



## SPREADING NATIONALISM IN THE EARLY 1900S: MARCO KARTODIKROMO'S TYPICAL APPROACHES IN INDONESIA

Annisa Meutia Ratri<sup>a</sup>

[Annisa.meutia.r@gmail.com](mailto:Annisa.meutia.r@gmail.com).

<sup>a</sup>Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia, Indonesia.

### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 31 October 2019

Revised: 30 December 2019

Accepted: 30 December 2019

Published: 31 December 2019

### Permalink/DOI

10.17977/um020v13i22019p239

Copyright © 2019, *Sejarah dan Budaya*. All right reserved

Print ISSN: 1979-9993

Online ISSN: 2503-1147

### ABSTRACT

*This writing aims to describe Marco Kartodikromo and his unique approach to spread an idea about nationalism in the early 1900s. By using historical research as a methodology, this paper consisted discussion about basic idea that led Marco to birth the writing, which is as strategy to influence the society. This writing also provided Marco's expounded on nationalism and his several typical approaches to spread of nationalism such as bringing historical consciousness and using low Malay language. Marco was successfully creating threaten to colonizer an expressing the pain and suffering of the colonized people within nationalist discourses by the literature work such as *Student Hidjo*, *Azia boeat Orang Azia* and others.*

### KEYWORDS

*Marco Kartodikromo, Nationalism, literature, history.*

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini adalah tentang Marco Kartodikromo dan pendekatan khasnya dalam menyebarkan ide tentang nasionalisme pada awal tahun 1900 di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan penelitian sejarah sebagai metodologi, penelitian ini mencakup diskusi tentang ide dasar Marco dalam menulis dan strategi untuk mempengaruhi masyarakat. Pada penelitian ini juga memberikan penjelasan tentang nasionalisme dan beberapa pendekatan Marco untuk penyebaran nasionalisme seperti membawa kesadaran sejarah dan menggunakan bahasa Melayu yang rendah. Marco tidak hanya berhasil menciptakan ancaman bagi colonial tetapi juga dapat mengekspresikan rasa sakit dan penderitaan orang-orang yang dijajah dalam wacana nasionalis melalui karya sastranya seperti *Student Hidjo*, *Azia boeat Orang Azia*, dan karya lainnya.

### KATA KUNCI

Marco Kartodikromo, Nasionalisme, literature, sejarah.

## INTRODUCTION

A country as a nation which is a political/state community of common affinity, identity and solidarity, the association of a people. Azar Gat, in his book stated that there are several forms of nationalism. The major difference between these forms of nationalism is the trigger elements. Every nation has own history of nationhood. It could be stimulated by historical construct, sincere feelings of for one's place, language, customs, ethnicity, affinity, fate, common destiny, cultural or religions. In some case, literature work brought the trigger element as a propaganda and nationalism.

Colonizers had their mission for altering indigenous society in line with their personal interests through western style education and indigenous intellectual class. However, educational opportunity

influenced the young intellectual to be critical to the colonizer through the literature work. Then, the idea about nationalism was expanded from the print in a newspaper, book or the other literature works. In the case of Asia, root of feeling about nationalism was already existed in the early 1900 and the Japanese conquered Asia. This phenomenon could be observed in the literature work in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Burma and China.

In the long history of rising nationalism, literature works was as a trigger. Literature is an art that develops in human society, which is the art of verbal expression. The pattern of the phenomena was put in place to deliver propaganda. For example, the ties relation between literature works with the spirit of Nationalism could be perceived on the Arab situation. Ibrahim al-Yaziji, wrote "Awake, O Arabs, and arise!(1868) in Lebanon, about the nascent Arab having independence from the Ottoman rule (Kramer,1993). Burma had Thakin Kodaw Hmaing, an outspoken critic of British colonialism in Burma. Burmese literature played an important role in disseminating nationalism among the Burmese during the colonial era. *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) by Jose Rizal showed the dark side of colonial rule in the Philippine. In Indonesia, literature in the Dutch colonial period set the stage for the nationalism, which in the repressive condition of 1900s came to represent an alternative to the overtly political expression of Indonesia Nationalism.

