Masculinities and Violence in Indonesia and India:

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Introduction

We wish to investigate the phenomenon of men and violence in two prominent Asian countries – Indonesia and India - where local interpersonal violence and significant civil violence frequently occurs. Such events impact harshly on families, on individual wellbeing, community life, political stability, economic progress and development programs. In both countries, there has been very little rigorous sociological investigation into the phenomenon. The problem of men and violence has been primarily located in accounts of colonisation, wars and insurgencies. It has also been addressed with reference to domestic violence and sexual assault, which results in an understandable and necessary focus on the plight of women. Criminological studies addressing the problem of men and violence have focused on criminals in the two countries, especially conviction rates and patterns of offending (for example, Sung 2004). Psychological studies of violent men and prison populations have concentrated on individual pathologies and apparent 'types' of men that habitually offend. Historical studies in both countries have considered how colonised men were constructed during colonial occupation and its aftermath.

While not wishing in any way to undermine the value of research endeavours in other fields, our sociological project here is slightly different. We aim to gain an

understanding of how subcultures of masculine violence might be constructed, maintained and enacted in everyday social practice in Indonesia and India. Accordingly, an important focus for us is how men enact, experience and perceive male violence in their local communities (see Kaufman 1987). In our appraisal of the relevant literature to date, we have found remarkably few sociological studies of violence conducted with males, despite their central role in perpetuating or tolerating cultures of violence. There is an urgent need to gain a better understanding of the forms of masculinity that are being expressed - and targeted - when men engage in male-to-male violence, and civil violence. Many positive community initiatives, NGO capacity-building programs, and strategies for the empowerment of women are disrupted or even nullified by, violent events in the public realm such as sexual harassment and assault, men fighting each other, crime, and outbreaks of rioting, vigilantism and arson. In both countries there are gang cultures and organised crime networks who use violence and the threat of violence to enforce their business dealings. Furthermore, there are terrorist networks which use violence to attack ideologically-framed targets. We do not see the logic of these varying practices of masculine violence as ontologically distinct, but as practices along a continuum comprised of linked masculine cultures of violence in a given society, cultures that have been historically shaped by tradition, colonialism, the state, and late modernity, especially the 'hypermasculinity' promoted by cultural globalization (Levy 2007; Ling 2001).

We are also aware that the social organization of prestige is the part of the social structure that most directly influences gender and sexuality for men (Ortner 1981). When it comes to male-male violence this is a most important consideration (Tomsen

1997). In his study of men and drinking violence in Australia Tomsen acknowledges that violence between men in the drinking context is often heralded by volatile 'power displays' in which an 'assertion of social power and heightened sensitivity to challenges to it is maintained'. Tomsen speaks of 'assaults as interactive incidents characterized by an escalating confrontation over social honour. These may seem trivial in reason, but are often highly meaningful among certain groups of males where the generation and protection of a masculine identity is most valuable' (1997: 94).

In another example, Mullaney explains that men who are called upon to give account of their domestic violence towards their wives in the USA, 'use varying verbal accounts as different means to achieve the same end - that is, not only to save face (…) but also to repair and reestablish masculine selves in a setting that in their minds, has called into question their rights and privileges *as men* (2007: 223, emphasis in original). Mullaney's finding has particular implications for our study. Following her lead, the accounts of violence given by men interviewed for our study will not be understood as conveying unmediated truth. Rather, their accounts will be interpreted as bearing upon key discourses of masculine identity, male honour and norms of aggression that inform masculine identities and cultures of violence in Indonesia and India.

In certain areas of India and Indonesia, public violence between men is a taken-for-granted facet of everyday life. Moreover there is frequent political rioting, and clashes between local militias and the police/military. In such contexts, violence is often viewed by local populations as inevitable - even mundane. However, local instances

of civil violence can escalate into looting, destruction of property, assault, rape and murder on a much larger scale (Anand 2007). Such escalations have serious psychological impacts for the individuals involved, present major barriers to development programs, and have negative economic implications for developing nations such as India and Indonesia. Despite this, in Asia masculinity has remained 'an important lacuna' in gender research (Louie and Edwards 1994: 135).

