

## Children's Heroism in Indonesian Cinema: The Representation of Child Heroes in *Djenderal Kantjil* (1958) and *Jenderal Kancil* (2012)

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### Abstract

Since the beginning of Indonesian cinema many films have deliberately portrayed children to articulate social and political messages. As symbols of innocence, children are in a unique position to spark discussion on sensitive contemporary issues. On film, they are presented in the way adults see and construct the image of a child, including forming the figure of a hero. The definition of a hero in Indonesian society is commonly centred on war, featuring a mature male as a soldier. Meanwhile, in a mostly patrilineal Indonesian culture, children are placed on the lowest rung of the family hierarchy, whereas the father is at the top and the primary figure of power. I examine two films with the same title: *Jenderal Kancil*. The first version was made in 1958 and the second in 2012. Both films present children in leading roles but within different social and political contexts. I argue that the idea of heroism represented in those films changes given their social and political context.

### Keywords

children, heroism, Indonesian cinema, representation

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## **Children's Heroism in Indonesian Cinema: The Representation of Child Heroes in *Djenderal Kantjil* (1958) and *Jenderal Kancil* (2012)**

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In this paper I will discuss how heroism is depicted in children's images in Indonesian cinema. Historically, from the early period of Indonesian cinema, many films have deliberately portrayed children to articulate several social and political messages. Kristanto (2005) suggests that *Terpaksa Menika* (*Forced Marriage*) produced in 1932 was the first film that children were permitted to watch.<sup>i</sup> *Si Pintjang* (1951) might be the first Indonesian children's film (Heider 1991). The film presents a story about a boy, Gimán, whose father is a farmer. They become victims of war, and then Gimán lives as a street kid in Jogjakarta. After *Si Pintjang*, several Indonesian films depict children in a range of narratives: war victim in *Si Pintjang* (1951); children's daily life story in *Lajang-lajangku Putus* (1958); as domestic homicide in *Arie Hanggara* (1985); and as street children in *Langitku Rumahku* (1989).<sup>ii</sup>

In academic discourse, scholars argue that as symbols of innocence children are in a unique position to spark discussion on sensitive contemporary issues. Wibawa (2008) argues that, while in Indonesian cinema children are popular as main characters, only very few works examine the representation of children. As film functions as a social practice within Indonesia's fluctuating social and political arenas, it will be interesting to examine the changing concept of heroism in its narrative. I take a historical perspective in analysing the films in this paper, following Anderson's (1991) discussion on a fundamental idea of the narrative of the nation-state as a state's authority to rule the nation.

Heider (1991) divides Indonesian film history into several periods: the first is the Dutch Colonial era to 1942; the second is from the Japanese invasion in 1942 until the early period of Indonesian Independence in 1949; and the third period includes the Old Order and the New Order regime from the 1950s to the 1990s. Sen (1994) also divides Indonesian film history into three periods, but within a more modern framework: the first is from the early 1900s to 1956; the second surrounds the "political polarisation" in cinema from 1956 to 1966; and the third is from 1967 to 1994, and is described as "Institutions of New Order Cinema." These divisions represent the political turmoil in Indonesian political history.

In this paper, I chose two films in different eras that both have the same title: *Jenderal Kancil* (*The General Deer Mouse*). The first version was made in 1958 and used the old style of Indonesian language structure. The second version was made in 2012. Both films present children as the heroes but within different contexts. To differentiate the films, I will use the title *Djenderal Kantjil* to identify the film made in 1958, and the title *Jenderal Kancil* for the film made in 2012.

*Djenderal Kantjil* is about a young boy, Arman, who wants to have a toy gun and carry out a brave act to save his village. *Jenderal Kancil* features a student named Guntur who saves a school from bandits. The words "Djenderal" and "Jenderal" have the same meaning, referring to the military rank in Indonesia. These two films are produced in different social and political contexts. Before the fall of the New Order, the discourse in Indonesian cinema was shaped by the state political policy. Dissanayake (1994) argues that Asian governments, such as

Indonesia, closely controlled the film industry for political and economic reasons. At some stage, filmmakers needed approval before film production. However, post-2000, the political changes in Indonesia boosted a shift in various aspects of Indonesian society, especially the cultural movement in cinema. As discussed by van Heeren (2012), the changes in Indonesian politics in 1998 fostered greater innovation and freedom with respect to Indonesian cinema. Moreover, taking into account Sen (2003) and van Heeren (2012) who discuss how Indonesian political turmoil shapes shifting ideas on Indonesian cinema, I argue that it is social and political contexts that underlie the representation of the respective heroes in *Djenderal Kantjil* and *Jenderal Kancil*.