The Indonesian Press contributed a significant role in the history of the nation. The growth and development of the press emerged as the consequences of the national consciousness of the Indonesian intellectual development. Even though, newspaper development was an inheritance from the European presence. The nationalist was using literatures as a good way for the spread of their idea. Indonesian revolutionaries used newspapers as their tools. The newspaper was so opinionated and full of propaganda. Anderson note that during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indonesia's national awakening enormously owed to the Indonesian press and journalists, like Abdul Rivai, Tirta Adhi Soerjo and Mas Marco Kartodikromo, who endeavor to boost awareness of the young nation by endorsing and promoting "freedom from colonialism" in their newspapers. This essay will describe more about Marco Kartodikromo and his unique approach to spread an idea about nationalism in the early 1900s and before the Japanese conquered Asia.

In the historical literature of Indonesia, the formation of the nation was often represented as the work of an elite intelligentsia educated in Dutch schools and employed in the colonial government's offices. However, comparing with other Indonesian literature pioneer in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century and before the Japanese conquered Asia, only Marco never got higher education. He only finished his school in "Ongko Loro" or well known as "Tweede klase School" in Bojonegoro. Marco was so interesting because he was the pioneer in Indonesia who spoke about the Idea of Asian solidarity and Asian nationalism from his article "Azia boeat Orang Azia" (Asia is for Asian people). He was also the first Indonesian writer that so vocal and openly criticize the feudalism and the Dutch colonial government in Indonesia. Based on primary and secondary sources that

related to Marco's literature works, this essay would like to demonstrate what kinds of typical approaches were performed by Mas Marco Kartodikromo to spread of nationalism in Indonesia in the early 1900s and before the Japanese conquered Asia?

## **METHODE**

Using historical research as a methodology, this paper is based on primary and secondary sources. Historical research methods consists collecting systematic historical sources beginning with heuristic writing, verification, interpretation and historiography (Notosusanto, 1975: 35). Heuristic is a method for collecting historical sources through literature study, other sources as well as primary and secondary field research. Verification provides source criticism to determine the validity and reliability of historical sources. Interpretation and historiography become the next step in analysing and turning facts into historical stories in writings. The study of literature is carried out with works on major works related to the research topics. The use of documents was supplemented with data from periodicals, journals, magazines and newspapers of the period in question. The primary sources were derived from archives in the Netherlands documented by European inhabitants, mostly of the colonial government and visitors.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### ***"Batjaan Liar" and Low Malay Language***

Mas Marco Kartodikromo (images 1) was a journalist, author and activist in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century Indonesian movement. Mas Marco Kartodikromo was born in 1890 in Blora (now Central Java), and died on 18 March 1932 in Papua. Before working as a journalist, Marco was employed in the national railway then he worked for Medan Prijaji, Saro Tomo and Doenia Bergerak. Period Marco carried out what Takashi Shiraishi calls "a war of voice" against the colonial authorities (Yamamoto, 2014). Marco's writing is remarkably revolutionary. In 1919, Marco published journals in Indonesian and Javanese, such as: *Matahariah* (1910s) wrote the story of *Anak-anak Hindia* (children of the Indies) to refer to everyone in the Indies who was not European. *The Violent One* (1914) depicted the aristocratic's moral, the youth who influenced of Western civilization, *Mata Gelap* (1914), *Rasa Mardika* (1918) *Sair Rempah-rempah* (1918), *Babad Tanah Djawi* (1924-1925), *Kromo Bergerak* (1924). The novel *'Student Hidjo* (1919) had instill to awaken a sense of nationalism to the Indonesian people. After he died, Marco's writings had been inspiring to the other nationalists and writers, including Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1988) who wrote novel *"House of Glass"* with Marco's as figure.



Figure 1. Mas Marco Kartodikromo (1890 – 1932)  
(source: Rozenberg Quarterly Magazines)

Marco had expanded his idea without fear never hides his opinion. Marco invited his reader to criticize colonial authorities. He encouraged people to combat injustice and oppression. Marco's writing could be defined as a "wild publication" or in that time was called "Batjaan Liar" (Farid, 2008). Based on Colonizer, Batjaan Liar or wild reading is a reading that could triggered a rebellion and the writer called as wild author. Generally, the wild author using literature as a weapon for their political struggle and movement in order to get Indonesian Independence (Taum, 2014). Marco is considered a role model for nationalists as mentioned in the "Overzicht van de Inlandsche en Maleisch-Chineesche" press on January 1 1921 for the courageous protest he presented to the invaders.