Sociological research on gender-based violence with men is therefore necessary: firstly, because we know little about the masculine 'half' of gender politics in the Asia-Pacific and hence the picture of non-western masculinities is incomplete (Kimmel 2000). Secondly, we know little about how men themselves understand and experience violent events in their lives. We need to 'deconstruct various characteristics of masculinity or manhood' (Demartoto 2008: 9) in these countries. This will be a methodological challenge since the investigation of masculinity is not common (Chopra 2004), and may be difficult to conduct in some unstable circumstances. Yet without relevant data we will have little idea of how to frame up productive social interventions and disseminate strategic information.

Defining Our Terms

Masculinity

In our project the terms 'men' and 'male' are taken to refer to the physiological and reproductive characteristics of male persons. In that sense men are men wherever they are and whatever they are doing. 'Masculinity' however, refers to socially and culturally constructed ideas of what it means to be male, to be a man. The term

masculinity describes the social and cultural identity constructs – characteristics and behaviours - associated with being biologically male for a given culture or subculture (Oakley 1972). For that reason, masculinities vary greatly from country to country, from culture to culture and between status groups of all kinds (Oakley 1972) in a given society or nation-state. Because there are many different kinds of masculinity, even within the same national culture, in this paper we usually refer to masculinities in the plural.

The specific term 'hegemonic masculinity' is usually attributed to RW Connell. However, Donaldson (1993) has also written significantly on the topic. The concept of masculinity as 'hegemonic' derives from Gramsci's theorising (1988: 260) of the state where one group claims and sustains a leading position in society during a given historical period. Domination by this group is achieved by consensus even while the cultural leadership is invariably contested. Hegemonic masculinity must therefore be understood not as a single discursive entity but as 'the *configuration* of gender practice' at a given point in time that shores up the 'legitimacy of patriarchy' (Connell 1995: 77, my emphasis). Writing of traditional gender relations in Asia, Moghadam maintains that 'senior men of a family have authority over everyone else in that family including younger men and women, who are in turn subject to forms of control and subordination (1993: 104).

For the purposes of social analysis, 'hegemonic masculinity' describes a normative or 'ideal' type of masculinity occurring in specific times and places (Connell 2002). Hegemonic forms of masculinity are hegemonic because they demand conformity to certain normative characteristics, for example toughness and violence, even though

other forms of alternative and marginalised masculinities are always present, and challenge the dominant stereotypes in various ways. The power of hegemonic masculinity is that it provides a cultural benchmark against which all males implicitly measure their gender legitimacy. In this way, hegemonic forms of masculinity affect: men's health and life expectancy; how male children are raised; and the nature of their relationships with older male relatives, male age peers, girls and women. Most significantly, the ideal of hegemonic masculinity affects men's attitudes towards, and tendency to use, violence.

Hypermasculinity is a term used to describe hegemonic forms of masculinity that circulate in the global popular media where male heroes and villains possess (often superhuman) physical strength, cunning, bravery, sex drive and aggression. Accordingly, where it is produced as an identity by men in everyday social life: 'hypermasculinity is an exaggerated expression of traits, beliefs, actions and embodiment considered to be masculine' – framed up actively to demonstrate 'opposition to femininity' (Levy 2007: 325).

Violence

A rapid survey of the available literature indicates the difficulty of reaching a single definition of violence that satisfies the vast range of phenomena that is grouped under the term (see Jackman 2002). Accordingly we have constructed our own definition that draws upon the main strands of contemporary sociological theorising about violence. By violence we mean:

> Any act – physical, verbal or emotional – that is intended to, or results in, harm to another person or group. For example, verbal abuse, harassment, bullying, intimidation, extortion, fighting, rioting, assault, rape, torture, manslaughter, murder.

