January 2024

NARRATIVE OF NATIONALISM IN MISE-EN-SCENE OF BIOPIC SOEKARNO: INDONESIA MERDEKA

Eric Gunawan  
ericwu2829@gmail.com

Bambang Wibawarta  
*Universitas Indonesia*, wibawarta@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/irhs

Part of the Anthropology Commons, Art and Design Commons, Creative Writing Commons, Cultural Heritage Law Commons, Education Law Commons, Film and Media Studies Commons, History Commons, Intellectual Property Law Commons, International and Area Studies Commons, Legal Writing and Research Commons, Linguistics Commons, Museum Studies Commons, Philosophy Commons, and the Urban Studies and Planning Commons

**Recommended Citation**

DOI: 10.7454/irhs.v9i1.1268  
Available at: https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/irhs/vol9/iss1/1

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty of Humanities at UI Scholars Hub. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Review of Humanities Studies by an authorized editor of UI Scholars Hub.
NARRATIVE OF NATIONALISM IN MISE-EN-SCENE OF BIOPIC SOEKARNO: INDONESIA MERDEKA

Eric Gunawan
Universitas Indonesia
ericwu2829@gmail.com

Bambang Wibawarta
Universitas Indonesia
wibawarta@gmail.com

ABSTRAK
This paper examines the national narrative presented in the biographical film Soekarno: Indonesia Merdeka (2014). The analysis employs a film studies approach to explore the interplay between visual and narrative strategies within the framework of Eisenstein's theoretical perspectives. Christian Metz's semiotic theory is utilized to decode the signs embedded throughout the film. The study focuses on the visual and narrative strategies employed in the biopic to elucidate the national narrative, particularly through the portrayal of the character Soekarno and his interactions with other key figures. Visual strategies, encompassing cinematography and mise-en-scene techniques, bring to light signs that are intricately linked to national narratives. Simultaneously, the narrative strategy reinforces the coherence of this narrative through pivotal plot points in the film's storyline. In this biopic, audio is construed as an underpinning element that enhances the information and meaning already conveyed through the visuals. The holistic analysis of visual, narrative, and auditory components provides a comprehensive understanding of how the national narrative is constructed and conveyed in Soekarno: Indonesia Merdeka.

KEYWORDS: national narrative, narrative strategies, visual strategies, semiotic theory.

INTRODUCTION
At the onset of the twentieth century, global enthusiasm surged with advancements in science and ideology. Communism emerged as a prevailing ideology, championing the rights of the proletariat oppressed by the bourgeoisie, composed of capital owners. This anti-capitalist stance, evolving into anti-colonialism, found resonance through a universal language of resistance, casting parties aligned with communist ideology as adversaries to established governments worldwide. In the Dutch East Indies, Henk Sneevliet sowed the seeds of communist ideology by establishing the
Indische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeniging (ISDV) in Surabaya in 1914, serving as a precursor to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) established six years later in Semarang. However, ISDV wasn’t the first to advocate for the rights of grassroots communities in the Dutch East Indies, comprising farmers and workers. Sarekat Islam (SI), founded by Tjokroaminoto in 1912, had been at the forefront of their struggle, envisioning an independent state free from racial and religious conflicts.

The aspiration for self-governance persisted and evolved until the Dutch were defeated and replaced by Japan. Unlike the Dutch colonial rule, the Japanese occupation marked a pivotal moment for Indonesian elites and political factions to engage in politics, fostering a tangible prospect of establishing an independent nation. Japan facilitated this shift, aspiring to mold the Dutch East Indies into a semi-autonomous colony united by Pan-Asian ideals and anti-Western nationalism. Subsequently, following the successful ousting of the Dutch by Japan from the Dutch East Indies, educational paradigms shifted from European-centric to Eastern-based principles. Furthermore, the introduction of the national flag as a revered symbol and compulsory military training for the youth ensued. As Japan's prospects in World War II dimmed, the call for Indonesian independence gained momentum, strategically appealing to the sympathies of the Indonesian political elite.

