Manufacturing the "Nippon Woman": Gender Representation and Wartime Propaganda in Djawa Baroe Magazine, 1943-1945

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Abstract

Between January 1943 and August 1945, the Japanese military administration's official magazine *Djawa Baroe* circulated an extensive visual and textual repertoire built around the figure of the "Nippon Woman" (*Wanita Nippon*) -- the idealised Japanese woman presented as a model of discipline, thrift, and patriotic self-sacrifice for Indonesian women to emulate. This article examines how *Djawa Baroe* constructed and deployed this figure across the final and most desperate phase of the Japanese occupation of Java, applying Stuart Hall's constructionist theory of representation to a corpus of twenty-one primary magazine issues spanning 1943 to 1945. Using the historical method of heuristics, external and internal source criticism, and representational interpretation, this article traces a systematic visual evolution: an aestheticised, kimono-clad cultural ambassador in 1943; a productive, *monpe*-clad labourer and household manager in 1944; and a militarised, weapon-bearing paramilitary combatant by 1945, a progression that mirrors the deteriorating trajectory of Japan's position in the Pacific War. The article argues that this representational shift was neither incidental nor merely aesthetic but a deliberate instrument of Sendenbu propaganda policy, designed to legitimise the economic exploitation of Indonesian women's labour, to sever the cultural allegiance of the Indonesian elite from Western models of modernity, to consolidate emperor-centred political loyalty, and ultimately to normalise Indonesian women's mobilisation into paramilitary and forced-labour structures such as Fujinkai and Joshitai. Drawing on the magazine's own visual and textual record together with the existing historiography of Japanese wartime propaganda in Java, this article demonstrates that the construction of the Nippon Woman produced consequences that exceeded the occupation's intentions: alongside documented harms -- economic pauperisation, the erosion of communal trust under Tonarigumi surveillance, and complicity in the machinery that enabled the *Jugun Ianfu* system -- the same propaganda inadvertently cultivated organisational and physical competencies that Indonesian women redirected into the nationalist struggle after 1945. This study contributes the first sustained representational analysis of the Nippon Woman motif in *Djawa Baroe*, extending a historiography that has previously examined the magazine chiefly through the lenses of advertising, religious propaganda, and military hegemony.

Keywords: Djawa Baroe, Japanese occupation, gender propaganda, representation theory, Fujinkai, Sendenbu.

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INTRODUCTION

By 1943, the Japanese occupation of Indonesia had entered its most critical phase. As the Pacific War turned decisively against Japan, the occupying administration's policy grew increasingly repressive and was redirected wholesale toward the demands of total war. Harry J. Benda observes that Japanese administration in this period emphasised the total mobilisation of the population, the tight regulation of social life, and the instrumentalisation of the indigenous bureaucracy as a mechanism of control.[1] Politically, Japan granted nationalist leaders limited space, chiefly for propaganda and mobilisational purposes; organisations such as Putera and, subsequently, Jawa Hokokai were formed not to confer political autonomy but to convert Indonesian society into a "labour community" subordinated to Japan's war aims.[2] Economically, the war economy prioritised military provisioning at the expense of civilian welfare, producing steep inflation and localised famine.[3] Socially, neighbourhood associations (*Tonarigumi*) enforced constant surveillance over distribution, morality, and obedience, while the mass conscription of forced labour (*romusha*) reached its peak in this period.[4] Aiko Kurasawa similarly characterises the 1943-1945 period as one of "hard mobilisation," in which persuasion gave way to demands that the population surrender its labour, thought, and resources entirely to the Greater East Asia war effort, executed through organisations such as Jawa Hokokai and through an intensified system of neighbourhood surveillance that reached into the household itself.[5][6]

Within this apparatus of total mobilisation, the periodical press occupied a central position. Kurasawa argues that under Japanese rule the magazine ceased to be a space of relatively free communication, as it had been -- however imperfectly -- under Dutch colonial rule, and became instead an instrument of the state, designed to redirect public opinion and manufacture a compliant readership; accordingly, the occupation abolished the entire Dutch-era press apparatus and replaced it with a new system placed under the strict supervision of the military propaganda bureau, Sendenbu.[7] Print media was directed to inculcate discipline, sacrifice, and the ideology of Asian racial unity under Japanese leadership, and to mobilise the population across every register -- economic contribution, food collection, labour, and the enlistment of youth and women.[8] Kurasawa further contends that the press was tasked with producing the "political subject" Japan required: a population obedient, willing to sacrifice, and disposed to accept Japanese dominance as natural.[9] *Djawa Baroe*, published from 1

[1]Harry J. Benda, *Bulan Sabit dan Matahari Terbit: Islam Indonesia pada Masa Pendudukan Jepang*, trans. Daniel Dhakidae (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1980), 52-53.

[2]Benda, *Bulan Sabit dan Matahari Terbit*, 57.

[3]Benda, *Bulan Sabit dan Matahari Terbit*, 52.

[4]Benda, *Bulan Sabit dan Matahari Terbit*, 52-53.

[5]Aiko Kurasawa, *Hubungan Indonesia dan Jepang dalam Lintasan Sejarah* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor, 1988), 123-124, 133-134.

[6]Shigeru Sato, *Perang, Nasionalisme dan Petani: Jawa di Bawah Pendudukan Jepang, 1942-1945* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 87-89.

[7]Aiko Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan Kontrol: Studi tentang Perubahan Sosial di Pedesaan Jawa 1942-1945* (Jakarta: Grafiti Press, 1992), 45-47.

[8]Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan Kontrol*, 48-49, 101-105.

[9]Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan Kontrol*, 55-59.

January 1943 to 1 August 1945, emerged as the principal instrument of this systematic propaganda effort directed at the population of the former Netherlands Indies.[10] Widjanarko notes that the magazine relied heavily on photography and illustration and developed recurring thematic registers -- Japanese-Indonesian friendship, Japanese military strength, nationalism, pan-Asian unity, antagonism toward the West, and the role of women and entertainment -- all oriented toward the construction of Japan as an "Older Brother" bringing hope and modernity to Indonesia.[11]

Among these thematic registers, the coverage of "Nippon Women" in *Djawa Baroe* cannot be separated from the political interests of the occupation government. The representation of the Nippon Woman was deliberately constructed as an image of ideal femininity -- disciplined, obedient, modest, and devoted to national service -- reflecting the values of Japanese wartime ideology (*Nippon Seishin*). This image carried an explicit political function: to shape the consciousness and conduct of Indonesian women in accordance with the demands of Japan's war mobilisation. By foregrounding the Nippon Woman's role in social, domestic, and war-support activity, the occupation sought to enlist Indonesian women as an instrument of its colonial machinery, whether through moral suasion, the management of a wartime household economy, or participation in Japanese-sponsored women's organisations such as Fujinkai. Raisa H. Rosalin and Desi D. Prianti's study of the magazine's propaganda techniques identifies a recurring rhetorical pattern -- the glorification of Japan, the emphasis on Asian unity, and exhortations to hard work and sacrifice -- executed through a persuasive and often manipulative deployment of metaphor, heroic narrative, and Japanese cultural imagery designed to consolidate Japanese authority while diminishing Western influence.[12]

The existing historiography of *Djawa Baroe* has approached the magazine from several angles without directly addressing this specific representational corpus. Raisa H. Rosalin and Desi D. Prianti's study of the magazine's advertising traces how commercial imagery encoded Japan's wartime economic policy of autarky and resource mobilisation, applying Roland Barthes's semiotics to show how advertisements constructed a myth of Japan as Asia's protector.[13] Imroatul Sholekah and Nurhadi Sasmita's study examines how the magazine deployed religious symbolism to court the loyalty of Indonesian Muslims, providing valuable contextual grounding in the magazine's press infrastructure and censorship regime but leaving its gender-specific content unaddressed.[14] Iskandar Zulkarnaen's study of the magazine's military columns examines hegemonic representation within a different

[10]Putut Widjanarko, "Messages from the 'Older Brother': Djawa Baroe Magazine and the Japanese Propaganda in Indonesia in 1943-1945," *Jurnal Komunikasi ISKI* 5, no. 1 (2020): 63-74.