Epistemologically, we understand men equally as agents, victims and observers of male-to-male violence. In considering what causes men to become involved in violence, it is often argued that deprived economic conditions trigger angry young men on the margins of the labour market to involve themselves in physical outpourings of collective rage and resentment. Yet it seems a taste for violence is not just the preserve of marginal and working-class men, but runs through a much wider male cohort (Tilly 2003) in the fields of the military, sport, and media. Male participation in forms of collective and one-on-one violence must be understood as common, and even pleasurable in some circumstances (Tomsen 1997), rather than unusual and unpleasant by definition. The highly popular movie *Fight Club* amply demonstrated this reality, and the popularity of Asian Kung Fu films never seems to wane. In another example, fighting for a cause can be constructed as heroic and laudable, and this is the very basis of recruitment in wartime. Young men in particular are drawn to the mythic ideal of the hero, or heroic band of brothers (Horrocks 1995) where there is triumph against the odds. Moreover, in certain contexts extreme male violence such as killing may have a beneficial outcome: defense of the vulnerable; democratic revolution; overthrow of injustice; or the liberation of a nation or a people.

A Note on Civil Violence

Among other theorists of masculinity, Connell (1995) has argued that historically,

nationalist politics has always been an important stage for the promotion of a hegemonic masculinity characterised by violence, aggression, and militarism (Nagel 1998). Roy (2006: 137) maintains that, despite cultural differences, the rhetoric of nationalist/religious identity movements across the globe tends to focus on the recovery of lost masculinity', where a specific male ethnic/religious 'other' is constituted as a threat and a menace to that project of regeneration. Roy's focused study of the Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena movement in India yields the following insight:

> The narrative pattern in the nationalist discourse of Shiv Sena is quite simple: the Hindu majority is victimized by the Muslim minority due to the policy of appeasement toward Muslims by Hindu politicians, whom Shiv Sena characterizes as being 'castrated', 'effeminate', and 'impotent'. The weakness of Hindu politicians and government officials in dealing assertively with the Muslim threat has resulted in a loss of manhood for Hindus. However, this loss of Hindu masculinity is temporary. With the regeneration of Hindu masculinity via violent action by Shiv Sena's brave warriors, Hindus will be able to recuperate their manhood. It is only by annihilating and humiliating Indian Muslims that Hindu men can regain their pride and glory (Roy 2006: 141).

In Indonesia the link to masculinity is less tangible, but a parallel to the Shiv Sena discourse may be found in Muslim militias that target Christians - spurred on not only by an antipathy to all things western, but by the belief that Indonesian political leaders have emasculated Muslims – 'the Islamist version of Indonesian history was a litany of victimhood' (Dhume 2008: 139). Both Muslim and secular militias target the

minority Indonesian Chinese (Christian or Buddhist) who are habitually imagined to be deriving wealth and prosperity at the expense of 'real' (Muslim) Indonesians. In both cases, members of the minority group may suffer individual criminal violence, including theft, arson and assault, and experience civil violence, involving mass attacks and fighting. We may understand this phenomenon through Appadurai's concept of a geography of anger in which the majority sector of the population fears a 'volatile morphing' where they will be somehow replaced by a minority group in society. Appadurai argues that in reaction to this perceived threat, certain groups within the majority population sustain 'predatory identities' that take action to diminish or even wipe out the cultural 'other' (2006: 85). The result is often civil violence (Starrett 2009: 223).

In comparison to criminal violence, civil violence, by definition, takes place in the more or less public arena of civil society. It disrupts the local civil order. Civil society may be considered as the 'realm of organised social life that is open, voluntary and self-generating' (Hadiwinarta 2008: 276). It is located more or less ambiguously between the institutions of the family and the state. The kind of social order achieved in the realm of civil society is in a sense always precarious because it does not come about through the rule of state law, or from longstanding family and kinship obligations, but arises from the shared intersubjective reality of social actors in assembled collectivities.

Theoretically, the greater the shared sense of cultural norms and social objectives (social capital), the more people will agree about what should be happening locally and nationally, and the more harmonious civil society will be. In practice though, the

contemporary realm of civil society is as much characterised by conflict as order in the two nations under consideration here. While lack of bonding social capital between relatively mobile ethnic/religious populations seeking work in the cities obviously plays a part in generating civil tensions, it is lack of economic capital that shows the strongest correlation with rising tensions in the realm of Indonesian and Indian civil society. This is competition for scarce resources. At the same time though, ethno-religious and nationalist tensions routinely flare up to threaten civil order in both nations and this is not simply reducible to issues of economic capital. As this brief discussion demonstrates, the question of civil violence is a complex one. For the purposes of our discussion in this paper, the first point worth noting is that civil violence occurs outside the formal institutions of the family and the state, even though the state is often the target. Secondly, civil violence remains almost exclusively the preserve of men.