### Definitions of Heroism: *Djenderal Kantjil* and *Jenderal Kancil*

For Indonesians, appreciating heroism comes naturally, yet with a lack of self-reflection. When I was a child, like many other Indonesian children, I was heavily exposed to a single concept of a hero: the national war hero. Through the school system we gained an extensive knowledge of many Indonesian figures as heroes, especially through textbooks. Parker (1992) argues that textbook culture in the Indonesian school system was deliberately utilised by the state to construct the idealized citizen. The hero figures in Indonesian history textbooks generalise the idea of the hero as the person who fights against colonialism for Indonesian independence.

The Indonesian dictionary defines hero or heroism as:

*pahlawan/pah-la-wan/ n orang yang menonjol karena keberanian dan pengorbanannya dalam membela kebenaran; pejuang yang gagah berani;*

A hero is a person who is brave and willing to sacrifice him/herself for defending the truth; a brave fighter/person.<sup>iii</sup>

This generic term of hero seems slightly redirected to the state idea of hero, which refers to a war hero. The state defines a hero in the Indonesian Constitution No. 20 / 2009 as an Indonesian citizen who died or who is still alive after committing his/her heroic action, and values the duty of defending the state and the nation. This Act has been used as a legal basis for determining someone to be a national hero. Thus, for me, and potentially for other Indonesian children at school, the only hero is the national hero, or more precisely, the war hero.

However, while the concept of heroism in Indonesia has been introduced through several heroic stories based on local folk tales such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, and other performance forms, very little academic discourse focuses on how heroism is defined explicitly in the Indonesian context. Wessel (1996), in his review of *Politischer Heldenkult in Indonesien: Tradition und Moderne Praxis* [*The Cult of Political Heroes in Indonesia: Tradition and Modern Practices*] by Klaus H Schreiner, argues that the Indonesian concept of heroism mostly developed from folk stories and the traditions of Javanese-Hindu warriors. Wessel (1996, 231) describes how “Hindu-Javanese satria (knight) tradition ... has been the moral and political prototype for the officers of the new Republican army.”

Franco, Blau and Zimbardo (2011, 99) state that “heroism is a social attribution, never a personal one; yet the act itself is often a solitary, existential choice.” They propose four

comprehensive aspects which define a hero. First, heroism is a concept that refers to various independent, courageous actions. Second, as a complex concept, heroism may include but is not limited to risk or pro-social activities. Third, in that sense, heroism is distinguished from other pro-social actions. Fourth, as heroism involves a set of complex actions, it is possible to carry negative aspects. Franco, Blau and Zimbardo's (2011) concept of heroism positions heroism as a 'grey area.'

Furthermore, Franco, Blau and Zimbardo (2011) suggest three different types of heroism. First, the martial hero that refers to the military figure or a similar figure who has to act under assigned duty or responsibility, usually involving physical risk. Second, the civil hero who refers to an untrained person who takes an action that risks their life or health, to help other people. Third, social heroism which usually does not implicate physical risk; however, it involves more of a social or personal psychological loss. Heroism, then, according to Franco, Blau and Zimbardo (2011) should be voluntary social action without expecting a positive result toward oneself; being willing to sacrifice and being aware of the risk and the possibility of harm.

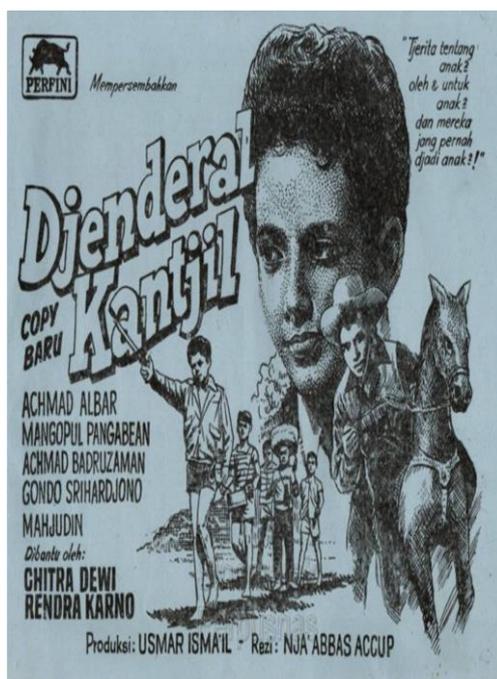
Allison and Goethals (in press) propose a relatively short definition of the hero: "Heroism is in the eye of the beholder." This allows defining a hero from different perspectives. They acknowledge that someone's hero might be someone else's villain; thus, this definition will be useful to understand the idea of heroism within children's images in Indonesian cinema. Furthermore, I take into account Wright's (2012) notion that a hero is an essential element of the culture of a society. In the context of popular culture, according to Wright (2012, 147):

