (Garriott and Raikhel 2015, 479, 486). The biology of nicotine addiction cannot explain why smoking rates have increased in Indonesia while falling elsewhere or why most Indonesian men smoke and most Indonesian women do not.<sup>4</sup> Warren Buffett praised the cigarette industry for making an addictive product for a penny and selling it for a dollar, but this special ability does not rest on the commodity’s addictiveness alone; it also depends on cultivating exploitable labor, natural resources, media, government, and consumers (Proctor 2011, 42). The industry has never shied away from “making the Government a little more dependent on the habit,” as one Philip Morris vice-president put it (Rosenblatt 1994). Tobacco capitalism is not simply a consumer-driven phenomenon, and cigarettes are not born on store shelves or in smokers’ mouths (Benson 2012). Kretek capitalism thrives by fostering attachment and dependency among leaf buyers, farmers, factory workers, influencers, athletes, artists, students, journalists, retailers, and governments. By claiming an essential role for itself, it reworks more than brain synapses; it also reworks society itself (Russell 2019, 66, 69).

For Indonesians who are proponents of or work for the kretek industry, *kretek capitalism* may sound troubling if not outright offensive. A supervisor in one hand-rolled factory I toured fumed, “Someone called Philip Morris capitalist [*kapitalis*]. I got angry at them. Don’t talk like that!” At her feigned punch, the plant manager jokingly warned, “She’s a thug [*preman*]!” Although for more than half a century, Indonesia has been a staunchly anti-communist country that encourages foreign investment and domestic private industry, *capitalist* remains a jarring, dirty word, a slur reserved for enemies (Welker 2014, 109). Capitalism evokes negative connotations and asocial imperatives such as maximizing profits, exploiting labor, externalizing social and environmental costs, and taking license to reap private benefits from social suffering—a set of associations that help explain why ordinary Indonesians might take umbrage at the notion that the kretek is the product of processes that are both cultural and capitalist. For those who regard kretek as Indonesian cultural heritage, *kretek capitalism* is, moreover, oxymoronic, because that which is traditional, cultural, and valued cannot be capitalist. This kind of reaction is indicative of the perennially vexed nature of the relationship between culture and capitalism, which has led some social theorists and anthropologists to omit culture from analyses of capitalism, to treat it as an external resource for capital, or to approach culture as the province of subalterns (e.g., workers, indigenous peoples, downstream communities) in contrast to bourgeoisie, who are supposedly governed by a universal capitalist logic (Yanagisako 2002). Against such approaches, Yanagisako (2002, 21) insists that capitalism is always and everywhere a cultural phenomenon. I share her perspective; my use of the term *kretek capitalism* is deliberately provocative and meant to promote reflection on how capitalist goals shape the industry, but it does not preclude recognition of cultural processes and meanings or the nongeneric ways in which tobacco capitalism flourishes in particular historical contexts and geographic settings (Benson 2012).

TABLE 1 Cigarette classifications and excise taxes, 2016

Brand	Cigarette type (govt. classification)	Excise tax/ stick (rupiah)	“Flavor” and price (industry classification)*	Tar (mg)	Nicotine (mg)
Sampoerna Hijau/A	Hand-rolled kretek	245	FF budget	38	2.2
Dji Sam Soe	Hand-rolled kretek	320	FF premium	39	2.3
Magnum Black	Machine-rolled kretek	480	FF mid-priced	33	2.3
U-Bold	Machine-rolled kretek	480	FF budget	32	2.1
A-Mild	Machine-rolled kretek	480	LTLN premium	14	1
U-Mild	Machine-rolled kretek	480	LTLN budget	14	1
Marlboro Red	Machine-rolled white	495	FF premium	13	1
Marlboro Black Menthol	Machine-rolled white	495	LTLN premium	8	0.6

\* The industry classifies brands as “full flavor” (FF) or “low tar, low nicotine” (LTLN).

Kretek capitalism is shaped by the often competing political and economic interests of a wide variety of actors. Among these, four in particular are worth highlighting: the Indonesian government, the tobacco control movement, the kretek nationalist movement, and the large companies that produce most of the cigarettes that Indonesians smoke. The Indonesian government’s own ambivalence toward the cigarette industry manifests in mandatory pack features. Text on the side of packs states, “Sale to children under 18 years or pregnant women is forbidden,” while front and rear pictorial and textual warnings stress the hazards of secondhand smoke and graphically depict tobacco-related cancers. But excise tax stickers underscore the revenue that enters government coffers with each pack purchase. Indonesia has an unusually complex multitiered cigarette excise tax structure that reflects producer size, cigarette type, number of cigarettes produced, and per-unit maximum retail price. It has been simplified since 2011 (when there were nineteen tiers), but it continues to reflect the state’s moral valorization of kretek over white and hand-rolled over machine-rolled cigarettes, as well as small producers over large (World Bank 2018, 5). The number of small producers and the hand-rolled market share have declined despite these protections. The government also requires that packs display nicotine and tar data, which creates the misleading impression that these are amenable to precise scientific measurement, that some cigarettes are safer than others, and that people can make responsible decisions about what they smoke based on these numbers. Table 1 illuminates the contradictions that characterize the government’s moral taxonomy, most notably that cigarettes that are taxed lower because of their purportedly pro-social qualities (e.g., employing more workers, incorporating cloves, budget pricing) appear to impose greater health costs on individual smokers in the form of more tar and nicotine.

International tobacco control regulations and tobacco industry research have singled out the clove cigarette among its “killer commodity” peers for harboring special dangers (Singer and Baer 2009). Kretek are effectively banned in forty countries in response to public health regulations combatting industry reliance on flavors as a way of marketing cigarettes to youth and masking tobacco smoke’s harshness.<sup>5</sup> Studies by Philip Morris found that tar from white cigarettes and kretek is equally toxic but that kretek deliver far more tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide per stick than white cigarettes. British American Tobacco (BAT) research found that clove-derived eugenol is toxic when inhaled and implicated in acute illness, pulmonary hemorrhage, and edema (Hurt et al. 2012, 307). Eugenol’s topical anesthetic properties decrease “the harshness of smoke inhalation by numbing oropharyngeal pain receptors,” allowing smokers “to deeply inhale smoke containing more tar and particulate matter” (Hurt et al. 2012, 307). Mentholated cigarettes, which have an anesthetic effect similar to kretek, are considered easier to inhale deeply and harder to quit. Notably, the cigarette industry has disproportionately targeted Black people with menthols, with racialized marketing tactics helping to make tobacco the number-one killer and disabler of Black people in the United States (Jain 2003, 296–97; Wailoo 2021). PMI’s and BAT’s decisions to acquire Indonesian kretek companies similarly enacts “predatory inclusion” by targeting a vulnerable population with a product that arguably contains “enhanced risks” (Taylor 2019).<sup>6</sup>

Indonesian industry activists reject any attempt to position the kretek as a pariah commodity. The industry has historically spoken for itself through the powerful kretek producer association *Gabungan Pengusaha Pabrik Rokok Indonesia* (GAPPRI), which sometimes was allied with the white cigarette association *Gabungan Produsen Rokok Putih Indonesia* (GAPRINDO), but recent decades have seen the emergence of various kretek nationalist NGOs and coalitions that promote industry interests and style themselves as grassroots champions of kretek smokers, tobacco and clove farmers, factory workers, home industries, and peddlers.<sup>7</sup> Often closely tied to and funded by the industry, they lobby the government, stage protests, publish books, and use websites and social media accounts to disseminate the beliefs that making, selling, and smoking kretek are patriotic acts and that tobacco control is part of a neocolonial plot to destroy Indonesia.

Like kretek nationalists, I am interested in the ordinary people who are involved in the kretek industry and the mundane labor they perform. Unlike kretek nationalists, I accept the scientific consensus that cigarettes (with or without cloves) are harmful and addictive, and I aim to understand how everyday kretek labor serves the interests of the large producers who orchestrate and exploit it using global tobacco technologies. Kretek capitalism is a “harm industry” predicated on “practices that are destructive or harmful to people and the environment”; harm has been “part and parcel” of kretek capitalism’s “normal functioning” from the outset (Benson and Kirsch 2010, 461). But the factors that shape kretek’s occasioning

of harm—who controls the means of production; which technologies and people are involved in making, promoting, and exchanging kretek; the extent of public knowledge of tobacco’s harms; and the social distribution of benefits and harms—have shifted over time.