In saying this, we emphasise the need to productively grasp how everyday cultures of mediated and symbolic male-to-male violence provide the conditions for violent civil events to arise as logical, if not unquestioned practices. Whether individual men participate actively or not in violent civil actions, riots, looting or mass assault, they are affected by local and national cultures of male violence, including the formal state enforcement mechanisms of the police and military brought in to deal with civil unrest.

Men and Civil Violence in Indonesia and India

In some parts of Indonesia and India, civil violence occurs between the military and local militias; in other regions a culture of conflict exists between supporters of political parties; in other areas religion, especially fundamentalist Islam and Hinduism, is claimed to vindicate acts of terrorism. To a certain extent, there does appear to be a link between male civil violence and radical religious movements in Indonesia and India, for example Islamic fundamentalism and Hindu nationalist extremism (Brass 2003). The recent campaigns of terrorist violence in India and Indonesia have been closely associated with religious fundamentalism and what has been labelled as the 'masculinisation of nationalism' (Banerjee 2006). In Indonesia, the Bali bombings and the rise of *Jem'ah Islamiyah* and *Laskar Jihad* have been spearheaded by men whose projected goal is to defend and enforce an exclusive and male dominated, model of Islam. Likewise, in India the rise of the Hindu fundamentalist movement (Hindutva) has based its campaign of 'purifying' the nation by opposing non-Hindu minorities, especially Muslims.

However, this is not the whole picture. Righteous indignation and outrage overlap with political agitation, crime, feuds, ethnic tensions and revenge motives in many civil violence events. Moreover, there are matters of masculine honour, status, peer pressure and the expression of class (and caste) resentments to be considered. Each case reflects the problematic interplay of masculine identity and civil violence, and the increasingly critical role of cultural expressions of masculinity in shaping the safety and wellbeing of Asian populations. In the current age when transnational tropes of masculinity freely circulate (Pringle and Pease 2001), violence and physical aggression, it would seem, are becoming expected or 'admired among men' in Asia

(Connell 2002), reflecting an increasingly dangerous environment for different kinds of men, and for young men, women and children.

For Indonesia, mass violence has been a significant feature of twentieth century national and political history (Sidel 2007; Nordholt 2002). It has ranged from wars of resistance against the Japanese and the Dutch; to the anti-communist purges of 1965 in which over a million people were killed; to the anti-Chinese riots in the 1970s and 1990s; to military abuses of power; to the radical Muslim *jihadi* bombings of Bali and western targets (Vickers 2005; Nordholt 2002). *Preman* militias still assault and terrorise local people – and implicit fear of violence is arguably everywhere in an outwardly peaceful nation. In a survey by Nilan et al (see Nilan 2008) of 3565 Indonesian youth aged 14-24, *tawuran* [fighting], and *narkoba* [drugs] were two major anxieties identified by male respondents. Accounts from male Indonesian Muslim youth revealed not only a personal concern with gaining and protecting *gengsi* [status], but in principle support for: bullying; *jihadi* acts of violence against those of other faiths (Sidel 2007); attacks on rival political groups (Vickers 2005: 213); and on fans of opposing sporting teams. Male Javanese youth in 2007 were observably 'nervous' (see Alter 2000) about the multifarious implicit threats of violence from other males. Yet, because masculinity has been so studied little in Indonesia (Oetomo 2000: Boellstorff 2004; Clark 2004a), violence is almost never seen as a specifically gendered phenomenon (for an exception see Elmhirst 2007).

