
Smoking Kretek

Industry Victims and Commodity Patriots

As I walked into the small gated compound where we lived one afternoon, a car emerging from the first cul-de-sac paused. The driver, just in the process of lighting his own cigarette, held out a second one for Arman, the security guard, who hastened over as fast as his limping gait allowed. After securing the cigarette, Arman looked over to see if I'd caught the exchange, holding his little prize aloft with a grin. I cheerfully waved back, suppressing my disappointment at the evident failure of his latest quitting attempt. Similar small scenes of cigarette gifting constantly play out across Indonesia, creating solidarities and reinforcing hierarchies. More frequently used to foster masculine fraternity rather than ties between women or across genders, cigarettes in Indonesia serve as critical but non-universal tokens of exchange (Klein 1993, 152).

Another residential security guard—Lucas, who worked near my kids' school—often received cigarettes from local residents and regular passersby. Whenever a pack he was gifted was an unappealing brand but in good condition—the box not bent or crushed—he would try to exchange it for a preferred brand in a kiosk. “Given the choice,” he sighed, “I'd rather get money than cigarettes.” I asked why he supposed people gave him cigarettes rather than cash. “The problem with money,” he reflected, “is that it seems to say, ‘You are only worth this much.’ So it's more polite to give a pack of cigarettes—say, [budget brand] Grendel that cost 8,000 rupiah—rather than 10,000 rupiah in cash, even though the cash is better.” Cash assigns too explicit a value to a person or service or relationship. It is also more socially legitimate to request a cigarette from a stranger than an equivalent amount of cash or food and more difficult for fellow smokers to turn down such requests (Graeber 2011a, 97).

Cigarette exchanges, like other forms of reciprocity, can foster social bonds, conviviality, companionable togetherness, and friendship, but they can also be

oppressive and coercive, reinforcing inequality and subordination (Bourdieu 1977). What Klein (1993, 27) describes as “the paradoxical experience of smoking tobacco with its contradictory physical effects, its poisonous taste and unpleasant pleasure” evokes the ambivalence of the gift as at once something given and, in the word’s more common German meaning today, a poison (Mauss 1990, 62–63). Building on the Māori concept of the spirit of the gift or *hau*, Mauss argued that gifted objects contain the spirit of the giver, bind giver and receiver to one another, compel counter-prestations, and actively and independently seek to return to their origin.

The ephemeral nature of cigarettes, however, curtails their individual trajectories and passage between persons. In early French and English, to consume something meant “to destroy it, make it burn up, evaporate, or waste away” (Graeber 2011b, 492). Cigarette consumption evokes these etymological roots and negative connotations. In his critique of the broadened application of “consumption” to ever more activities in contemporary scholarship and an associated neoliberal celebration of agency and creativity, Graeber called for conceptualizing consumption as an ideology as opposed to an analytical term. He rooted this ideology in Western notions of private property misconceived as a relationship between persons and objects rather than a relationship among persons whereby an individual or group claims the right to exclude all others from access to an object. This logic of sovereignty and dominion over objects finds ultimate expression in the act of destroying them. Graeber (2011b, 502) advocated conceiving “what we have been calling the ‘consumption’ sphere rather as the sphere of the production of human beings, not just as labor power but as persons, internalized nexes [*sic*] of meaningful social relations, because after all, this is what social life is actually about, the production of people (of which the production of things is simply a subordinate moment).” Tobacco fits Graeber’s restriction of the term “consumption” to objects that are destroyed through their use (e.g., food, fossil fuels), but its addictive and harmful qualities challenge the dominant role his understanding of consumption ideology accords to humans and the passive and subordinate role it assigns to objects. Scholarly insights into the lively and agentive properties of things in general (Bennett 2010), and of plants more specifically (Galvin 2018; Langwick 2018, 2021; Myers 2015, 2017), call attention to tobacco’s power to transform the material composition, capacities, desires, and identities of persons and social life writ large (Russell 2019). To treat cigarettes as mere props in human projects, as minor and inactive because they lack capacities deemed as essentially human (consciousness, intentionality, reflexivity, morality, and a sense of self), is to miss how such nonhuman objects beckon and provoke interaction (Cerulo 2009). Smokers are themselves consumed by, and often compulsively return to, cigarettes in ways that upset the ideology of destructive consumption as an expression of sovereignty and dominion over an object. Smoking and related “scandals of the appetite,” Berlant (2007, 778–79, 767) suggested, are better construed as exercises of “lateral agency” that involve “episodic intermission from personality” and “small vacations from the will,” moving “towards death and not health, and certainly not against power.”

Rather than illustrating the power of humans over objects, smoking may instead signal acceptance of an external force that dispossesses or suspends the self, will, and control (Gomart and Hennion 1999).

Graeber objected to reproducing political economy's division of the world into spheres of production and consumption, which correspond to supply and demand, to the (masculinized) alienated workplace where goods are produced and the (feminized) unalienated household where they are used and destroyed. Yet feminist and cultural theorists have highlighted how production and consumption intertwine in the gendered labor of social reproduction and the fashioning of class identities and maintenance of laboring subjects (Bourdieu 1984; Federici 2012; Miller 1998; Mintz 1986). Cigarette consumption is similarly entangled with gendered class and occupational identities, with social networking and labor maintenance.

This chapter shows how smoking, as much as not smoking, plays a profound role in making and policing social identities and in mediating forms and boundaries of belonging, membership, and inclusion, as well as rejection, stigmatization, and exclusion. Decisions about smoking are shaped by a range of factors beyond the smoker's individual control, from age, gender, and class norms to government regulations and industry saturation of public space and TV with advertising and infiltration of hobby groups and social media accounts. Smokers nevertheless tend to see themselves as individually responsible for the negative economic and health consequences of their smoking. This enables tobacco companies to avoid accountability for the harm they cause and to maintain their reputation as benefiting the nation.

THE CHILD SMOKER

In scandalized Western media treatments of Indonesian child smokers, parents often appear as ineffectual and ignorant, permissive and complicit (Welker 2021). In my research, I found parents and children negotiating their smoking status in more complex ways that reflected class-inflected notions of gender, filial, and parental propriety. Some toddlers and young children smoked their first cigarettes when their fathers gave them one as a joke, perhaps assuming that early negative experiences would inhibit future smoking (Haines-Saah 2013). In rural Java, smoking is sometimes embraced during religious rituals around circumcision, which boys typically undergo around the age of ten to twelve, with the cigarettes symbolizing adulthood and maturity and meant to aid in healing circumcision wounds (Ng, Weinehall, and Öhman 2007). For most smokers, however, early cigarettes involved hiding, deception, theft, or a breach of parental trust and expectations, conforming to the commonplace that "cigarette smoking begins under the sign of the illicit" (Klein 1993, 86).

Smokers often described their first smoking experience as physically unpleasant, accompanied by coughing (*batuk*), scratchy throats (*gatal*), dizziness (*pusing*), nausea (*mual*), and overwhelming sickness (*nggak enak, nggak enak*). To learn to smoke, the novice must withstand these discomforts and develop the social and

bodily knowledge, perceptions, and techniques for lighting and ashing cigarettes, inhaling and exhaling smoke, letting time elapse between drags, and managing their overall capacity (Hughes 2003). Part of the appeal of learning to smoke stems from the transgressive and rebellious nature of the act itself, which asserts maturity and independence from parental authority and control and aspirations for recognition and membership in broader social groups.

Smokers recounted misusing allowance money to buy cigarettes or sneaking relatives' cigarettes from packs or ashtrays. Early smoking usually unfolds in clandestine fashion, sometimes alone but often with school buddies, siblings, or cousins in bathrooms, empty buildings, fields, and vacant lots. Budi, an undergraduate student, began smoking in his second year of middle school with friends in a motorbike club that held parties and gatherings sponsored by Djarum's LA Lights. He bought cigarettes with allowance money earmarked for snacks (*uang jajan*). At twelve, a minibus driver recalled, he and his buddies began hitching rides on passing trucks, saving bus money for cigarettes. A kretek nationalist leader described himself as a naughty kid who was all the more attracted to smoking because it was forbidden.