[11]Widjanarko, "Messages from the 'Older Brother,'" 15-18.

[12]Raisa H. Rosalin and Desi D. Prianti, "Propaganda Jepang melalui Majalah Djawa Baroe pada Masa Kependudukan di Indonesia," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 16, no. 2 (2022): 152-155.

[13]Raisa Hashina Rosalini and Desi Dwi Prianti, "Propaganda Jepang melalui Majalah Djawa Baroe pada Masa Kependudukan di Indonesia," Jurnal Komunikasi 16, no. 2 (2022), 152–155.

[14]Imroatul Sholekah and Nurhadi Sasmita, "Djawa Baroe sebagai Media Propaganda Jepang di Jawa (1943–1945)," Historia 4, no. 1 (2021).

thematic register, that of martial coverage rather than gendered propaganda.[15] None of these studies undertakes a sustained analysis of how the magazine constructed the Nippon Woman as a discrete propaganda category, nor traces the chronological evolution of that construction across the occupation's most critical years -- the specific gap this article addresses.

The temporal boundary of this study, 1943 to 1945, is not arbitrary: it spans three distinct phases of Japanese propaganda in Java. The year 1943 marks the full consolidation of Japanese power, when print propaganda began operating in a structured and intensive manner. The year 1944 constitutes a critical transitional phase, in which Japan's mounting defeats in the Pacific War began to reshape the content and tone of propaganda, pushing *Djawa Baroe*'s messaging toward total mobilisation, sacrifice, and moral endurance, including that of women. The year 1945 represents the terminal crisis of the occupation, when propaganda reached its highest pitch of intensity as an attempt to preserve popular loyalty amid a rapidly deteriorating military position. This periodisation is accordingly the most representative frame for examining the dynamics, transformation, and continuities of the propaganda message embedded in *Djawa Baroe*.

This article's novelty lies in its departure from previous studies, which have concentrated on propaganda in general or on its political, economic, or advertising dimensions. This article instead focuses specifically on the representation of the Nippon Woman as a symbolic construction within Japanese propaganda, treating the figure not merely as a visual object but as part of a deliberate ideological strategy to fashion an ideal model of femininity for emulation by Indonesian women. In doing so, it fills a gap in the historiography connecting media history, propaganda, and gender within the specific context of the Japanese occupation.

METHOD

This study follows the four canonical stages of historical method -- heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.[16]

Heuristics

The heuristic stage combined digital and physical repositories. The search began online, through digital archives of the magazine, scholarly articles, and prior studies of Japanese propaganda and wartime representations of women, before proceeding to the Perpustakaan Batoe Api for historical books, printed journals, and a collection of Japanese-era magazines; to the West Java Regional Library and Archives Service (DISPUSIPDA) for regional archives, provincial government publications, and related research documents; and finally to the library of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung for theses, dissertations, and journal articles supporting the study's theoretical framework.[17] The primary-source corpus comprises twenty-one issues of *Djawa Baroe* spanning the entire publication run: nine issues from 1943 (editions 1, 2, and 8-12),

[15]Iskandar Zulkarnaen, "Hegemoni Jepang pada Rubrik Kemiliteran dalam Majalah Djawa Baroe Tahun 1943-1945" (Skripsi, 2016).

[16]Kuntowijoyo, *Metodologi Sejarah*, 2nd ed. (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2013), 89-130.

[17]Sulasman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2014), 93.

four from 1944 (editions 3, 8, 9, and 16-21, drawn selectively), and eight from 1945 (editions 1-2, 3, 6, 7, and 11-15), supplemented by secondary sources drawn from books, theses, journal articles, and verified online repositories, including the national digitisation portal Dapobas Kemendikbud.

External Source Criticism

External criticism assessed the physical and archival authenticity of the primary sources.[18][19] Each issue examined bears the Japanese imperial dating system (*Kōki*) consistent with its purported date of publication -- for example, issue 8 of 15 April 1943 is dated 2603.4.15 -- and each retains the pre-1947 Van Ophuijsen orthography characteristic of the period ("*Boeah,*" "*Perdjoengan,*" "*jang,*" "*djoeni,*" "*tjapik*"), together with Japanese-language administrative terminology embedded in advertisements and bylines (for instance, the credit line 演藝部指導委員, "Arts Guidance Committee"), confirming each issue's status as an authentic official document produced under Japanese military bureaucratic control and thus a primary source of high evidentiary reliability for reconstructing the atmosphere and policy of its moment of publication.

Internal Source Criticism

Internal criticism assessed the reliability of each source's content rather than its physical form, following a four-part test: whether the source is official; whether its authorial competence and veracity can be established; whether it is relevant and accurate to the research problem; and whether the intent behind the information can be adequately understood.[20] Applying this test, the study treats *Djawa Baroe*'s content as thoroughly and deliberately biased in intent -- its purpose being Japanese military propaganda -- while nonetheless highly credible as evidence of the forms that propaganda and cultural control took. Its accounts of, for instance, the veneration of Admiral Yamamoto or the "voluntary" enthusiasm of Giyugun recruits in Ngawi are not reliable as spontaneous popular sentiment but are strongly credible as evidence of the intensity of Japan's indoctrination programme; likewise, its war reportage, such as Admiral Shimada's naval communiqués, must be treated with scepticism as probable exaggeration of Japanese success and concealment of defeat, while its coverage of agricultural achievement and Prime Minister Tojo's political announcements should be read as propaganda constructing an image of prosperity and hope rather than as objective description of material conditions.

Interpretation

This study employs Stuart Hall's theory of representation as its principal analytical framework. Hall (1997) defines representation as the essential process by which members of a culture use language, signs, and symbols -- including texts and visual images -- to produce and exchange meaning about an object, person, or event.[21] The approach adopted here is constructionist, which rejects the premise that media

[18]Sulasman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah*.

[19]M. Dien Majid and Johan Wahyudi, *Ilmu Sejarah: Sebuah Pengantar* (Depok: Kencana, 2014), 217.

[20]Majid and Wahyudi, *Ilmu Sejarah*, 104.

[21]Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 15.

merely reflect reality; representation is instead an active practice that deliberately produces meaning by linking mental concepts (ideology) to visible signs, organised within a cultural code.[22] In the context of *Djawa Baroe* as a propaganda medium of the military occupation, representation theory allows this study to treat the coverage of the Nippon Woman as a dominant discourse constructed by Japan for explicit political purposes -- a discourse intended to regulate how women ought to think and act, and therefore never neutral but always bound to power and to the occupier's project of ideological hegemony. Representation theory further supplies a methodology for analysing the texts and images within the magazine -- photographs, illustrations, and narrative -- with particular attention to the practices of signification through which the ideal Nippon Woman (disciplined, thrifty, patriotic) was encoded and deployed for propagandistic ends, allowing this study to expose how gender roles were reconfigured and reconstructed by the Japanese regime as an instrument for mobilising and controlling the identity and participation of indigenous women in the projects of total war and Pan-Asianism.

Historiography

The final stage synthesises the findings of heuristics, criticism, and interpretation into a coherent chronological and thematic narrative, structured to present the evidentiary basis of each claim transparently to the reader.[23] The account that follows proceeds in two parts: first, a chronological reconstruction of the visual representation of the Nippon Woman across 1943, 1944, and 1945; and second, a thematic analysis of the political interests underlying this representation and its consequences for Indonesian women, before turning to a discussion that situates these findings within Hall's representational framework and the existing historiography.