Similarly, India has a violent history of anti-colonial struggle, inter-religious conflict, and caste and ethnic disputes and confrontations – which continue to this day (Anand 2007; Banerjee 2005). As suggested above, Hindutva has based its campaign of

‘purifying’ the nation in opposing non-Hindu minorities, especially Muslims. Such communal violence against Muslims reached its climax in the Gujarat riots of 2002, in which over two thousand Muslim were murdered, and tens of thousands were left uprooted and dislocated—refugees in their own land. Once again, women were at the receiving end of such hyper-nationalist terror, subjected to rape and other practices of violence and control. There is a growing body of literature that links the rise of these fundamentalist and rightwing nationalist movements to repressive cultural expressions of masculinity (for example Tilly 2003). Furthermore, violence and physical aggression are key elements of lower caste Indian masculinities, and are intertwined with resistance to caste-based subordination (for example, Doron 2008; Rogers 2008; De Neve 2004). Yet like Indonesia, masculinity has not been explored to any great extent in South Asia (Charsley 2005; Srivastava 2004a), and only in a limited way with regard to violence *per se.*

Masculinity and Violence in Indonesia

Masculinity as a distinct topic has been little studied in the Indonesian context: ‘masculinities have tended to remain either unmarked (the assumed “norm”), or at best one-dimensional (the patriarch)’ (Elmhirst 2007: 225). In one of the few studies to date, Nilan et al. propose that,

> While the globally-mediated, Western, sexualised ‘playboy’ ideals of masculinity now play strongly in Indonesian urban male culture, Islamist discourse in Indonesia is vociferous on the topic of how Western sexuality poses the major threat to male Muslim piety. Indonesian Muslim masculinities

are arranged in various identity configurations around these two major influences (Nilan, Donaldson and Howson 2007: 25).

However, it was not always so. New Order policies governing civil life until 1998 were emphatically gendered (Robinson 2000: 141). The cultural diversity of indigenous gender orders in the archipelago was homogenised into a nationally-promoted binary of masculinity and femininity: *kodrat pria* and *kodrat wanita.* State-sanctioned gender roles were integral to the project of nation-building (Anderson 1990; Simon and Barker, 2002). In her study of sexual politics and nationalism in the birth of the New Order state in Indonesia, Wieringa notes that 'nations as socio-political entities are often described as bonded together by a deep camaraderie of men'. She reminds us that this 'male bonding rests upon the control over the behavior and sexuality of "their" women', and that 'controlling women and girls is a central concern both of the military and of men who are "protecting" the nation' (Wieringa 2003: 72).

The elevated Javanese discourse of masculinity – *Bapak* - was significant for hegemonic masculinity during the New Order period. 'During the New Order the upper-class Javanese *priyayi* model of emotional self-restraint was widely deployed as an "ideal" pattern of masculine behaviour' (Clark 2004b: 118). This 'ideal' pattern of masculine behaviour was an important component of *Bapakism* (Geertz 1961), around which the system of authority in the formidable New Order bureaucracy was organised (Robinson 1998: 67). *Bapakism* blended feudal traditions of patron-client with a modern development paradigm. In a striking example, Suharto made himself known as *Bapak Pembangunan*, the father of development (Rahim 2001; Scherer

2006). In principle *Bapak* always rules over the family; but often also over the business; the town; and the nation-state. He is entitled to exercise dominance because of his God-given wisdom; self-control and mastery of emotions. These qualities grant him authority over women, children, and male underlings. He achieves hegemony through the exercising of 'refined' power embodying 'emotional self-restraint' (Clark 2004b: 118; see also Brenner 1995). His calm and passive demeanour demonstrates the triumph of *akal* - reason and control (Peletz 1995: 88-91) over base passions - *nafsu.* Even today, when Indonesians speak of the 'proper' role of a husband/father – *Bapak* remains the point of reference.

Young unmarried men *(pemuda, remaja, cowok-cowok)* present a challenge (Scherer, 2006) to the authority of older men. Their behaviour is often *kasar* (coarse, flamboyant, playful, outrageous, animalistic). They are ruled by passion rather than reason. Their operation of masculine power is of a different, less refined order. It is signalled by a different hegemonic ideal of Indonesian masculinity – *pemuda*. Although the term *pemuda* means a youth or young man, it usually refers to a young male activist or fighter. *Pemuda* lead the struggle against colonisation (Anderson 2006) and were on the streets again when Suharto was forced to step down in 1998. They have also have been active during subsequent elections (Scherer 2006: 205). On the negative side, *Pemuda Pancasila* thugs were active when Suharto first took power. At present, some youthful *preman* (thug) militias available for hire as street mobs to any political cause like to call themselves *pemuda* (Wilson 2008).