It should be remembered that all heroes – the idea of hero – are inherent in the structure of stories, so that any analysis of heroes, even popular heroes, concern basic issues of social explanation, not just transient issues of cultural fashion.

Moreover, Wright (2005) argues that stories reveal the social contexts relevant to the heroic acts. These stories also reinforce the established social values by articulating them in the narrative and reflecting them in their heroism. Wright's (2005) thesis on contextualising narrative in popular culture could be utilised to understand the different contexts of how the two versions of *Jenderal Kantjil* represent children's heroism.

*Djenderal Kantjil* is directed by Nya Abbas Akup and produced by Usmar Ismail. Nya Abbas Akup and Usmar Ismail were some of the most prominent Indonesian film directors at the time. Usmar Ismail was also one of the filmmakers recognised as the founding father of Indonesian cinema. *Djenderal Kantjil* was made during the early period of the Indonesian cinema industry, as well as Indonesia as a nation. In the same era, the first national Indonesian film, *Darah Doa*, was also produced, and was accompanied by the establishment of a national film company.<sup>iv</sup>

The film is about Arman, a boy hero, who fights against local bandits with his group. Arman's dream is to have a toy gun. His request has always been denied by his father, even though his mother permits it. His parents then approve Arman's wish. With his toy gun, Arman persuades his friends to create a boys' squad which is called "Berani mati" (Ready to Die). Meanwhile, their village is threatened by a local bandit called Bang Hamid. One day, Arman and his squad successfully prevent Bang Hamid's criminal activity. They catch Bang Hamid and save the neighbourhood. Although the residents applaud the squad, Arman's father insists that they disband.



**Figure 1**

A poster of *Djenderal Kancil* (1958)  
Source: <https://www.bantaranqin.net>



**Figure 2**

A poster of *Jenderal Kancil* (2012)  
Source: [http://www.rizkipd.com/2012\\_07\\_01\\_archive.html](http://www.rizkipd.com/2012_07_01_archive.html)

Fifty years later, a young director, Harry Dagoë Suharyadi, produced a popular TV series with the same title: *Jenderal Kancil*. This TV series was broadcast nation-wide by RCTI – a free-to-air TV station in Indonesia. After he made his debut in the TV version, Harry decided to produce the cinema-version.<sup>v</sup>

In this film, the storyline is slightly changed with the setting now a school and is focussed on student life. Guntur, an elementary school student, is named Jenderal Kancil by the school magazine journalist. This is because Guntur and his best friends successfully defend students from local bandits' criminal harassment. While the students acknowledge his popularity, the school teachers question Guntur's action in striking the local bandits. In one instance, his intention to help other students accidentally creates collateral damage which leads to Guntur's suspension from school. His popularity as a brave student fades in comparison to a new student who is a movie star and singer. Guntur steps ahead again when the school and the new student get involved with an Italian mob who raid the school and take the teacher and school headmaster as their hostages. This time, Guntur resolves the problem successfully.

I argue that the specific sociopolitical context will affect the way cinema represents heroism in children's images. To understand children's position in an Indonesian context, I will first discuss the image of children in *Djenderal Kantjil* and *Jenderal Kancil*. Then, I will describe the representation of heroism in children's images in these films. For these purposes, I utilise Allison and Goethals' (in press) perspective on heroism to understand the way children's heroism is constructed in these Indonesian popular narratives. Furthermore, I apply Franco, Blau and Zimbardo's (2011) types of heroism to explain children's heroism in both films.