RESULTS

The Japanese Occupation and the Reconstruction of the Press, 1942-1943

Japan's arrival in Indonesia followed its attack on Pearl Harbor in late 1941 and its rapid redirection of military focus toward the resource-rich territories of Southeast Asia; Indonesia's oil reserves in Sumatra and Kalimantan, together with its rubber and tin, made it a decisive target.[24] Following landings at Tarakan, Balikpapan, and Palembang and the collapse of Allied (ABDACOM) resistance, Japanese forces landed simultaneously at Indramayu, Kragan, and Banten in late February 1942, and the Dutch colonial administration signed an unconditional surrender at Kalijati, Subang.[25] Japan initially presented itself as an "Older Brother" liberating Asia from Western imperialism, permitting the Red-and-White flag and the national anthem *Indonesia Raya* alongside the Hinomaru and *Kimigayo*, and propagating the Triple-A slogan

[22]Hall, *Representation*, 20-21.

[23]Louis Gottschalk, *Mengerti Sejarah*, trans. Nugroho Notosusanto (Jakarta: UI Press, 1986), 45-46.

[24]M. C. Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2008* (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2008), 412-414.

[25]Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah Indonesia Baru: Sejarah Pergerakan Nasional*, vol. 2 (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1993), 189-192.

(Japan as Leader, Protector, and Light of Asia).[26] Administratively, Japan divided the archipelago into three military commands -- the Sixteenth Army over Java and Madura, the Twenty-Fifth Army over Sumatra, and the Second Southern Fleet over the eastern islands -- reflecting a governing logic of total control, centralised economic exploitation, and uniform mass mobilisation.[27]

This administrative consolidation extended immediately to the press. Dutch-language newspapers were banned outright; Malay- and Javanese-language papers were frozen pending audit of their equipment, personnel, and editorial loyalties.[28] From early 1943, as the naval defeats at the Coral Sea and Midway turned the tide of the Pacific War against Japan, press policy tightened further under the Sixteenth Army's civil administration (Gunsei): the independent news agencies Aneta and Antara were dissolved and absorbed into the official Domei news agency, establishing a monopoly over both domestic and international reporting.[2930] Sendenbu, the military propaganda department, implemented a hierarchical system of pre-publication censorship in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya, screening every article, cartoon, editorial, and even small advertisement for pro-Allied sentiment, subversive nationalism, or criticism of wartime economic policy, with violations punished by confiscation, interrogation by the Kempeitai, or forced closure.[31] By mid-1943 this culminated in the formation of the single press corporation Djawa Shinbun Kai, which absorbed the remaining independent newspapers of Java -- among them *Asia Raya* (Jakarta), *Sinar Baru* (Semarang), and *Soeara Asia* (Surabaya) -- under editorial leadership imported from Tokyo, reducing indigenous journalists to technical and translation roles.[3233] It was within this apparatus that *Djawa Baroe*, produced through the Shinbun Sha in cooperation with the *Asia Raya* editorial staff, was launched as an illustrated periodical combining modern print technology with high-quality photographic documentation, intended to penetrate the domestic sphere of both the indigenous elite and the general population.[34] Its content -- propaganda poetry and short fiction, a dedicated women's education column, front-line military

[26]Sholeha, *Pendidikan Indonesia pada Masa Pendudukan Jepang (1942-1945)* (Skripsi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Metro, 2021).

[27]Aiko Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan Kontrol: Studi tentang Perubahan Sosial di Pedesaan Jawa 1942-1945* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1993), 55-59.

[28]A. M. Hanafi, Pers dan Propaganda di Masa Pendudukan Jepang (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1984).

[29]M. Lakomy, "Between the 'Camp of Falsehood' and the 'Camp of Truth': Exploitation of Propaganda Devices," *Indonesia* 44, no. 2 (2020): 62.

[30]Aiko Kurasawa, *Kuasa Jepang di Jawa: Perubahan Sosial di Pedesaan 1942-1945* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2015), 114.

[31]Nanda Nurjaman, "Propaganda Jepang dalam Majalah Djawa Baroe untuk Menarik Keberpihakan Umat Islam Indonesia Tahun 1943-1945," 35.

[32]A. M. Hanafi, *Pers dan Propaganda di Masa Pendudukan Jepang* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1984), 45.

[33]H. Nurrokhmansyah, "Surat Kabar Soeara Asia sebagai Media Propaganda Jepang 1942-1945," Repository Universitas Airlangga, 2017, 12.

[34]RH Rosalini and DD Prianti, "Propaganda Jepang di Indonesia Melalui Majalah Djawa Baroe pada Masa Kependudukan 1943," *Jurnal Komunikasi Universitas Islam Indonesia* 16, no. 1 (2022): 138.

coverage, and printed war-song notation (*Gunka*) -- was calibrated to instil discipline, industrial work ethic, and material sacrifice.[35]

It was within this tightly controlled press environment that the occupation extended its propaganda reach into a domain scarcely touched by Dutch colonial politics: the domestic and gendered sphere. Sendenbu judged that ideological penetration could not succeed by targeting men and officials alone; because women occupied the pivotal position within the family unit, dismantling the residual lifestyle of Dutch colonial society required first deconstructing the very image of the ideal woman in the eyes of Javanese society.[36] Through consistent propagandistic journalism, women's involvement in public affairs outside the home was reframed from social taboo into a sacred disciplinary duty, and the formation of the women's organisation Fujinkai in 1943 required precisely this kind of psychological priming, so that Indonesian women would feel called rather than coerced.[37] Benda notes that Japan sought explicitly to align the devotional values attributed to the Nippon Woman with Eastern ethics and Islamic morality, in order to allay religious leaders' suspicions regarding the militaristic modernisation of women's traditional roles.[38] It is against this institutional and ideological backdrop that the following section traces the visual construction of the Nippon Woman across the magazine's three chronological phases.

The Visual Evolution of the Nippon Woman, 1943-1945

1943: The Aestheticised Cultural Ambassador. In the magazine's earliest issues, the construction of the Nippon Woman emphasised aesthetic and cultural refinement over martial or productive qualities. Photographs and illustrations depicted Japanese women in elaborate kimono, set within tranquil domestic interiors or sacred ceremonial moments, positioning the figure as a cultural ambassador introducing Japanese identity to Java rather than a symbol of military strength. This visual strategy reinforced Japan's self-presentation as "Older Brother," a civilisation of deep tradition and moral refinement standing in explicit contrast to a Western culture the occupation characterised as liberal and decadent. Beyond physical elegance, the imagery of 1943 conveyed profound moral discipline: gentleness was framed not as weakness but as the product of rigorous character formation and ethical fidelity to national values. Domestic space itself was rendered symbolic of national order -- photographs of women conversing quietly or arranging flowers (ikebana) were presented not as leisure but as visual statements of spiritual depth and inner calm, implying that a nation's strength originates in the discipline and refinement of its women within the home. Images pairing the Nippon Woman with cherry blossoms or manicured gardens reinforced this message, associating Japanese femininity with the purity and harmony of nature and offering a cultural diplomacy intended to persuade Javanese women that emulating Japanese domestic discipline was a path back to an authentic Asian identity eroded by Dutch colonialism.

[35]K. Aufy, "Propaganda Jepang melalui Lagu dalam Majalah Djawa Baroe," *Japanology Universitas Airlangga* 9, no. 2 (2022): 140.

[36]Aiko Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan Kontrol*, 185.

[37]Sukanti Suryochandro, *Pergerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kalangan Sendiri, 1984), 124.

[38]Harry J. Benda, *Bulan Sabit dan Matahari Terbit*, 158.