Post-1998, the state-normative male role has been significantly challenged and reshaped. It is claimed this signals a 'crisis' for Indonesian masculinity (Clark 2004a).

> Just as the Indonesian nation has found itself in a deep crisis in the years following the fall of Suharto, as a constructed category the Indonesian 'man' is also undergoing a period of fluidity. Cultural icons such as the landmark film *Kuldesak* suggest that the contemporary image of the Indonesian male is torn between outdated and archetypal images and 'alternative' or non-traditional masculinities (Clark 2004b: 131).

Boellstorff suggests that 'norms for Indonesian national identity may be gaining a new masculinist cast' (2004: 469), driven by a changing labour market, Islamist discourse and mediated global hypermasculinity. For example, male Islamist youth want to 'Islamise' Indonesia and protect Muslims from western secular and Christian influences (Smith-Hefner 2005: 442). As far as class origins go, the evidence for male membership of Islamist groups is mixed. For example, Fealy noted the relative youth and poverty of male radical Islamist group members: 'one quantitative survey of radical group members in Jakarta, found that 35 per cent of respondents were unemployed or experiencing socio-economic difficulties' (2004: 110). The argument is that poverty draws embittered, economically marginal young males into radical fringe groups (Bruce 2008). However, middle-class university-educated youth have also long been involved in radical Islamist groups (van Bruinessen 2002: 136) in Indonesia. Religious chauvinism, anti-western rhetoric, control of not only female but male sexuality, and the danger for men of interactions with unrelated women are key focii (see Ouzgane 2006; also Boellstorff 2005).

The spread of a strong culture of Islamism in Indonesia since 1998 has shown mixed effects (Bennett 2005) for men. On the positive side, theological emphasis on education for both sexes, and the complementary partnership of marriage as the basis for social life means men find their moral roles as dedicated husbands and fathers considerably emphasised. On the negative side, censorship and the emphasis on public piety and formal marriage limit the expression of non-marital sexuality. There is strong condemnation not only of homosexuality (Boellstorff 2007; 2005) but pre-marital sex and adultery – realised in recent anti-pornography legislation. At the same time though there has been extraordinary growth in the production and dissemination of locally-produced pornography (Suryakusuma 2000).

The criminal or gang member is a common Indonesian media stereotype of masculinity. He could be a *preman* (thug), a drug user or dealer, a pimp, or just a participant in the gambling, drinking, whoring, 'fight club' culture that characterizes some inner city street life after midnight (for example Berman 2003; Noszlopy 2005; Elmhirst 2007; Baulch 2007). He treats women badly, shows no respect for authority and constitutes a threat to law and order (Wilson 2008). Across the secular/religious cultural discourse of division he is closely related in attitudes towards violence to the young *jihadi.* Yet, significantly, he is also related to the masculinist code of behaviour favoured by the police and the military.

Robinson begins her account of masculinity in Indonesia by pointing out that 'the centralised authoritarian power wielded by the Suharto regime was symbolically anchored by a militarised hegemonic masculinity that supported the monopolisation of political and economic power by a small elite of military men and rent-seeking

cronies' (2008: 1). This aptly describes the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinities under the New Order regime. At the highest point of the hierarchy of masculinities was the *Bapak*, a modernised version of the ideal benevolent patriarch of traditional Java. The ultimate expression of the New Order *Bapak* was President Suharto himself, self-titled as *Bapak Pembangunan,* or the 'father of development', who guided and protected the nation, using all forms of power, including state violence. Robinson (2008) notes that the form of hegemonic masculinity celebrated under the New Order tended to erase the wide variety of masculine identities that had once prevailed across the archipelago (see also Boellstorff 2005; Peletz 1995). In particular the proper role of men as breadwinners, controllers of family finances and protectors of women was elevated, even though some aspects of this role contradicted or ignored local cultural norms (Boellstorff 2007). In Java for example, traditionally men did not handle the family money at all and women were the traders and organisers of home and locally-based enterprises (Robinson 2008: 6-7).