PMI’s \$5 billion acquisition of Sampoerna in 2005 heralded a new era of increasing foreign control of kretek capitalism. BAT and Japan Tobacco International (JTI)—major international tobacco companies that previously confined themselves to the shrinking white cigarette sector—subsequently indigenized by taking over Indonesian kretek producers, soon realizing a combined foreign market share of over 40 percent. As PMI, BAT, and JTI have invested heavily in expanding production and sales of conventional combustible cigarettes in Indonesia, they have made commitments to harm reduction and a “smoke-free future” central to their public relations platform in higher-income countries. Such deep contradictions and inequalities, however, are not new to kretek capitalism; these kinds of tensions have animated it since it first emerged as a Central Javanese cottage industry at the end of the nineteenth century.

#### CLOVES, TOBACCO, AND THE GENESIS OF KRETEK CAPITALISM

Before the kretek industry turned Indonesia into the world’s largest consumer and importer of cloves, the spice historically played a fairly minor function in local cuisines and pharmacopoeias, with cloves primarily used to flavor and fasten together betel quids (Reid 1985, 536). Indigenous to the Spice Islands of Maluku, cloves, together with nutmeg and mace (which derive from the same plant), nevertheless fulfilled an outsized historical role in galvanizing regional trade and colonial competition, warfare, and violence. Beginning early in the Common Era, a network of Javanese, Malay, Indian, Arab, and Persian traders transported the Maluku spices as far afield as China, India, the Middle East, and Europe. Known in various languages as “spice nails,” cloves have been valued not only as a culinary spice and garnish but also as a food preservative, perfume, deodorizer, fumigant, incense ingredient, embalming agent, aphrodisiac, dentifrice ingredient, dental analgesic, disinfectant for open wounds, and ingredient in respiratory, digestive, muscular, and rheumatic medicinals variously inhaled, ingested, and dermally absorbed (Donkin 2003; Freedman 2008; Turner 2004).<sup>8</sup>

After 1500, the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British, and French competed for direct access to and control over the spice. In the seventeenth century, the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC) won control and pursued a “radical policy of exploitation” that aimed to concentrate plantation production on Ambon and small adjacent islands and extirpate it elsewhere (Andaya 1993; Bulbeck et al. 1998; Donkin 2003, 169; Ellen 2003; Wright 1958). This brutal strategy disrupted ancient trade patterns and depopulated islands, although

the Dutch never entirely succeeded in preventing smuggling or the cultivation of “unauthorized” clove trees. In the 1770s, French and English traders broke the Dutch monopoly by capturing clove seedlings, and the plant was soon successfully cultivated in Zanzibar.

The history of the kretek’s other key ingredient—tobacco—is equally tied to the global history of colonialism. Christopher Columbus was searching for a western passage to the spice trade in 1492 when he landed in the Caribbean and accepted a gift of tobacco from Taíno people whom he would later subjugate and enslave (Ortiz 1995). The New World crop reached the Spice Islands and Java in the sixteenth century, although historians have disagreed over whether it was brought by Portuguese colonizers pursuing spices or by trade networks radiating out from the Philippines under Spanish colonialism (Courtwright 2001; Reid 1985). Small-scale tobacco cultivation spread across the archipelago and into the uplands, and during the 1800s, the crop was also subject to forced cultivation and plantation production (Boomgaard 2004; Stoler 1995). In 1863, Jacobus Nienhuys established the first commercial tobacco plantation in Deli, North Sumatra, which produced cigar leaf and relied on Chinese laborers from Singapore. People smoked tobacco in pipes or wrapped in dried banana leaves or cornhusks called *klobot*, but mostly they chewed it in betel quids. Tobacco expanded the repertoire of additives such as cloves, cardamom, and gambier that garnished the quid’s core elements of areca nut, lime, and a betel leaf wrapper. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the introduction of the Manila cigar and cigarettes and with betel chewing and spitting increasingly regarded as unhygienic and uncivilized by colonial and postcolonial modernizers, tobacco smoking gradually supplanted betel chewing. Whereas betel chewing was an accessible and affordable indulgence across gender and status differences, smoking is largely reserved for men, and cigarette brand and price tiers serve as prominent wealth and status markers (Reid 1985, 542).

Popular accounts credit Haji Djamhari, a resident of the Central Javanese town of Kudus, with inventing the *klobot kretek* in the 1870s or 1880s. Rubbing clove oil on his chest to relieve his asthma inspired Djamhari to incorporate finely cut cloves into his *klobot*. Touting the purported medicinal benefits of these *klobot*, which he claimed had miraculously cured his affliction, Djamhari marketed them in pharmacies. Although Djamhari realized little profit before his death in 1890, a cottage *klobot kretek* industry quickly sprang up in Kudus. Nitisemito, a local aristocrat who wed a *klobot* maker called Nasilah, scaled up *klobot kretek* production by hiring middlemen to oversee home-based pieceworkers and modernized *klobot* marketing by launching the Bal Tiga brand in 1906 and hosting promotional events with extravagant prizes like imported ceramicware, bicycles, and automobiles (Hanusz 2000, 32–49).<sup>9</sup> As the new *klobot* grew more popular, Chinese entrepreneurs entered the market, and manufacturers began using paper rather than cornhusk wrappers, signaling the emergence of the contemporary kretek form.



INDONESIAN NATIONALISM, CHINESE INDONESIANS,  
AND SAMPOERNA

Long a site of nationalist impulses and conflict, the kretek industry was implicated in the devastating 1918 anti-Chinese riots in Kudus. The early twentieth century was a period of growing Chinese and proto-Indonesian nationalism in the Dutch East Indies, with both Tionghoa (Chinese) and *bumiputra* or *pribumi* (native or indigenous) communities establishing schools, newspapers, and religious and political organizations. Soon after its 1912 founding in Surakarta, Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union), which evolved into a mass movement against colonialism, organized a boycott of Chinese middlemen who dominated batik supplies, sales, and marketing (Brenner 1998, 43). In Kudus, pribumi resentment rose against Chinese kretek producers, whom pribumi accused of undercutting market prices and luring workers with better wages and credit. On October 30, 1918, Chinese residents held a ritual procession to honor religious figure Tua Pek Kong and ward off the influenza epidemic. Some Javanese Muslim observers found procession participants dressed in Arab and haji garb insulting, which led to a brawl, Sarekat Islam's involvement, and tensions that escalated the next night when Javanese rioters burned homes and businesses in the Chinese district. Nine Chinese residents died, and some two thousand—about half the Chinese population—fled the city. The precise role of pribumi kretek producers and workers in the riots is unclear, although some speculated that producers instrumentalized religious sentiment to destroy Chinese businesses (Budiman 1987; Carkner 2019; Castles 1967; Hana 2018). Pribumi kretek producers' subsequent imprisonment instead created more opportunities for Chinese kretek producers (Badil 2011, 146; Kartajaya 2005, 81–82). The Dutch responded to the riots with arbitrary mass arrests and by militarizing Kudus.

Dutch colonial policies were largely responsible for pitting Tionghoa and pribumi against one another in the first place. Under the VOC, the Dutch recruited Chinese labor, granted some Chinese middlemen tax-collecting positions and monopoly trade power, and created a hierarchy relegating Chinese to a status below Europeans but above pribumi. After the 1799 VOC nationalization, the Dutch reduced Chinese privileges and restricted where they could live, travel, and own land. With the so-called Ethical Policy in 1901, the Dutch condemned Chinese for exploiting pribumi. Chinese were often more visible and accessible, and certainly less able to defend themselves, than Dutch colonial oppressors, and they have faced recurrent racial scapegoating in the colonial and postcolonial eras. The Chinese Indonesian families who built and ran the four largest kretek producers in the twentieth century would have to navigate the harmful “wealthy Chinese” stereotypes they came to epitomize and often emphasized their connections to Indonesian culture and nationalism and their respect for Islam.

