

## BOOK REVIEW

# Krisis dan Paradoks Film Indonesia

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Publisher: PT Kompas Media Nusantara

Year: 2015

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Today's film life demands two main points in its development: discourse and technical innovation (technology). Both must be balanced to actualize the development of a dynamic and up-to-date film. However, in reality the film is still struggling with technical affairs, while film from a critical and historical point of view is still dry. On the other hand, for the world of film itself, the point of view of historical context is of course very important. It can show the development of a widespread public reaction of the position, role, and value of the film from time to time. Through this point of view the world of film finds the flow and form of its tradition.

The book *Krisis Dan Paradoks Film Indonesia* by Garin Nugroho and Dyna Herlina S are efforts to balance the world of film especially in historical point of view. This book provides an understanding that the presence of the film cannot be separated from the context of the time the film was made. Even movies are always relational to what is around them. In the introductory section of this book, Bambang Sugiharto (Professor of Aesthetics at Parahyangan University) explained that this book shows how the film grew as a superstructure of the urban life formed from colonialism and as an unexpected consequence of the change in a society, marked by so many paradoxes.

Systematically, Garin and Dyna Herlina present this book's systematically in a linear way on the history of film and the political context as well as a regime that lives and influences the film's development. This book consists of six chapters, in which each chapters has a continuation of history, so it cannot be separated. In understanding this book, readers are invited to explore the national history of Indonesia from the calendar to the volatile movements in some areas, all of which affect the type and development of a film in the country.

The first chapter opens with a discussion of the urban art (1900-1930). Originally, the base of the birth of the film is mentioned that film and art performance cannot be separated from the economic and political condition (Dutch East Indies). The history of a film as a projected art form is often associated with the aspect formulas in Javanese *wayang kulit*, especially during the silent film when the source of the music is live music in the theatre (page 12). This is reinforced by Garin and Dyna's exposure on page 19, stating that long

before the presence of Hindi films, the films were familiar with various performing arts performances such as *wayang*, *stambul* comedy, and theatre. The popularity of these arts came with the modernization of the Dutch East Indies government on the basis of ethical politics (repayment).

In this first chapter, the book through various data explores the existence of homeland film in the early colonialism of Indies-Dutch government. Art in the Dutch East Indies helped prepare the film audience in the context of social, cultural, and spectacle so that the presence of the film received by the community at that time. The development of arts such as *stambul* comedy, ketoprak, ludruk and skits are series of arts that eventually became the background of the homeland films. The filmmakers of the early period began their arts career through the above theatrical groups.

The film in this colonial period seems to be a bastion of defense for traditional arts, it is explained that the history that the growth of a film is always accompanied by concerns about the death of traditional art and its values (page 33). This early chapter epilogue gives an illustration that the performing arts and films do grow as part of the growth of urban society. The film embraces the aspirations of the Indies-Dutch modernity, both in pictures and technology. Initial films are seen as modern media that have the ability to reach a large audience through mechanical reproduction. The presence of films in the Dutch East Indies is part of the internationalization process that continues to color the development of the next film. The growth of performing arts or known as the entertainment including film, never escape from the growth of the city, technology and industry of the 19th century in the Dutch East Indies. As the first story film, *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* movie (1926), shows the relationship of the film with other art, both *wayang orang* and play. The presence of the first story film is also a form of paradox between the concerns of caring for the art with the demands of entertainment and new value, as well as the role of power in supporting it.

Chapter two opens with a discussion of the two-faced economy and its relation to the entertainment industry. On one hand, crisis causes the difficulty of getting production costs and weak purchasing power. On the other hand the society demands entertainment to forget about their crisis. The above statement opens the issue of film development relating to the economic crisis that took place in the colonial period. The economic depression became a turning point for the revival of the entertainment industry, including in the Indies at the time. In the midst of economic crush, cinemas began to be visited to relieve fatigue.

In the second chapter of this book, it becomes clear that the paradox have taken place in the development of the film. The paradox is that the film must fight the economic crisis that is hitting while the demand for the presence of the film is increasing because the film is a way for the society to escape from their troubles. In the post-colonial period, awareness of nationalism and access to education had an impact on the form of expression and entertainment both literary and theatrical works that gave effect to Indonesian films. The forms of entertainment from theatrical to film were used as propaganda tools by the colonial rulers, both in the Dutch and Japanese periods, which gave birth to different forms of censorship and different forms of technological transformation and knowledge.

Perspectives in the third chapter of the *Krisis Dan Paradoks Film Indonesia* books were diverted to the post-World War II, the Cold War (1947-1949). This resulted in the birth of two giant countries of the time, which is the United States and the Soviet Union. Cold War turned out to affect the life of politics and Indonesian culture. In Indonesia came the organization of the People's Culture Institute (LEKRA, 1950) affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). On the other hand, Institute Muslim Artist Cultural (LESBUMI, 1962) was born, which is an extension of Nadhlatul Ulama (NU).

The LEKRA party is very active in boycotting American films. The turmoil in 1965 which was the movement of this ideology extended to films of the homeland affected. In this era of political awareness, Indonesian film organization comes to take the society's attention. Film organizations began to be included in political parties, then formed the film organization as the forerunner of a new generation of Indonesian films.