In his discussion of organised civil violence in Indonesia Wilson (2006) makes the masculine nature of the phenomenon quite clear in his descriptions. For example, one of the civil militia (*preman*) groups he investigated in Jakarta was the FBR (*Forum Betawi Rempug* - Betawi Brotherhood Forum),

> When I visited FBR's headquarters in 2003, the street was filled with around seventy well-built men wearing black and camouflage military-style uniforms emblazoned with the FBR logo; they were waiting to go on 'patrol' in the neighborhood. Some were armed with wooden batons and barely concealed machetes (Wilson 2006: 277).

Wilson also undertook research on the FPI (*Front Pembela Islam* – The Islamic Defenders Front). He writes:

> On 24 September 1998, a month after its founding, FPI made its first public appearance, attacking student activists at the Christian Atmajaya University on the pretext of challenging 'left-wing and Christian students who are paid by American Jews' (…) One month later FPI was involved in a bloody pitched battle with Christian Ambonese security guards in Ketapang, Central Jakarta. In the aftermath fourteen were dead and the public was left with an indelible image of white-robed and turbaned young men angrily wielding machetes and swords in the name of Islam (Wilson 2006: 282).

Wilson implies, largely in his choice of language, that there is great deal of similarity between the attitudes to civil violence of young men involved in FBR and FPI, despite the apparent secular-religious divide between the groups. His argument is that political gangsters, *preman* militias, vigilantes and violent *jihadi* groups have been major beneficiaries of decentralized governance and decision-making in Indonesia, since they can earn a great deal of money in the service of corrupt local politicians, greedy businessmen and even radical fundamentalist *imams* (see Dhume 2008). As the *preman* and *jihadi* hold on urban civil life grows, attacks on them from others also increase (Wilson 2006: 291), further intensifying civil unrest.

Masculinity and Violence in India

According to researchers Osella and Osella, when we search the South Asian literature for ‘an understanding of men, masculinities and masculine hierarchies, we encounter an ambivalent situation: men are certainly present (…) but they are generally not the explicit object of study’ (2006: 4). Yet, in overall terms masculinity as a phenomenon has been studied far more often in India than in Indonesia. For example, Dumont’s (1980) original study of the caste system in the 1960s may be read as implying that the ideal of the Brahmin male represents hegemonic masculinity in India. A host of other studies of contested or complicit masculinities have followed that either confirm or challenge this claim (for example, Rogers 2008; Doron 2008; Roy 2006; Osella and Osella 2006; Basu and Banerjee 2006; Derne 2000; De Neve 2004; Srivastava 2004b; Jain 2004 Alter 2002;).

Osella and Osella claim that there have been two main strands of research where men in India have been the explicit object of study: ‘the putative South Asian “culture-bound” syndrome of semen-loss anxiety’, and ‘analyses of masculinities under colonialism’ (2006: 4; see also Srivastava 2004a). The latter include ethnographies of masculinity written in the tradition of ‘subaltern studies’, where the term subaltern connotes both subordination and resistance (see for example Rogers 2008: 86). One analytical trend seems to have been to create binary pairs, typologies or lists of masculine archetypes. For example, Dumont’s four stages of man: – the celibate student; the householder; the forest-dweller and the renouncer (1980) are derived from the Hindu tradition. In contrast, in his 1995 study Derne discerned four modern categories of men in his fieldsite: true believers, cowed conformists, innovative mimetists, and unapologetic rebels. Regarding masculinities within the contemporary Hindutva movement, Banerjee (2005) identifies complementary constructions of

masculinity: the Hindu soldier and the warrior monk (see also Basu and Banerjee 2006: 490). In his discussion of South Asian masculinities, Srivastava states that contemporary understandings of what it is to be a man in India ‘are the concomitant of the varied histories of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras, and caste and religious identities’ (2007: 329). He points to the valorisation of masculinity through persistence in the preference for male children that has resulted in a significant gender imbalance in some states. Moreover, there remains a seemingly unbreakable link between men’s ‘honour’ and women’s ‘propriety’ (330) that feeds into a high incidence of domestic violence and also into male-to-male violence.