Sukarno, a significant political figure during the Dutch East Indies and Japanese occupation periods, emerged as a central figure navigating the power dynamics between these two ruling entities. His initial encounter with communism transpired during the era of movement marked by numerous uprisings in the Dutch East Indies (Compton, 1954). Residing at Tjokroaminoto’s residence, Sukarno engaged in dialogues with key figures in the movement, including Ki Hajar Dewantara and Semaun, who were then affiliated with ISDV and held administrative roles in SI.

The pivotal influence of this environment inspired Sukarno’s endeavor to unify and elevate the Indonesian populace, culminating in the establishment of the Indonesian National Party (PNI), rooted in Indonesian comunism or Marhaenism (Rizki, 2017). Despite ideological disparities between PNI and PKI, with the latter dubbing the former as the 'national bourgeoisie' (Compton, 1954), both movements shared anti-capitalist, anti-foreign, and anti-Western imperialist sentiments, fostering mutual support.

Sukarno's political stance, consistently against Dutch colonial rule, led to his arrest and subsequent exile to Ende Island and Bengkulu. Contrarily, during the Japanese occupation, his political strategy shifted, aligning with support for the Japanese military. This transformation in political tactics, portrayed in the biopic Soekarno: Indonesia Merdeka (2014) directed by Hanung Bramantyo, prompts inquiries into Sukarno's national narrative and its underlying ideology.

An intriguing aspect arises when examining Sukarno's national narrative within the conceptual framework of nationhood. Lane M. Bruner (2005) contends its transient nature; while James G. Kellas (1998) asserts its facets hinge upon consensus among ethnic groups, societal context, and official perception. Similarly, Benedict Anderson (2006) delineates national boundaries as products of collective imagination within particular political communities, despite lacking defined beginnings or endpoints. However, alongside this malleable interpretation, the concept of nationhood possesses the potency to situate individuals in term if defining and locating it in the world, and to represent societal constructs in public discourse and diverse forms of dialogue, 'they imagine the communities they inhabit' (Anderson, 2006, p. 25). Thus, Anderson suggests that the foundation of national identity essentially rests in 'a nation that never was' (ibid, p. 204). In light of this adaptable notion of nationhood, analyzing Sukarno's national narrative within the cinematic portrayal of Soekarno: Indonesia Merdeka assumes
Derived from the term 'biographical motion picture,' a biopic is a film genre that narrates, celebrates, and delves into the contributions of historical figures to society (Custen, 1992; Bingham, 2010). Film history traces the production of biopics back to the silent film era, yet formal scrutiny and nomenclature only emerged notably in 1992 through George F. Custen's publication *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History*, further developed by Dennis Bingham in 2010. Before Custen's work, biopics were often conflated with documentary and historical film genres, sometimes excessively labeled as 'biopic docudramas.' However, Custen's pioneering study delineated the genre's distinctions from historical films and documentaries.

Reviewers of biopics concur that the genre's significance does not solely rest on historical accuracy regarding the protagonist's life events depicted in the film. Instead, it lies in entertainment value and the filmmaker's perspective. From the viewpoint of documentary filmmakers, the primary criteria for assessing a biopic revolve around the fidelity of events and historical precision (Bruzzi, 2000). Consequently, documentary filmmakers prioritize authenticity in locations and actors as educational objectives take precedence over entertainment. The emphasis on event purity and historical accuracy aims to mitigate fabrication within documentaries, with any such fabrication treated as dramatic reconstructions, leading to the classification as docudramas or performance documentaries. Unlike biopic filmmakers, documentary makers do not accentuate the entertainment aspect and instead prioritize the pivotal role of historical figures within their communities.

The entertainment factor in biopics, attracting audience interest, often revolves around the character's romantic storyline (Levy, 2002; Schlotterbeck, 2008). Belén Vidal (2007) stresses that conforming to the aesthetic norms of art films and popular love stories is more essential in portraying the life narrative of a historical figure than conforming to typical biopic patterns. Susan Fellemen (2001) adds that the character's romantic narrative need not solely reside in denotation but also in connotation, achieved through artistic cultivation, technical finesse, heroic passions, and the valorization of gestures.

