Review Essays

Film Studies in Indonesia *An Experiment of a New Generation*

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This essay aims to discuss the state of the art of the study of Indonesian cinema with a special focus on what is being written in Indonesia. Although the number of academic publications on the subject within and outside the country has grown in the past decade, it is still relatively small in comparison to scholarship on other Asian cinemas from Japan, China, and South Korea. This demands us to look at different kinds of writing and publishing practices in Indonesia, including the publication of more popular journals outside of academia that are mostly published online. Beyond the problem of limited sources, delving into this specific local practice of writing and publishing also allows us to examine the larger socio-political contexts with regards to the

ideas of nation, citizenship, and experiments in cultural production in post authoritarian Indonesia.

My interest in Indonesian cinema began in 2005, when I started compiling a bibliography to prepare for my Master's thesis in the United States. It was the first time that I noticed that Indonesia had a long history of national cinema, with the first film made in the Dutch colony in 1926, and that it had produced more films than many countries in South East Asia. However, I was immediately confronted with the scarcity of writing on this subject. With only a handful of books available in English, Indonesian cinema was hardly a 'field.' In this lonely path, I decided to find allies. As film programs, courses, and publications were almost non-existent back home, I became acquainted with young film-makers, critics, and activists interested in the study of Indonesian cinema, including Ekky Imanjaya and Eric Sasono, well-known film critics and founders of the online film journal *Rumah Film*, and Tito Imanda, a filmmaker who at that time was also in the U.S., writing a thesis on the political economy of Indonesian cinema. Twelve years later, film studies has become an emerging field in the country, and the bibliography on Indonesian cinema has expanded. Monographs in English are still rare, but there have been more theses, dissertations, journal articles, and book chapters published in English and Indonesian. In early 2017, the Association of Indonesian Film Scholars was established, involving more people beyond the small circle I knew in 2005.

Recent publications on Indonesian cinema demonstrate an attempt in the past decade to establish the field of film studies in Indonesia. I argue that the formation of the field, largely shaped by independent writers and communities in its initial stage, took place outside of academia. I further argue that this should be contextualized within the changing landscape of cultural production after the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998. Shaped by the narratives of the student movement and a wave of democratization that followed, a new generation of artists, activists, and scholars emerged and transformed the cultural fields—including cinema—with various kinds of cultural practice that have projected new ideas about nation and citizenship. Embracing a cosmopolitan worldview and a DIY (Do It Yourself) mode of production, this generation rehearses what I call 'the scenario of experiment' outside the confinement of the state and formal institutions in order to make cultural intervention. Underlining that film studies in Indonesia is part of the post-1998 generation's experiments, I will provide an overview of existing studies on Indonesian cinema, describe the characteristics of the post-1998 film generation, and identify three types of publication that show experiments at home as well as transnational trajectories as factors that contribute to the emergence of film studies in the country.

Studies on Indonesian Cinema

Until the mid 2000s, other than very few articles such as Hanan (1995) and Biran (2001), books on Indonesian cinema available in English were limited. These books came from the disciplines outside film studies and focused on films during the Soeharto regime. Three texts that have been widely cited are *Indonesian Cinema. National Culture on Screen* (1991) by anthropologist Karl Heider, who conducted his research on Indonesian cinema while doing a field work in West Sumatra; *Shadows on the Silver Screen* (1990) by former film critic Salim Said, who based the book on his 1977 PhD thesis in political science before he abandoned his writings on film to pursue a career in politics; and *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order* (1994) by scholar of media and politics Krishna Sen. Also developed from a PhD thesis in political science, Sen's book is probably the most well-known, pioneering work that examines the relations between nation, state power, and cinema in Indonesia.