Of the four Chinese Indonesian companies that would dominate the kretek industry, Sampoerna was founded first. Liem Seeng Tee, Sampoerna's founder, was



born in 1893 in Fujian Province. He lost his mother in 1897, and the following year, his father took five-year-old Liem and his six-year-old sister to Penang. Unsatisfied with conditions there, Liem's father continued on to the port city of Surabaya, leaving his daughter behind with a Hokkien family because he could not afford passage for all three. Liem was orphaned six months later when his father died of cholera. Adopted by a Hokkien family in Bojonegoro, Liem lacked access to formal education and moved to Surabaya to work in a restaurant at age eleven. He later peddled charcoal from a secondhand bicycle and sold food on railway cars. In 1912, at the age of nineteen, Liem wed Siem Tjiang Nio, a fifteen-year-old Peranakan (culturally hybrid Chinese) girl, and they began selling general provisions out of a stall in front of their house.<sup>10</sup> After briefly working for a cigarette manufacturer in Lamongan where he learned to blend tobacco, Liem began selling his own blends, both directly through his wife's stall and to retailers and wholesalers. In 1913, he incorporated the business as HM (*Handel Maatschappij* or trading company) Liem Seng Tee. When an opportunity arose to buy tobacco cheaply from a trader going bankrupt, Siem funded the purchase with a wad of cash she had saved and stashed in the bamboo roof, illustrating the role women's capital often plays in family businesses and challenging narratives that center masculine enterprise and patrifilial succession (Yanagisako 2002).

Liem Seeng Tee's family and business grew over the ensuing decades. Siem gave birth to two sons, Swie Hwa (1914) and Swie Ling (1915), followed by three daughters, Sien Nio (1921), Hwee Nio (1926), and Kwang Nio (1928). Liem began selling a blend of tobacco, cloves, and the heavy flavoring mix known as *sau*s (sauce) under the brand *Dji Sam Soe*, Hokkien for "two three four." In 1930, Liem changed the business name to HM Sampoerna, using a Sanskrit-derived Malay term that evokes perfection, wholeness, and completion. Liem embraced the auspicious number nine—the sum of two, three, and four—wherever possible, from domestic and business street addresses to license plates, workers' wages, the nine-lettered brand and company name, and the arc of nine nine-pointed stars gracing *Dji Sam Soe* packs. Reflecting their increasing wealth, Liem and Siem educated their sons abroad; Swie Hwa studied business in Chicago, and Swie Ling attended high school in China and then the English Catholic University in Beijing. In 1932, Liem bought a former orphanage that dated to 1864. He renamed it Taman Sampoerna and converted the compound into a family residence, warehouse, and factory. He renovated an auditorium as a cinema and theater with a rotating stage visited by Chinese acrobats, *wayang* (traditional puppet theater) performers, Charlie Chaplin, and future president Sukarno, who in 1938 gave some of his trademark rousing speeches calling for Indonesian independence on the Taman Sampoerna stage. Because machine-rolled cigarettes were more prestigious than hand-rolled kretek, Liem also expanded into white cigarette production, buying seven semiautomated machines that could operate around the clock (Sampoerna 2007, 46).

When the Japanese invaded in 1942, Sampoerna was one of the three largest cigarette producers. Within hours of the Dutch surrender, Japanese troops arrived at Taman Sampoerna, confiscated family assets, and arrested Liem, who was accused of supporting China's war against Japan and imprisoned. Taman Sampoerna was converted to manufacturing Fuji cigarettes for troops. Liem's family hid near Malang, although his sons were also eventually arrested and interned. On August 17, 1945, two days after the Japanese surrender, Sukarno declared Indonesia's independence. The Dutch attempted to reassert control, and bloody battles between colonial forces and revolutionary nationalists ensued until the Dutch finally acknowledged Indonesian independence on December 27, 1949. Liem, who had been released on August 27, 1945 (and subsequently declared the auspiciously numbered day Sampoerna's birthday), reconstituted his business amid the fierce independence battles unfolding in Surabaya and changed his company's name to Hanjaya Mandala Sampoerna. Liem and Siem also supported their sons' business efforts; Swie Hwa ran a tobacco trading company in Central Java, and Swie Ling founded the cigarette factory PT Panamas in Bali in 1954, although he and his Dutch Chinese wife, Nan, spent a period abroad after 1945 out of fear that they might be targeted by revolutionary nationalists.

President Sukarno's leftist administration was conducive to militancy among the low-paid workers whom kretek capitalism relied on exploiting, making the first decades after Indonesian independence challenging for Sampoerna. The Indonesian Communist Party (PKI, Partai Komunis Indonesia) became a significant political force, boasting two million members in 1955 and garnering 16 percent of the national vote and nearly 30 percent of the vote in East Java where Sampoerna was located. By 1965, the PKI claimed around 3.5 million members, with 20 million more in affiliated mass organizations for women, youth, peasants, workers, and other groups (Robinson 2018, 9). The feminist, PKI-affiliated Indonesian Women's Movement or Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia) had three million members in 1965 and supported women workers, women's equality, and political, economic, and social rights. Communist organizing and unionization spread in Sampoerna's factory where laborers worked eleven- to twelve-hour shifts, seven days a week. By 1954, Liem Seeng Tee ceased visiting the shop floor out of fear that labor activists might threaten his personal safety (Sampoerna 2007, 40, 49). After Liem died of heart failure in 1956, his daughters Sien and Hwee and their husbands took over Sampoerna. To reduce the company's labor dependence and vulnerability to union activism, they invested heavily in the machine-rolled white cigarette market but struggled to compete against foreign firms like BAT and Philip Morris. By 1959, the company was edging toward bankruptcy. At the request of Swie Hwa, Swie Ling returned and took over the faltering business; he terminated white cigarette production and invested in revitalizing the neglected *Dji Sam Soe* brand, raising worker wages and bonuses to secure their loyalty.

## KRETEK MECHANIZATION AND MARKET GROWTH IN THE SUHARTO ERA

On September 30, 1965, six Indonesian army generals and a lieutenant were killed in an alleged communist coup attempt. General Suharto used the murders to justify a massive, military-led anti-communist campaign that incited civilian participation in targeting Communist Party members and their allies (despite the legal status of the party before its ban in 1966). The anti-communist crusade served as cover for opportunistic extrajudicial killings of leftist activists, intellectuals, teachers, artists, musicians, dancers, peasants who threatened large landholders, and ethnic Chinese tainted by their association—however tenuous—with a communist country. Gerwani-affiliated women were targeted based on a fabricated, sensation-alist account of members sadistically mutilating the generals' genitalia and dancing naked in the Lubang Buaya (literally, crocodile pit) region where some of the men were killed and their bodies were dumped down a well. Casualty estimates from the slaughter that followed range from five hundred thousand to one million Indonesians. Corpses were dumped in rivers and mass graves. Hundreds of thousands of civilians were also imprisoned, often without trial. Those who survived the harsh prison conditions became a political underclass and often faced social ostracization and difficulty finding employment upon their release due to the “economically and socially deadly practice” of stamping their identity cards with the initials ET (for *eks tahanan politik*), marking them as former political prisoners (Larasati 2013, 57). Enjoying support from the United States with its Cold War mission of communist containment, Suharto ousted the leftist Sukarno and maneuvered himself into the presidency in 1967. Over his thirty-two years of New Order rule, Suharto invoked the bogeyman of communism to inspire fear, depoliticize citizens, and ensure support for his economic development agenda.

Kretek capitalism, and large Chinese Indonesian kretek producers, would flourish under Suharto's rule, which encouraged mechanization and curtailed labor rights. Through most of the New Order, unauthorized strikes were illegal and suppressed with military force. Workers were limited to a single government-sanctioned, management-friendly union that dominates Sampoerna factories to the present day. Kretek producers ousted men from their hand-rolling workforces and replaced them with women, whom the New Order targeted for gendered depoliticization. Each year, the government forced schoolchildren to watch a traumatizing propaganda film (*Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI*, the 30 September Movement/PKI Treason), which rehashed Gerwani members' fictional sexually depraved role in the alleged coup attempt (Larasati 2013). Against this political and sexual threat, the state espoused the primacy of a conservative housewife (*ibu rumah tangga*) identity, even for women workers (Suryakusuma 1996). Buoyed by high oil prices, Suharto's administration supplied cheap credit to domestic

businesses and encouraged kretek mechanization. Suharto presided over decades of rising foreign investment, national prosperity, and consumption levels and increased access to formal education. The middle class grew, but deepening inequalities, rural dispossession, environmental degradation, and urbanization also increased, and Suharto, along with his family members and cronies, were accused of rampant corruption and nepotism.