1944: The Productive Labourer and Household Manager. Entering 1944, the magazine's visual discourse underwent a fundamental shift correlated with Japan's deteriorating position in the Pacific War.[39] The static, decorative femininity of the earlier period gave way to an active, capable, and functional figure. The dominance of silk kimono receded in favour of the practical *monpe* -- loose work trousers -- worn by women shown farming, preparing war logistics, or managing household industry; the standard of feminine beauty was redefined away from external appearance toward productivity and tangible contribution to the crisis.[40] Food self-sufficiency became the dominant visual theme, with photographs of home-plot vegetable cultivation and small-scale livestock management functioning as instructional models for a Javanese population increasingly affected by food scarcity.[41] Collective household-industry labour -- sewing military uniforms, knitting soldiers' equipment, producing medical bandages, recycling scrap material -- appeared repetitively throughout 1944 issues, redefining women's traditional domestic role as the "lifeline" sustaining Imperial soldiers at the front and serving as a visual vehicle for introducing the neighbourhood-association system Tonarigumi.[42][43] Photographs of morning calisthenics (*Taiso*) and light physical training also began appearing regularly, an early and comparatively gentle stage of what the magazine would later develop into more rigorous militarised training, functioning as a form of "soft persuasion" preparing Indonesian women psychologically and physically for the harsher discipline to come.[44][45]

1945: The Militarised Paramilitary Combatant. By the occupation's final year, *Djawa Baroe*'s visualisation of the Nippon Woman underwent a radical transformation into an aggressive paramilitary entity, a visual manifestation of the *Sokusen Sokutotsu* ("swift battle, swift decision") doctrine adopted by Tokyo to confront the anticipated Allied invasion.[46] The Nippon Woman was now presented as a living embodiment of the Bushido warrior spirit, in which the distinction between front line and rear echelon was dissolved entirely.[47] Traditional dress vanished from the magazine's pages, replaced by functional civil-defence uniforms -- work trousers, tactical shirts resembling military uniforms, stiff field caps, and combat boots -- while hairstyles shifted from decorative arrangement to practical, severe binding, and facial

[39]Bestian Nainggolan, *Propaganda Masa Pendudukan Jepang di Jawa 1942-1945: Mobilisasi Massa Lewat Media Visual* (Jakarta: Jurnal Sejarah Universitas Indonesia, 2015), 114.

[40]Susan Blackburn, *Kongres Perempuan Indonesia: Tinjauan Historis Peran Wanita dalam Publikasi Kolonial dan Pendudukan*, trans. Gandung Utama (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2007), 145.

[41]Dadan Adi Kurniawan, "Mobilisasi Perempuan Jawa pada Masa Pendudukan Jepang Tahun 1942-1945," *Jurnal HISTORIA Universitas Sebelas Maret* (2018): 78.

[42]Shanti Nurfianti Andin, "Propaganda Media Cetak pada Masa Pendudukan Jepang di Jawa 1942-1945," *Jurnal Sejarah dan Budaya* 12, no. 1 (2018): 43.

[43]Sri Margana, "Tonarigumi dan Mobilisasi Total Masyarakat Jawa di Bawah Fasisme Militer Jepang," *Lembaran Sejarah Universitas Gadjah Mada* 14, no. 2 (2016): 112.

[44]Lilik Sugiarti, "Konstruksi Perempuan Ideal dalam Majalah Masa Pendudukan Jepang: Analisis Wacana Kritis Djawa Baroe," *Jurnal Kajian Sastra dan Budaya* 8, no. 1 (2020): 72.

[45]Kunto Sofianto, *Sendenbu: Alat Propaganda Militer Jepang di Jawa 1942-1945* (Bandung: Jurnal Sosiohumaniora Universitas Padjadjaran, 2011), 95.

[46]Nugroho Notosusanto, *Taktik Militer Kekaisaran Jepang dan Runtuhnya Hindia Belanda* (Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia, 1985), 74.

[47]Dadan Adi Kurniawan, "Fujinkai: Mobilisasi dan Persepsi Perempuan Jawa pada Masa Pendudukan Jepang," *Jurnal Historia* 6, no. 2 (2018): 208.

expressions consistently registered resolve rather than warmth.[48] Photographs increasingly depicted women gripping sharpened bamboo spears in combat-ready postures, composed from low angles to project physical power, communicating that under conditions of total war the boundary between women as life-preservers and women as combatants had been erased.[49] The magazine also depicted women as skilled technical personnel in civil-defence organisation -- operating fire equipment, climbing ladders, leading air-raid evacuation drills -- and, in industrial contexts, as munitions workers whose individual identity dissolved entirely into the machinery of national defence, framed as "industrial soldiers" whose labour was recast as devotion to the Emperor.[50] The culmination of this visual trajectory was the depiction of women prepared for total self-sacrifice, severed from domestic and familial ties and presented as military assets ready for deployment at any moment -- an image that came to stand, in the historical record, as the final personification of the occupation's militarist idealism in its last months.[51]

The Political Interests behind the Coverage

The coverage of the Nippon Woman cannot be read as an innocuous, neutral, or merely cultural journalistic product.[52] Viewed through the lens of critical history and hegemony theory, every editorial choice -- diction, visual composition, layout -- exploiting the figure of the Japanese woman was designed consciously and teleologically by the occupation authorities, who understood that consolidating a resource-rich territory such as Java could not rest on coercive instruments like the Kempeitai alone, since physical repression without the conquest of psychological consciousness would only nurture latent rebellion.[53] Sociologically, the smiling, industrious, nurturing Nippon Woman functioned to project the image that Japan's arrival was not that of a bloodthirsty conqueror but of an "Older Brother" bringing peace and shared prosperity under the banner of Greater East Asia, deployed to erase the collective memory of the violence of the initial landing and to divert public attention from the daily sight of emaciated *romusha* columns and the food scarcity produced by forced grain requisition.[54][55]

More fundamentally, this coverage aimed to construct voluntary civil submission. Through the image of a Nippon Woman obedient to state command and willing to surrender her entire life to the glory of the Emperor, Sendenbu transmitted a subliminal message to Indonesian women urging emulation of this disciplined

[48]Lilik Sugiarti, "Konstruksi Perempuan Ideal," 75.

[49]Shanti Nurfianti Andin, "Propaganda Media Cetak," 47.

[50]Kunto Sofianto, "Mobilisasi Sosial Masa Pendudukan Jepang di Jawa: Kajian Struktur Keanggotaan Keibodan dan Fujinkai," *Jurnal Sosiohumaniora* 15, no. 3 (2013): 289.

[51]Susan Blackburn, *Kongres Perempuan Indonesia*, 152.

[52]Aiko Kurasawa, "Propagandis Media Massa pada Masa Pendudukan Jepang di Jawa," *Jurnal Sejarah Kontemporer* 4, no. 2 (1987): 112-135.

[53]Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1958), 78-99.

[54]Aiko Kurasawa, "Pengaruh Pemerintahan Militer Jepang terhadap Perkembangan Pers di Jawa," *Lembaran Sejarah* 1, no. 2 (1993): 15-38.

[55]K. Goto, "Terjebak di Tengah: Sikap Jepang terhadap Nasionalisme Indonesia," *Jurnal Studi Asia Tenggara* 28, no. 2 (1997): 289-305.

conduct, calculating that if mothers -- who held decisive spiritual and emotional influence over their sons -- could be indoctrinated through this ideal image, the mobilisation of young men into Japanese-sponsored military and paramilitary organisations such as Heiho and PETA would proceed with far less family resistance.[56] The propaganda apparatus also exploited mass psychology by glorifying a superior Asian identity in which the Nippon Woman represented the pinnacle of modern Asian feminine achievement, uniting rational intelligence with Eastern spiritual purity, cultivating both a sense of psychological inferiority and admiration among the educated indigenous population, whose adoption of the values and outlook desired by Japanese fascism would in turn ease long-term political assimilation.[57]

This political calculus extended directly into economic exploitation. As Japan's Pacific position deteriorated, the occupation intensified its extraction of local resources -- rice, castor oil, rubber, precious metals -- and Sendenbu repeatedly published articles on the frugal living of Nippon women in Tokyo and Osaka, depicted heroically as voluntarily reducing their daily consumption, surrendering personal gold jewellery to the state bank, cooking with nutrient-poor substitute ingredients, and sewing their own clothing from recycled cloth.[58] This narrative of sacrifice, dressed in the aesthetics of Eastern spirituality, created a mechanism of shame-based social control: if Japanese women, members of the victorious "Older Brother" nation, willingly endured hunger and hardship for the noble cause of the Greater East Asia War, then the Indonesian population, as a people ostensibly "liberated," bore a correspondingly greater moral obligation to sacrifice without complaint -- thereby redefining the seizure of crops, forced labour, and systematic impoverishment as an act of sacred pan-Asian solidarity rather than colonial oppression.[59] Household-industry propaganda extended similarly into precious-metal collection for arms production, with stories of Nippon women melting their own wedding rings and family heirlooms to produce bullet casings and aircraft parts used to legitimise Java-based collection drives.[60]

The coverage further served a de-Westernising cultural function. After nearly three and a half centuries of Dutch colonialism, in which formal Western education, individualist liberal freedom, European fashion, and cosmopolitan lifestyle defined "the modern woman," Tokyo regarded this residual Eurocentric orientation among the Javanese elite as a serious political threat capable of obstructing fascist indoctrination and nurturing pro-Allied civil disobedience.[61] The Nippon Woman

[56]Aiko Kurasawa, "Sisi Gelap Dai Toa: Struktur dan Implementasi Kebijakan Romusha dan Jugun Ianfu di Jawa," *Jurnal Kajian Sejarah* 12, no. 3 (2011): 301-325.