Karl Heider's book aims to look for the idea of 'Indonesian-ness' in Indonesian 'genre films', which he describes as formula films in contrast to 'auteur films' that project strong artistic statements. While Heider has initiated a scholarly interest in what was considered low-brow culture such as horror films, a specific genre that is not given much attention in the works of Sen and Said, the idea that a distinctive 'Indonesian culture' predicates Indonesian cinema is complicated by the fact that the Indonesian film industry has always been exposed to transnational cultural and capital forces. Salim Said's central questions, on the other hand, revolve around why Indonesia has so many low quality films imitating Hollywood and why the representation of Indonesian reality, phrased as 'the real face of Indonesia', is almost absent from the screen (Said 1991: 3–4). The commercialism of cinema, according to Said, is rooted in the origin of Indonesian cinema as a commodity produced and consumed by Chinese Indonesians. By observing the roles of Shanghai-affiliated Chinese Indonesians within the history of Indonesian cinema, Said—perhaps unconsciously—has led us to conclude that transnationalism in the Indonesian film industry is not new. His historical research allows us to see how Indonesian cinema has been shaped by various global cinematic aesthetics including Hollywood action films, Chinese melodrama, Japanese propaganda, and Indian tear-jerkers. These transnational connections, albeit unexplored, certainly problematize Karl Heider's argument about Indonesian cinema as a reflection of 'national culture'. However, by using the term 'the real face of Indonesia,' Said, like Heider, does not problematize the notion of 'Indonesia' and treats it as a fixed category.

Krishna Sen engages with other disciplines, particularly Asian studies, film studies, and feminist studies, in order to enrich her political science approaches. She argues that the New Order censorship, film policy, and institutions explain why Indonesian cinema, regardless of the themes and genres, tend to project the political ideologies of the right-wing militaristic regime (Sen 1994: 6). Sen offers a valuable insight in understanding how a dictatorship regime exploits cinema as a political tool. Her conception of power, however, is heavily centralized on the state and disregards the possibilities for negotiation and resistance hinted by Heider, who states that Indonesian filmmakers could always find a leeway through a culture of indirectness, or by Said, who identifies a number of instances where filmmakers had the power to lobby the government to produce certain policies for their benefits.

Heider, Said, and Sen have each made a significant contribution to the study of Indonesian cinema. The younger generation of scholars, who began conducting their research after 2000, use these texts as an entry point to interrogate their ideas, analyze new contexts, and explore different trajectories of theoretical approaches. Some younger scholars are interested in the changes that have taken place after the 1998 *Reformasi* while identifying that the 'ghosts' or legacy of the old regime still persist. Three PhD theses published between 2005–2016 focus on post-1998 film culture. Katinka van Heeren's dissertation (Leiden University), which has been published as a book titled *Contemporary Indonesian Film. Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past* (2012), examines discourses such as censorship, history, and religion through mainstream as well as alternative practices of film production, distribution, and exhibition. Thomas Barker's dissertation, *A Cultural Economy of the Contemporary Indonesian Film Industry* (2011), focuses on commercial films and provides an insightful analysis of the revitalization of the film industry since 1998. My own PhD thesis, *The Wild Child's Desire. Cinema, Sexual Politics, and the Experimental Nation in Post-Suharto Indonesia* (2014), views film practice as cultural activism and examines how the post-1998 generation redefines the nation through sexual politics. Van Heeren, Barker, and I are affiliated with the Association of Southeast Asian Cinemas (ASEAC), a regional Southeast Asian film network founded in 2004. In the later part of this essay, I return to ASEAC as a transnational space that has influenced writing, publishing, and networking practices of the new generation of Indonesian film scholars.