Parental discovery, disappointment, threats, and punishment often ensued. Mothers encountered evidence of their children's smoking in the form of lighters, cigarettes, or debris in backpacks or clothing pockets they emptied for laundering and the stench that clung to their children's bodies and clothing. Such discoveries often precipitated confrontations. Dion, a driver, was incensed when he discovered his teen with a half-empty pack. He crushed it, cigarettes and all, in front of his son's face. No longer trusting his son with a weekly allowance, he started dispensing a smaller daily amount, telling him he could save money or spend it as he pleased on snacks and phone cards, anything but cigarettes. His mother-in-law had tuberculosis, and multiple cousins suffered asthma, so he felt that his son should maintain the good lungs with which he was blessed. Dion himself smoked but insisted that he never once asked his own child to buy his cigarettes, and he angrily swore at a friend who had asked his son to run this errand for him. Adi, a security guard, recounted that his father beat him when he learned he was smoking in his third year of high school.

By contrast, Dedo's mother allowed him to smoke as a young child but treated his habit as an embarrassing secret and restricted where and when he smoked. He started as an eight year old, stealing his grandfather's discarded cigarettes and occasionally making off with a whole cigarette from his pack. Deciding that preventing her naughty child from smoking was futile, Dedo's mother confined him to smoking in his bedroom behind a closed and locked door. She threatened to hold his head underwater if she caught him smoking elsewhere, a threat she had made good on for other infractions and a punishment he saw as justified by his bad behavior.

Rural and working-class parents more readily accepted adolescent male children's smoking once they earned their own wages, which they could dispense

as they saw fit (Ng, Weinehall, and Öhman 2007; see also Amigó 2010; Li 2014). A minibus driver, for example, instructed his middle-school-aged son to hold off on cigarettes until he earned his own income (*tunggu ada penghasilan sendiri*). Another, who started smoking after he stopped attending school in sixth grade, said his parents did not object, because he worked as a driver's assistant (*kernet*). Faizah, a security guard, said that one day, he was surprised when his son pulled out a pack of LA Lights and suggested they smoke together. He reflected that although his son was an employed wage earner by then, he had probably secretly started earlier.

Middle-class parents, whose children typically became wage earners later in life, were often more resistant or at best grudgingly resigned to their male children's smoking. As college students, Joyo and Idris felt that their parents disliked but accepted their habit. Others who were of sufficient age to smoke and whose parents knew they smoked nevertheless felt it was disallowed or disrespectful to do so around their parents. Stefan, a judge in his early fifties, still refrained from smoking in the presence of his parents. Out of a sense of respect for social hierarchy and etiquette (*sungkan Jv*), he confined himself to smoking behind their backs and maintained the appearance of a nonsmoker. Stefan recalled that his parents had strictly forbade him from smoking, a habit his own father had quit and was angry to see his son adopt, although by that point, he was an adult earning his own money from typing work. Stefan saw this as the natural attitude of a parent to want to protect their child.

Reflecting gender differentiation in the social acceptability of smoking, daughters tended to be even more inhibited about smoking around parents. Blackwood (2010, 97, 157, 163, 175) describes how lesbian *tombois* who embraced conventional masculine normativity by smoking, drinking, and carousing with friends at night often adopted feminine gender conventions around relatives and family friends by abstaining from cigarettes. Yanti worked hard to hide her habit from her parents, using hand sanitizer and spraying her clothes with perfume to mask the odor. "They would certainly be angry if they found out. Smoking is normal for men," she explained, "but when it comes to female smokers people assume: 'That girl's bad [*buruk*].'" Fatma asked whether Yanti had ever stolen a smoke from her father. Yanti shuddered in horror at the very idea.

CONFORMING MEN AND TRANSGRESSIVE WOMEN

Noting that all his friends smoked, Budi rhetorically asked, "What kind of impression would it make if you didn't smoke?" Smoking poses health risks, but not smoking can also pose significant social risks (Nichter 2015). Masculine norms that render the act of smoking as much social necessity as personal indulgence in many circumstances undercut the notion of individual agency over cigarette habits (Reid 1985, 540).

Cigarettes are typically provided to men at social and ritual gatherings organized around neighborhood, annual calendar, and life cycle events such as weddings, births, and deaths (Ng, Weinehall, and Öhman 2007). During the busy social period that follows the tobacco harvest in Madura, people often insert wedding and engagement ceremony invitations into cigarette packs, and cigarette companies provide musical entertainment (*orkes dangdut*, *orkes Melayu*) with brand sponsorship and banners to those who purchase sufficient quantities. During Lebaran, the period after Ramadan concludes, families often greet the whirlwind of relatives and friends by setting out not only snacks but also cigarettes, which male visitors are urged to consume. Joko, a Malang cab driver, was part of a men's spiritual retreat group (*padepokan*) that integrated smoking into their Islamic religious chanting (*berzikir*), making the act of breathing more visually and sensorially manifest and evoking prayer and meditation (Klein 1993, 138). He was introduced to his chocolate-scented brand of Dunhill kreteks by his spiritual teacher and noted that you mysteriously smell the smoke's scent when you inhale but not when you exhale.

Refusing to participate in male cigarette reciprocity violates social norms and expectations. When Linda, my staunchly anti-smoking Javanese teacher, held social gatherings (*arisan*) at her house without setting out cigarettes, she faced vociferous complaints from male guests after meals that their mouths were sour ("Kecut, kecut!"). She encouraged her non-smoking husband to eschew smoke-filled interiors at neighbors' *arisan* and sit outdoors, which meant prioritizing his personal health over socializing with peers.

Beyond their role in ritual life and relations, cigarettes are a central feature of quotidian togetherness among men. Weix (1990, 93) observes that smoking eases masculine social intercourse by substituting for conversation and licensing a retreat from talk: smoking men, contemplating the taste of their cigarettes, "frequently withdraw from conversation as they smoke, as if smoking and talk are to a large extent exclusive." Because normative social interactions skew toward homosociality, men and boys are disproportionately exposed to the secondhand smoke of peers; a non-smoking college student at the Averland camp, for example, complained that secondhand smoke exposure was unavoidable when he hung out with roommates and buddies.

If smoking and exchanging cigarettes builds homosocial fraternity and signals normative masculinity, then men who don't smoke forgo access to cigarette-mediated relations of reciprocity and face questions about their status. Joko, who started later than most at the age of twenty-one, had his first cigarette at a social gathering where friends teased, "Why don't you smoke? Aren't you a man [*cowok*]?" A middle-aged minibus driver pantomimed calling the masculinity of non-smokers into question, pointing at a fellow driver and jeering, "You there, non-smoking man, must be a transvestite. Queer! Not smoking, must be a transvestite this one!" So now he starts smoking! [*Kamu itu laki-laki nggak merokok bencong kan. Banci! Nggak merokok bencong ini! Nah sekarang udah mulai merokok!*]" Those

who didn't succumb to such mockery developed go-to defensive retorts, such as pointing out that women, gay, and transgender persons could smoke, too, so the act hardly provided ironclad assurance of heteronormative, cisgender masculinity. Linda said that when her husband's friends taunted him as queer (*cemen*) for not smoking he retorted, "Impossible! I have a wife and two kids."¹

"Cigarette money" (*uang rokok*) is a commonplace, socially legitimate, and protected category of "special money" for men that further cements the association between masculinity and smoking (Zelizer 1989). In Javanese families, wives conventionally control household finances while husbands, stereotyped as incompetent at managing money, are expected to cede their income to wives, who dole out a small cigarette and snack allowance (Brenner 1995, 23). Weix (1990, 90) notes that pocket money for tobacco and betel has formed a household budget category since the late eighteenth century, with colonial and postcolonial surveys in Java finding that they constituted up to 7 percent of total expenses for all households. More recent surveys show that in households where fathers smoke, tobacco accounts for 22 percent of weekly household expenditures (World Bank 2018, 2–3). Although women give their husbands cigarette money, many deplore the health and economic consequences. One kiosk owner said she was grateful when her husband quit because smoking was like "lighting money on fire; all that's left is smoke."