[57]B. Anderson, *Jawa pada Masa Revolusi: Pendudukan dan Perlawanan, 1944-1946* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 60-85.

[58]A. W. Adam, *Sebuah Reorientasi Sejarah Indonesia: Antara Kebenaran dan Kekuasaan* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2004), 119-136.

[59]A. K. Pringgodigdo, *Sejarah Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia* (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1994), 154-178.

[60]N. Oktorino, *Di Bawah Matahari Terbit: Sejarah Pendudukan Jepang di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Elex Media Komputindo, 2016), 215-238.

[61]M. D. Poesponegoro and N. Notosusanto, *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia VI: Zaman Jepang dan Zaman Republik Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2008), 112-140.

was consistently positioned as the perfect antithesis of the Western woman: where the latter was portrayed as selfish, consumerist, and morally corrosive, the former was constructed as the consummate embodiment of Eastern culture, mastering modern science and industrial technology while retaining moral purity, domestic loyalty, and absolute submission to traditional patriarchal structure.[62] This project of cultural de-Westernisation extended to a redefinition of women's emancipation itself: rather than the individual political rights sought by the pre-1942 nationalist movement, the magazine promoted an "Eastern" emancipation measured by collective contribution to national glory, exemplified by Nippon women whose Tokyo university education produced not liberal political demands but an expanded capacity to be "scientific" mothers raising future soldiers for the Emperor.[6364] Finally, the glorification of the Nippon Woman served an emperor-centred political function, deployed to allay nationalist suspicion regarding future independence promises, with images of ceremonial meetings between Japanese women and indigenous women's leaders publicised to suggest Japan's benign intent as protector of Asian civilisation, while values of unlimited loyalty (*chusei*) -- exemplified by depictions of Nippon women performing the daily ritual bow toward Tokyo (*Kyujo Yohai*) -- were promoted as a template for redirecting Javanese spiritual orientation from local or religious authority toward reverence for the Emperor.[6566]

Bias and Ideological Construction

The discourse surrounding women in *Djawa Baroe* rested on a fundamental distortion: the expanded activity, mobility, and public duties granted to Indonesian women were never intended to secure basic rights, economic independence, or genuine liberation, but arose purely because Japan faced a shortage of male labour, most of whom had already been dispatched to the Pacific front.[67] The magazine's editorial policy also systematically suppressed the emotional and human costs borne by Japanese women themselves -- no image in *Djawa Baroe* depicted a grieving widow following the loss of a husband in the Solomon Islands or New Guinea; such grief was instead recast as a form of ultimate spiritual happiness to be celebrated rather than mourned.[68] The magazine likewise appropriated the vocabulary of Western progress -- "progress," "modernity" -- while emptying these terms of their original content: progress ceased to signify critical thought, financial independence, or bodily

[62]N. Oktorino, *Sendenbu: Mesin Propaganda Jepang di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Elex Media Komputindo, 2013), 77-94.

[63]S. Suryochondro, "Melacak Akar Gerakan Perempuan: Dari Kongres Perempuan hingga Fujinkai," *Jurnal Gender dan Masyarakat* 5, no. 1 (2012): 67-82.

[64]Y. Mulati, "Domestikasi Ilmiah: Rekonstruksi Pendidikan Perempuan dan Mobilisasi Ibu Rumah Tangga Masa Pendudukan Jepang," *Jurnal Kajian Gender Indonesia* 6, no. 2 (2014): 114.

[65]M. R. Utama, "Tameng Lunak Fasisme: Fungsi Diplomatik Citra Perempuan dalam Propaganda Kebudayaan Masa Pendudukan Jepang di Jawa," *Jurnal Sejarah dan Diplomasi* 7, no. 2 (2020): 142, 155.

[66]F. M. Shofa, "Infiltrasi Psikologis Nippon Seishin: Rekayasa Nilai Chusei dan Pergeseran Orientasi Spiritual Masyarakat Jawa Masa Gunsei," *Jurnal Sejarah dan Kajian Kultural* 11, no. 1 (2021): 58.

[67]M. H. Mustopo, "Mobilisasi Massa dan Dampak Sosial Politik Masa Pendudukan Jepang di Jawa," *Jurnal Sejarah dan Budaya* 12, no. 1 (2018): 49.

[68]S. Pane, "Sastra dan Pers sebagai Alat Sensor Sendenbu di Batavia," *Jurnal Komunikasi Jurnalistik* 6, no. 1 (2014): 94.

autonomy, and was instead measured by a woman's obedience and efficiency within the state's forced-labour system.[69]

This ideological framework originated in a domestic Japanese synthesis of two historically distinct value systems, the Meiji-era household ethic of *Ryosai Kenbo* ("Good Wife, Wise Mother") and the martial absolutism of Bushido, producing the hybrid figure of the "household soldier" -- a woman whose everyday domestic tasks (cooking, sewing, cleaning, breastfeeding) were elevated to the status of sacred national duty, equating the sewing of a soldier's shirt with the firing of a bullet.[70] This messaging deployed carefully composed low-angle photography that fused industrial machinery with natural imagery to soften the reader's critical perception.[71] An accompanying gendered hierarchy left men as the primary agents of political and military control while assigning women the subordinate moral burden of sustaining male morale, reinforced through the magazine's stigmatisation of wives who discouraged their husbands from enlisting as a shameful violation of Eastern values.[72] Visually, this asymmetry was reinforced by combining images of women engaged in agricultural labour with silhouettes of bayonet-bearing Japanese soldiers, collapsing the boundary between civilian and military life and persuading women that their labour -- however distant from the front -- functioned as an extension of the national defensive line administered from Tokyo headquarters.[73] A pronounced class bias further inflected this coverage: despite propaganda claims of unified sacrifice across all social strata, the Nippon women consistently depicted in the magazine's pages were disproportionately urban and affluent, with clean complexions, high-quality *monpe* fabric, and laboratory or office backdrops, obscuring the far harsher poverty and hunger endured by Japan's own rural farming women.[74] Coverage of maternal and child health likewise measured women's reproductive health not as an individual right but as an imperial biological asset -- women who could not bear sons were relegated to marginal status, while mothers of numerous sons destined for the battlefield received disproportionate praise, a pattern that reduced women's dignity to a function of "military breeding" and worked to erode the egalitarian family values of Indonesian society.[75] This entire representational system was, finally, organised along an explicit racial hierarchy in which the Japanese woman, despite official rhetoric of Asian equality, was consistently positioned as the "elder sister" instructing a "younger sister" -- the Indonesian woman -- assumed backward and in need of

[69]A. M. Suryanegara, "Propaganda Kebudayaan Sendenbu dan Konstruksi Identitas Asia Baru di Indonesia," *Jurnal Kajian Sejarah* 3, no. 2 (2015): 118.