Scholars who write and publish their work after 2000 tend to be more critically engaged with various perspectives from the discipline of film studies. Dafna Rupin's book on movie-going practice and early cinema in Indonesia, *The Komedi Bioscoop. The Emergence of Movie-Going in Colonial Indonesia* (2016), is in line with the development of 'new cinema history' in the field of

film studies since the 1990s, which moves away from textual analysis to cultural history, with an emphasis on the circulation and consumption of cinema. Also engaging with film history, Dag Yngvesson's dissertation, *Non-Aligned Features: The Coincidence of Modernity and the Screen in Indonesia* (2016) focuses on post-independence Indonesian cinema to examine the roles of Western technologies and ideas as catalysts for the development of nationalism and national cinema. On the other spectrum of film studies, while feminist and queer theories received little attention in the past studies on Indonesian cinema (except for Krishna Sen's book, which contains a chapter on the representation of women in New Order cinema), gender and sexuality become an important focus in contemporary studies on Indonesian cinema. Ben Murtagh's *Genders and Sexualities in Indonesian Cinema: Constructing Gay, Lesbi, and Waria Identities on Screen* (2013) deploys film theory and queer theory to look at images of non-normative sexualities in Indonesian cinema, whereas Alicia Izharuddin's *Gender and Islam in Indonesian Cinema* (2017) focuses on the representation of women in the popular genre of 'Islamic' cinema. These texts demonstrate the urgency of an analysis of gender in post-Soeharto era, in which political freedom is marked by the more prominent articulations of gender and sexuality in arts and culture. To some extent, a more diverse theoretical exploration found in these contemporary texts has also affected the perspectives on Indonesian cinema and the ways in which Indonesian writers think about film studies as a field.

The New Generation and the Formation of Film Studies

While the above-mentioned single-authored books and dissertations were written in English and circulated outside Indonesia, it is notable that a new generation of Indonesian intellectuals have been actively writing about Indonesian cinema both within and outside the national borders. Their writing practice, its connection to the larger landscape of cultural production, and its contribution to the emergence of film studies in Indonesia are the main interests of this essay. Although I use the term 'Indonesian writers/ critics/ scholars,' I acknowledge the complexity of the national category regarding the fact that some Indonesian scholars are now living outside Indonesia and that the roles of non-Indonesian scholars have been equally influential in shaping the directions of Indonesian cinema. In this essay, however, 'Indonesian' helps to emphasize citizenship practice, which includes the practice of redefining home and a movement away from home largely shaped by the 1998 political reform. I view Indonesian film critics and scholars as part of the post-Soeharto

film generation, who transformed the cultural landscape after a decade of dormant state in the film industry in the 1990s.

In the late 1990s, when many film directors, producers, and actors had moved to the television business due to the decline of the film industry, young people emerged and revived Indonesian cinema by introducing new thematic concerns as well as new ways of producing, exhibiting, and distributing films. The film that is often regarded as a pioneering work that started the Indonesian cinema revival is *Kuldesak* (1996; dir. Mira Lesmana, Nan Achnas, Riri Riza, and Rizal Mantovani). An omnibus of four shorts about youth in the urban space, *Kuldesak* was a low-budget independent film that inspired others to tell their own stories—mostly those revolving around young people—and experiment with guerrilla filmmaking. After *Kuldesak* new filmmakers made films with various styles, from art-house films like *Eliana, Eliana* (2002; dir. Riri Riza) and *Pasir Berbisik* (2001; dir. Nan Achnas) to the popular teen flick *Ada Apa dengan Cinta?* (2002; dir. Rudi Sujarwo). The success of these young independent filmmakers urged wealthy commercial producers, who had moved to television in the 1990s, to return to cinema to profit from the new market.

A brief comparison with the previous generation will further explain the values and the working culture of this generation. The older generation of film cultural producers was shaped by a more bureaucratic environment, in which most films were funded by commercial studios and one could only become a film director after a long apprenticeship with senior directors. There were, of course, independent filmmakers such as Gotot Prakosa, whose art-house experimental films did not reach the mainstream audience, but this was not a common practice. Respectable film directors such as Arifin C. Noer, Teguh Karya, and Nya Abbas Akup had to negotiate with commercial producers in order to secure funding. Negotiation became an important skill in the Soeharto period, including in the ways in which filmmakers deal with the state. Even though they did not always agree with the government or state policies, they were willing to collaborate with or place themselves in state institutions to gain more bargaining power.