Outside the home, when men receive tips and related monetary expressions of gratitude, these are also often labeled *uang rokok*, earmarking the money for personal masculine indulgences rather than the household budget. While condemning Indonesia's smoking culture (*budaya rokok*) as bad culture, a public health scholar at Airlangga University exasperatedly observed, "When men help out with wedding preparations, they get cigarettes, when they take part in gamelan performances, they get cigarettes, and even when they get money, it's called cigarette money!"

Dominant gender norms that sanction and encourage smoking among men discourage it among women. The link between smoking and hegemonic masculinity, patriarchal privilege, and entitlement is protected by framing women's smoking as a shameful breach of propriety associated with sex work or aspirations for a modern, urban, Western-influenced lifestyle (Kodriati, Pursell, and Hayati 2019). Cognizant of these stereotypes, women smokers tend to exercise caution around when, where, with whom, and which brands they smoke. As noted above, some go to great lengths to hide their smoking from close family members. Yanti found that smoking facilitated her relations with men since most smoke, but she was more hesitant to smoke around women, especially veiled women whom she presumed were more likely to judge her negatively. Rini, a radio DJ in her twenties, said she was careful about smoking in front of other people, although it was a common practice among women in her profession. She pointed to a producer whom she had just met that day and from whom she had bummed a cigarette. For women, because smoking is conflated with sexual immorality, the act is often seen

as inconsistent with religious piety and its expression in forms such as wearing a hijab (Byron et al. 2015; Handayani 2012; Rosemary 2018).

Growing up in an earlier era, Katy's cosmopolitan mother smoked and taught her to be sensitive to context in determining when it was acceptable. Katy placed two packs of Esse cigarettes beside her when we sat down to chat. Esse brands include a plethora of fruity flavors marketed to youth (honey, berry, juicy, apple-mint, grape), some of which were released by squeezing the filter (an act denoted by "pop" or "klik" branding), and available in mixed "shuffle" packs. Labeled as containing 12 mg of tar and 0.8 mg of nicotine, they exhibited conventional feminized design features with their long, thin, and white styling. After we talked for a while, Katy opened her second Esse pack to disclose its contents: three hand-rolled *Dji Sam Soe* kretek. A closeted two-brand smoker, she typically smoked a couple of hand-rolled kretek a day but felt compelled to hide the stout and heavy cigarettes in her stereotypically feminized pack.²

BRAND IDENTITIES AND INDIFFERENCE

Imron, an elderly *Dji Sam Soe* smoker and minibus driver, fastidiously insisted that he was incapable of smoking random brands, unlike his companion Farid, an ashtray (*asbak*) who would smoke whatever was on hand (*seadanya jadi*), any kind (*macam-macam*). "If you can suck it in, you can blow it out," Farid cheerfully affirmed, adding that he desired but could not afford *Dji Sam Soe*. Pulling out his black-market (*gelap*) cigarettes, he said, "I can get six of these for the cost of a single pack of *Dji Sam Soe*." He joked that cheap cigarettes like those in his possession could belong only to someone special, like himself. Between the poles of the ashtray and the committed single-brand smoker, other smokers identified as context-dependent brand smokers or, among those tied to the industry, as company loyalists who would happily choose among their employer's different brands but wouldn't venture further afield.

The ashtray willing to accept any brand is often either a starting smoker or one whose straitened financial circumstances curtail their ability to be choosy. Scholar-activist Erwan first tried smoking in elementary school but became a routine smoker in his second year of middle school. His first brand, Bentoel Remaja, was blatantly marketed to teens (*remaja* means teenager or adolescent). "I went on to smoke all the rest," he said, reciting a string of brands. Rudi, a kretek nationalist leader and erstwhile ashtray, switched a great deal (*ganti-ganti terus*) until he started coughing a lot and a friend suggested he try the cooler (*lebih dingin*) LA Menthols, which he had stuck with. Financial considerations were prominent in brand choice for Manuel, a student who frugally stubbed out and stashed his cigarette before sitting down to talk to us, then removed and relit it after our conversation concluded. Smoking about a pack or at least less than two packs a day (*tidak sampai dua pak*), he estimated his monthly cigarette expenditures at 500,000 rupiah, which strained his student budget. He liked Marlboro Reds and

occasionally A-Milds, which he found had little taste, but was on a Magnum Black streak after learning that he could exchange seven silver foil pack linings in kiosks for a free pack. Two construction workers who were chain-smoking while wrestling with rebar said their brands reflected their current fortunes. Gani smoked Surya Pro Mild (14,000 rupiah a pack) when fortune smiled on him (*kalau lagi ada rejeki*), but otherwise might choose something cheaper like BMW (7,500 rupiah a pack), the brand his younger companion was smoking. They were often gifted cigarettes, and a boss might buy them whichever brand he saw them smoking. Hendra, his companion, typically smoked two packs a day but could go through four on a cold rainy day. He was suspicious of extremely cheap cigarettes, fretting, “Who knows what they put in there?”

Single-brand smokers professed a strong attachment to the brand that they considered particularly well-suited (*cocok*) to them personally, an attitude that promotes brand fidelity and was sometimes combined with a belief that one’s brand was not harmful when smoked “in moderation” (ten to twelve cigarettes a day; Nichter and Nichter 2016). In explaining why a brand suited them, single-brand smokers often cited price and purported potency and toxicity. Various distinguishing features—linguistic, visual, tactile, olfactory, and sonic (kretek crackle when coarsely cut clove fragments ignite)—play into notions of safety and harm, tradition and modernity, masculinity and femininity, and wealth and poverty. Dion smoked one or two packs a day of Ares because, at 8,000 rupiah a pack, they were cheap and, he claimed, exclusively produced and sold in Malang. From his perspective, cigarettes kept getting more expensive, but a pack kept costing about the same as a kilo of rice.

Some smokers chose brands they believed offered better quality and safety and regarded “filtered” and “mild” brands as safer than unfiltered brands and those without mild or light descriptors. Aripin, who primarily smoked LA Lights, said he didn’t dare smoke other brands, fearing that they would pose greater health dangers. Fauzi switched from hand-rolled unfiltered to machine-rolled kretek for health reasons, but he soon found himself smoking two LA Lights sixteen-packs a day instead of one Dji Sam Soe twelve-pack. Budi started on LA Lights, switched to Magnum Blacks, but then decided they were too heavy for daily use because his stamina and breathing as a basketball player were not what they used to be. He swapped the Magnums for Dunhill Blacks, which he felt were lighter (*agak ringan sedikit*) and more appropriate for daily use. Yanti said that A-Mild suited her and pointed to the side of the pack where it showed exactly one gram of nicotine (“satu koma nol gram nikotin,” literally, one point zero gram nicotine), as if this were just the right amount.

Contrary to the single-brand devotee, a marketing stereotype holds that Indonesian smokers have at least two brands that they consistently buy and deploy depending on context. Some context-dependent brand smokers like Katy, as described above, are motivated by gender concerns over the impression particular brands will make on others. Joyo preferred “Inter” (Gudang Garam International,

a “full-flavor” machine-rolled kretek) but smoked white Marlboros (formerly Marlboro Lights) when he had money because they were cool (*keren*) and because Marlboro smokers appear wealthy (“Orang lagi rokok Marlboro kelihatan orang ada uang gitu”). His friend Idris smoked Marlboro Red and A-Mild, favoring A-Mild when he had a sore throat because he considered it milder. Other context-dependent brand smokers were governed more by personal preferences than outward impressions. Arik, a telecommunications employee, enjoyed Surya filtered kretek when it was cold or had just rained because they lasted a while (*lama habis*) and warmed his body (*menghangatkan tubuh*). He smoked quicker Marlboro Reds in hot weather. Lucas found Surya lighter and more appropriate in the morning, smoking heavier hand-rolled Sampoerna Hijau in the afternoon and at night. Didit, the Sampoerna master tobacco blender whose health remained sufficiently intact for him to smoke, alternated between Magnum and Dji Sam Soe and was particularly partial to the latter after dinner.