[70]S. Utami, "De-Westernisasi Kultural: Serangan Wacana Propaganda Jepang terhadap Gaya Hidup Eropa," *Jurnal Sejarah Asia Modern* 13, no. 1 (2022): 221.

[71]C. S. Handayani, "Bias Domestikasi dan Citra Perempuan Jawa dalam Publikasi Djawa Baroe," *Jurnal Antropologi Budaya* 7, no. 3 (2019): 152.

[72]H. Poerwanto, "Mobilisasi Romusha dan Eksploitasi Logistik Pendudukan Jepang di Jawa Tengah," *Jurnal Kronika* 11, no. 2 (2020): 418.

[73]A. Citra, "Semiotika Busana Monpe: Dekonstruksi Estetika Barat dan Penyeragaman Identitas Perempuan Masa Pendudukan Jepang," *Jurnal Kajian Sejarah Kultural* 4, no. 1 (2018): 92.

[74]M. R. Utama, "Tameng Lunak Fasisme," 147.

[75]Y. Mulati, "Domestikasi Ilmiah," 124.

guidance, framing all local Javanese custom and habit as an impediment to progress requiring elimination.[76]

Women's Organisations Promoted in the Coverage

The institutionalisation of a mass women's movement in occupied Java depended heavily on the strategic use of the Nippon Woman as promotional device for state-sponsored women's organisations. Recognising that passive print indoctrination alone could not achieve maximal reach, the occupation authorities used the magazine to promote organisational structures capable of penetrating and controlling social behaviour down to the village level.[77] In 1943, Japan dissolved the independent women's organisations that had flourished since the nationalist movement era -- both religiously affiliated bodies such as Aisyiyah and Muslimat NU and secular-nationalist organisations such as Istri Indonesia -- regarding them as potential incubators of underground anti-fascist resistance, and established in their place *Dai Nippon Fujinkai*'s Java counterpart, the Barisan Wanita Jawa, as the sole permitted women's organisation.[78][79] *Djawa Baroe* promoted Fujinkai through large-scale photographs depicting Japanese women acting as ideological instructors to elite Indonesian women, projecting an illusion of intimate, harmonious "Asian sisterhood," even as the organisation's actual leadership structure enforced strict subordination, with senior positions at both central and regional levels consistently held by the wives of Japanese officials while Indonesian women were confined to technical field roles.[80] At the village level, Fujinkai's structure was extended through indigenous administrative hierarchy: the wives of village heads (*Ku-cho*) were automatically appointed as local Fujinkai chairs, tasked with executing logistics-collection quotas, a mechanism that maximised compliance by pitting rural women against an authority structure they already recognised.[81] The magazine regularly celebrated villages that exceeded rice or scrap-cloth collection targets as moral exemplars, generating competitive social pressure in which villages that fell short were branded as lacking in *Seishin*; substantive pre-war feminist concerns such as the abolition of polygamy, educational rights, and legal equality, articulated since the first Indonesian Women's Congress of 1928, were displaced entirely by an agenda of planting quotas and burlap-sack garment production.[82]

As Japan's Pacific position collapsed further, the organisational orientation promoted in the magazine shifted toward outright militarisation with the introduction of *Joshitai*, a paramilitary formation targeting young unmarried women, distinct from Fujinkai's focus on married household heads, who were trained to abandon personal claims for labour in munitions factories, military hospitals, logistics administration,

[76]F. M. Shofa, "Infiltrasi Psikologis Nippon Seishin," hlm.

[77]M. H. Mustopo, "Mobilisasi Massa," 53.

[78]Muhammad Choirin et al., "Peran Organisasi Perempuan Islam di Indonesia: Studi atas Aisyiyah dan Muslimat NU," *Musawa: Jurnal Studi Gender dan Islam* 13, no. 1 (2014): 32-45.

[79]M. H. Mustopo, "Mobilisasi Massa," 58.

[80]F. M. Shofa, "Infiltrasi Psikologis Nippon Seishin," 68.

[81]S. Utami, "De-Westernisasi Kultural," 226.

[82]H. Poerwanto, "Mobilisasi Romusha," 418.

and mass castor-oil cultivation.[83] Photographs depicted the transformation from elegant kimono-clad women to *monpe*-clad ranks wearing the rising-sun headband (*hachimaki*) and gripping sharpened bamboo in combat readiness, trained under direct Japanese military instruction in formation drills, air-raid firefighting simulation, and close-quarters bayonet technique.[84] *Joshitai* members were further integrated into the *Tonarigumi* neighbourhood-surveillance system, promoted in the magazine as vigilant guardians tasked with monitoring unfamiliar movement within their villages, extending Japan's structure of gendered social control into the family's most intimate circle.[85]

The Impact on Indonesian Women

The massive, sustained propaganda exposure generated through the Nippon Woman image produced consequences that were simultaneously psychological, economic, structural, and, in the most severe cases, traumatic. At the level of collective consciousness, exposure to the discipline and self-sufficiency embodied by the Nippon Woman prompted urban, educated Indonesian women to adopt wartime survival practices -- home-garden cultivation, rigorous saving habits, and hygiene consciousness -- as coping strategies amid the collapse of the market economy.[86] This surface-level adaptive benefit came at a severe sociological cost: doctrines of domestic patriotism drawn from the Nippon Woman legitimised the mass, often brutal exploitation of female labour through the Fujinkai network, as millions of largely illiterate and impoverished rural women were drawn into unbounded forced-logistics labour -- cultivating castor plants for machine lubricant, managing squalid military mess kitchens, and producing burlap garments -- disrupting rural family structures as women lost the time to care for their own children.[87]

The gravest and most historically damning consequence was the manner in which propaganda's construction of unconditional obedience helped enable the systematic sexual crime of *Jugun Ianfu* (military "comfort women"). Indoctrinated by magazines such as *Djawa Baroe* and by Fujinkai's organisational apparatus to believe that any summons from the military government was a sacred duty equivalent to the sacrifice attributed to Nippon women, thousands of young Indonesian women were recruited, through outright deception or coerced family consent, with promises of nursing scholarships in Tokyo or textile-factory employment, only to be confined within closed military installations as sexual slaves for Japanese soldiers.[88] No visual trace of these camps appeared anywhere within *Djawa Baroe*'s pages, which continued instead to display smiling women in laboratories or in clean, hygienic nursing uniforms -- a contrast between the magazine's artificial visual record and the biological suffering of

[83]Y. Mulati, "Domestikasi Ilmiah," 132.

[84]A. Citra, "Semiotika Busana Monpe," 98.

[85]M. R. Utama, "Tameng Lunak Fasisme," 155.

[86]Imroatul Sholekah and Nurhadi Sasmita, "Djawa Baroe sebagai Media Propaganda Jepang di Jawa (1943-1945)," *Historia* 4, no. 1 (2021): 53.

[87]Aiko Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan Kontrol*, 215.

[88]Aiko Kurasawa, *Kuasa Jepang di Jawa 1942-1945: Pandangan Baru* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2016), 280, 295.

Indonesian women that stands as the starkest evidence of the exploitative, dehumanising character of the occupation's gendered propaganda apparatus.