There was a sense of rupture when the new generation stepped in because they introduced a different working culture; they made films outside the conventional production and distribution channels, and they celebrated the idea that ‘everyone can make movies’ without having to go through the apprenticeship system. Members of this generation made their own films and film festivals as well as establishing new audiences and film communities. They also embrace a more cosmopolitan worldview in terms of trajectories and references, including international film festivals and global aesthetic styles. Cosmopolitanism, described broadly here as an openness toward other cultures

and customs as well as a more critical view of one's own cultural affiliation (Anderson 1998), can be seen in how members of this generation seek and acknowledge global influences, from MTV to indie directors such as Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez. Some members of this new generation, who received their education abroad, might fit the characteristics of elite cosmopolitan figures. However, as we are reminded by Bruce Robbins (1998), there are pluralities and particularities in cosmopolitanism. Some film-makers and writers might not have the privilege of travel, but their work reflects an awareness of and a desire for an interconnected world. Cosmopolitanism, therefore, exists in 'habits of thought and feeling that have already shaped and been shaped by particular collectivities, that are socially and geographically situated' (Robbins 1998: 2). As I will show later, cosmopolitanism as shown in the cultural practice of the post-1998 generation is geographically grounded and is not in opposition to nationalism.

Indonesia's political reform (*reformasi*) in 1998, with its emphases on democratization and freedom of expression, has influenced the ideas of nation and citizenship among members of this new film generation. Political and cultural engagements are viewed as constitutive elements of post-Soeharto citizenship, in other words, of what it means to be Indonesians today. Oppositional stance, inspired by the street politics of the 1998 student movement, becomes the dominant practice. Unlike the previous generation, who was willing to strategically align themselves with state institutions, members of the new generation are more driven to situate their practice outside formal institutions. The new film generation is actively involved in activism, and this translates into articulating political concerns publicly, often through street protests, as well as taking an active part in cultural production. In this case, festivals, film discussions, and independent film journals are forms of cultural activism, which Faye Ginsburg defines as the ways in which 'cultural material is used and strategically deployed as a part of a broader project of political empowerment' (Ginsburg 2008: 299). Through cultural activism, members of the new generation reject the Suharto construction of apolitical middle-class citizens and instead underline the notion of new citizenship marked by political engagement and participation in the cultural landscape.

To further conceptualize this generation's practice of citizenship, I propose a concept called 'the scenario of experiment'. 'Eksperimen' (Experiment) is a keyword widely shared by the new generation to describe the aspiration to start new—to create new initiatives, ideas, collectives, affiliations—in order to make cultural intervention. I borrow the term scenario from performance scholar Diana Taylor, who describes scenario as 'meaning-making paradigms that structure, social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes' (Tay-

lor 2007: 28). A scenario is repeatable and transferrable; it is something that a community understands as a setup, a way of doing things, and it can be rehearsed and reactivated many times. I view that the scenario of experiment is a paradigm that frames the new generation's cultural practice; it highlights the active roles of young cultural producers in inventing and experimenting with new spaces, and it is repeated in various circumstances from making a low-budget film to setting up a new cultural initiative.

The DIY (Do It Yourself) ethos is part of the scenario of experiment. Although later there have been more encounters and intersections between independent mode of production and the commercial realm, it could be argued that the independent spirit characterizes the early formation of the post-1998 generation. The guerrilla mode can be found in film production, film festivals, the creation of communities as well as the practice of archiving, documenting, and writing about cinema. Most of these activities are conducted in 'alternative' spaces, or spaces outside the formal and regulated spaces such as government institutions and universities. Within the logic of the scenario of experiment, one is expected to be an active participant in cultural production despite limited resources; DIY means fund your own project, create, your own audience, make your own institutions.

