

**DEBATING “GOLDEN LEAF”:
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF SMOKING
AND TOBACCO CONTROL**

**Nawiyanto
University of Jember**

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Nawiyanto

Fakultas Sastra Universitas Jember

Pos-el: snawiyanto@gmail.com

Abstrak

Kontroversi telah menjadi fenomena mencolok yang mewarnai keberadaan tembakau dan kebiasaan merokok. Bersandar pada sumber-sumber yang tersedia dan dapat dijangkau, terutama sumber sekunder, artikel ini bermaksud melacak secara umum akar-akar historis oposisi terhadap tembakau dan merokok, serta memaparkan perkembangan mutakhir menyangkut pro dan kontra mengenai kedua isu dan argumentasi yang mereka bangun untuk mendukung posisi masing-masing. Diargumentasikan bahwa perdebatan mengenai kedua isu sudah berlangsung lama, beriringan dengan penyebaran tembakau dan kebiasaan merokok dari Benua Amerika ke kawasan Eropa dan berbagai tempat lainnya di dunia. Belakangan ini perdebatan menjadi semakin panas, melibatkan berbagai kelompok kepentingan. Pada masa kini pro-kontra tembakau dan merokok dapat disimplifikasi sebagai pertempuran antara “laba” versus “kesehatan”, yang secara radikal berbeda dengan kontroversi pada masa lalu yang memperlihatkan alasan-alasan kesehatan sebagai bagian integral penjelasan atas ekspansi tembakau dan merokok. Pada masa lalu alasan moralistik menjadi dasar oposisi terhadap tembakau dan merokok. Kini posisinya digantikan oleh isu-isu kesehatan, yang menjadi argumentasi inti dalam gerakan anti tembakau dan merokok yang berkembang beberapa dekade terakhir.

Kata kunci: kontroversi, tembakau, kebiasaan merokok, masa lalu, periode kontemporer

Abstract

A series of controversies have been a striking phenomenon colouring the existence of tobacco and smoking habit. Drawing upon the available and reachable source materials, mainly secondary ones, the present paper seeks to trace broadly the historical roots of opposition to tobacco and smoking and the recent development of the pro and cons concerning the two issues. A special attention is going to be paid to the arguments built by the conflicting to support their own positions. It is argued that the debates on tobacco and smoking have long taken place, parallel with their spreads from the Americas to the European Continent and the other parts of the world. The debates have been increasingly fierce, in which many parties are getting involved. The present pros and cons conflict might be simplified to certain extent into a battle of “profit versus health”, which is radically different from the earlier battle in which health considerations were initially an integral part of the explanation for tobacco and smoking expansion. In the past the moralistic arguments played a major role in the opposition against tobacco and smoking.

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Recently the position has been replaced by health issues, serving as the core arguments in the anti-smoking and tobacco movements emerging over the last couple of decades.

Keywords: controversy, tobacco, smoking habit, past time, contemporary period

A. Introduction

Tobacco is one of the world's controversial commodities that have been produced for centuries in a large commercial scale in various places, including Indonesia. The controversy has grown from the conflicting views regarding the beneficial and harmful effects of tobacco production and its uses. The controversy can be portrayed as a battle of two different interests, profits versus health. The fact that tobacco has long been produced especially under the initiatives of the corporate enterprises and commercial farmers clearly indicates its great importance in economic terms. It can be understood that tobacco was and still is widely known as "golden leaf" or "green gold" (Arifin, 1989, Nawiyanto, 2009). This commodity has generated a very lucrative business, wide employment opportunities, and major source of revenues for a number of parties (the states, private enterprises, and producing farmers) in many places in the world.

The Indonesian historiography provides a good illustration of views on the positive impact of tobacco. In Indonesia this commodity began to develop as part of the colonial production system run under the Dutch colonial rule especially from the second half of the 19th century. It followed the development of the export-oriented sugar and coffee productions emerging under the so-called Cultivation System (*Cultuur Stelsel*, 1830-1870), designed for Java by Governor General Johannes van den Bosch. In regions such as Besuki, Deli, the Surakarta and Yogyakarta Principalities (*Vorstenlanden*), tobacco developed into a leading sector of the agricultural production system. In the three areas the development of commercial tobacco has been described as a major driving force of the regional transformation in demographic, economic, socio-cultural, and ecological terms (Mackie, 1985; Arifin, 1989; Padmo, 1994; Nawiyanto, 2007).

The existence of tobacco and its use, however, have increasingly become a target of fierce criticisms. The opponents of the tobacco build their arguments especially on the basis of the consumption side of this commodity. The use of tobacco especially in the form of smoking has been blamed for causing a complex of health problems leading to financial and human losses. In this connection, tobacco control regulation is felt by various parties urgent and necessary to prevent further health problems, financial and human losses from happening continuously. Drawing mainly upon secondary sources,