The apparent ‘muscular manliness’ (Banerjee 2005; Srivastava 2007; Jain 2004) that now seems to define hegemomic masculinity in India has many sources. Srivastava maintains that the contemporary ‘conjoining’ of muscularity and masculinity appears to be a ‘product of transnational cultural flows’ (2007: 331). Banerjee points to the British Raj where particular kinds of Indian masculinities were produced in the colonial encounter (see also Osella and Osella 2006: 5; Basu and Banerjee 2006: 477). British images of empire shaped Christian notions of manliness back home and in the colony:

> Christian manliness was a Protestant construct. It emerged in the mid-nineteenth century when British imperial power was at its zenith and drew on various traits - self-control, discipline, confidence, martial prowess, military heroism, heterosexuality, and rationality (Basu and Banerjee 2006: 479).

In turn, these ideals are held to have generated the key hegemonic masculinity of

Hindu masculinist nationalism (Hansen 1996). Regarding the complementary constructions of the Hindu soldier and the warrior monk within the contemporary Hindutva movement, Banerjee (2005) identifies both as expressions of hegemonic masculinity that allude to aggression. Although historically these models of manhood emerged during the colonial period, they are being 'regenerated' (Roy 2006) in the context of Hindutva politics in contemporary India. In other words, 'the cultural logic of masculine Hinduism and nation adopted the categories implicit in imperial hegemonic masculinity in their resistance to British gaze' (Basu and Banerjee 2006: 490).

There seems to be ample evidence linking these Hindu nationalist heroic masculine identities to civil violence events of various kinds across India. They have been described as driven by hypermasculinized 'imaginings' of revolutionary nationhood (Basu and Banerjee 2006: 490). However, other apparent correlations between constructions of masculinity and the incidence of interpersonal and civil violence also need to be considered. For example, the term for an Indian thug is *goonda,* and *goonda* criminal gangs are deeply embedded in local societies (Hudson and Den Boer 2002: 34). They may be hired for the purpose of stirring up trouble, whether political, religious, or personal. In another example, Hudson and De Boer expand upon the fact that there is a preference for male offspring to propose that large Asian states like China and India show 'exaggerated gender inequality' - a surplus of unemployed and unamrried young men (2002: p. 6). They argue that this leads to a heightened state of internal instability in those countries that greatly increases the likelihood of criminal and civil violence. The authors find that north and northwest states of India, that show the highest male-female sex ratios, the highest fertility rates, and the highest incidence

of people not in the labour market, are the states where violence and crime are most prevalent (Hudson and De Boer 2002: 34). ‘Extensive interdistrict contrasts (…) show a strong – and statistically very significant – relation between the female-male ratio in the population and the scarcity of violent crimes’ (Sen 1999: 200). One must be wary however of taking correlation for causality, since both strong preference for male offspring and high rates of male violence may actually be the outcomes of a third set of factors, most likely a combination of poverty, archaic patriarchal traditions, lack of education and long-standing local violent disputes over sovereignty that require an endless supply of fighters.

Conclusion

It is easy to quickly find similarities in the incidence of masculinities and violence between Indonesia and India. Religious radicalism is present in both countries for example. There are also strong resonances of violent masculine subcultures between the *preman* phenomenon in Indonesia and the *goonda* phenomenon in India. Moreover, in contrast to previous generations, men in both countries are now favouring muscularity, and devoting time and money to building their bodies (Srivastava 2007; Clark 2004b), which would seem to point to transnational media flows that encourage both male aggression and narcissism at the same time. However, it is dangerous to assume too much similarity (Pringle and Pease 2001). Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) rethinking of hegemonic masculinity is useful here. They point out that local patterns of hegemonic masculinity are located within regional patterns which sit within a global gender order, and thus a masculinity that is

hegemonic in one area, social strata, or generation, may be regarded as marginal or even stigmatised in another.

In short, detailed research is needed in both countries before any claims of similarity or difference can be made. Moreover, although our topic is masculinities and violence, we are careful not to consider that universal male qualities or characteristics lie behind the broad parameters of the phenomenon. Rather we propose that understanding cultures of male violence from a male perspective is a key strategy for devising strategies to facilitate cultural change in the region towards greater levels of peace and stability for men, women and their families.

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