In the early 2000s, to respond to the burgeoning of new film-making and film going culture, writers and critics started to publish their writings on Indonesian cinema independently. As there were no film journals in the country and spaces allowed in mainstream media were not sufficient, they began to experiment with their own film websites and publications. The initial goal was to 'fill the lack' due to the absence of the field of film studies in Indonesia. Later, these writers expanded their practice by publishing in international academic journals to engage with the larger transnational landscape of film studies. In describing the academic discipline of film studies as a 'field,' I refer to the Bourdieusian notion of field as a specific social space that consists of agents with cultural capital competing for position and recognition. When Indonesian film critics aspire to establish film studies and therefore acknowledge it as 'a space of positions and position-takings' (Bourdieu: 1993, 30), they enter a game of recognition. By recognizing who's who in the field of film studies, these writers assert their position as knowledgeable experts and accumulate greater cultural capital. Additionally, by writing in international journals, they try to make Indonesian cinema as a recognizable player in the field.

In mapping out the writing practice of the post-1998 film critics and scholars, I categorize three kinds of publication: indie publications, academic publications, and sponsored publications. The first category consists of non-academic online journals, which are often tied to film communities and activism. The sec-

and includes academic publications, mostly in English, that appear in special-issue journals and edited volumes such as the special issue on Indonesian Cinema in *Asian Cinema Journal* (published in Indonesia as *Mau Dibawa Ke Mana Sinema Kita?*). The first and second types of publications, despite their different audience and sphere of circulation, indicate cosmopolitan aspirations in terms of exposure and theoretical exploration, the creation of alternative spaces, and the attachment to the larger networks of cultural activism in Indonesia and Asia. In the meantime, the last category, consisting of publications sponsored by the government or NGOs, reveals a different but necessary path in which inevitable contacts with the state and state policies are seen as part of the process of institutionalization.

Indie Publications

Indie publications include journals, mostly published online, that operate independently with no affiliation to academic institutions. Due to the limited number of scholarly writings on contemporary Indonesian cinema, academics often turn to these online journals for references; thus, it is not uncommon to find references to articles from *Rumah Film* in an academic book. Mostly initiated by young film writers or film communities in the early or mid 2000s, indie publications include *Jurnal Footage* (published by Forum Lenteng community), *Rumah Film*, and *Cinema Poetica*.¹ These publications share common characteristics.

Jurnal Footage was established in 2003 by Forum Lenteng film community, an organization in Jakarta that focuses on film and media production, film archives, and audiovisual literacy programs. The website features articles on Indonesian and world cinema in Indonesian language, though some of them are translated into English. One can find a coverage on local and regional festivals such as OK Video Festival, ARKIPEL Film Festival, and festivals in Southeast Asia, interviews with Indonesian/ international filmmakers, as well as analyses on global art-house films. For instance, in the past few years *Jurnal Footage* has reviewed Southeast Asian films that have garnered much attention in film festivals such as Yosep Anggi Noen's *Solo Solitude* (Indonesia, 2016), Apichatpong Weerasetakul's *Blissfully Yours* (Thailand, 2002), and Rithy Panh's *The Missing Picture* (Cambodia/ France, 2013). *Jurnal Footage* and Forum Lenteng

1 Other indie publications include *Jurnal Karbon* (published by ruangrupa), *Klea* (published by Rumah Sinema), and *Film Indonesia*.

have indeed endorsed a cosmopolitan practice of film consumption as part of engaging with film history and the field of film studies in general. Highlighting the importance of knowledge on film theory and history, founder of Forum Lenteng Hafiz Rancajale mentioned in an interview that both filmmakers and film critics should be familiar with canonical writings on cinema such as the work of film theorist Andre Bazin. He believes that film studies canons will provide a strong conceptual ground for both filmmaking and writing practices.