### **Children as Heroes-in-Training: Family and the School System**

Children do not develop their own identity in isolation. Scourfield and others (2006) argue that there are two main ideas on the construction of child identity. First, family and society culturally construct children's identity through norms and roles. Second, the state develops children's identities using formal education such as the school system, textbooks and the curriculum. Both this cultural and formal construction shapes the identity of a child as a citizen-in-training, and appears in both of these films.

*Djenderal Kantjil's* storyline mainly focuses on the life of an Indonesian family. It consists of a father, mother and a male child. Another family member is Arman's nephew. The father is a government officer who is depicted working every day in an office with his official hat, clothes and suitcase. The mother is portrayed wearing Javanese *kebaya* and does not work outside the home, while Arman, their child, goes to school. This image of family represents Indonesia's traditional Javanese culture's dominant concept of the family system. Shiraishi (1997) describes how, in Javanese culture, a family is a system whose father figure is at the top of the hierarchy. This family culture sees children at the lowest level and controlled by the father. Top-down communications apply within the family, which means that the father tells his son what he should do; Arman has no prospect of opposing this at any level or debating his father's command. Arman's father figure is reminiscent of the Victorian father figure, as suggested by Carpenter (2002), as an authoritarian and resistant father who imposes structure and is unconcerned with nurturing children.

Arman's only way out is talking with his mother. The mother figure reflects the ideal concept of the mother in Javanese culture. Suryakusuma (1996) argues that mothers in Javanese culture take on a subservient position to the husband. Similarly, the figure of the mother in *Djenderal Kantjil* is constructed as a medium to underline the supreme power of the father in the family. Arman is depicted as passive and non-authoritarian. For example, when Arman wants a toy gun, his mother allows him to do so, but nevertheless keeps suggesting that he talks to his father directly to gain permission. Interestingly, while the mother is constructed as a traditional Javanese woman, she also attempts to balance the father's dominant role. For example, in the debate on how they should talk with Arman about his dream to get a toy gun, the mother persistently asks her husband to change his authoritarian way of talking to their son.



**Figure 3**

A family setting in *Djenderal Kantjil* (1958)

In contrast, the setting in *Jenderal Kancil* is primarily at school. The film conveys the idea that schooling significantly affects children's lives. The family in this film is absent from children's discourse. Instead, the film focuses on how the teacher carries out the school rules. *Jenderal Kancil* depicts a rebellious student against the authoritarian teachers at the school. Wyness (2006) argues that the school system is as important as the family system in preparing children for entry into society for several reasons. First, school and family provide rules for their members. Second, in the school and family a formal relationship is conducted between children and adults. Third, adults have authority in both situations. Similarly, Shiraishi (1997) argues that the school system in Indonesia creates a temporary family where the teacher is a substitute for the parents. The school creates a hierarchy of authority in the classroom in which the teacher is the highest authority. The hierarchy then places teachers as the representatives of the state. This relationship represents a dictatorial regime where students should show the utmost loyalty to their teachers.

The school system is represented as an authoritarian system in which some teachers practice a harsh teaching style. Guntur, the main character, initiates an encounter against local bandits who threaten his schoolmates. He plans an attack, but in the end, he only wants the bandits to ask forgiveness of the children. He thinks this is a good idea because he does not intend to break the school rules. However, his teachers see this quite differently, and assume that Guntur is just another rebellious student who demands attention from his friends. The conflict

between the teachers and Guntur reflects Gellner's (2006) argument regarding the way the state endorses teachers' powers to instil in students appropriate values as perceived by them. Teachers defend their values based on how they define a good student, and, in contrast, students try hard to balance their perception of good behaviour within the teachers' expectations.



**Figure 4**

A fight against the authoritarian teachers in *Jenderal Kancil* (2012)

Both films represent the similar idea that children are "trainee citizens": they should be taught and imbued with the state's values through family and the school system, as suggested by Scourfield and others (2006). Children are constructed to be good citizens with rules and adult values. The idea of a trainee-citizen suggests that citizen values can be learned, in this case, in the family and school system. Any students who try to do unusual things from the teacher's perspective will be categorized as misbehaving or rebellious. This situation leads to the children taking a stand and this is what I define as children's heroism. This definition resembles that of Franco and Zimbardo's (in press) notion of "heroism-in-training." Heroism, as well as civic virtue, according to Franco and Zimbardo (in press, 515), "can be learned and practiced by anyone rather than being a unique inborn trait." While civic virtue in an Indonesian context, at some stage, encloses political purposes, heroism, on the other hand, encompasses a social action which can be carried out by anyone, including children.