There are suggestions regarding the temporal scope of biopic films, advocating for the portrayal of historical figures' entire lifespans from birth to death. This proposition has evolved to emphasize two primary aspects: the life trajectory of a historical figure and their substantial contributions to their community or the world (Custen, 1992; Bingham, 2010). Hence, the selection and portrayal of events from a historical figure's life are inherently subjective, reflecting the filmmaker's perspective and imbuing the biopic with a certain ideological standpoint (Bingham, 2010; Spirou, 2010).

*Soekarno: Indonesia Merdeka* chronicles the life of Sukarno, from his childhood to the pivotal moment of proclaiming Indonesian independence. This article utilizes this biopic film as a primary text, analyzing it by delving into the interplay between narrative and visual strategies in shot composition, drawing from Eisenstein's seminal theory further developed by Bordwell. Christian Metz's semiotic theory is employed to interpret the symbols embedded throughout the film. The visual strategy, employing cinematography and mise-en-scène approaches, unveils symbols intricately intertwined with the national narrative. Meanwhile, the narrative strategy, utilizing Todorov's structural analysis, reinforces the coherence and rational progression of the narrative by emphasizing pivotal plot points within the text. The film's locations and settings are not merely backdrops but are also instrumental in fortifying the underlying ideology intended by the text.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Initially, early researchers in biopics concentrated on two primary aspects: firstly, the film industry’s, particularly Hollywood’s, inclination towards producing narratives of historical figures (Oliver, 1993; Hoberman, 1993); and secondly, the factual accuracy inherent in biopic content (Maio, 1994; Dixon, 1998). Charles Oliver (1993) examined the trend of biopic production in Hollywood, perceiving it as a preemptive response to the burgeoning influence of television during the 1960-1990 era. On the other hand, Kathi Maio and Simon Dixon focused on the fidelity of events depicted in biopics, observing Hollywood's proclivity towards straying from historical accuracy in narrating the lives of its subjects. Maio (1994) highlighted the absence of authenticity, resulting in misrepresentations of characters' lives, while Dixon (1998) emphasized the perpetuation of stereotypes due to the disregard for factual accuracy. The inconsistencies within biopics in portraying the lives of their subjects have led to questions about the inherent naturalness of these films (Fischer, 2000; Levy, 2002; Schlotterbeck, 2010; O'Meara & Stevens, 2012) and prompted further investigations into the patterns prevalent in biopic films (Doherty, 2000; Fischer, 2000; Felleman, 2001; Vidal, 2007; Jacobs, 2014; Spirou, 2014).

The fidelity of biopics to historical truths prompted Leila S. Chudori, Bambang Aris Kartika, and Hendra Kurniawan to scrutinize the portrayal of Soekarno in Soekarno: Indonesia Merdeka. Chudori (2013) raised concerns about anachronisms that could have been avoided had the filmmakers paid closer attention to historical accuracy, while Kurniawan (2014) highlighted inconsistencies in Soekarno's depiction, advocating for a film code of ethics mandating fidelity to facts. However, while Kartika and Kurniawan concur on the need for authoritative sourcing to ensure factual representation, Chudori (2015) revealed the early involvement of authoritative sources such as families, foundations, or affiliated political entities with the characters. Specifically regarding Soekarno, Chudori argued that familial involvement stifled the filmmaker's creative expression due to stringent guidelines, such as family approval concerning the suitability of the actor portraying Soekarno.

Identity and politics are key issues analyzed within biopics, stemming from the demands of melodramatic standards (Letort, 2012) or the fusion of 'film with fiction' or 'fiction and film' standards (Preece, 2003). Soekarno's representation of nationality and leadership within the biopic has been the focal point of analysis by Fatima (2019) and Rose (2015). Fatima delineated four core values depicting Soekarno’s nationality: religiosity, kinship, harmony, and democracy, while Rose dissected Soekarno's leadership portrayal.