Tobacco industry-affiliated smokers frequently displayed loyalty to their employer by confining themselves to brands in that company’s portfolio. Tobacco companies often strongly encourage and sometimes coerce their employees not only to choose company brands but also to smoke in the first place. Most of Sampoerna’s marketing staff smoked and dutifully confined themselves to PMI/Sampoerna brands. One former Bentoel Biru smoker switched to Marlboro Reds when he joined Sampoerna and had more recently switched to Marlboro Lights, since he was trying to cut down (he smoked more than a pack a day and consumed quite a few during our time together despite claiming he felt unwell). Some contract suppliers also demonstrated company loyalty with their brand choices. As described in chapter 2, at the Jombang contract hand-rolled factory, female workers took home a pack of Sampoerna Hijau each week for their male kin with the cost deducted from their wages. Sampoerna’s event organizers limited themselves to Sampoerna brands in public. A Madura regional manager for Sampoerna’s tobacco leaf supplier, Sadhana, aligned his consumption with his employer, smoking Dunhills when he worked for British American Tobacco and then switching to A-Mild after being hired by Sadhana. He smoked six while screening a PowerPoint slideshow about tobacco and confessed that the brand sometimes grew boring and lost its taste (*tidak ada rasa lagi*). When this occurred, he switched temporarily to a different Sampoerna brand to recover the taste.

LABOR AND CLASS SUBJECTS

For Indonesian women, smoking is part of certain niche occupational identities—such as art, entertainment, and sex work—that themselves carry a transgressive charge. For Indonesian men, smoking is a more universal feature of class and labor relations, identities, and experience. For many, work and cigarettes are profoundly intertwined. Where indoor smoking is allowed in the workplace, gov-

ernment officials and businesspeople smoke at their desks and in meetings. Journalists, academics, and activists associate cigarettes with writing and interacting with colleagues and contacts. In the entertainment industry, musicians, DJs, and MCs typically smoke as part of their party identities. Truck and public transportation drivers alleviate their sleepiness, boredom, and traffic jam frustration with cigarettes. Driving the same route day in and day out, a minibus driver insisted, “If you don’t smoke, you’re sleepy! I mean, if you’re holding onto the steering wheel, and don’t have one of these, you’re truly sleepy.” Farmers and farm workers smoke while working or taking a break and claim that the smoke can ward off mosquitoes and help with the irritation of being bitten. Upland agriculturalists and fishermen who spend long hours at sea often claim that cigarettes, especially hand-rolled kretek, keep them warm in cooler temperatures.³ For low-wage day laborers and pedicab drivers short on cash, smoking can also replace meals (Weix 1990, 92), serving as a “proletarian hunger-killer” that suppresses the appetite, stimulates wakefulness and concentration, and affords a brief respite from reality (Mintz 1979, 60, 69).

Among security guards, cigarettes mediate experiences of hierarchy, solidarity, and solitude. In urban Indonesian settings, private security guards (*satpam*, *satuan pengamanan* or security units) have become ubiquitous at the entrances to residential, business, educational, and nonprofit institutions. Private security guards proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s alongside the commercialization of urban life and real estate and amid efforts by the New Order state to replace local security actors and territorial defense practices (e.g., *ronda*) with uniformed guards, surveillance strategies, and bureaucratic categories and concerns that mimicked the police (Barker 1999). Typically low paid, some hold multiple jobs, and others develop side enterprises like gardening for residents, renting property, or, in the case of our kids’ school guards, matching newcomers with home rentals, domestic help, and cars for a finder’s fee. Most are male, and most smoke.

For security guards, cigarettes play an important social role in building relations of reciprocity with both familiar passersby and potentially dangerous strangers. As described in the opening of this chapter, security guards often receive individual cigarettes or packs as tips from those who benefit from their service. Lucas estimated that he smoked twelve cigarettes a day, but he was unsure about the exact number because he both gave and received cigarettes. Giving cigarettes was part of his signature approach to security work: “Be nice to everyone, whether they ask for directions or a cigarette.” If he heard of someone hatching a plan to carry out a theft, he informed them that this was his area (*wilayah*), and he didn’t have anything to protect himself with, so they could hurt him. He attempted to convey his vulnerable position as someone trying to make a living for his family and thereby to shame them into leaving his area alone. “They usually understand,” he claimed, with one would-be thief even offering him cigarettes, a gesture that alarmed him a little since he did not want them thinking he would go into league (*berkongsi*) with them.

Cigarettes not only help security guards forge and maintain social ties but also serve as reliable companions that help fill long solitary hours on the job. Commercial and residential security guard work fosters negative conditions that smoking alleviates or makes more tolerable: waiting, loneliness, sleepiness, and boredom.⁴ Monday through Saturday, Lucas worked a 5:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. shift followed by a 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. shift in a separate residential complex. From 4:00 to 8:00 p.m., he tried to sleep a bit at home but often found his eyes uncooperative. At work, he typically smoked when there was nothing to do, especially at night to alleviate boredom (*jenuh*). He smoked less when there was something interesting on TV. After midnight, he got some fitful sleep while staying alert to any foreign sound, and he patrolled the residential complex at 1:00, 2:00, and sometimes 3:00 a.m., knocking loudly on electric poles as he walked.⁵ Faizah, a security guard in his sixties on a street home to large and ostentatious houses with tall spiked gates interspersed with vacant lots, had smoked since he was thirteen. Whereas in his previous job as a vehicle mechanic he had smoked with friends, now he was alone much of the time, pulling eleven-hour shifts from 6:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. His job was alright when there was someone to talk to, something to do, but more often than not, he just sat around bored, “like a bird looking for a friend.” He was happier at that particular point in time because he could watch construction workers building another gargantuan home. Anton, who served as one of five security guards at a seminary, worked rolling eight-hour shifts (with 6:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., and 10:00 p.m. start times). All the guards smoked, but because the school had a no-smoking policy, they tended to hide their cigarettes or smoke in their little post. On busy mornings with people coming and going, Anton did not think much about smoking, but later in the day, and especially after 8:00 p.m., boredom set in and he craved cigarettes.

Most security guards with whom I spoke wanted to quit or at least reduce their smoking. Anton, who was in his twenties, managed to stop for an entire year but then resumed after gaining ten kilograms. Lucas and Faizah, who were both middle aged, wished to cut down and were dismayed by how much they spent on cigarettes. Faizah ruminated on the cost, explaining that he normally smoked two Gudang Garam packs a day, which cost 28,000 rupiah and amounted to 840,000 rupiah in monthly expenditures. To monitor and reduce his consumption, he began stacking empty packs in his little security post window. He happily brandished yesterday’s pack, which still had seven cigarettes left, meaning he had smoked only five. Abu, one of our residential security guards, told me he had quit smoking five months earlier after being hospitalized for a week due to high blood pressure. People still offered him cigarettes, but he declined, saying that he didn’t smoke anymore, which took strong will and intention (*niat*). “It’s hard being a security guard without smoking,” he mused, “just sitting around.” He had previously smoked about two packs of Surya a day, which cost 28,000 rupiah and meant that his job, which paid 25,000 rupiah a day, did not cover his habit (*nggak nutut*).

His five children and grandchildren all agreed he should stop after he was hospitalized. A few weeks later, I saw him smoking along with a companion.