Marco was condemning feudalism, although often in and out of prison, he is not deterrent. De Sumatra Post, 19 December 1921\* mentioned that Marco was convicted of spreading hatred towards the government through his work like Matahariah. However, Marco denied that the publication of the publication was legitimate and had previously been published in the Sinar Hindia. In some occasion, Marco should re-write his writings because it disturbed the colonizer. For example, the news from De Sumatra Post in 21 January 1919, Marco was asked to make a statement about his writing about Badjak Laoet in the Indian Rays December 23, 1918 that his writing was not referring to the Netherlands. In this De Sumatra Post it is mentioned that not only Marco but other newspaper writers such as Darnakoesoema from Bandoengsche "Kaoem Moeda", were also considered to have committed press crimes because writing the Queen received a huge tribute in The Hague.†

\* *Marco veroordeeld: De landraad teJogja veroordeelde mas Marco, alias Kartodikromo tot anderhalfjaar gevangenisstraf, wegens het opwekken van vijandschap, haat en minachting tegen de regeering van N.I., voor ue vierde maal gepleegd. Beklaagde erkende, naar aan het Soer. Hbld. gemeld werd, een spotprent bij Pemimpin te hebben doen verpreiden, Matahariah en Rahasia kratonterboeka te hebben geschreven, doch ontkende het hem ten laste gelegde oogmerk(...)*.

† Naar aanleiding hiervan plaatst hij in zijn blad de volgende verklaring: Ik ondergeteekende, Marco Kartodikromo, redacteur van de Sinar-Hindia, verklaar uitdrukkelijk, dat met „Badjak laoet" in het vers,

Notwithstanding, Marco was an exiled and was executed by the colony in 1926. The colonial state was not able to control the growth of this subaltern literature. Typical Marco's writings was so politic and indicating the spirit of nationalism. Marco explained that post-confrontational nationalism began to emerge among the *prijaji (elite)* family in Central Java around 1910 and 1920. Mental confrontation due to the struggle between modernity and traditionalism. The general discourse that put western as the best knowledge and system to be more modern and prosperity, However, it brought a threat to the traditional values of the Indonesian people. It is told by Marco's writing "the Student Hidjo".

The Student Hidjo tells the story about Hidjo, the Indonesian native that move to the Netherlands and having contact with Western education and direct interaction with the Dutch. This situation makes Hidjo learn to behave like Europeans, especially to do how to walk, how to eat, dress, speak Dutch and have a lifestyle like other Europeans (Taum, 2014). This makes Hidjo feel more civilized in the middle of his Dutch friends. In the end, he experienced cultural disorientation and then left Eastern culture which he had held firmly. The story reflects his struggle for political expression and its part in the growth of the anti-colonial movement in Indonesia.

Expansion of nationalism spirit could be seen in the dimension of the role of literature and the language of literature in constructing an articulating various form of nationalism. Marco faced the risk and became an embryonic Indonesian with the spirit of "imagined community" through literature works. The conception of an "imagined community" is confirmed by the nobleness of the writing of Marco.

Imagined community based on the Anderson argument that nations, as well any community in which face-to-face contact among all members would be impossible to achieve, are social constructs, existing only in the minds of those in the community (Anderson,1991). They are imagined as the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, never meet or hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". Nation, national identity and political consciousness are all branches of the same tree. This basic idea led Marco to birth the writing, which is as strategy to influence the society.

In that time, Marco triggered people's nationhood spirit through the Malay language. Owing to Marco's thought, Indonesia should write their own history in his own language. Literature as the invisible hands in the process of unification of the region, ranging from villages, clans, tribes to be a form of state. As Durkheim said that the nation was to be more a collection of groups, subgroups and individuals, it also constituted a system of meaning (Jongerden, 2007). A system of meaning perpetuated with the concept that Anderson stated as an "imagined community". Marco struggled to spread nationalism in the system of meaning people through the language. The literature work

---

opgenomen in de Sinar-Hindia van 23 December 1918 No. 255, door mij niet bepaald de Nederlanders bedoeld zijn, doch alle vreemdelingen, die met slechte bedoelingen in Indië zijn geko:nen, als de Hindoes, Arabieren, Portugeezen, Nederlanders, Chineezzen, Engelschen en anderen, voor zoover hun handelingen slecht waren of zijn(...)

creates the impression to direct the people as a one union. He chose "Low Malay language" to reach out public from elite until commoners. Getting higher education in that time was so exclusive. The Low Malay language could attract native readers. For example: He prefers using term "Sama Rasa dan Sama Rata" than "Solidaritas dan keadilan" (Solidarity and Equality) in his propaganda. Thus, using "Low Malay language was Marco's unique approach to his "Batjaan liar". the work of Mas Marco is a novel that depict the national struggle that illustrate Unequal power interaction between colonizer and colonized, and between nobles - commoners. Thus Marco in his work has a firm idea to fight for human equality. In other writings, Marco also provides useful knowledge about the history of Java in Malay (Overzicht van de Inlandsche en Maleisisch-Chineesche press, 15 January 1924).