After 1965, President Soeharto runs the military politics in a military and censorship way imposed in various dimensions of life including film. Since then, the propaganda through the film on the history of September 30, 1965 and the heroism of Suharto was made to strengthen the propaganda of communist danger and political stability. The film that exist in middle of an ideological war emerged from a film that used to be an entertainment to become an ideological vehicle to maintain power.

The fourth chapter of this book is entitled *Globalisme Semu* (1970-1985), focusing on the pop culture that established its existence in 1970. On page 1941, it is mentioned that the dynamics of films are always associated with the growth of urban cities and popular culture to fill the psychological needs of a city man. The 1970s where urbanization growth was remarkable, and opened up space for collaboration between infrastructure as well as new emerging communications and information technologies.

The presence of television began to spread across the country in this period, television that was originally built as a spectacle of the world for houses is always reciprocal with the development of the film that was originally built as audio-visual dish of the world outside the home. Therefore, the dynamics of film cannot be separated from the history of television development. The New Order regime mobilized the legal system, propaganda strategy and control through the Information Department which oversees the entire film organization supported by the Ministry of Education and the Department of Defence and the Coordinating Ministry for Political and Security Affairs.

Uniquely, this era became a golden period of popular culture and film. Popular culture (television, comics, novels, commercials, magazines, and radio) grows and fosters with the world of film. This era is also marked by the birth of a popular cultural and artistic centre, Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) in Jakarta as well as teenagers halls. Short film movement was born in this era that was pioneered by those who proceeded early in the Jakarta Arts Institute, in which then gave birth to short films *avant-gard*.

The continuation of the fourth chapter discussion in this book continues in the fifth chapter which takes the title of Crisis in the Midst of Globalization. In 1998, amid

the economic crisis that hit Asia, about two weeks before the momentum of Soeharto's downfall, the anti-Suharto political situation mounted even more. As a result of the economic crisis and globalism that are not fully censored by the Soeharto regime, local popular culture products that are the source of the film's creation are in crisis because they have to compete with global popular culture products.

Film life is always related to the history of the rapidly evolving entertainment technology. The acceleration of communications technology is in line with the demands of entertainment that does not only present in the public sphere but also into the homes of hundreds of millions of Indonesians. On the other hand, this period is marked by the inclusion of video technology. The video gave birth to access movies outside the cinema and television. The rapid acceleration of the rapidly changing video format of die-and-go video technology and the decline of the film laboratory's life-cycle shows that the government is making the audience to become a consumptive market. In this period, the 'schoolgirl' specifically from the IKJ (Jakarta Arts Institute) encouraged the growth of short films and independent cinema movements.

Indonesian films, like other popular local cultural products, does no longer live in the golden age of the entertainment industry. Indonesian films have to compete with various types of entertainment and techno capitalist that grow extraordinary, such as television, video, game technology and a variety of cultural products as well as new global lifestyle. This is followed by the growth of various forms of entertainment in the public space as the birth of shopping centers, cafes, and so forth. At the end of this chapter, the author concludes with the statement that the 1998 period toppled Soeharto's fall and marked the birth of a new generation of films in a transitional political situation. Coinciding with the fall of the Soeharto regime, the film titled *Daun di Atas Bantal*, produced by Christine Hakim was screened in Un Certain Regard program at the Cannes Film Festival in France and became a popular film in Indonesia that was able to wake the audience in the transition period. Christine Hakim became an icon that has awoken Indonesian film since 1970s until now when this book is written.

In the last chapter of this book, the sixth chapter entitled Euphoria of Democracy (1998-2003) discusses how the post-New Order era marked the era of democracy or freedom. Reading the resurgence of films in the 2000s cannot be separated from political acceleration, especially those that produce political products that affect the sharing of life sectors including movies. The collapse of the New Order brought fresh air to the communications media industry in Indonesia. If previously print and broadcast media were strictly controlled by the authorities. Reforms undermined that control. Printed and television media that had previously dominated Indonesia to get a new partner, the digital media. The presence of digital technology changed the face of pop culture in Indonesia. After video technology (laser disc, VCD, DVD) became a new medium of popular culture, post 1998 internet presence continued to spread.

The late-2013 period is a paradoxical era, between the stagnation of film politics and the growth of a new vanguard of film actors, between political saturation and the emergence of a new generation that won numerous prestigious awards at several international festivals, between the audience crisis and the explosion of spectators for a number of phenomenal films, the fall of Indonesian film and the consistency of working a number of film directors and producers. Although the system and regulation did not change, accompanied by the crisis of the audience and no local film protection policy, Indonesian film is able to continue giving birth to a new generation by sharing perspectives and diverse backgrounds. This is the real power of Indonesian cinema.

The book *Krisis Dan Paradoks Film Indonesia* explores the many contradictory tensions in each age. This book comes more as a long essay trying to dig certain critical histories and perspectives and seek wisdom (insight) for the direction of further film development. From this angle, this book is an important milestone in the formation of Indonesian film discourse.