This study scrutinizes Soekarno's national narrative depicted in the mise-en-scène of the Soekarno biopic, employing Christian Metz's semiotic theory and refining it with Eisenstein's theory of organic harmony.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article centers on the analysis of Soekarno's national narrative depicted in the biopic film Soekarno: Indonesia Merdeka (2014) through mise-en-scène. Todorov's narrative structure will be utilized to scrutinize the sequence of scenes, while Eisenstein's theory of organic harmony will be applied to dissect the interaction between narrative and visual strategies, encompassing sequence, film duration, characters, plot, and mise-en-scène elements. Metz's semiotic theory will further complement the analysis by examining symbols present in the film. These three theoretical frameworks will serve as anchors in dissecting Soekarno's national narrative.
Metz's *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* introduces eight categories encapsulated within 'the large syntagmatic' to comprehend the relationship between elements in films. These categories are indispensable tools for extracting the embedded meaning within film texts. The film can be deciphered using one or more of these categories, namely: the autonomous shot, the parallel syntagm, the bracketing syntagm, the descriptive syntagm, the alternating syntagm, the scene, the episodic sequence, and the ordinary sequence.

In addition to visual elements, Metz proposed an analysis encompassing audio components, categorizing primary quality for visuals and secondary quality for audio. Weis and Belton (1985) summarize Metz's distinction between these qualities, highlighting the significance of 'off-screen sound' or non-diegetic sound, a term denoting sound sources not visually perceptible. This underlines that all perceptible elements are collectively constructed, contributing equally to the meaning-making process.

Eisenstein's theory of organic harmony, detailed in *The Structure of Things* (2006), asserts that emotions elicited in films result from deliberate construction rather than inherent emotional reactions to events. Eisenstein elucidates that the intended emotional response is conveyed through deliberate composition within the frame, emphasizing, 'That relationship is most effectively expressed through composition' (p. 22). Eisenstein underscores that the interaction between visual elements creates narrative cues, affirming that realistic stories reflecting reality can effectively manifest through combined visual and narrative strategies.

Narrative strategies in film are delineated by sequence, space, and time (Cobley, 2001; Bordwell et al., 2016). Narrative is construed as a sequential representation demonstrating causal relationships between events using signs. Todorov (1971), later refined by Bordwell (2016), explicated the narrative structure where equilibrium sets the stage, followed by disruptions and consequent attempts to restore equilibrium, culminating in a new situation marking the narrative's resolution.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Construction of the Greatness of Soekarno**

The biopic *Soekarno: Indonesia Merdeka* spans 136 minutes, comprising 33 sequences. Notably, the longest sequence, lasting 9 minutes 5 seconds, is Sequence XXXI, titled by author as 'Towards the Proclamation of Independence.' This sequence is pivotal in revealing the narrative strategy embedded within the film. Employing Todorov's structure, Sequence XXXI forms part of the 'Fixing the Equilibrium Act' leading up to Sequence XXXII, the 'Indonesian Independence is Proclaimed,' serving as the Final Climax. The sequence commences with Admiral Maeda inviting Sukarno and Hatta to his house, aiming to fulfill Japan's pledge of Indonesian independence.

Sequence XXXI employs a montage format without dialogue but underscored by the non-diegetic sound of *Indonesia Pusaka* song. The scenes depict discussions on drafting the proclamation script, intercut with poignant moments of Fatmawati sewing the Red and White flag, Sjahhrir anxiously awaiting news, and the youth congregating in front of the script writing room. The handwritten manuscript, subsequently typed by Sayuti Malik and signed by Soekarno and Hatta, culminates the sequence. Simultaneously, scenes of Soekarno's deteriorating health due to malaria are juxtaposed with the progress of the proclamation manuscript's distribution, leading to a gathering at Soekarno's house. The sequence concludes with Soekarno's plea for time, waiting for Hatta's arrival, crucial for the proclamation.

These scenes encapsulate Soekarno's magnanimity, framed not only within the
categorical scene but also by Metz’s semiotic concept of the parallel syntagm. The
grandeur narrative is carefully constructed, commencing from earlier sequences. Notably,
Soekarno's dialogue praising Hatta's grammar in the proclamation text is a precursor. In
the montage shots of Sequence XXXI, Soekarno is depicted listening attentively and
responding sagaciously during discussions, further emphasizing his stature. The inclusion
of 'Indonesia Pusaka' non-diegetically heightens the sacredness of the proclamation
writing process and fortifies Soekarno's portrayal as a monumental figure.