### ***"Politik adalah Panglima" and "Literature as weapon"***

Marco believed that "Politik adalah panglima" (Politics is the commander), which means everything should be dedicated to political interests, including activities in the field of literature. This fundamental approach influenced his dedication for the national movement. In 1914, he established Inlandsche Journalisten Bond (IJB). IJB was considered as the first union of indigenous journalists in the Indies (Indonesia). The IJB had publication well known as Doenia Bergerak. Using the term of Weber about a subjective meaning, Marco's did the action that has a meaningful understanding with the social action of others. He influenced people and raising the spirit of nationalism by means of literature as a weapon, especially newspapers. Owing to that, Marco stated: "a newspaper is a very sharp weapon indeed". Really, if you still have some right which is constantly thwarted, please publish about it in the newspaper, look for its secret and preserve it well. This is a weapon for a journalist. Newspapers are not under the influence of big people, rich people, aristocrats and the like, but under the influence of the truth" (Maier, 1996).

His writings were indeed so political. For example, his article "Student Hidjo." 'Student Hidjo' (Images 2), struggled to facilitate progressive revolutionary power to form new hegemony and culture. 'Student Hidjo' was a counter discourse. The situation happened because of colonialism discourse that oppresses the society. He expressed the story in the Malay language to show a distinction between a society with colonial society. He stated also that the Dutch were responsible for the Indies (Indonesia) which was left behind.

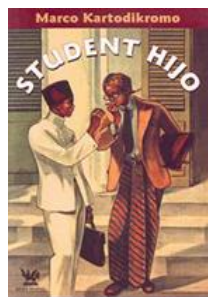


Figure 2: Student Hidjo  
Source: kemendikbud.go.id

Henry Chambert –Loir stated that Marco's importance as a literary and political figure and also put him in the leading of Indonesian nationalism: "Marco Kartodikromo is one of the Javanese journalist from the turn of the century, one of the personalities most deserving attention, because of his education, his temperament, his profession and the contemporary social tensions, the aspirations, the struggles and the confusion of Indonesia intellectuals at the very beginnings of Indonesian nationalism which were concentrated in his writing" (Tickell, 1981). It showed that Marco's works consistently mentioning social injustice, and political consciousness.

### ***"Azia boeat Orang Azia"***

Marco stated that historical consciousness as a key of a diverse society. He thought the people can gain nothing from this isolated position. Because of that, he argued that the people have the option to remain silent, and then lose everything and perpetuate a system of oppression or unity. He added also that without unity, the society will remain without an identity.

In the beginning of 1900s, Marco thought already about broader solidarity and consciousness to Asia. He published the article in Sinar Hindia, Monday August 8<sup>th</sup> 1918, "*Asia is for Asian people*" or "*Azia boeat Orang Azia*". In this article, Marco was concerned with the oppression of Tiongkok (China) people by colonizer in Indonesia as example. He was also mentioning Asia people such as Siamese, British Indie etc (Hartanto, 2008). He argued that colonialism did not merely invent injustice in economic matters but also robbed the consciousness of the colonized people. The article was as doctrine to urge Asian people to be united. He publicized colonial injustice, organized protest and demanded equality and right to the colonized people. The colonies developed their land to become modern, broadening of roads, the lighting of streets, restaurant and others modern architecture, however the indigenous people in the middle of discriminated and left behind.

There were interesting findings from the article "*Azia boeat Orang Azia*" about Japan. He added that the European Nations was threatened about the strength of the Japanese nation<sup>‡</sup>. Although, the article is done before the Japanese conquest Indonesia. Marco has predicted that Japan will be the "master" in the Indies. In this article, Marco has been quoting the article from Central Java that Japan had a strong military and Empire<sup>§</sup>. Then, Japan had been able to take it as a "Toean" (master) of the Indonesia.

<sup>‡</sup>“(…)Bangsa Japan, walaupoen bangsa itoe toeroet bilangan bangsa Azie tetapi dia orang dapat deradjat seperti bangsa Eropa, begitoe Djoega bangsa Eropa ada miris kepada bangsa itu(…)”. ( Marco, *Azia Boeat Orang Azia*, 1918, see more: Hartanto, 2008):90.