The Sampoerna family benefited economically under Suharto but experienced renewed cultural suppression. The administration's approach to the so-called Chinese problem involved forced cultural assimilation while underscoring differences that kept Chinese Indonesians forever foreign and potential targets of racial scapegoating. Laws passed in 1966 and 1967 forced once vibrant Chinese schools and media to close, compelled Chinese Indonesians to adopt Indonesian-sounding names, and prohibited Chinese religious and ritual expression in public. The government insisted on using the derogatory term *Cina* rather than the preferred term *Tionghoa* and built on Sukarno-era demands for Chinese Indonesians to acquire and, upon demand, display extra proof of their citizenship status (Warga Negara Indonesia or WNI). Documentary evidence of their bureaucratic belonging only underscored their exclusion from the full national belonging enjoyed by their *asli* (authentic, indigenous) Indonesian neighbors (Strassler 2010).

In response to government pressure to assimilate, Liem Swie Ling adopted the first name Aga and family name Sampoerna in 1966. In 1967, he launched a budget kretek to appeal to smokers who could not afford expensive Dji Sam Soe. The green packaging featured a large white A for Aga on a red background. The brand became known as Sampoerna Hijau (Green Sampoerna) or alternatively Sampoerna A or Sampoerna Kretek. Perhaps because the failed attempt to shift to machine-rolled white cigarettes in the 1950s remained fresh, Sampoerna, under Aga's direction, confined itself to hand-rolled production.

The Suharto administration began granting kretek manufacturers permission to import cigarette-rolling machines in 1968, overturning the Sukarno administration's policy of discouraging kretek mechanization to shelter hand-rolling jobs. In 1974, Bentoel was the first kretek producer to exercise the option to mechanize kretek and confer on them features associated with "modern" white cigarettes.<sup>11</sup> In 1976, Bentoel launched the machine-rolled Biru (blue) International brand, which quickly became a hit. By the end of the 1970s, two other major producers—Djarum and Gudang Garam—had also mechanized.<sup>12</sup>

Mechanization enabled kretek producers to gain dominance over white cigarette makers and to claim a share of Indonesians' rising disposable income. White cigarettes, which were regarded as prestigious, modern, and cosmopolitan compared to the cheaper traditional hand-rolled kretek, claimed over 75 percent of the market in the 1960s (Reid 1985, 541). But starting in the 1970s, Indonesians could smoke machine-rolled kretek, which evoked an alternative national modernity. They were soon so popular that the government intervened to protect the labor-intensive hand-rolled sector; in 1979, the director general for duty and

excise required that large manufacturers produce one hand-rolled for every two machine-rolled kretek, a ratio relaxed in 1986 to one to four. When companies routinely violated these policies, the government implemented the tiered taxation system to keep hand-rolled kretek cheaper (Hanusz 2000, 112–15).

Tien Pao, the second of Nan and Aga Sampoerna's three sons, would bring his overseas business training to bear on modernizing Sampoerna and mechanizing its production. Born in the Netherlands in 1947, Tien Pao was first educated in Hong Kong and Melbourne. He met his future wife, Kathleen Chow (Katie Sampoerna), while attending college at the University of Houston. The couple moved to Singapore, where his horseracing-obsessed father had established Agasam Stables.<sup>13</sup> Tien Pao eventually became involved in the Sampoerna and Panamas kretek factories, joining Sampoerna's board of directors in 1977 and leading the company from 1978.

Over the 1980s and 1990s, Putera Sampoerna, as Tien Pao was publicly called in Indonesia, embarked on a mission to apply global tobacco and business technologies to modernize every facet of Sampoerna's business, from financing and sourcing supplies to production, marketing, distribution, and inventory control. He established new Surabaya corporate headquarters at Rungkut Industrial Park in 1983 and proceeded to wrest control of Sampoerna's tobacco procurement and cigarette distribution networks from the traders and agents on whom the company had historically relied. Putera enrolled his cousin Boedi Sampoerna to set up tobacco buying stations that enabled them to buy directly from farmers and bypass the Chinese Indonesian traders who had long controlled tobacco purchase and storage. Traders allegedly retaliated with personal threats and arson attempts on the buying stations (Kartajaya 2005, 123–27; Sampoerna 2007, 117). Putera proceeded to dismantle the agent distribution system established by his grandfather and continued under his father. From his perspective, the agents, some of whom were third generation, had grown “fat and spoiled” and were not motivated to increase Sampoerna's market share or do the hard work of marketing new products or extending marketing to places where Sampoerna did not already enjoy a devoted consumer base. At an emergency meeting in 1986, Putera informed agents that the company was ending their contracts and was prepared to buy their assets and employ their managers and salespeople. Overcoming distributors' resistance and threats, by 1989 Sampoerna claimed control over the most extensive distribution system in the country.<sup>14</sup> The company also invested heavily in new information management systems to enhance quality, inventory, and marketing control (Kartajaya 2005, 127–35, 145–47; Sampoerna 2007, 121–22).

For Putera Sampoerna, mechanizing cigarette production with global technologies was key to transforming Sampoerna from “a niche player in the upper price segment of the kretek market” into a “world-class” manufacturer and “major volume player in Indonesia's lucrative cigarette industry” (Kartajaya 2005, 118, 136; Sampoerna 2007, 125). In 1987, Sampoerna began constructing its new “world-class” facility on a 153-hectare plot of land in Sukorejo, forty-seven kilometers south of Surabaya. Built in stages, it included long-term storage warehouses for

tobacco and cloves, a primary tobacco and clove processing and mechanized blending factory, a secondary factory for making and packing cigarettes, finished goods warehouses, and supporting units like the power plant, logistics, HR, training, security, and maintenance. Confronting delays on German and Italian cigarette making and packing machines, Sampoerna converted used machinery (procured from a Semarang BAT plant in 1989) from white cigarette to kretek production (Kartajaya 2005, 136–44). A lavish Science and Development Center was tasked with creating new products and testing and controlling the content, taste, and budgets of existing product lines.<sup>15</sup> To raise more capital for its ambitious expansion, Sampoerna listed twenty-seven million shares on the Jakarta Stock Exchange at 12,600 rupiah per share on August 27, 1990.<sup>16</sup> Bentoel and Gudang Garam became public companies the same year.

During the business-friendly Suharto period, four large Chinese Indonesian family firms thus used mechanization to consolidate control over the majority of Indonesia's cigarette market and shift it from white cigarettes to kretek by the close of the twentieth century. The following sections provide a more detailed account of the factors undergirding their success, which was predicated not only on their turn to mechanization but also on an ability to incorporate seemingly opposing discourses of tobacco control and commodity nationalism into their kretek engineering and marketing. Mechanized factories and kretek museums are paradigmatic sites in which kretek producers address tobacco control and kretek nationalism, respectively. In mechanized factories, firms bring to bear on the kretek a host of global technologies not only to make production faster and cheaper but also to create the appearance of a safer cigarette. In museums, kretek producers conversely center the hand-rolled kretek and the industry's cultural, indigenous, and artisanal features. Hidden from view, the mechanized factory is focused on the future, on speed, and on volume. Open to the public, the kretek museum stages slow production and kretek's past.

## TOBACCO CONTROL

Even as abundant scientific evidence emerged over the course of the twentieth century about the addictive nature of cigarettes and their toxic and carcinogenic effects on active and passive smokers, proponents of tobacco regulation have faced a steep uphill battle in Indonesia due to the industry's close government ties, influence, and reputation as a key taxpayer and employer (Lawrence and Collin 2004). During Suharto's administration (1967–98), the industry became the country's largest revenue source after oil, gas, and timber and its second largest employer after the government (Reynolds 1999a, 89). The government began requiring small, weakly worded health cigarette pack warnings ("Smoking can harm your health") in 1991, but it lifted a ban on television advertising the same year. Through ownership stakes in television stations and an outdoor advertising

business, Suharto's children benefitted from extravagant cigarette advertising budgets (Reynolds 1999b, 87–88). In the 1990s, four large kretek producers controlled 85 percent of the industry and produced the majority of their cigarettes in mechanized factories. Of the seven known billionaires (USD) in Indonesia in 1997, three owed their fortunes to tobacco (Putera Sampoerna, Gudang Garam's Rachman Halim, and Djarum's Hartono; see Reynolds 1999a, 90). Yet continued hand-rolled production and small kretek producers maintained the impression of a diverse and employment-generating industry.