Furthermore, the scene where Soekarno awaits Hatta's arrival, intertwined with
his health check, accentuates their equal contribution to formulating the proclamation
text. This verbal assertion augments Soekarno's stature. Metz's parallel syntagm
elucidates the correlation between this motif and the initial scenes from Sequences I and
II.

Sequence I unveils Soekarno's arrest by the Dutch army, commencing with a
gramophone playing *Terang Boelan* song and paper files listing PNI members' names.
Simultaneously, Dutch soldiers hurry towards a house identified as Dr. Soejoedi's in
Jogyakarta. The gradual audibility of *Terang Boelan* confirms the gramophone's location
in the house. Dr. Soejoedi hurriedly turns it off and conceals communist-related books as
Dutch soldiers approach. The sighting of communist posters and the words *Komunist
Number Sidji* (The Communist is Number One) by the Dutch soldiers hint at their pursuit
of someone linked to communism, eventually revealed to be Sukarno.

Soekarno's eminence was manifested when Dr. Soejoedi initially intended to
deceive the Commander by denying Soekarno's presence, yet Soekarno voluntarily
presented himself. The narrative doesn't portray Soekarno as being coerced into surrender
due to a dire situation; instead, it underscores Soekarno's conscious readiness for arrest.
His attire, comprising a shirt, a white coat, and a black skullcap, amplifies this narrative.
The expressions on the faces of Soekarno's associates, including Dr. Soejoedi, upon
Soekarno's unexpected appearance, further reinforce this portrayal.

While Sequence XXXI highlights Soekarno's greatness through the montage
depicting the formulation of the Proclamation text and his request to await Hatta, Sequence I emphasizes Soekarno's childhood ruwatan ceremony, a part of Sequence II
('Soekarno the Boy and Dutch Discrimination'). The ruwatan ceremony was preceded by
Koesno's frequent illness in childhood. His father's incense burning and penance under
Koesno's bed depict a far-from-sublime condition. Ruwatan was an attempt to alleviate
Koesno's physical frailty, culminating in his renaming to Soekarno, referencing the
Mahabharata character Adipati Karna, known for his enigmatic nature. Soekarno's
greatness, as constructed from his childhood, culminates when he reads the Proclamation
text alongside Hatta, thus repeating the narrative from Sequence I through different
events.

Eisenstein (2006) asserts that narrative strategy is incomplete without visual
strategy. He posits that conveying narratives to an audience necessitates organizing visual
elements within a frame, underscoring the interdependence of these strategies to convey
meaning. Similarly, Soekarno's narrative strategy converges with visual strategies in
portraying the historical figure.

Soekarno's depicted eminence via narrative plot finds reinforcement in visual
strategies through mise-en-scène and cinematography. His initial voluntary surrender is
accentuated by his attire, symbolizing his willingness—a white shirt wrapped in a coat
and a black skullcap exuding composure. This costume's presentation, coupled with the
stark contrast to the ordinary t-shirts worn by others in the room, amplifies the impact.

Metz's semiotic category of the bracketing syntagm is employed to analyze the
interplay between narrative and visual strategies. The initial introduction of Soekarno's
figure involved framing him partially, showing only his shoulders to waist, causing a shift in attitudes among fellow youths, Dr. Soejoedi, and the Dutch Commander. The subsequent shot continued this framing, depicting Soekarno's silhouette from head to waist, sharing space with the approaching Dutch Commander (image 2). This visual composition amplifies the dynamic shift in their interaction.

Image 1. Image 2.