The occupation's coverage also produced sustained cultural and linguistic transformation. Urban Indonesian women increasingly abandoned the traditional kebaya for functional *monpe* trousers, adopted Japanese greetings and gestures such as the *rei* bow, and, among the educated elite, developed a degree of Japanese-language fluency that opened greater access to civil administrative roles -- an asymmetry that widened the gap between urban elite women fluent in the occupier's language and rural women who remained tied to local custom, transforming language into an instrument of class stratification and ideological sorting rather than cultural bridging.[89] In education, curricula for girls' schools were reoriented wholesale away from literature, the arts, and Western critical thought toward practical wartime skills -- morning calisthenics, school-garden cultivation, military sewing, and *Seishin* indoctrination -- producing a generation of Indonesian women with heightened physical stamina and technical competence but diminished access to critical philosophical and social-scientific education, as the literary and nationalist curricula associated with the Kartini schools and the "women's virtue" schools were displaced by Sendenbu pamphlets and biographies of self-sacrificing Japanese heroines.[90]

The propaganda's promotion of Fujinkai further generated acute class tension among Indonesian women themselves. Elite and educated Fujinkai administrators, often serving as de facto enforcers of Japanese collection quotas and labour mobilisation in the villages, produced deep resentment among impoverished peasant women, for whom the celebrated image of the Nippon Woman came to symbolise not progress but a new apparatus of dispossession stripping them of both domestic peace and harvest.[91] This asymmetry of sacrifice -- urban elite women publicised in clean clothing under comfortable meeting conditions, rural women facing hunger, poverty, and the threat of physical punishment for missed quotas -- fractured the cross-class solidarity that had briefly coalesced around the 1928 Indonesian Women's Congress, producing instead sharp class suspicion and localised passive resistance: concealed harvests, falsified livestock counts, and feigned illness to avoid mandatory village labour.[92]

Economically, the internalisation of the extreme thrift doctrine modelled by the Nippon Woman contributed to severe structural impoverishment, as families surrendered savings and gold jewellery to the war-fund programme and were forced onto a subsistence diet of taro, banana stalk, and snails, producing malnutrition and disease among mothers and children across rural Java.[93] Compulsory jewellery surrender, though publicised as the voluntary act of Nippon women, was in practice enforced through intimidation, with families who concealed valuables threatened

[89]Putut Widjanarko, "Messages from the 'Older Brother,'" 37.

[90]Maria Yovita Qwartiti, "Dari Gema 'Iboe Nippon' ke Emansipasi Semu: Penggambaran Perempuan sebagai Ilustrasi Majalah Djawa Baroe Tahun 1943-1945," Repository Universitas Sanata Dharma, 94.

[91]Putut Widjanarko, "Messages from the 'Older Brother,'" 37.

[92]Susan Blackburn, *Kongres Perempuan Indonesia*, 152.

[93]Shigeru Sato, *Perang, Nasionalisme dan Petani*, 143.

with accusations of espionage; the loss of this traditional emergency savings mechanism left rural households with no economic buffer as inflation accelerated uncontrollably, and maternal and infant mortality rose sharply across 1944-1945 as pregnant women subsisted on nutritionally deficient wild foods while medical supplies were diverted to military use.[94]

The psychological toll of the *Tonarigumi* surveillance system, extended and administered in significant part through Fujinkai's female membership, proved similarly corrosive: domestic space ceased to be a refuge from political scrutiny, and Indonesian women lived under chronic anxiety that any complaint about scarcity or any critical remark toward the occupation could be reported by a neighbour, eroding the social trust that had underpinned Javanese communal life and replacing it with a durable culture of mutual suspicion.[95]

Yet the historical legacy of this propaganda proved genuinely dialectical. As men were conscripted, sent to forced labour, or killed at the front, Indonesian women were compelled to assume de facto household headship, developing an economic and organisational self-reliance -- managing barter networks, trading in informal markets, and cultivating abandoned fields -- that eroded traditional patriarchal dependency and produced a generation of women markedly more pragmatic and resilient under crisis conditions.[96] When Japan surrendered in August 1945 and Indonesia entered its physical revolution against the return of Allied and Dutch (NICA) forces, former Fujinkai cadres redirected the organisational competence, physical training, and communal-mobilisation experience acquired under occupation into new nationalist institutions, founding the Barisan Buruh Wanita, the Persatuan Wanita Republik Indonesia (PERWARI), and the armed Laskar Wanita Indonesia (LASWI), redeploying the very drills, formation discipline, and bamboo-spear training once showcased in *Djawa Baroe*'s pages in active combat against Dutch forces.[97][98]

DISCUSSION

Read chronologically, the three visual phases documented above -- the aestheticised cultural ambassador of 1943, the productive labourer of 1944, and the militarised combatant of 1945 -- might appear as a simple sequence of stylistic updates tracking the magazine's changing subject matter. Read through Stuart Hall's constructionist theory of representation, however, they disclose something more consequential: a single, evolving ideological project in which the Nippon Woman functioned as a signifying practice, deliberately encoding shifting political concepts into a legible visual code for an Indonesian readership. This section argues that the representational transformation traced in the Results was not incidental to Japan's deteriorating military fortunes but was itself an instrument calibrated to that

[94]Shigeru Sato, *Perang, Nasionalisme dan Petani*, 143.

[95]Raisa H. Rosalin and Desi D. Prianti, "Propaganda Jepang melalui Majalah Djawa Baroe," 162.

[96]Aiko Kurasawa, *Hubungan Indonesia dan Jepang dalam Lintasan Sejarah*, 89.

[97]Benedict Anderson, Jawa pada Masa Revolusi: Pendudukan dan Perlawanan, 1944–1946 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972).

[98]Harry J. Benda, *Bulan Sabit dan Matahari Terbit*, 158.

deterioration, and that this calibration constitutes the article's principal contribution to the historiography of *Djawa Baroe*.

Representation as Signifying Practice, Not Reflection

Hall's constructionist approach insists that media do not passively mirror an existing reality but actively produce meaning by linking mental concepts to visible signs within an organised cultural code.[99] Applied to the three phases identified above, this framework clarifies that the shift from kimono to *monpe* to combat uniform was never a simple documentary record of what Japanese women in Tokyo happened to be wearing; it was a sign system calibrated to the ideological concept Japan needed the Indonesian reader to internalise at each stage of the occupation. In 1943, when the occupation's priority was cultural legitimation and the erasure of the trauma of conquest, the sign system encoded refinement, tranquillity, and civilisational superiority. In 1944, as the war economy required an intensified extraction of female labour, the sign system shifted to encode productivity, self-sufficiency, and functional discipline. In 1945, as Japan confronted potential invasion and total defeat, the sign system encoded militarised sacrifice and the dissolution of any boundary between civilian and combatant. In each phase, the visual and textual signs cohered around a distinct "problem" the occupation needed its readership to solve -- first the problem of legitimacy, then the problem of labour, then the problem of survival -- demonstrating that the Nippon Woman was never one image but three successive representational codes serving three successive political needs.

The Cultural Code and the Antithesis of the West

A second contribution of Hall's framework lies in its attention to the cultural code within which a sign acquires meaning -- meaning is never intrinsic to an image but is produced relationally, through what a sign is set against.[100] Throughout all three phases, the Nippon Woman's meaning was constructed negatively, as the structural antithesis of the Western woman the occupation sought to discredit: where the Western woman was coded as individualist, consumerist, and morally decadent, the Nippon Woman was coded as collectivist, self-sacrificing, and morally pure, however her specific attire or activity might change from kimono to bamboo spear. This relational structure explains a feature of the source material that a purely descriptive reading would miss: the magazine's persistent effort, documented in the Results, to redefine terms such as "progress" and "modernity" away from individual autonomy and toward collective obedience. Within Hall's framework, this redefinition is not incidental wordplay but the necessary work of cultural coding -- for the Nippon Woman to signify "the modern Asian woman" against the Western alternative, the very meaning of modernity itself had to be resignified, which is precisely what the magazine's editorial vocabulary accomplishes.

Representation, Power, and the Production of Consent

[99]Hall, *Representation*, 15, 20-21.
[100]Hall, *Representation*, 20-21.

Hall's theory insists that representation is never neutral but is always bound to power, structured to produce particular forms of conduct in its audience.[101] The political-interest analysis developed in the Results substantiates this claim concretely: the Nippon Woman's image was deployed to manufacture voluntary civil submission (through the appeal to maternal influence over sons destined for Heiho and PETA), to legitimise economic extraction (through the shame-based logic of comparative sacrifice), to sever cultural allegiance to the West (through the antithetical coding discussed above), and to consolidate emperor-centred loyalty (through the ritual imagery of *Kyujo Yohai*). What is significant, from a representational standpoint, is that none of these effects required explicit political argument; each was accomplished through the accumulation of visual and narrative detail -- a photograph's camera angle, a caption's choice of adjective, the juxtaposition of a farming woman with a silhouetted soldier -- confirming Hall's contention that ideological power in media operates primarily through the organisation of signs rather than through overt assertion.