<sup>§</sup>“(…)Siapakah itoe Japan? (...)Salah Satoe Keradjaan di Asia Timoer. (...)Ra'jat Japan, dibelakangnja ada berdiri pasoean tentara jang tegeh, cruiser-kruiser jang koeat, meriam-meriam jang besar, pada siapa marika ada taroeh andelan, hingga segala pengetjoet seolah tiada berani kasih oenjoek laga lagoenja. Ra'jat Japan, ada mempenjain keradja'an jang koeat, angker, dan nekat, hingga pada marika soedah bisa mengambil hak sebagai toean di ini Hindia(…)”.( Marco, *Azia Boeat Orang Azia*, 1918, see more: Hartanto,2008):91.

Because of that, Indonesian national consciousness should be careful to against all of forms of colonialism.

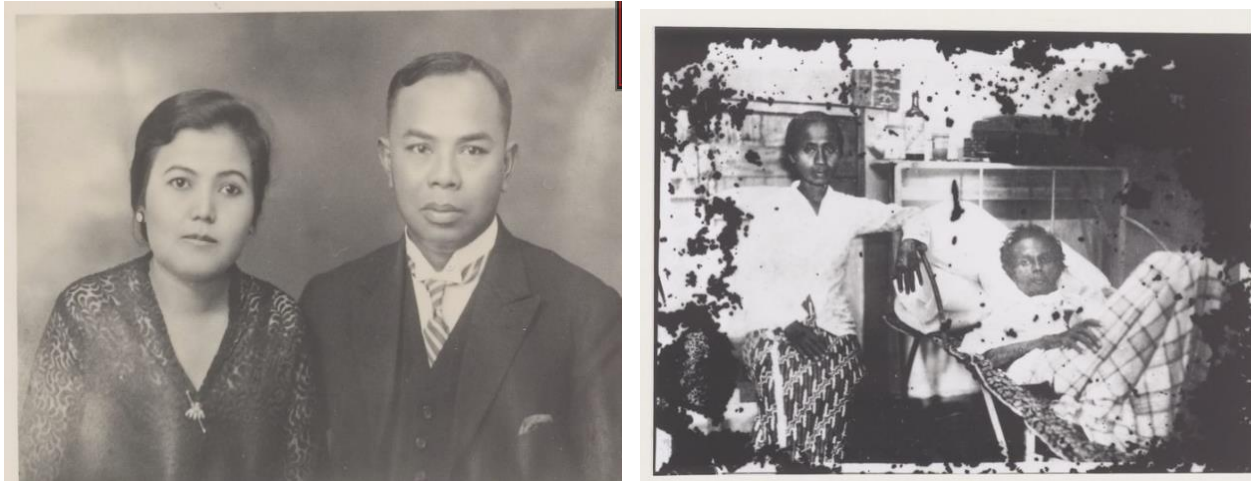


Figure 3: Marco Kartodikromo and his wife in Boven Digoel.  
Source: KITLV, Leiden University

Thus, Marco's writing was constructed through his interpretation about the situation under colonial oppression. He wanted to reveal to the people about the colonialists had kept them in the oppression and darkness and to summon to their pride in their traditional culture and a consciousness solidarity of the nation. Marco Kartodikromo died on March 18, 1932, and on March 24, 1932, Marco was reported that already passed away in Digoel by the newspaper "Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië". Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië\*\* in 1932 also mentioned that He was a pioneer of journalism as well as a rebel, because Marco gave many problems for the colonial government.

## CONCLUSION

In the case of Marco, Marco's expounded on nationalism not only as a sentiment, but as a passion, a virtue that could be acquired and developed into an ideology that rationalized and synthesized his personal ideas and dreams in his writings. Culture, language and fate in colonial oppression were triggered. His works contained the theme of reflection of the turbulent situation between indigenous and Dutch helped imagined the Nation. All of Marco's literature work would move Indonesia spirit about their nation, and prepare it for a major revolution and gaining political support.

---

\*\* Marco Overleden In Digoel: In Aksi lezen wij het bericht, dat de familie te Semarang, 18 dezer een telegram uit Digoel heeft ontvangen, meldende, dat de aldaar geïnterneerde Marco Kartodikromo overleden is(...)In de jaren 1915.-1925 stond Marco bekend als de opstandeling in de Vorstenlanden. Hy heeft het Zelfbestuur daar heel wat moeite en last bezorgd.