The narrative strategy does not explicitly elucidate the cause behind Soekarno's arrest. However, through visual strategies and the autonomous shot category, this rationale becomes apparent. The autonomous shot category encompasses a scene displaying papers scattered on a table listing the names of PNI members. This shot, primarily detailing administrative arrangements, lacks explicit depth. Yet, the subsequent shot, presenting posters of Lenin, Stalin, and Trotzky adorning the wall alongside the graffiti 'Kommunist Number Sidji' (The Communist is Number One), accompanied by the hammer and sickle symbol, utilises the autonomous shot and parallel syntagm categories to reinforce each other's information. These shots, arranged in tandem, engender a new significance—establishing a linkage between the names of PNI members on the files and communism. This new connotation sheds light on the motivation behind Soekarno's arrest. The categories of the autonomous shot and the parallel syntagm further contribute to substantiating the grounds for the arrest. Particularly, the scene depicting a Dutch soldier squad rushing past a wall adorned with communism figures' posters and Dr. Soejoedi concealing books related to communism. Communism becomes a coherent parallel syntagm bridging these distinct scenes. The insights gleaned from this section will serve as a foundational framework for analysing Soekarno's national narrative in the subsequent section.

Narrative Construction of Soekarno and Communism

This section commences with an exploration of two shots falling within the autonomous shot and parallel syntagm categories. The initial shot hails from sequence I, portraying a close-up of a sheet of paper detailing the names of PNI administrators (image 3). Correspondingly, the parallel shot captures a close-up of Soekarno's handwritten text of the Proclamation (image 4).


The shots mentioned belong to the autonomous shot category, showcasing visual elements such as papers, handwriting style, and a pen. The distinction between the first and second shots lies in the absence of a character writing in the former, unlike the latter
where Soekarno is depicted as the author of the proclamation text. This information regarding Soekarno's authorship is crucial, especially when these shots are interpreted as a bracketing syntagm—a pair of independent shots arranged as a montage. The sequence formed by each shot yields a new meaning for subsequent shots.

The shot of the paper sheet indicates one political reason behind Soekarno's arrest: affiliation with an ideology prohibited by the Dutch East Indies government. In contrast, the shot of Soekarno writing the Proclamation text signifies political steps toward nationhood, encapsulating declarations of independence and future strategic plans.

While the author of the first shot remains undisclosed, similarities in handwriting styles between the shots suggest Soekarno's authorship in both instances. If the first writer was apprehended due to communist ideology, it can be inferred that the second writer shared similar ideological affiliations. Hence, the ideals espoused in the proclamation text might be rooted in the author's ideology. This deduction warrants a closer examination, possibly through an analysis of handwriting styles in the biopic *Soekarno: Indonesia Merdeka*.

Four samples demonstrating distinct handwriting styles are presented in medium close-ups: the envelope address received by Fat (image 5), the letter contents discovered by Inggit in the kitchen waste (image 6), the anonymous letter thrown at Soekarno's residence (image 7), and the plea manuscript contents by Soekarno in Landraad (image 8). Inggit's found letter in the kitchen was from Fat, discernible through the "off-screen" sound associated with Fat. Conversely, the anonymous letter was addressed and read by Soekarno, implying that the recipient was not the author.

Notably, the handwriting style of the envelope address received by Fat matches the writing in Soekarno's plea manuscript in Banceuy prison. Both styles also align with the writing seen on the paper listing names in sequence I and the contents of the proclamation text authored by Soekarno in sequence XXXI. Among these, the writing expressing a specific ideology is present in the plea manuscript. Within the descriptive syntagm category, sequence VI comprises events tied to Soekarno and holds a causal link with the shot of the name list in sequence I. If Soekarno's arrest stemmed from communist ideology, the shot of composing the proclamation text could also be viewed through the lens of the same ideology. However, further analysis is required to uncover the ideological thread interconnecting sequences VI to XXXI.

Sequence analysis VI delves into Soekarno's plea, depicted in the film both through written form and enacted via dialogue and gestures. Sequences XV and XXX
also serve as analytical material, representing the onset of the Japanese occupation following the Dutch defeat and the subsequent transition to Allied rule after Japan's defeat in the war.