### **The Transformation of Children's Heroism**

The two main characters in these films represent the journey of the hero, or, as Allison and Goethals (in press) put it, the hero's transformation. They suggest three distinct transformations: setting, self and society. They also describe how the hero's journey starts by leaving their world for the new world, thus creating a better world that benefits broader society. Goranson and Gray (in press) propose that during the hero's journey, a person experiences a deep moral transformation that changes them into a hero, a victim, or even a villain. Furthermore, Vandello, Goldschmied and Michniewicz (in press) suggest that the moral transformations of the hero include the possibility that someone who is disadvantaged could be a hero, or, in their terminology, embody the underdog as hero.

*Djenderal Kantjil* and *Jenderal Kancil* present the transformation of children's heroism in slightly different ways. The main character in *Djenderal Kantjil*, Arman, is an ordinary child. His only dream is to own a toy gun so he can play war games with his friends. This toy gun is a focal point in this film. The film was made in 1958, the era that the Indonesian political sphere was rife with military clashes with regional rebellions' militia, the rising tension between the Communist Party, the Indonesian Nationalist Party and the Masyumi Party, as well as Soekarno's presidential decree regarding a bilateral relationship with the US government (Feith 1963).

Despite his father's concerns regarding the dangers of the toy gun, Arman finally gets it as a reward for his class graduation. With his (toy) gun, his friends declare themselves as an army, and Arman is appointed as the general. Every day, they practise a military march. Then, another group challenges them. At first, Arman and his troop choose not to fight against their rival. However, their cowardly rival attacks them; then, Arman leads the revenge attack. Finally, after a one-on-one fight, Arman wins the battle. He gets more troops, and eventually, their army becomes bigger.

In the meantime, their village experiences several robberies. Arman and his troops want to solve the case themselves and find the bandit. However, their first challenge comes from Arman's father. He asks Arman to stay at home. To his troops, Arman is their hero, but at home, he is subservient to his father's commands. As a result, he stays at home. Somehow, the bandits catch and kidnap him because they believe Arman knows too much. His troops come to save him, their general. Then Arman leads his troops to catch the bandits.

In the end, the village acknowledges the troop's actions, especially Arman's brave act to catch the bandits, and recognises their actions as heroic. While acknowledging Arman's action to stop the bandits, his father insists that the whole situation is instigated by Arman's toy gun and his troop. As a result, he decides to dismiss Arman's troops and, of course, Arman, as 'the general.' However, for the village and his 'ex-troops,' Arman is still their hero. As stated by Franco, Blau and Zimbardo (2011), heroism stands for social acknowledgement. While Arman's process of taking the decision to act is personal – because he thinks saving the village is necessary – his action comprises pro-social behaviour, and will be acknowledged as a heroic action by society. Having his groups dismissed by his father, whilst being cherished as hero by society, reflects the idea that the hero resolves social or cultural obstacles to accomplish the journey for the benefit of society, regardless of personal benefit (Goethals and Allison 2012).

In *Jenderal Kancil*, fifty-four years later, Indonesia has a different social and political context. In this film the heroic act is initiated by Guntur, a rebellious student at a primary school. He plans a strategy and leads his friends to fight against local bandits who threaten other students. In the end, the bandits ask for forgiveness and become Guntur's allies. Because of this, the school journalist writes about Guntur's brave actions and acknowledges him as a general. His school mates cheer him as if he were the school celebrity. However, the teachers have a different opinion. They assume Guntur has broken the school rules and, as a consequence, Guntur gets suspended.

Meanwhile, a new student comes to the school. She is cute, an actress and a famous singer. Her appearance attracts attention from most students while Guntur is suspended and forgotten. When he returns, Ratu Pelangi, the new idol, grabs most of the attention from the students, including the news in the school magazine. Guntur's friends and Ratu Pelangi's fans agree to conduct competitions between Guntur and Ratu Pelangi to pick the real idol. Guntur loses all of these competitions.

At the same time, a group of bandits plan to buy the school site, but the head of the school rejects the plan. The bandit then kidnaps Ratu Pelangi to make the head of the school give in to their demand. Knowing Ratu Pelangi has been kidnapped, Guntur and his friends arrange a rescue mission, along with his ex-bandit allies. Because of Guntur's brilliant plan, their mission succeeds in saving Ratu Pelangi from the bandits. In the end, Guntur is awarded a medal of honour.