Limited in number, resources, and geographic reach, Indonesia's tobacco critics confront public condemnation, mockery, and even death threats (McNeil 2018). Government officials and civil servants, whose upper ranks consist mostly of men who are more likely to smoke or be sympathetic to fellow male smokers, rarely see tobacco control as part of their remit unless they are in health-related positions, which are often more feminized and less powerful. Industry, trade, and agriculture ministries openly side with the tobacco industry, and even the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports claim they need tobacco money for scholarships and sports (Astuti, Assunta, and Freeman 2020). Journalists often smoke, and media relies on tobacco industry advertising revenue and can be swayed by industry threats, bribes, and journalism awards. As an activist cause, tobacco control is largely supported by Jakarta-based nonprofits that focus on consumers, children and youth, tobacco “victims,” and heart and lung health (e.g., Yayasan Lentera Anak, Yayasan Lembaga Konsumen Indonesia, Yayasan Jantung Indonesia). Although only a small number of activists overtly support the tobacco industry, smoking is widespread in activist circles dominated by youth—cigarette companies' favorite demographic—who might otherwise oppose corporate capitalism but often use cigarettes to forge relations of reciprocity and to alleviate boredom, hunger, and tension (Lee 2016).

In the world's largest Muslim country, the tobacco industry has faced Islamic opposition but also mustered considerable support. In 2009, the government-sponsored council Majelis Ulama Indonesia issued a fatwa (religious opinion) declaring smoking in public and any smoking by children and pregnant women as *haram* (prohibited) and smoking more generally as *makruh* (discouraged). Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which boasts thirty to thirty-five million members, objected to the fatwa, declaring smoking less harmful than alcohol and beneficial for clear thinking (Byron et al. 2015, 2). In collaboration with Bentoel, NU invested in a hand-rolled kretek factory in 2002, then sold its share in 2007 when the plant required more capital.<sup>17</sup> The brand it launched in 2003, Tali Jagat (rope of the universe), bore a logo resembling NU's, with nine stars in an arc around a globe. The marketing focus was purportedly to recruit NU smokers (*warga nahdliyyin*) so as to bolster both NU's economic fortunes and those of tobacco and clove farmers, many of whom are NU members.<sup>18</sup>



In 2010, Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's second largest Muslim organization, with a reformist, modernist orientation and twenty-five million members, issued a fatwa declaring cigarettes haram. Grounded in the rationale that smoking is a slow form of suicide and harms family members and bystanders, the fatwa's impact was limited. Although a Muhammadiyah Tobacco Control Center leader claimed that the organization was like a state that could issue orders that reached down to its roots and were scrupulously followed by loyal members, many smokers found the fatwa too extreme and dismissed it as a misinterpretation (*salah menafsirkan*), asserting that people were allowed to smoke but earned blessings (*pahala*) by avoiding it.<sup>19</sup> Others reproduced claims that the fatwa was money motivated; kretek nationalist organization Komunitas Kretek sought to discredit it as a political maneuver and a performance for the Bloomberg Initiative, which awarded Muhammadiyah a grant of \$393,000 in 2009 (Emont 2016). (To put such tobacco control funding into perspective, consider that the tobacco industry spent \$378 million—almost a thousand times the size of the grant—on Indonesian tobacco advertising in 2017.)<sup>20</sup>

Indonesia's tobacco control activists seek membership in a global order of tobacco control that promises rights to knowledge, industry regulation, an environment free of smoke and cigarette advertising, and a healthier and more prosperous future for Indonesian citizens. Many of these activists work within the framework of tobacco control justice, which involves challenging the industry's targeting of vulnerable countries and communities. Such an approach means paying particular attention to how social inequalities interact with the environmental, health, and economic dimensions of tobacco violence. Tobacco plays a role in Indonesia's five leading causes of death (ischemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, tuberculosis, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases), and tobacco-related diseases strain and jeopardize the country's drive toward universal health coverage.<sup>21</sup> In 2015, the Ministry of Health estimated the total direct and indirect health costs of smoking at nearly \$34 billion, three times the amount generated by the tobacco tax (World Health Organization 2020, 2, 8, 12). In terms of gender inequality and violence, boys and young men experience intense social pressure to demonstrate their masculinity and adulthood by smoking. Of the 7 percent of Indonesian women killed by tobacco-related diseases, many have never actively smoked a cigarette. Girls disproportionately lose education opportunities due to tobacco-related illness among parents (World Health Organization 2020, 9). In Indonesian households where the father smokes, tobacco accounts for 22 percent of average weekly household expenditures, curbing spending on food, education, and health care, contributing to high rates of child malnutrition and stunting, and diminishing health and economic life chances (World Bank 2018, 2–3). People in Indonesia's lowest income bracket smoke at twice the rate of Indonesians in the highest income bracket, implying that the poor bear the greatest burden of tobacco-related diseases and risk of financial devastation due to chronic illness and the premature death of key household providers (World Health Organization

2020, 12). The heavy toll of tobacco use on the poor has led some to question the orthodoxy that cigarette tax increases are necessarily regressive (Verguet, Kearns, and Rees 2021). While statistical evidence on smoking rates in Indonesia's queer community is lacking, anecdotal observations and ethnographic accounts suggest a higher prevalence than among straight Indonesians, consistent with trends in other countries (Blackwood 2010; Boellstorff 2005). Cigarettes facilitate new relations and identities but also create additional health risks for LGBTQ individuals and exacerbate others they already disproportionately face.<sup>22</sup>

Tobacco control has gained some ground in the post-Suharto period, but Indonesia has not joined the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), a 2003 treaty ratified by over 180 countries. Indonesian government delegates who actively participated in establishing, drafting, and approving the convention saw industry interference in the Sukarnoputri administration's abrupt withdrawal of support just as they were preparing to sign the treaty. In the Indonesian government, only the Ministry of Health prohibits tobacco industry collaboration; politicians and political parties are not required to report tobacco industry contributions, and industry influence over policymaking is rife (Astuti, Assunta, and Freeman 2020). The Tobacco Transparency Index ranked Indonesia among the five countries with the highest levels of industry interference; its 2021 report cited Sampoerna's leveraging of the pandemic to gain access to senior government officials and its letter requesting that a regent in Bali revoke an outdoor cigarette advertising ban (Assunta 2021, 4–5, 36, 57). Not being party to the FCTC also means that Indonesia is unable to influence its direction or access member resources, including funding for farmers transitioning away from tobacco (Chamim et al. 2011, 61–82).

After President Yudhoyono's administration signed Regulation 109 into law in 2012, followed by Health Ministry Regulation 28 a year later, Indonesia became the only country with pictorial warning labels that also allowed rampant cigarette advertising in conventional mass media, including television, radio, print media, and billboards (Anshari 2017, 28). The new laws prohibited tobacco companies from distributing free cigarettes or showing cigarettes in advertising but allowed television and radio advertising between 9:30 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. Local governments were empowered to craft smoke-free legislation but at their own discretion and without a deadline; the process has unfolded slowly and unevenly and has been subject to politicians' priorities and industry influence (Kramer et al. 2023). Companies were forbidden from creating new brands with "misleading descriptors" like "mild" or "light," but existing brands could keep using these terms. Prohibitions on cigarette sales to pregnant women and to children under the age of eighteen go unenforced.

Indonesia's refusal to sign the FCTC may have had the important upshot of attracting PMI to acquire Sampoerna in 2005, thereby setting in motion the current era of increasing foreign stakes in kretek capitalism (Chamim et al. 2011, 69). Indonesian kretek company acquisitions are strikingly at odds with the

public commitments to harm reduction and a “smoke-free future” that PMI, BAT, and JTI have made. PMI boasts that it has invested \$9 billion since 2008 in “reduced risk products,” resulting in the launch of various e-vapor products and heated (rather than burning) tobacco devices such as IQOS that are meant to “disrupt” the conventional combustible cigarette industry.<sup>23</sup> The company has set striking targets, such as ending cigarette sales in the United Kingdom by 2030 and seeing “at least 30 percent of PMI’s adult consumers who would otherwise continue smoking switch to PMI’s smoke free products by 2025” (Jackler 2022, 134; Sampoerna 2022, 159). Meanwhile, PMI aggressively pursues conventional combustible product growth in Indonesia, where it claimed the largest market share beginning in 2006 and celebrated a new milestone in 2012 with over one hundred billion sticks sold. PMI constructed a \$250 million mechanized kretek factory near Jakarta at the same time as it was building a (\$120 million) reduced-risk product facility in Switzerland and launching IQOS in Japan.