The analysis commences by examining Soekarno's plea as portrayed in the film:

"Dear gentlemen judges, your court accused us of a grave crime. With what did we commit the great crimes of which you are accused? With a sword? With a rifle? Bomb? The field of our struggle is none other than public meeting buildings and public newspapers. Not a weapon. And our struggle is also simply to fight for justice for our brothers and sisters, people who are always oppressed, people who earn only sixty rupiah a year, while white people earn 9,000 rupiah a year. If gentlemen say this is rebellion, we say it is not. We are here to challenge the humanity of Den Haag and honorable gentlemen judges. We are innocent. But if, the ideals of this struggle are realized with suffering rather than our freedom, I surrender this body and soul willingly, without hesitation. I surrender my soul to this country."

Soekarno's plea encapsulated several key points: (i) Dutch accusations of rebellion, (ii) the movement's aim to fight for justice, particularly regarding wages, (iii) the challenge to the justice system in The Hague, and (iv) the unwavering commitment to persevere despite hardships.

Facing accusations of rebellion, Soekarno vehemently denied and identified himself as a justice advocate, defending the oppressed politically, economically, and morally. The initial shot in sequence I, categorized as a scene and parallel syntagm, forms a fresh perspective when juxtaposed with subsequent shots in the same sequence. The shot of Bolshevik posters on the street and Lenin's hidden book by Dr. Soejoedi links PNI members, including Soekarno, to communist ideology. The association with Lenin, the leader of Russia's Bolshevik Revolution, and the book's theme on working-class rule underscores this connection with communist ideology. Consequently, aligning these stages with the plea's contents in sequence VI, the conclusion of Soekarno's communist leanings becomes inevitable.

The fervor that swept the globe in the early 20th century also reverberated in the Dutch East Indies amidst political unrest. Communist ideology gained popularity, introduced by Sneevliet and further propagated through the establishment of the PKI in 1920. Its appeal lay in championing the rights of marginalized individuals oppressed by the bourgeoisie. While Sarekat Islam initiated the struggle for farmers' and workers' rights, communism's international network led to constant colonial surveillance. Soekarno inherited SI's ideals of unifying Indonesians, fostering prosperity, and establishing an independent state. He perpetuated this vision through the PNI, founded in 1927, guided by the Marhain ideology.

The struggles of the PNI and PKI ran in parallel, both advocating against capitalism, foreign influence, and Western imperialism, prompting a mutual need for support. Consequently, the Dutch East Indies government perceived these parties as dangerous entities preparing for treason and necessitated suppression. An opportunity arose after the PKI initiated a rebellion in 1926, providing grounds for the Dutch East Indies government to justify the arrest of party leaders, including Sukarno, apprehended in 1929 while staying at Dr. Soejoedi's residence in Jogyakarta after delivering a speech at a general meeting. Despite Soekarno's nationalist stance, his consistent emphasis on anti-imperial Western messages in speeches clashed with the PKI's ideals, leading to facile accusations of communist affiliations (Compton, 1954; Teguh, 2018).

**Narrative Construction of Soekarno and Nationalism**

Sequence XV delineates events following the Dutch defeat in the war, Japan's
assumption of power in Indonesia, and Soekarno's return from exile in Bengkulu to Jakarta. This sequence highlights the ideological disparities between Soekarno and Sjahrir concerning the means of attaining national independence amidst the backdrop of the Nanking massacre, a crucial factor in their decision-making. Sjahrir, wary of Japan's unpredictable stance post-Nanking massacre, advocated for collaboration with the Allies (America, Britain, and Russia), stressing the necessity to prevent reoccurrences of such atrocities. Conversely, Soekarno deemed collaboration with Japan as the most viable option to shield the populace from potential massacres like Nanking. He perceived the Allies as weakened after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, while Britain and Russia were engrossed in internal affairs, thus considering cooperation with Germany, Italy, and Japan as the optimal choice for overall safety.

Evaluating the contents of Soekarno's plea in sequence VI, his narrative of struggle in sequence XV retains a consistent pursuit for the populace's welfare. However, the deviation surfaces in the interpretation and enactment of the ideals of struggle through voluntary sacrifice. Soekarno's reference to the Nanking massacre as a rationale for choosing collaboration with Japan contradicted the essence of voluntarily surrendering body and soul as emphasized in his plea. Notably, his statement ignited enthusiasm among the listeners in the Landraad Building, prompting a disruptive response and his forceful removal from the courtroom by the Dutch army.