The experience of Indonesian security guards aligns with scholars' observations elsewhere concerning the ties between smoking, waiting, and subordinate social positions. In his study of welfare clients of the Argentinean state, Auyero (2011, 14–15) notes that waiting is stratified, and waiting time unequally distributed in ways that correspond with relations of power and reinforce the dependent and subordinate position of people marginalized by class, gender, and race. A smoke break is one way for those waiting to fill “dead time” in an active and self-directed or relational fashion.⁶ Jeffrey similarly describes smoking as a “timepass” activity among male low-middle-class students in India experiencing disintegrating prospects for employment and social mobility, progression to masculine adulthood, and movement into a modern era.⁷

Whereas smoking fits easily with masculine working-class identities and occupations, Stefan was acutely embarrassed by his habit, which seemed increasingly at odds with his class identity as a judge. In the past, Stefan acknowledged, smoking had facilitated social interactions (*pergaulan*) with senior judges in the Supreme Court and national high courts during collaborations on the legal curriculum and other matters in Jakarta. Peers were impressed by Stefan's close relations with senior judges (“Kok dewan pengadilan tinggi akrab sekali dengan Pak Stefan!”). Knowing one another as smokers, they performed “the code”—miming smoking—to trigger a mutual exit to a spot where each smoked his own brand. But Stefan now felt that smoking was more strongly associated with the ignorant underclass, citing minibus drivers as an example. “I have awareness. I know I can buy cigarettes, but I can't buy health.” He approved of his own shaming and marginalization among peers in Malang. “In our own environment, we must feel that we as smokers have become a minority. There are thirteen of us judges. Only one who smokes! Colleagues have said to me, ‘Why do you still smoke? It's like you're a relic from a bygone era! Someone out of the past, a primitive! [*Kayak orang purba saja! Orang jaman dulu, orang primitif!*]”

Stefan was discomfited by the collapse of class boundaries that occurred when members of the middle and upper class—those who should know better—smoked:

This is what leads to a sense of shame. Try observing yourself. Smokers in any circle tend to be filthy [*borok*]. Unclean. They throw cigarette butts on the ground. Even though there's an ashtray right there. Even professors are like that in Indonesia if they're smokers. I'm a smoker, but I don't smoke in front of just anyone; I don't smoke in cars, buses, public transport. If someone waves away your smoke, you should show self-awareness [*tahu diri*] and step away [*menyingkir*].⁸

During four months in Australia, he learned to never smoke in public because Australians loathed it; he illustrated how they theatrically waved secondhand smoke away from their bodies (Dennis 2016). “This is what's hard,” he sighed,

“facilitating that sense of embarrassment [*memudahkan rasa malu*] with other people we encounter. This is no longer the place for smoking, this is no longer the smoking era.” Stefan saw smoking in Indonesia progressively evolving into what Keane (2014) observes it has already become in Australia: “one of the most visible social markers which differentiate the proper, restrained middle class body from the uncontrolled and excessive bodies of the underclass.”

Although he may have been unfamiliar with the tobacco control term, Stefan displayed the values associated with smoking’s “denormalization” or deliberate conversion from a mainstream, normal, and desirable activity into one that is socially unacceptable. Critical public health scholars have pointed out that denormalization discourse can stigmatize not only smoking but also smokers themselves, who in Western countries are often already marginalized by class, race, gender, sexuality, and mental health struggles (Bell and Dennis 2013; Haines-Saah 2013; Haines-Saah, Bell, and Dennis 2015). It can also stigmatize as “backward” entire countries such as Indonesia with high levels of smoking in contrast to “civilized” and “advanced” countries that have achieved low smoking rates (Welker 2021). Even as he found himself incapable of quitting (*belum bisa*), Stefan was at pains to distinguish himself from other smokers through his self-controlled, decorous approach to smoking: shallow inhales, modulated pace, distancing from non-smokers, waste disposal etiquette, and specific motivations (seeking inspiration for work or enjoyment after a meal). He animatedly described an airport encounter with a white (*bule*) woman who was a heavy smoker:

I had finished eating, and I tend to smoke after I eat. After that, I’m done. She was smoking like a locomotive. Like there was a profound anxiety there. Not quiet and relaxing. She was a “real smoker” [*perokok tulen dalam tanda petik*]. She smoked her cigarette down to the end and then lit another. I couldn’t stand ten minutes in that smoking area.⁹ She finished three cigarettes; I smoked half a cigarette. I was astonished. Such cigarettes aren’t enjoyed. I truly couldn’t enjoy smoking in the smoking area. I only smoked because it was after a meal. I smoked half a cigarette, and I put it out. I left. I couldn’t stand to sit there any longer.

Stefan repeatedly interspersed his account with imitations of the woman’s heavy, unfeminine, locomotive-like exhalations. She fit the biomedicalized rendering of the atomized addict who consumes “without pleasure, in response to a base and bodily need,” her smoking “a purely physical rather than communicative or discursive act” (Keane 2014). In countries like Australia, tobacco control has achieved considerable success in supplanting the aesthetic, cultural, and symbolic pretensions of cigarettes with the insistence that they represent nothing more than nicotine delivery devices, the fix that addicts repeatedly return to not for pleasure but to stave off withdrawal symptoms (Keane 2014). Even as Stefan distinguished himself from this abject spectacle, the specter of self-recognition clearly haunted him.

From his perspective as an industry proponent, Sunu, a kretek nationalist and lawyer, expressed concern that Indonesians were converging on Western smoking

practices. When I asked him why he smoked machine-rolled rather than hand-rolled kretek, which were more consistent with the values kretek nationalists espouse, he pinned blame on the anti-tobacco movement and the standardizing forces of globalization. Dexterously rotating his lit cigarette around in his fingers without burning himself, he explained that if you're in a closed space built for smokers, then with your first exhale of an unfiltered hand-rolled kretek, you will fill the room. He uttered the sound "dassss" to accompany an enormous imaginary cloud of smoke. Indonesians were being pushed toward the "light" cigarettes that more and more people smoke abroad because they are being forced to smoke in little smoking rooms or outside malls, and so they don't have the time to slowly smoke and enjoy their cigarettes as they traditionally did. Now they are starting to smoke fast like Europeans and Americans; he motioned with his cigarette, miming taking drags at short intervals, almost as though in fast forward. In the future, Sunu feared, smoking would become an ever more temporally and spatially circumscribed and marginalized activity. This would cause the connection between smoking and sociality that previously cemented kretek's role in the workplace to wane, and ambivalent, self-conscious smokers like Stefan could become the majority.

THE ADDICTED SMOKER

Smokers' biographies often register a shift from smoking for external appearances and as a medium of social identity and interactions to smoking for themselves (Hughes 2003). Manuel, a university student, declared, "I usually wake up, drink some water, then smoke, even before I bathe." Smoking, as security guards assert, can be a solo activity that actually fills social absences and voids. "When you're alone, you're not alone with a cigarette," a minibus driver explained, likening it to a friend (*teman*) and according it an important role in a country where there is generalized social pressure to be in human company, especially outside the home.¹⁰

When cigarettes become tightly woven into smokers' daily lives and routines, their absence can provoke a sense of distracting unease or even urgent calamity that leads the smoker to identify as an addict. Cigarettes punctuate the day and serve any number of moods and purposes: preparing for, accompanying, or concluding an activity or task, simply passing time, and pausing to reflect, celebrate, or mourn. As discussed at the outset of this chapter, the addictive qualities of tobacco sit at odds with a definition of cigarette consumption as an expression of human dominion and sovereignty over an object. Arman, a security guard, observed, "I could smoke nonstop and never be content." His rueful conviction resonates with literary depictions of cigarettes as objects whose consumption exasperates and inflames rather than satisfies and extinguishes desire.¹¹ I had long discussions about smoking with minibus (*angkot*, from *angkutan kota*) drivers at their base near my children's school; the base consisted of a bamboo platform sheltered by a roof and equipped with lighting, television, and a portable kerosene burner. While

awaiting their turn to depart for the bus terminal, they ate, drank, and smoked, watched and called to passersby, chatted and teased one another, stretched out for a nap, read snatches of newspaper, washed and repaired their vehicles, and occasionally engaged in mock fights or danced to music blasted from car stereos. They reflected on the profound embedding of cigarettes in their daily lives:

Imron: It's essential to smoke after eating and drinking coffee. If you don't smoke, you feel confused. It's addictive, it's like a narcotic. It belongs among the narcotics, especially if I've just finished drinking coffee like this. Most smokers feel this way.

Ridwan: I can cry if I don't have cigarettes. It's like heroin.

Marina: Have you ever tried to stop?

Imron: Yes! But because I saw my friends smoke, I wanted to smoke again. I stopped for about a month.

Marina: Why did you stop back then?

Imron: If you ask yourself what's the use of smoking, there isn't any, right? What's the point? There's no purpose [*Cuma iseng aja*]. And it disrupts your health. And you're throwing away money if you think about it. But, too late, you're already addicted and it's hard to get rid of it. And cigarettes are as expensive as rice.