By becoming major kretek capitalism players, foreign firms have pursued growth and reaped profits from conventional combustibles while confronting dramatic smoking declines in higher-income countries where they more heavily market “reduced risk products.” Critics claim that PMI uses profits from growing deadly production and sales in lower- and middle-income countries like Indonesia, Tanzania, Uzbekistan, and Egypt to develop and promote its “reduced risk products” in higher-income countries (Chaudhuri 2017; Jackler 2022, 131–34). PMI has not issued bold calls for an end to cigarette sales outside of the United Kingdom and has instead spent millions of dollars opposing tobacco control policies in underdeveloped countries. Kretek capitalism thereby provides vital support to foreign tobacco firms and shareholders at the expense of ordinary Indonesians.

## COMMODITY NATIONALISM

In their efforts to promote and defend the commodity, kretek nationalists appeal to nationalist sentiments of both love and hatred. The most prominent voice of kretek nationalism, Komunitas Kretek (kretek community), evokes these sentiments with its self-description as a “fun community that celebrates kretek as the cultural heritage of Indonesia . . . upholds national independence and opposes foreign threats toward a local commodity.”<sup>24</sup> Founded in 2010 and abbreviated as Komtek, the organization refuses to disclose its funding sources but claims that it accepts money exclusively from domestic rather than foreign-owned firms. Djarum is widely rumored to be the group’s primary funder. The Komtek website recommends a range of “LTLN” (low-tar, low-nicotine) kretek brands for the starting smoker, all artfully arranged and photographed to hide grotesque warning labels.<sup>25</sup>

Komtek stages the kretek as an affectively and ethically potent “matter of care” when it emphasizes the vulnerable “little people” (*wong cilik* Jv) who depend on the industry and the lofty ideals of cultural heritage and national independence (Puig

de la Bellacasa 2011). Whereas tobacco control activists often depict Indonesia's lax regulatory environment as embarrassingly backward, kretek nationalists insist that Indonesia's bestselling tobacco product is a distinctive cultural heirloom and should be a source of pride rather than shame (Sunaryo 2013). One of Komtek's taglines insists, "The kretek is not a cigarette" (*kretek bukan rokok*), and Komtek members occasionally employ neologisms like *to kretek* (*mengkretek*) and *kreteker* (*pengkretek*, Handayani 2012b) to underscore the commodity's distinctiveness and distance it from conventional terms derived from the Dutch term for smoking (*roken*, i.e., *rokok* [cigarette], *merokok* [to smoke], *perokok* [smoker]).<sup>26</sup> Kretek nationalists celebrate as heroes (*pahlawan*) women smokers who brave public condemnation and factory workers and farm laborers who "selflessly struggle for a form of independence, in pursuit of lofty goals for the nation" (Yoska 2012, 175). Books and photos offer a nostalgic, aestheticized, and romanticized view of the industry, evoking seductive sights, textures, and aromas through bucolic agrarian imagery of tobacco and clove agriculture, scenes of factory workers and cigarette peddlers, smokers convivially interacting or enjoying a solo smoke, reproductions of colorful and whimsical vintage cigarette labels, and depictions of *cethe*, the art of inscribing delicate and intricate swirling designs on cigarettes with toothpicks dipped in coffee grounds (Badil 2011; Basjir et al. 2010; Hanusz 2000; Puthut 2013; Santosa 2012).

In 2015, kretek industry supporters snuck an article into a culture bill that was up for debate in the House of Representatives; the article's language subversively coopted UNESCO definitions of intangible cultural property and heritage by listing kretek as cultural heritage (*warisan budaya*). This would have obliged the government to inventory, document, facilitate, and promote the industry. Kretek protections were struck from the law, but attempts to weaken tobacco control legislation by having kretek declared a national heritage item persist (Astuti and Freeman 2017).

In their more oppositional mode, kretek nationalists stir up fear, hatred, revulsion, and anger toward tobacco control, which they portray as part of a foreign, neocolonial, capitalist plot bent on destroying Indonesia and its cherished commodity and callously killing off industry dependents (Abhisam, Ary, and Harlan 2011; Daeng 2011; Pinanjaya 2012; Wibisono and Yoandinas 2014). They intensify run-of-the-mill commodity nationalism—that is, marketing and advertising agencies' tactic of interpellating potential consumers by invoking a communion with unknown fellow patriotic consumer-citizens achieved through consumption (Foster 2002; building on Anderson 2006)—by infusing it with postcolonial affect and counterhegemonic appeal as a purported expression of opposition to colonialism. Although cigarette demand tends to be fairly inelastic and shifts very slowly in response to regulation and price hikes due to the addictiveness of nicotine, kretek nationalists treat the tobacco control threat as urgent, with a histrionic "sudden death" myth casting regulation as tantamount

to immediate and total closure (*Industri mati besok pagi!*; see Chamim et al. 2011, 57–58). Komtek denounces as foreign threats both tobacco control and multinational takeovers of domestic kretek firms alike, claiming that tobacco giants like PMI and BAT are scheming to stealthily convert Indonesian consumers to white cigarettes by gradually eliminating cloves from kretek.<sup>27</sup> Kretek nationalists constitute themselves as a counterpublic that holds a threatened, endangered underdog status in relation to a purportedly dominant public and tobacco control orthodoxy (Warner 2002, 86). They claim that tobacco control criminalizes and pathologizes smokers as sick, addicted, and infectious and victimizes them in ways akin to organized discrimination based on age, gender, class, race, and sexual orientation (Arymami 2012, 301). Kretek nationalists proffer an alternative and oppositional identity through kretek consumption and “a sense of active belonging that masks or compensates for the real powerlessness of human agents in capitalist society” (Warner 2002, 81).

By focusing on little people and the cultural and historical significance of kretek, Komtek avoids engaging with the kretek industry as a capitalist phenomenon. Kretek nationalist literature even figures the commodity as antithetical to capitalism; Handayani (2012a, 30) describes an artist and Sampoerna A-Mild smoker named Willy who dismisses white cigarettes as not delicious, referring to them as “capitalist cigarettes.” Willy is either unaware of or unperturbed by the fact that his kretek brand is made by a PMI subsidiary. Similarly, Aini (2012, 218) insists, “Kretek belong to the people [*rakyat*] because they are produced and consumed by the people. It is not a mass product and does not belong to giant global capital. Even when the kretek is produced by a large company with global distribution reach, the kretek serves as a national ambassador because it carries the unique taste of Indonesia.” The claim that the kretek is not a mass-produced product is as extraordinary as the claim that the companies producing them are not part of global capital. Giving up kretek culture, another kretek nationalist writes, is the same as giving in to capitalist culture, which destroys everything (Prasetyaningrum 2012, 227). If loving kretek is identical with loving Indonesia (Prasetyaningrum 2012, 229), tobacco control is equivalent to murdering Indonesia and those who rely on the tobacco industry (Abhisam, Ary, and Harlan 2011).

Kretek nationalists frequently advance their claim that tobacco control represents sinister neocolonial interests (*kepentingan*) by pointing to Big Pharma in general—and former New York mayor and philanthropist Michael Bloomberg specifically—and their goal of creating a nicotine replacement product market (Kurniawan 2012). As kretek nationalists uncover this hidden agenda and excoriate the Indonesian traitors (*penghianat*) and lackeys (*antek-antek*) who support tobacco control, they fail to question the more basic and obvious motivations of kretek capitalists, for example whether the three wealthiest Indonesians (Djarum’s Hartono brothers and Gudang Garam’s Susilo Wonowidjoyo) make and sell kretek to promote national interests (Astuti, Assunta, and Freeman 2020). Kretek nationalists claim to follow Spivak in clearing space for subalterns to speak, but their

work ventriloquizes for the industry and stifles industry critique (Ardianti 2012, 35). And although kretek nationalists cast tobacco control as foreign and incite hatred toward Indonesian tobacco control activists, they voice no objection to the kretek industry's uptake of foreign technologies for making and marketing kretek. A closer examination of what transpires in mechanized factories and of the kretek that emerge from them reveals how thoroughly large kretek producers have incorporated global tobacco materials, technologies, and deceptions.