Both Arman's and Guntur's respective heroic transformations represent the heroism arc, only slightly differently. Arman experiences a hero's journey from an ordinary child who lives in his familiar world – the world where children play what they like, including a war game, a male-constructed play game. Then, Arman starts his new journey by expressing his concern that his village is not safe anymore. He wants to do something, and for the village's future, he persuades his friends to join. Arman's transformation does not merely represent a single fighter hero, but a group or collective hero transformation (Allison and Goethals in press).

Arman, the heroic actor in the story, is depicted as weak. Goranson and Gray (in press), and Vandello, Goldschmied and Michniewicz (in press) suggest that one classical hero's transformation is of a victim that is usually weak or an underdog who then transforms into a stronger person and achieves his or her goal. The villains are adults – not fellow children. Thus, Arman is seen as physically weak when the bandits kidnap him, and as culturally weak to his authoritarian father; however, he manages to overcome those situations. By defeating the adult villain, Arman shows his capabilities, as a child, to overcome his physical weaknesses. The bandits get caught and are then handed over to security. However, it is a different situation at home: while his father acknowledges Arman's heroic acts, he still holds the power in the family. As culturally weak in the family, Arman's position remains while his father acknowledges the benefit of his heroic act for society. The situation reflects Allison and Goethals' (in press) idea of the hero's transformative change. They argue that, during the journey, a hero could experience a reflective failure for a greater good. Arman's father might not salute him as a hero, instead giving punishment by disbanding the troop; however, Arman's act has been acknowledged. Arman, as culturally bound within his family, respects his father's decision, and accepts the family hierarchy.

In *Jenderal Kancil*, Guntur's transformation into a hero reflects the moral change as explained by Goranson and Gray (in press). In the beginning, the film represents Guntur as a hero, before becoming a villain against the new student, and then, in the end, by rescuing the new student, Guntur becomes a hero again. The path of the hero's transformation provides two oppositional sides: good versus evil as the core form of heroes and villains. According to Goranson and Gray (in press), role-shifting between heroes and villains requires simple values because both of them have the "power to do moral or immoral actions." They argue that the moral rules "are not just perceptions in the moment, but are stable perceptions of individuals."

Thus, the two transformations in Guntur's heroic arc articulate the ambivalent position of children among adults' and fellow children's perceptions. While the children assume their act is heroic, it could be judged differently by adults. Guntur believes that catching the local bandits is a noble action; his friends support him and recognize his heroic act. However, the teacher assumes the action involves misbehaviour and breaks the school's regulations. At this stage, Guntur is a villain to the teacher, but a hero to his friends. The shifting of Guntur's hero's transformation represents the different perception of adults and children. As heroism is a social activity that needs an acknowledgment from society, it might be that members of the society

have different values. In these films, the adults, and the teacher, have different values by which they judge Guntur's actions. The conflict reflects the idea that children's heroism does not merely obligate the adults' value of heroism.

Arman and Guntur embody the collective hero's perspective by persuading their friends to join a rescue plan. They take a stand against their adult-villains. The transformation of children's heroism in these films articulates two notions: first, in order to achieve the act of heroism, the children must liberate themselves from the social-cultural boundaries. Arman releases himself from the family restriction that limits his plan to save the village, while Guntur overcomes formal school rules and teachers who accuse him of being a rebellious student; second, both child-heroes in this film represent Franco, Blau and Zimbardo's (2011) approach to heroism in the civilian sphere or civil heroism. Both Arman and Guntur engage in physical risk and sacrifice, but none of them are bound by any formal duty to do the action.

However, while both heroic acts indicate civil heroism, military discourse is heavily used in both films to identify ranks and certain activities, such as: *kopral* (corporal); *prajurit* (soldier); *Letnan* (lieutenant); *serang* (attack); and *pasukan* (squad or army). Furthermore, the use of the term *general* to identify the child-heroes strengthens the idea of heroism in Indonesia as most likely associated with war heroes. In particular detail, the films represent the idea of civil heroism within a martial sphere, but in slightly different ways. In *Djenderal Kantjil*, the general is the person who oversees the army in the field, thus Arman is actively involved in the field with his friends. Arman gives himself the rank of 'general' to identify him as the leader of his squad. Because of that rank, he has the license to command his friends, and organises their attack on the bandits, while in *Jenderal Kancil*, the general is one who stays behind the desk planning everything. Guntur takes on the role as the strategist, and illustrates brilliant leadership in striking the bandits, and, as a result, he is acknowledged as the general by his friends and the school magazine.