These reflections dovetail with orthodox tobacco control discourse and with a biomedical understanding of cigarettes as addictive and smokers as addicts. In this model of addiction (*kecanduan, ketagihan*), *angkot* drivers underscored their own powerlessness—and the corresponding power of cigarettes—by likening their craving to a narcotic addiction.¹² Another minibus driver admitted, “Sometimes we forget our family. We who are addicted. ‘What matters is that I smoke. Whether there’s food in the house or not isn’t my problem.’ That’s addiction.”

During the month of Ramadan, fasting Muslims must abstain from smoking in addition to eating and drinking each day from before the sun rises until after it sets. Many smokers claimed that they could withstand not smoking (*bisa menahan*) due to the special purpose and intention (*niat*) that accompanied their fast, which they would break with water and food before smoking a cigarette. Dion described his smoking abstinence during Ramadan in more dramatic and less decorous terms. “I’m like a crazy person with disconnected cables! Doors that refuse to open!” He broke his fast with a drink of water quickly followed by a smoke and found he felt better after one or two cigarettes. “Eating can wait.”

Several smokers volunteered that smoking was congenially combined not only with eating and drinking but with other bodily functions as well. A former smoker recalled that a post-meal cigarette invariably sparked an urgent need to defecate. Katy explained that constipation made it hard to quit, recalling that she spent two days straight unable to go to the bathroom (*ke belakang*) during one quitting attempt. A taxi driver in his late fifties who quit his *Dji Sam Soes* after coughing

up something large and bloody still smoked a filtered cigarette when defecating, insisting that for him, the cigarette functioned not as a laxative but rather to cover the stench. Dedo was so attached to combining the two activities that if he did not have a cigarette on hand he would run to the nearest kiosk to buy more, even if the “shit was already knocking at the door.” His long bathroom retreats left his wife yelling, “Are you shitting out a rock? Why does it take so long?”

As students with limited means, Joyo and Idris intermittently experienced cigarette shortages that underscored just how addicted they were (*ketagihan banget*). Joyo explained that he tended to get dizzy and angry (*pusing terus marah-marah*) when he could not smoke then felt a sense of calm (*tenang*) once he got a hold of a cigarette. Idris erupted in pained laughter while describing the agonies of not smoking:

Idris: Without a cigarette, you feel, like, restless. Feeling anxious, you know. It's different once you have a cigarette, you're happy.

Marina: Have you ever tried to quit?

Idris: Yes, for a week, but I couldn't stand it! A whole week feeling so anxious, oh! Then, whoa, seeing other people smoke! Better to just smoke again.

Marina: Why did you want to quit?

Idris: I just didn't have any money. And I wanted to know what it felt like, for the future if I didn't smoke. Yeah, restless like that. Not enjoying life.

When she quit for six months, Yanti found that not smoking felt dull (*jenuh*) and made her mouth bitter (*pahit*) and astringent (*sepat*). A minibus driver who quit for a week said it left him sleepy and depleted of energy. Rahman, a petty government official, quit for two years but then succumbed to the relentless badgering of a close colleague who wanted his smoking companion back. Rahman regarded his enabler with a mixture of resentment and affection. He gained fifteen kilograms while not smoking, ten of which he had shed since resuming five months earlier. Planning to marry soon, he acknowledged with an anxious laugh that the health risk he most feared was impotence. (Male smokers mostly dismissed possible impacts on their virility, and a number attributed this health impact solely to menthol cigarettes.)

Although cigarettes appear as a health risk in the framework of addiction, some smokers nevertheless justify smoking on health grounds. Some accorded cigarettes the capacity to help regulate emotions, calm turbulent thoughts, and maintain mental health. Yanti framed smoking as a way to alleviate *stres* (stress).¹³ Security guard Adi explained, “When I'm alone and without a friend, I want to smoke. The cigarette is my friend. When my thoughts are going all over the place, I like to smoke.” A minibus driver reflected, “Smoking is pleasant, and not smoking can be unpleasant. Smoking calms and settles one's thoughts” (*pikiran ayam tenteram* Jv).

A kretek nationalist depicted “mild” kretek as the savior of, and “self-esteem medication” (*obat pede*, *PD percaya diri*) for, a fictionalized nineteen-year-old boutique worker who could not face other people or her job without a dose and always smoked in secret so others would not think her naughty (Ardianti 2012, 38–39). Cigarette companies tap into cultural beliefs that it is “inappropriate and dangerous to experience and/or express strong emotions,” with advertisements suggesting that smoking serves “to deflect negative emotions and to distance strong feelings” (Mimi Nichter et al. 2009, 101, 103). Scholarship on Java, Bali, and Malaysia has stressed self-control and repression of passion and strong emotions as important cultural values, particularly for adult males (Anderson 1990; Geertz 1973; Keeler 1987; Peletz 1994).¹⁴

Cigarettes often play a more complex role in diagnosing and managing physical and mental health conditions than is countenanced by public health orthodoxy. Smokers told me that cigarettes suddenly tasting wrong or bad was an early sign of impending illness. Recovering from illness was accompanied by restoration of the familiar taste and enjoyment of cigarettes. Smokers often receive—or interpret—doctors’ advice to stop smoking or cut back as encouragement to temporarily abstain or reduce until they feel better rather than to permanently quit. Smokers suffering respiratory problems like coughing, congestion, and sore throats may also temporarily or permanently switch to brands that they believe will resolve the issue.

Misinformation widely circulated by kretek nationalists and dissident scientists promoting divine kretek smoking cures also encourages smokers to doubt mainstream claims about the harmful nature of tobacco. Thousands of patients have sought treatment in clinics for conditions like cancer, often renouncing conventional biomedical treatments for “alternative” smoking cures promising to remove toxins and free radicals. These clinics sell “divine” filters that are supposed to make cigarettes healthier, which some of my interlocutors used. YouTube videos, articles, and social media extend the reach of these ideas, leading Indonesians, including a Sampoerna factory doctor I interviewed, to express doubt and uncertainty about the public health consensus on tobacco’s harmful nature. When Erwan, a scholar-activist, brought up the “healthy cigarette” (*rokok sehat*) therapy, I asked whether he really believed that cigarettes could have curative powers. “I’m unsure,” he responded.

A plan to quit in the future often legitimates ongoing smoking in the present. College students like Idris, Joyo, and Yanti anticipated quitting when they married (*patokan nikah*) or by the time they were thirty. When we met, Katy had identified her upcoming sixtieth birthday as a fresh opportunity to quit. Klein analyzes how the protagonist of Italo Svevo’s novel *La coscienza di Zeno* enters into a painfully relatable “dance of the last cigarette” as he repeatedly vows to stop smoking and fills entire walls with quit dates (personally momentous occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, graduation, numerically concordant dates, and purely random dates) that accumulate as records of his abandoned resolutions.¹⁵

Smokers had various ideas and strategies to assess and control how much they smoked. Marlboro influencer Marko, whom we met in chapter 4, sometimes limited himself to buying single sticks (*eceran*) rather than packs and deliberately left his lighter at home so he would be forced to ask someone for a light. Whereas a Telkomsel worker who smoked seven or eight cigarettes a day regarded himself as a moderate (*sedang*) smoker, student Budi saw the pack as an appropriate daily serving size. He exclaimed, "What's important is that one smokes a reasonable amount [*taraf normal*]. Don't smoke two or three packs a day!" Joyo also followed the pack-a-day rule: "For me, what matters is one day, one pack, whether it's smoked with friends or finished alone. One day, one pack. That's it." Could it be more? "It can't be more." Could it be less? "It could be less. But it's rarely less," he laughed.

When we asked smokers how much they smoked, the math did not always add up, particularly among more ambivalent smokers. Stefan told me he smoked four to five cigarettes a day, since his packs lasted three days (at this rate, his white cigarette twenty-pack should have lasted four to five days). Yanti equivocated, saying she smoked as many as six cigarettes a day, with one pack lasting her three to four days; she then acknowledged that during stressful periods, she might polish off a whole pack in one day, before concluding that she probably smoked fewer than five packs a month, probably only about three packs. Heru, a senior Sampoerna marketing manager in Jakarta, called himself a social smoker but also intimated that he could not quit, saying he would stop smoking in a heartbeat if he could, and cautioning me not to smoke under any circumstances as part of my research.