Applying Metz's parallel syntagm to this sequence, the plea's content implies a collective sense of shared suffering as a nation, fostering strength in realizing the struggle's ideals. Soekarno's use of "I" in the plea, expressed as a plural pronoun, addresses not just himself but all present inside and outside the Landraad Building. This collective pronoun indicates that the trial is not merely of Soekarno as an individual but symbolizes all involved in the resistance against the Dutch East Indies. Therefore, the use of "I" also encompasses the potential victims of a Japanese massacre if collaboration with Japan failed. Sjahrir acknowledged this shift in the meaning of "I," noting Soekarno's ability to rally people.

In sequence XXX (Soekarno and Hatta Consider Readiness to Lead the Country), Soekarno recognized the futility of aligning with Japan. He conceded that Sjahrir's choice to abstain from collaboration resonated with the sense of shared destiny, constituting the nation's strength in its struggle.

Furthermore, in sequence XXX, Hatta's questions to Soekarno, following Kellas's definition of nationalism, reveal two aspects. Firstly, nationalism mandates individual allegiance to the nation's interests. Hatta's inquiry refers to Soekarno's shifting use of "I" from a collective stance against the Dutch to an individual perspective against the Japanese. Secondly, it alludes to Hatta's earlier remark about the differences between Soekarno and Sjahrir's attitudes in sequence XV, emphasizing the necessity of involving and respecting the populace in achieving popular sovereignty.

Secondly, nationalism necessitates two key elements: a national identity and a commitment to reform the national and political system away from individual or group dominance. Thus, Hatta queried Soekarno about his intentions concerning several critical aspects: fairness in the political sphere, equitable distribution of natural resources for prosperity, and ensuring security across different ethnicities and religions.

Addressing the first facet, Soekarno responded, "there is nothing more significant than rectifying a wrong deed without hiding behind uncertainties." Regarding the second aspect, Soekarno remarked that "independence isn't the ultimate objective. It marks the inception. And we are the pioneers of this journey."
CONCLUSION

When Eisenstein grappled with arranging his visual material to evoke sadness, he concluded that there exists no universal standard for sadness. The portrayal of sadness within a frame is contextual and lacks external reference beyond it. Constructing a character's image can be achieved through various shooting angles—such as low or high angles—and the arrangement of layered shots using different techniques to represent the image of Soekarno's greatness, as previously discussed. However, representing a character's thoughts or ideology is inherently challenging. Utilizing literature, figures from specific movements, or symbols of certain ideologies becomes essential to establish the character's ideological beliefs. These visual elements serve to affirm the meaning generated through the composition of particular scenes. In the analysis discussed earlier, the composition of visual material representing Soekarno's greatness, intertwined with communism symbols and books, is rooted in Soekarno's national narrative linked to communism.

Dialogue in the film takes a secondary position and serves to emphasize the visual strategy in establishing cause-and-effect relationships within the narrative strategy. While the interaction between these two strategies in sequence I establishes the relationship between Soekarno and communism, subsequent sequences leading up to sequence XXX, just before the writing of the proclamation script, employ dialogue to clarify the connection between Soekarno, communism, and the term PNI introduced in the initial shot. The dialogue delivered by Hatta becomes the guiding force; for instance, in sequence XV, when Hatta emphasizes the necessity of people for achieving popular sovereignty, and also in sequence XXX, when Hatta questions Soekarno's and his own readiness to lead the Indonesian populace. However, given that dialogue takes a secondary position after visuals and the PNI lacks a visual icon apart from the word "PNI," the narrative of communism tends to dominate Soekarno's national narrative.

If the narrative of nationalism endeavors to be constructed through dialogue to counteract the narrative of communism, akin to Hatta's skeptical demeanor and tone whenever he converses with Soekarno, then the national narrative of the character responsible for scripting the proclamation of Indonesian independence in sequence XXXI exists at the boundary of either communism or nationalism.

REFERENCES


Not for publication.