The Bias Built into the Representational System

The bias documented in the Results -- the systematic exclusion of grief, the disproportionate selection of urban and affluent subjects, the erasure of the *Jugun Ianfu* system entirely from the visual record -- is, within Hall's framework, not a failure of representational accuracy to be corrected but a structural necessity of the representational practice itself. A constructionist reading holds that every act of representation involves selection, and therefore every act of representation involves exclusion; the question a critical historian must ask is not whether *Djawa Baroe*'s coverage was selective, but what political function its particular pattern of selection served. The pattern identified in this study is unambiguous: emotion, hardship, and the sexual violence that the same propaganda apparatus helped enable were excluded precisely because their inclusion would have disrupted the very concept -- willing, joyful, dignified sacrifice -- that the representational system existed to produce. This reading extends Rosalin and Prianti's identification of *Djawa Baroe*'s manipulative rhetorical techniques by specifying the representational logic, rather than merely the rhetorical technique, through which that manipulation operated.[102]

The Limits of Representational Control

Finally, this study's tracing of the paradoxical postwar legacy of the Nippon Woman propaganda -- the redirection of Fujinkai-trained competence into LASWI and other nationalist paramilitary formations -- points to a limitation within Hall's own framework that this case usefully illustrates. Constructionist representation theory explains how meaning is encoded by a dominant power, but it does not by itself explain how an audience's practical uptake of a representation's skills and competencies can outlive and subvert the ideological code that image was meant to serve. The evidence assembled here suggests that while Sendenbu successfully encoded the physical and organisational disciplines it wished Indonesian women to

[101]Hall, *Representation*, 15.

[102]Rosalin and Prianti, "Propaganda Jepang melalui Majalah Djawa Baroe," 152-155.

acquire, it could not control the semantic frame within which those disciplines would ultimately be redeployed: the same bamboo-spear drills and formation discipline that *Djawa Baroe* encoded as devotion to the Emperor were, within months of the occupation's collapse, recoded by their own practitioners as instruments of Indonesian nationalist resistance against the returning colonial power. This finding refines rather than contradicts Hall's model: it demonstrates that representational power, however systematically constructed, is exercised over signs and their meanings, not over the embodied skills those signs happen to transmit -- a distinction with clear relevance for any historical study of propaganda whose practical content (labour skills, physical training, organisational technique) exceeds its intended ideological message.

Situating the Findings within the Historiography

These findings extend, rather than duplicate, the existing historiography of *Djawa Baroe*. Puadi's semiotic analysis of the magazine's advertising demonstrates how commercial imagery encoded a myth of Japanese protection and economic self-sufficiency, but does not examine the specifically gendered register of that mythology; this study specifies how the same mythic structure operated when its central sign was not a product but a woman's body and labour.[103] Nurjaman's account of the magazine's religious propaganda establishes the institutional and censorship context within which all of *Djawa Baroe*'s content, including its gender coverage, was produced, a context this study has drawn upon directly in reconstructing the press apparatus of Sendenbu and Djawa Shinbun Kai.[104] Zulkarnaen's study of the magazine's military rubric identifies hegemonic representation within an explicitly martial register, a register this study finds increasingly merged with the gendered register as the occupation approached its final, militarised phase in 1945 -- suggesting that by the war's end, the magazine's military and gender coverage had effectively become a single representational project, an observation the existing historiography, having treated these registers separately, has not previously articulated.[105] By applying Hall's representation theory systematically across the full 1943-1945 corpus, this study demonstrates that the Nippon Woman was not a static propaganda trope but a dynamic representational instrument recalibrated in step with Japan's military fortunes, and that its consequences for Indonesian women were neither wholly determined by, nor exhausted by, the occupation's original ideological intent.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to reconstruct and critically interpret how *Djawa Baroe*, the principal Japanese-sponsored magazine circulating in occupied Java between 1943 and 1945, visually and textually constructed the figure of the "Nippon Woman," and to assess the political interests and consequences that construction served. Read through Stuart Hall's constructionist theory of representation, the evidence assembled from twenty-one issues of the magazine demonstrates that this construction was neither static nor incidental but a dynamic representational instrument, recalibrated in close correspondence with the shifting military fortunes of the occupying power. In

[103]Rizal Maulana Puadi, "Perkembangan Iklan pada Majalah Djawa Baroe Tahun 1943-1945."
[104]Nanda Nurjaman, "Propaganda Jepang dalam Majalah Djawa Baroe."
[105]Iskandar Zulkarnaen, "Hegemoni Jepang pada Rubrik Kemiliteran."

its earliest phase, coinciding with Japan's regional ascendancy, the Nippon Woman was rendered through an aestheticised idiom of refinement, embodied in kimono, ikebana, and domestic craft, coded to demonstrate the cultural superiority of the "Asian" alternative to Western modernity. As battlefield pressure mounted through 1944, this idiom gave way to a productivist register, in which the same figure appeared in the rice paddy, the workshop, and the *Tonarigumi* meeting, her value measured now in labour rather than refinement. By 1945, as Japan's position collapsed, the register shifted again toward outright militarisation, culminating in images of women drilling with bamboo spears under the *Sokusen Sokutotsu* doctrine of mass sacrificial resistance. Each of these three phases answered a distinct wartime necessity, and their sequence traces, more precisely than any single image could, the trajectory of Japanese strategic desperation as it was projected onto the bodies of Indonesian women.

The analysis of the political interests served by this coverage, developed through internal source criticism of the magazine's institutional apparatus, showed that the Nippon Woman was never a neutral cultural subject but a calculated instrument of the Sendenbu propaganda department, operating through the monopoly structure of the Djawa Shinbun Kai and the Domei news agency, deployed to manufacture civil obedience, legitimise economic extraction, sever cultural allegiance to the West, and consolidate loyalty to the Japanese emperor. This study's tracing of the coverage's documented consequences for Indonesian women revealed a genuinely dual legacy that resists simplification in either direction. On one hand, the propaganda apparatus that celebrated feminine sacrifice operated alongside, and in the case of certain organisational structures directly enabled, the *Jugun Ianfu* system of sexual slavery -- a violence the magazine's idealised imagery worked systematically to obscure from view, along with the grief, hardship, and coercion that accompanied wartime mobilisation more broadly. On the other hand, the same mobilisation inadvertently equipped a generation of Indonesian women with organisational experience, physical discipline, and public confidence that outlived the occupation and fed directly into the nationalist paramilitary and political organisations, among them LASWI, PERWARI, and BBW, that women deployed against the returning Dutch colonial power within months of Japan's surrender.

The contribution of this study to the historiography of the Japanese occupation is threefold. First, by applying Hall's representation theory systematically and chronologically across the full corpus of *Djawa Baroe*'s 1943-1945 print run, rather than to isolated issues or a single propaganda register, it demonstrates that the Nippon Woman's meaning was produced relationally, in continuous negative reference to a Western other whose own meaning had to be actively reconstructed for the Japanese ideal to signify against it. Second, it identifies the pattern of systematic exclusion, most critically the near-total absence of the *Jugun Ianfu* system from the magazine's visual record, as a structural feature of the representational practice itself rather than an incidental gap, thereby specifying the representational mechanism through which the coverage's manipulative function operated. Third, and most novel among its findings, this study documents and theorises the paradox by which a propaganda apparatus of encoded submission generated skills and organisational competencies that its own architects could not control, and which were subsequently redirected by Indonesian

women themselves toward the nationalist cause -- a limitation within the logic of representational power that existing studies of *Djawa Baroe*, having treated the magazine's advertising, religious propaganda, and military rubric as separate registers, have not previously articulated as a unified analytical problem. Together, these findings position the Nippon Woman not merely as a historical curiosity of occupation-era print culture, but as a case study in the structural mechanics, and the structural limits, of representational power exercised through the visual press.

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