Smokers also adopted bodily techniques that they hoped would protect them from cigarettes' harmful effects. Lucas said he did not inhale like other smokers and expelled the smoke right out, "even when smoking expensive cigarettes." A professor who said he only occasionally smoked a menthol cigarette to help him write, and even then only until inspiration struck, theorized that inhaling and exhaling through the mouth was much safer than inhaling through the mouth and exhaling through the nose. He shared this wisdom with his students. When Budi tried to enroll in the police academy, the doctor who examined him assured him, "Smoking is perfectly fine provided you eat nutritious food, drink water, and exercise." Following the advice of elderly smokers, Adi tried to balance his smoking with exercise, smoking but also sweating.

Some smokers successfully quit after health scares. After an evening out with friends, Erwan coughed all night and could not stop. He kept attempting to smoke again but found that he had lost his enjoyment of cigarettes, yet it was still difficult to quit. As a scholar and activist, he spent a lot of time writing and was accustomed to having an ashtray to the right of his keyboard with a lit cigarette in it. Its absence left him disoriented, and it was tough to even get ten words out. He gradually had to learn to write without a cigarette. Seeing the specter of his own death or debility, a banker in Jakarta quit after three colleagues in their forties suffered heart attacks in short order, with two dying.

Other smokers quit cigarettes alongside larger lifestyle changes, the purging of what they saw as unhealthy activities or vices such as drugs, coffee, alcohol, and gambling. A purple-haired, asthmatic minibus driver said he was previously the number-one addict (*pecandu nomor satu*) but gave up his two-pack-a-day Dji Sam Soe habit along with card gambling. Ucup reported that his father was a heavy smoker but quit in his late thirties after deciding that smoking was haram and committing to becoming more pious (*saleh*). An assistant dean at Brawijaya University quit smoking after getting kidney stones and found that he slept much better after he stopped using coffee and cigarettes as chemical stimulants to stay awake all day. At a food stall in Yogyakarta, a fellow customer told us that in high school, he was so desperate for cigarettes that he smoked discarded ones that he picked up off the street. He showed us with his fingers that if the butts were yea long, they were still tasty; if they were shorter, they tasted nasty, but he smoked them anyway. He eventually decided that smoking was destroying his health and quit. He exercised and drank copious quantities of water to sweat and rid his body of cigarette residue. His friends mocked him for quitting, calling him queer (*bencong*), but he ignored them and sought out new, athletic friends.

Smokers sometimes looked to me for advice on whether and how they should quit. A twenty-year-old student who wanted to quit said he had kidney problems, but a friend assured him they were unrelated to smoking. After I showed him research linking smoking to kidney disease and cancer, and with encouragement from his friends, he threw his pack with its remaining cigarettes in the trash. Minibus driver Roni said he tried to eat snacks (*ngemil*) and chew candy (*ngunyah permen*) instead of smoking, but this only made the prospect of a cigarette more appealing. “So,” he asked, “do you know how to quit smoking?” My stock suggestions were obviously disappointing and unhelpful to Roni. Although tobacco control campaigns assign responsibility for tobacco harms to the tobacco industry rather than to individual smokers, the experience of these harms, the vocabulary of addiction, and the struggle to not smoke are often individualizing.

#WEAREVICTIMS

“You smokers are victims, those exposed to smoke are all the more victims, we are all victims. So stop smoking right now!” So urges the prologue of *Kita Adalah Korban* (We are victims), an eighty-page collection of victims’ stories centering on twenty-four Indonesians disabled or killed by smoking (Sidipratomo, Menayang, and Fauziy 2014). The product of a collaboration between the National Commission on Tobacco Control (Komisi Nasional Pengendalian Tembakau) and the Alliance of Indonesian Smoking Victims (Aliansi Masyarakat Korban Rokok Indonesia), *Kita Adalah Korban* is a difficult book. A foreword by the Indonesian health minister lends it public health authority, and its cultural legitimacy is enhanced by a contribution from prominent poet Taufiq Ismail, who condemns Indonesia for

not joining the FCTC, mistakenly claiming that it is one of only three countries that have not done so, and that the other two are, as “godforsaken African countries,” shameful company (11). The research team described assembling the book as a race against time, as the angel of death repeatedly claimed the lives of willing participants before interviews could take place. Mobilizing poignant details and juxtaposing photographs of bodily suffering and happier times, the book provides an archive of human tragedies meant to touch its audience in ways that charts and statistics cannot (76).

The book features a music promoter, a housewife, an interior designer, a retiree, and a prominent rock star (Donny Fattah, bassist for the band God Bless), each of whom underwent surgery after suffering heart attacks or heart failure. A taxi driver, a truck driver, and a musical-instrument maker found their bodies ravaged and their worlds diminished by lung cancer, the classic calling card of cigarette smoking (Proctor 2011, 225). A musician and a retired government official described how chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis) made them suffer and struggle for breath even when sitting still, their condition so dire that they sometimes long for death. The book features a cohort of laryngeal cancer survivors, some of whom have also featured in anti-tobacco ads and testified before the national legislative assembly, lifting their bibs to display their tracheostomies.¹⁶ They have higher survival rates than lung cancer patients, but their lives, appearance, and communicative capacities are profoundly transformed.¹⁷ A dancer who underwent breast cancer treatments, including a mastectomy, nods to additional tobacco-related cancers. Some victims’ stories were written by spouses who themselves struggled to quit, such as a musician’s widow whose spouse died of tuberculosis and lung cancer. Another woman described how husband suffered a stroke at age forty-four, falling to the floor with cigarette in hand; he survived seven years more but was able to communicate only by moving his eyelids, fingers, and toes. She herself finally managed to quit after her children threatened that they would put her in an institution if she became similarly disabled.

The claim of the book’s title—We are victims—articulates a stance that struggles for credibility against popular views of individual responsibility for smoking, echoes of which are apparent even within the book. The book and related activism and hashtags (#kitakorban, #kitaadalahkorban) frame tobacco-related disease sufferers as victims of industry and government. Promising social status, fun, and friendship, the industry, abetted by a corrupt and tax-hungry government, lures youth into trying its addictive product, or so the logic goes. Djoko Waluyo, who suffered laryngeal cancer and a tracheotomy, echoes this narrative in his contribution to the book, accusing the government of violating the national spirit by collecting tax revenues from the industry while impoverishing and sacrificing smoking victims (Sidipratomo, Menayang, and Fauziy 2014, 35–37). Adrie Subono, a music promoter who smoked his last cigarette an hour before undergoing heart surgery

to install five rings, described himself as having been enslaved (*diperbudak*) and colonized (*dijajah*) by cigarettes for forty-five years (14–16). In tobacco control discourse that frames smokers as pathologically addicted subjects, observes Keane (2002, 121), the smoker is often presented as a passive “innocent victim of evil and rapacious companies . . . while the tobacco industry fills the role of active agent of disease and death.” *Kita Adalah Korban* only partially subscribes to this view; there are victims, and then there are victims. Passive smokers with tobacco-related diseases are more profoundly victims (*jauh lebih korban*) because they suffer without having committed the sin (*tak berdosa*) of active smoking (Sidipratomo, Menayang, and Fauziy 2014, 6). Three of the four non-smoking victims who appear in the book are women—a photography store worker whose boss smoked heavily and who died of lung cancer at thirty-six; a political activist who attended numerous political party meetings in enclosed, smoke-filled, air-conditioned rooms; and a cook who developed laryngeal cancer after a decade of workplace exposure to secondhand smoke. One male non-smoker was surrounded by smokers growing up and developed laryngeal cancer at only twenty-three, which left him feeling profoundly bitter, depressed, and angry with God (66). The book treats the victim status of the secondhand smoker as pure and their tragic misfortune as complete, whereas the victimhood of the smoker is adulterated by the problem of their own agency in harming themselves and loved ones, friends, and colleagues in their vicinity. If an undertone of accusation runs through the narratives of secondhand smoke victims, guilt and regret appear in those of smokers, who rue spending millions of rupiah on cigarettes and heart surgery, liquidating family assets, cars, and land for cancer treatments, and engaging in an egotistical act that endangered those around them.