**Figure 5**

Arman "The General" inspects his "army" called "Ready to Die Squad" in *Djenderal Kantjil* (1958)



**Figure 6**

“General” Guntur's sidekick ready to attack their enemy in *Jenderal Kancil* (2012)

It is interesting to understand how the films present the idea that systems in the civic sphere, such as family and school, provide a less supportive environment for children's hero journeys. As discussed above, to start their heroic journey, the children must free themselves from the formal boundaries of the family and the school. The family and the school system are depicted as placing children in a difficult position, where they are undermined, and their imaginations are restricted. Wyness (2006) argues that the school system endorses similar pressure as the family system to prepare children for entering into society. In Indonesian culture, family and school apply formal rules, procedures and relationships within the system, so that the socialization process is conducted more efficiently in a formal authoritarian environment (Shiraishi 1997).

Arman and Guntur's heroic journeys, in many ways, follow a classic hero's journey approach that includes departure, initiation and return (Campbell 1949). Boundaries force children into a difficult position, especially when they are willing to carry out pro-social activities. When faced with a challenging situation, Arman and Guntur's journeys should achieve a central stage of the hero's journey: the arrival of the mentor figure (Allison and Goethals in press). However, those children will have no adult mentor – the adults are the villains, or they are forced to be part of a restrictive system. Arman and Guntur pick their path on their hero's journey: civil heroism with martial hallmarks. Both children show their leadership skills at the highest level, and have the privilege to command their followers as in a military system. Arman and Guntur have fellow children as sidekicks. In the end, the child hero's journey achieves the return phase. The films, in a way, present both child hero journeys as starting with a disobedient act to the patronage system, and ending with mutual acceptance on both sides. The family and the school acknowledge the children's heroic arc, and both children recognize the role of the family and the school.

In *Djenderal Kantjil*, children heavily depend on family culture, given that regardless of whether they are the hero for their society, the father figure still imposes the central authority – Arman apologizes to his father because of his causing trouble, and accepts the punishment when his troops are disbanded. In *Jenderal Kancil*, Guntur could not avoid the fact that the school has

the formal authority over Guntur as a student. Arman and Guntur, at the end of their hero journeys, return to the beginning, but hope for the greater good.

## Conclusion

The fifty-four year time gap between the productions of *Djenderal Kantjil* and *Jenderal Kancil* amplifies the contextualized representation of children's heroism through several notions. The films depict a shift in two social institutions: family and school. However, both films emphasize the strategic position of the family, and the school as a place to train citizens – a place which also, at some stages, puts children in a difficult situation. The film shows that social acknowledgment of heroic acts at some point becomes ambiguous, specifically when the formal entities, such as family and school, place a negative value on the heroic act. Arman and Guntur's hero journeys are embedded in an entity that has social bonding (the family), or has a formal authority (the school), which has a pre-existing perception of the heroic act. At that point, the heroic act could be miss-acknowledged as rebellious.

Both films strengthen the idea of heroism in Indonesia as constructed by a military perspective, and formally defined by the state. Interestingly, even though the time gap between the two films is extensive, the idea of a martial characteristic present in heroic acts endures. The films present the idea of civil heroism; however, military allusions are used heavily in the narrative. Children's heroism in these films appears like that of an on-duty soldier on the battlefield: a war against adults. Thus, the hero's journey in these films seemingly ends with glorification of the hero – children's heroism is synonymous with the war hero.

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<sup>i</sup> Kristanto, J. *Katalog Film Indonesia, 1926 - 2005*. Jakarta: Penerbit Nalar, FTV-IKJ Jakarta, and Sinematek Indonesia, 2005

<sup>ii</sup> Kristanto, J. *Katalog Film Indonesia*

<sup>iii</sup> <http://kbbi.web.id/>

<sup>iv</sup> An unofficial YouTube account provides the clips from this film available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjvbDnRPJTQ>

<sup>v</sup> The full version of the film can be watched on the YouTube account: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQMykk4o0DM>

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