#### MECHANIZED FACTORIES AND MACHINE-ROLLED KRETEK

Heralding a “cleaner, healthier, enjoyable taste” (*lebih bersih—lebih sehat—rasa nikmat*) and a filter “kretek revolution” (*revolusi kretek*), Bentoel's taglines for Biru International, the first machine-rolled kretek, illustrate how the mechanizing kretek industry adopted global manufacturing and marketing technologies to provoke and allay health fears. Mechanized kretek factories were designed to make tobacco control discourse work to the industry's advantage via global technologies. Bentoel promised an Indonesian taste—cloves and saus—with white cigarette features that made machine-rolled kretek appear more modern, prestigious, uniform, and quality controlled and healthier than unfiltered hand-rolled kretek, which were stigmatized as low class, coarse, dirty, and cheap (Kartajaya 2005, 101). Brand names with English words like “International” signaled cosmopolitan aspirations, and although relatively few would be exported and consumed abroad, the machine-rolled kretek would indeed be made on imported machines with imported tobacco, cloves, and other ingredients.

Mechanized kretek producers purchased and tailored machinery made by European companies rather than adopting an import substitution path by developing Indonesian machinery specific to kretek. This remains the case in Sampoerna's mechanized factories today. Machines made by Italian firms Comas and Garbuio dominate the primary process of treating tobacco, cloves, and additives and converting them into tobacco filler. German Hauni brand machines make filters and cigarettes, and German (Focke & Co.) and Italian (Senzani) machines package cigarettes with supplies printed on Swiss (Bobst) machinery. British (Cerulean) and German (Borgwaldt) machines smoke cigarettes in Sampoerna's labs to generate deceptive nicotine and tar numbers.<sup>28</sup>

Kretek producers have adopted global technologies for manipulating tobacco to make cigarettes with a lower quality and smaller quantity of tobacco. Through a process akin to papermaking, reconstituted tobacco (“recon”) is made from a pulp of mashed tobacco stems and dust that would otherwise go to waste. Sprayed with nicotine, the pulp is sliced to look like shredded leaf tobacco. Recon now appears not only in machine-rolled but also in hand-rolled kretek, which are thus subject to transformation through mechanization, even as Sampoerna markets brands like Dji Sam Soe as unchanging tradition. Along similar lines,





FIGURE 1. In this vintage ad in the Bentoel Museum, the company markets new machine-rolled kretek with filters to the middle and upper class as a “revolution” advancing cleanliness, health, and pleasure. Photo by author.

machine-rolled kretek brands often employ puffed or expanded tobacco made from leaves that are saturated with freon and ammonia gases and then freeze-dried, doubling in size and enabling the manufacture of cigarettes with smoke that is supposedly lower in tar.<sup>29</sup>

Kretek also incorporate many of the same additives as white cigarettes. Tobacco filler contains as many as six hundred additives, which constitute about 10 percent of the weight of a white cigarette, and more for kretek with their cloves and heavier flavoring (Cross and Proctor 2014, 66). “Casing”—a combination of humectants, treatments, and flavorants—forms the “foundation” that diminishes negative tobacco tastes. The “after cut” or “top flavor,” which is applied later, adds “notes” or a “signature,” endowing branded cigarettes with their particular taste. Flavorants create an appealing “pack aroma” and improve tobacco’s taste and mask its harshness. The casing’s moistening agents or humectants, such as glycerine and



diethylene glycol, help stabilize the moisture content, make tobacco more pliable, and prevent finished cigarettes from rapidly drying out. Freebasing agents such as urea and ammonia help nicotine reach the lungs, blood, and brain more efficiently. Burn accelerants—oxidizing agents such as potassium citrate—keep cigarettes lit and exacerbate the fire hazard associated with discarded or accidentally dropped cigarettes. Cocoa and licorice, both common additives, appear to act as bronchial dilators that make smoke “smoother” and facilitate deep inhalation (Proctor 2011, 501). Sugary additives such as invert sugar also make tobacco smoke less alkaline and thus easier to inhale.<sup>30</sup> Cigarette makers often underscore that they use “food-grade” additives in cigarettes. Foods, however, are meant to be ingested rather than burned and inhaled into lungs. Combustion induces chemical shapeshifting that turns relatively innocuous substances like sugar, protein, and glycerine into potent carcinogens (Proctor 2011, 490, 499). Typical kretek flavorants, according to Sampoerna’s flavor specialist, include cacao, licorice, vanillin, furaneol (“sweet like candy”), prune extract, plum extract, jackfruit, black pepper, clove oil, nutmeg, and basil.<sup>31</sup> Beginning in 1957 with Dutch firm Polak and Schwarz, European flavoring companies have established branches in Indonesia to supply the kretek industry; others include Mane (French), Quest (Dutch), Givaudan (Swiss), and Firmenich (also Swiss).<sup>32</sup>

Kretek paper also incorporates global tobacco technologies; it is bleached white, inked with brand labels, and permeated with burn accelerants. Cigarette designers manipulate paper porosity, thickness, width, weight, color, tensile strength, stretch, opacity, texture, spots, and pinholes (Proctor 2011, 366). Circular striations called burn rings evidence two-paper thicknesses, which serve to slow the burn rate when cigarettes are not being smoked to prolong consumption then speed it up when smokers inhale to maximize smoke intake.<sup>33</sup> The paper, which typically constitutes 5 percent of a cigarette by weight, is burned and inhaled into the lungs alongside the tobacco filler (Cross and Proctor 2014, 77).

In public perception, synthetic filters are probably the most significant features distinguishing machine-rolled from hand-rolled kretek. If rising incomes made machine-rolled cigarettes more affordable, health fears made them more appealing. The global industry popularized filters in the 1950s, using a wide variety of materials (including asbestos) and manufacturing technologies to counter growing health fears. Today, most are made with synthetic fibers, typically cellulose acetate. The industry engineered filters to turn brown when smoked, imparting the impression that they effectively trap tar (Brandt 2007, 245). Proctor (2011, 346, 355, 357) argues that filters are best understood as fraudulent gimmicks that lower manufacturing costs, keep tobacco bits out of smokers’ mouths, and, most importantly, impart the false impression of a safer cigarette (Benson 2010). Filters encourage and perpetuate smoking rather than making it less lethal.

Kretek manufacturers have drawn on the global industry playbook by combining filters, ventilation holes, paper porosity, and puffed tobacco to create cigarettes

that yield lower tar and nicotine readings when smoked by machines. In the early 1970s, the global industry began marketing such cigarettes as (ultra) “light” and “mild.”<sup>34</sup> These terms are now banned in many countries as “misleading descriptors.” PMI adheres to this position on its website, which dutifully informs smokers that they “should not assume” that the variety of “brands with different features . . . means that one cigarette is less addictive or less harmful than others.”<sup>35</sup> Its suggestive pale metallic and pastel palettes and advertising nevertheless imply lower risk for certain brands. The industry has long known that actual smokers tend to unconsciously cover tiny ventilation holes and inhale longer and harder to get their nicotine fix (and accompanying tar) from LTLN cigarettes, thereby negating the features that produce low machine readings. Deep inhalation increases smokers’ risk of developing lung cancers that are harder to detect and treat (Brandt 2007; Proctor 2011). Djarum first developed “low-tar” kretek in 1986 for the health-alarmed US market (Hanusz 2000, 143), and Sampoerna bet heavily on an LTLN kretek for the domestic market when it launched A-Mild in 1989. Initially disparaged as a cigarette for trans women (*banci*, a derogatory term), A-Mild is today the most widely smoked brand in Indonesia (Kartajaya 2005, 433). Like many LTLN kretek, its tar and nicotine levels equal or exceed those of “full flavor” Marlboro Reds. LTLN kretek are marketed using English terms *mild* or *light* rather than their Indonesian equivalent *ringan*.

Kretek mechanizers also adopted global packaging features such as flip-top cardboard packs, shiny interior foil, and transparent exterior film with pull-tabs. Philip Morris pioneered the flip-top hard pack design in 1955 when it masculinized Marlboro, a brand hitherto marketed to women (Cross and Proctor 2014, 77). Bentoel adopted this design for Indonesia’s first machine-rolled kretek. For kretek as much as for white cigarettes, package design is critical for creating the impression of brand differences amid the basic homogeneity and sameness of mechanized cigarettes (uniform length, nicotine content, and so forth; Bell 2020; Cross and Proctor 2014, 82).