Analysis of Marco's writings showed a battlefield of ideology of nationalism. However, Marco has several typical approaches to spread of nationalism in the early 1900 and before the Japanese conquered Asia. He produced his writings by using "low Malay language" to attract every level people in the society. He thought literature as a weapon with full of political interest. He added the idea to raise consciousness of the colonized people in the broader context, such as in his article "Azia boeat orang Azia". Marco believed that consciousness of Asian people to protect their own identity and nationhood was important. Thus, his writings were a counter discourse from Dutch and formal language's hegemony and western style publication. He tried to broaden the range of consciousness and nationalism spirit. Marco's writings was not merely expressing the pain and suffering of the colonized people within nationalist discourses by the literature work but also succeed to threaten colonizer about raising people's spirit of nationalism.

## REFERENCES

### Books and Journals

- Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 'Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism' (Revised and extended. ed.)(London: Verso. 1991).
- Azar Gat. 2013. 'Introduction: Is Nationalism Recent and Superficial?', in: Nations : the long history and deep roots of political ethnicity and nationalism (Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press): 1-26; 388-91.
- Hartanto, Agung Dwi. 2008. 'Karya-Karya Lengkap Marco Kartodikromo: Pikiran, Tindakan dan Perlawanan'. Jakarta: Boekoe.
- Hilmar Farid & Razif. 2008. 'Batjaan liar in the Dutch East Indies: a colonial antipode'. (Postcolonial Studies) 11:3, 277-292.
- Jongerden, J. 2007. The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004155572.i-355>.
- Kartodikromo, Marco Mas. 1918. 'Student Hidjo: Sebuah Novel'. Surat Kabar Hindia.
- Kramer, M. 1993. Arab Nationalism: Mistaken Identity. Daedalus,122(3), 171-206. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027188>.
- Luthfi Adam and , Prof. Dr. Suhartono. 2011. 'Ambivalensi Identitas Mas Marco Kartodikromo'. (Yogyakarta: Gajah Mada University).
- Maier , Hendrik M. J. 1996. 'Phew! Europeesche beschaving!Marco Kartodikromo's Student Hidjo'. Southeast Asian Studies, Vol. 34, No.1, June. 184-210.
- Nobuto, Yamamoto. 2014. 'The Dynamics of Contentious Politics in The Indies: Inlandsche Journalisten Bond and Persatoean Djoernalis Indonesia'. Keio Communication Review No.36.
- Notosusanto, Nugroho 1975. Sejarah Nasional Indonesia. Depdikbud:Jakarta.
- Pospelov. G.N. 1967. 'Literature and Sociology'. International Social Science Journal Vol.XIX No.4. Paris: UNESCO.
- Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman, 2011. 'Introduction: The Emergence of Pan-Asianism as an Ideal of Asian Identity and Solidarity, 1850-2008', in: Sven Saaler

and Christopher W. A.Szpilman eds., *Pan-Asianism : a documentary history*. Volume 1: 1850-1920. (Lanham, Md etc: Rowman & Littlefield): 1-42.

Tarling, Nicholas. 2004. 'Nationalist movements', in: *Idem, Nationalism in Southeast Asia : "if the people are with us"* (London etc: RoutledgeCurzon): 86-115; 250-3.

Taum, Yoseph Yapi. 2014. *Diskursus Batjaan Liar: Kajian Terhadap Dua Sastrawan Liar Dalam Periode 1900-1933*. Jurnal Penelitian. <https://ejournal.usd.ac.id/index.php/JP/issue/view/144>.

Tickell, Paul. 1981. 'Three Early Indonesian Short Stories by Mas Marco kartodikromo'. (Australia: Monash University).

### **Websites**

<http://rozenbergquarterly.com/voor-de-kinderen-der-aarde-leven-en-werk-van-mas-marco-kartodikromo/> October 2019.

[http://ensiklopedia.kemdikbud.go.id/sastra/artikel/Student\\_Hidjo](http://ensiklopedia.kemdikbud.go.id/sastra/artikel/Student_Hidjo), October 2019.

### **Archives**

*De Sumatra Post*, 21 January 1919, vervolging van Inlandsche Journalisten.

*De Sumatra Post*, 19 December 1921, Marco veroordeel

*Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1932, Marco Overleden.

*Overzicht van de Inlandsche en Maleisisch-Chineesche press* on January 1 1921.