The brevity of, and similarities among, the victims’ stories suggest not only the challenges of eliciting them but also how they were redacted, reduced to haunting tropes of suffering, regret, and anger.¹⁸ They stabilize a correct subject position: the politicized victim, who by the time of their political awakening may lack the physical means and strength to speak. They edit out and proscribe other kinds of social, cultural, and individual experiences with cigarettes.¹⁹ The institutional identity of the tobacco industry victim comes with prescribed ways of speaking and acting.²⁰

The passive and negative figure of the tobacco industry victim is sometimes interrupted by a competing institutional identity: the active and positive cancer survivor.²¹ When Fatma, Shahnaz, and I met with two laryngeal cancer survivors in their homes, both offered short and evasive responses to our inquiries into their smoking past and where they felt fault might lie for their predicament, even when we explicitly asked if they blamed the industry or government. Instead, they kept returning our attention to the learning and effort demanded by life in the present and the support networks they formed with fellow disease survivors. The eighty-year-old Husni, who had undergone a tracheotomy and thirty-three rounds of radiation two decades earlier, took pride in presenting himself as a

medical miracle and the very picture of geriatric vigor. He detailed how he had learned various feats, from producing speech and laughter (a staccato *ah-ah-ah*) to bathing without water trickling down his stoma. After lots of talking, he demonstrated how he cleansed his tracheal hole by rolling up and inserting a tissue with one hand while holding a compact mirror in the other and clutching his bib in his mouth. In exposing his stoma, he performed his ingenuity rather than his suffering, and he aimed to inspire admiration rather than pity, anger, revulsion, horror, or fear as anti-tobacco messaging tends to do. This was consistent with his role in local hospitals helping laryngeal cancer patients find the courage to go through tracheotomies and recover a semblance of their normal lives. Junaidi was less upbeat but likewise more interested in present challenges than in interrogating who was responsible for his cancer and smoking past. He also taught people with tracheotomies to speak “so that they will not lose hope,” and he maintained a notebook with a list of members of a social support group. Many had died, but there was a constant influx of new members. The positive and active survivor identity helps those afflicted by laryngeal cancer to reconstitute their lives, but it also limits negative emotional expressions and critique of the tobacco industry’s structural power.

COMMODITY PATRIOTS

Among his fellow minibus drivers, Fauzi staked out an unpopular position on who bore blame for Indonesia’s large population of smokers:

Fauzi: In my opinion, the companies are to blame, and the government. If the government didn’t permit them to operate, the companies would have to close, and maybe there wouldn’t be any smoking. There wouldn’t be any. There you have it.

Rama: You know we don’t have to smoke! If the factories were closed, the Indonesian government would lose its income. Its greatest tax revenue source is cigarettes.

Fauzi (speaking with growing outrage): The government has already issued this label, words like this, “Smoking causes cancer.” Really, it should be shut. Why is it even open? Right? Shut it down, it’s already harmed enough people!

Marina: I think the companies and government deserve more blame.

Fauzi: If there were no factories, it would be impossible for us to buy cigarettes. If there are factories, we will surely buy them.

Marina: What was your reaction when you first saw the pictorial warning labels?

Fauzi: Unbelievable [*Nggak masuk akal*]. If you’re going to write something like that, then the companies should be shut. That would finish the problem. There would be no more problem.

Others remarked on this dissonance in the government's actions, requiring grotesque warning labels on cigarettes while legally allowing their sale. Anton, holding a pack with the lung cancer image, mused, "How can something that does this to people be sold?" Fauzi's views on government blame were nevertheless at odds with the mainstream perspective, embodied in Rama's comment about personal responsibility and government tax revenues.

During interviews and casual conversations, I often asked who ought to bear blame and responsibility for the negative impacts of smoking, including the premature tobacco-related deaths of over two hundred thousand Indonesians a year. Should the industry, and the government that lightly regulated it, bear blame? Many of my respondents believed that cigarettes were addictive but nevertheless saw smokers themselves as responsible for any negative consequences rather than as industry victims.

Manuel: It's the user alone.

Budi: It comes back to each individual.

Joyo: Because I smoked, whatever sickness I end up suffering is mine, my responsibility because I did this.

Idris: It's a choice, right. A choice. We already know the dangers of smoking. We've been told that if you smoke, this is what's going to happen. But I still smoke, so if I get sick, it's my own responsibility. No one else needs to be blamed.

Adi: No one ordered us to smoke! We're to blame for our own illnesses.

Hamzah: Who do you want to accuse? Because on every cigarette pack, there's a warning. It's my fault. It's your own fault for lacking the will [*keniatan*] to stop.

Yanti (pointing to the lung cancer image on her A-Mild pack): The consumer [*konsumen*] is to blame, because they've been informed [*sudah diinfokan*], so if they still kept smoking . . .

The latter comments underscore how the cigarette industry benefits from cigarette warning labels. Cigarette advertisements urge people to abandon caution and rational thought (e.g., A-Mild's "Don't Think Twice," LA Light's "Don't Quit"), yet when smokers take companies to court for their diseases, they insist that the consumer is a sovereign subject who was duly warned.

This insistence on individual agency and blame is often coupled with a defense of the industry in terms of the social benefits it purportedly generates in the form of national employment and government tax revenues (Byron et al. 2015, 5).²² Although I never raised the possibility, my interlocutors often brought up the (wildly improbable) idea of a sudden and total ban on the industry and the dire consequences that would ensue.

- Ucup:* If cigarettes were totally banned, there would be a lot of unemployment. That's for sure.
- Rizki:* The tobacco industry provides the largest sums of money to the state.
- Adi:* Factories can't be held accountable or closed down because they employ workers.
- Arik:* If the industry were shut down, people would suffer a lot of hardship.
- Rama:* Tobacco creates jobs for people of all classes and allows low-skill workers to advance and send their children to college. If factories halted production, unemployment would rise, and what industry would replace lost jobs?
- Lucas:* If no one smoked, all the factories would shut, and people would be out of work.

Public health and World Bank studies dispute these perspectives by pointing out that mechanization has already dramatically reduced tobacco-related agricultural and manufacturing employment and by claiming that the income reaped by the state and industry workers pales in comparison with expenditures on tobacco-related disease treatments and lost employment and income due to premature tobacco-related debility or death.²³ Although construction workers Gani and Hendra exclusively smoked machine-rolled brands, Hendra nevertheless asserted that if they did not smoke, their wives—both cigarette hand-rollers—would be unemployed. The view that individuals are responsible for the harms of smoking while the tobacco industry is responsible for its national benefits is a public relations triumph for cigarette companies.

. . .

In his study of modern nationalism, Benedict Anderson (2006, 7) wrote that “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.” Contemplating deaths from wars fought in the name of nations, Anderson went on to analyze the arresting power of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Outside of kretek nationalist discourse, which tends to reject the harmful nature of smoking and insist that kretek support health, few smokers conceive of themselves as great patriots or heroes when they buy a pack of cigarettes. Many do, however, feel that their cigarette consumption supports an industry that contributes to government coffers and national employment, thus doing some larger good. If their sense of contributing to this larger good is more diffuse than that of the volunteer or drafted soldier, so too is the nature of their suffering and sacrifice. Kretek capitalist deaths tend to be geographically dispersed, gradual and cruddy, bearing the

hallmarks of slow violence and death, unlike the tragic and catastrophic wartime culling of youth (Berlant 2007; Nixon 2011; Povinelli 2011). Tobacco-related deaths are not memorialized as national sacrifices. There is no Tomb of the Unknown Smoker, and the coffins of those who die of tobacco-related diseases are not draped in national flags in recognition of their consumption sacrifices. The “shrunk imaginings” of commodity nationalism nevertheless help engender “colossal sacrifices,” commodity martyrdom on a mass scale (Anderson 2006, 7).