### KRETEK MUSEUMS

Museums, coffee-table books, and websites that celebrate kretek as Indonesia’s cultural heritage tend to gloss over or omit entirely discussion of recon, puffed tobacco, burn accelerants, humectants, urea, ammonia, plasticizers, synthetic filters, and German machines that produce ten thousand or more kretek per minute. The international technologies that turned the Indonesian cigarette market from majority white cigarette in the 1960s to mostly kretek by the 1980s play a muted role, if they appear at all, in kretek nationalist narratives that emphasize feminine hands, natural ingredients, slow smoking, and a rustic past rather than high-speed machines, synthetic additives, and an industrial present.

Kretek nationalists use cloves to claim a distinctive tobacco history and trajectory, but Indonesia is far from unique in celebrating cigarettes as objects of



FIGURE 2. The House of Sampoerna museum with columns resembling the *Dji Sam Soe krektek*. Photo by author.

nation-building and displaying pride in museums, films, artwork, and literature. Claims of national heritage represent another global tobacco industry commonplace. The industry has deployed cultural pride and heritage discourses and yoked wartime patriotism to tobacco production and cigarette provisioning in soldiers' rations, in countries ranging from China to Bulgaria, Canada, France, and Egypt (Brandt 2007; Klein 1993; Kohrman 2018; Neuburger 2013; Proctor 2011; Rudy 2005; Russell 2019; Shechter 2006). Tobacco boosterism in the United States downplays how production was rooted in slavery and remains mired in racial inequalities today (Benson 2012; Griffith 2009; Kingsolver 2011; Milov 2019; Swanson 2014).

Indonesia's kretek museums present the history of the commodity in a nostalgic and flattering light and frame kretek manufacturers as benevolent patrons. Commemorating "Indonesia's first indigenous capitalists" and celebrating the commodity in its birthplace, the Kudus Kretek Museum, which opened in 1986, glosses over Chinese-pribumi conflict and anti-Chinese violence (Weix 1997). The Jember government in East Java runs a small tobacco museum and library, and BAT has become the custodian of Museum Bentoel in Malang, which depicts the company as a positive family enterprise.

The elaborate House of Sampoerna complex in the East Javanese port city of Surabaya, spearheaded by Putera's wife, Katie Sampoerna, is the grandest and

most ambitious of Java's kretek museums and reinforces kretek nationalist narratives and aesthetics. Since opening in 2003, it has become a popular and acclaimed tourist destination in Indonesia's second largest city, earning gushing reviews and awards and attracting over two hundred thousand domestic and international visitors a year.<sup>36</sup> Inside the museum, a tiny bamboo and palm-frond kiosk topped with taxidermied chickens recalls the humble origins of Sampoerna's founder. Family heirlooms, including furniture, textiles, horseracing trophies, and Ming dynasty porcelain, frame the Sampoerna family's creolized Chinese Indonesian identity as unthreatening cultural rather than political difference (Strassler 2010). Photos, artwork, and vintage artifacts (matchbox covers, cigarette cases, refillable lighters, grooved glass matchstick holders) from the family collection recall the rich material culture around smoking and its association with masculine social activities and traditions like cockfighting. Once-modern lab equipment and an ancient German printing press render kretek research and marketing quaint and unthreatening. Visitors often pose as vendors inside a Sampoerna-branded vending stall; stocked with cigarettes, snacks, sachets, a plastic stool, a grass mat, and a pillow, the display evokes the entrepreneurial gumption and precarity of the "little people" who depend on the industry. From behind floor-to-ceiling windows upstairs, visitors used to gaze down on a living factory exhibit (the source of the pungent clove scent permeating the museum until the factory closed in 2019). As throbbing music broadcast on "Radio Sampoerna" filtered through the glass, hundreds of women rolled, trimmed, and packed kretek at astonishing speeds.

The House of Sampoerna's historical and cultural ambition stretches beyond the museum. Meticulously maintained colonial-era buildings in the compound include a private family wing, a gift shop, a restaurant serving Western, Asian, and "heritage" menu items, and a gallery hosting free exhibits of work by established and emerging artists. The House of Sampoerna also offers free historical tours of Surabaya in a colorful bus custom designed to resemble a tram. Tours explore the Indonesian nationalist struggle and Dutch colonial occupation, old trading sites, and the city's European, Chinese, and Arab neighborhoods with their characteristic commercial, religious, and domestic features. Sampoerna has also decorated a lengthy stretch of the decaying Kalisosok Prison walls with colorful murals celebrating Sampoerna's hand-rolled kretek workers and Indonesian cultural diversity. In this way, Sampoerna presents itself as an important feature of the historical landscape and a generous patron of regional and national arts, culture, and history.

Like other official memory projects, kretek museums are always sites of forgetting as well as remembering (Nora 1989). Nostalgically portraying the commodity as full of wonder, pleasure, and possibility and as the artifact of an agrarian past, national tradition, and family enterprise, kretek museums necessarily omit the materials, speed, labor, and technologies that mark the industrial present and the tobacco-related diseases and deaths the industry has inflicted. I address kretek nationalist narrative omissions by taking into account contemporary kretek



FIGURE 3. The House of Sampoerna's living factory exhibit in 2007. The large billboard evokes patrilineal transmission of the brand. Photo by author.

capitalism's increased foreign ownership, mechanized production methods, and marketing tactics. As this book tracks the trajectory of kretek from tobacco and clove seeds to smoke and ash, it brings into focus the labor Sampoerna requires across different stages of the commodity's life and its methods of enrolling this labor.

### THE WORK OF KRETEK CAPITALISM

I carried out most of the research for this book over a year in Indonesia (2015–16) that built on prior one-month visits (in 2007 and 2014). My research was predominantly located in the East Javanese college town of Malang, host to one of Sampoerna's hand-rolling factories, but also extended beyond Java to the islands of Bali and Lombok. Fatma Mustikasari and Shahnaz Priwingsatiningrum, who were then recent graduates from Brawijaya University, assisted me with my research. As a white agnostic professor from the United States in my early forties, I was extremely fortunate to have two young Muslim Indonesian researchers who were adept Javanese speakers, intimately familiar with Malang and the college scene, members of the age demographic Sampoerna targets for its top-selling cigarette brand, skilled at navigating Indonesian social media and connecting with potential interlocutors, and wonderful companions on excursions to tobacco



farms, cigarette factories, and promotional events. The evidence and analysis presented throughout this book has benefited from their work and insights.

The first three chapters focus on more familiar, obvious, and conventional forms of wage labor in fields and factories, including seasonal and contract work. Chapter 1 argues that kretek capitalism has been able to maintain its enrollment of tobacco and clove agricultural labor and to sustain the kretek nationalist narrative by exerting strong hierarchical control at every level of the supply chain. This keeps farmers attached to the industry even as many express hesitancy about its profitability. Chapter 2 shows that in factories producing hand-rolled kretek staffed by a female-dominated workforce, labor is shaped by a gendered paternalism that allows Sampoerna both to benefit from the public image of noble (and often suffering) female kretek heroes and to mask the high-pressure and tightly controlled work in the rhetoric of protective care. In factories producing machine-rolled product, where chapter 3 is sited, Sampoerna secures worker consent not only by offering relatively high pay in a tough labor market but also, just as importantly, via managerial techniques that magnify personal responsibility on the part of workers and teams and render collective organizing unappealing and ineffective.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 explore how Sampoerna recruits less obvious and sometimes unpaid forms of labor from youth, community groups, artists, and influencers, as well as retail owners and smokers themselves. Chapter 4 assesses how Sampoerna has harnessed global marketing tools associated with the influencer and content-creator economy to enroll young people as unpaid or underpaid brand producers for A-Mild, bolstering the brand's image by extracting these brand producers' creativity, community ties, and cool; this strategy evinces how kretek capitalism wrests valuable labor from a wide swath of Indonesians with only tangential connections to the tobacco industry. Turning to cigarette advertising and distribution, chapter 5 describes how Sampoerna extracts value from a network of small-scale independent retailers via the labor of salespeople who travel to these stores and via the Sampoerna Retail Community program, both of which involve the ongoing maintenance of relationships and retail infrastructure. Chapter 6 shows that despite the fact that decisions to smoke are shaped by a range of factors beyond a smoker's individual control (including norms around age, class, gender, and profession), smokers for the most part understand themselves as bearing individual responsibility and blame for their habits. The upshot of this is that narratives about smokers help tobacco companies deflect responsibility for smoking's harms and maintain their reputation as working for the nation's benefit.

#### A NOTE ON TRANSLATION

Where English words and terms are accompanied by parenthetical source-language translations, the translations are offered in Indonesian unless otherwise indicated as Javanese (Jv) or Sasak.