There are, however, only a handful of schools that offer film studies courses/programs in Indonesia. Other than the Jakarta Arts Institute and Binus University, which began to offer film studies courses in the mid 2000s, film analysis is either absent or taught sporadically in prestigious universities such as University of Indonesia and Gadjah Mada University. To respond to the lack of formal education, *Jurnal Footage* and Forum Lenteng community translate the DIY ethos into self-education, and this means obtaining knowledge through any possible means, including illegal downloading. At first, Forum Lenteng made copies of their pirated film collections, already provided with Indonesian subtitles, and distributed them to local communities. Later, they engaged in a more daring strategy: providing torrent links on the Jurnal Footage website. Thus, the website looks quite distinct in comparison to online film journals in the US, UK, or Australia. It features a 'Torrent' page and a library widget at the bottom that provides links to English-language e-books, downloaded for free from websites that are currently facing troubles with legal issues.

Another example of indie publication is *Rumah Film*, which was founded in 2007 by a group of graduates from the University of Indonesia with a background in film journalism. When the website was created, some of them had already established a good reputation as film reviewers, but they wanted to introduce a different kind of film criticism that goes beyond a guidance for the viewers. In other words, they endorsed a deeper critical engagement with films and their cultural contexts rather than merely providing good/bad ratings. *Rumah Film* editors, particularly Ekky Imanjaya, Eric Sasono, and Hikmat Darmawan, often converse in public discussions with Indonesian filmmakers, with whom they maintain a good relationship. They regard that a partnership between critics and practitioners is essential for the 'development of national cinema.' The discourse of national cinema, linked to the awareness of the importance of creating national cinema infrastructure, coexists with a cosmopolitan aspiration.

Rumah Film editors find it important to publish articles in English in addition to Bahasa Indonesia to expand readership and to engage in a dialogue with critics and academics outside Indonesia. If *Jurnal Footage* looks like a pirate website, editors of *Rumah Film* seem to be more conscious in presenting

the website as a valid site for those who are looking for references on Indonesian cinema. Further, Ekky Imanjaya and Eric Sasono are very much involved in the transnational academic network. This network has even inspired them to continue their PhDs abroad, a decision that made it difficult to maintain the website. Currently, *Rumah Film* is inactive because its two main editors are completing PhDs in the UK. Articles are now inaccessible on rumahfilm.org, except for a few articles that are widely cited and republished in other websites/ blogs such as Ekky Imanjaya's 2006 piece, 'Idealism Versus Commercialism in Indonesian Cinema: A Neverending Battle?'. Although *Rumah Film* has recently published a book on in cooperation with TIFA foundation, as I also explore later, the problem of maintaining the website and preserving all published articles exposes a larger issue. Since *Rumah Film* and others have been chiefly dependent on voluntary labor, they are confronted with the harsh reality that experiments tend to be short-lived. The problem of sustainability is haunting many forms of post-1998 cultural initiatives.

Cinema Poetica, another indie publication, was initiated in 2010 by a younger generation of film critics, journalists, researchers, and activists who were mostly born after the 1980s. Like *Rumah Film & Journal Footage*, *Cinema Poetica* was created as a response to the lack of resources on film studies and Indonesian cinema in particular. Here you can see how the scenario of experiment is transferred. Inspired by the independent practice of their predecessors such as Eric Sasono and Ekky Imanjaya, younger writers reactivate the scenario by making their own website and continuing the tradition of independent cultural initiatives while adding their own specific concerns. Since 2015, *Cinema Poetica* has added a new site, *Cinema Poetica International*, which contains English-language articles as well as a selection of articles in Bahasa Indonesia that have been translated into English. They publish in-depth film analyses, film reviews, and opinions on topics such as alternative cinema, cinema spectatorship, film and society, film history, and film preservation. Since many Indonesian films can be considered as low-budget indie films screened in alternative sites, these topics seem to respond to the interests of the film critics as well as the concerns of the filmmakers. The experimental spirit underpins the editorial decision to give 'special attention to films and film cultures often abandoned in many public conversations.' Furthermore, with close links to film communities, *Cinema Poetica* regularly organizes Critics Clinic, or what they call 'a public education program' through workshops, lectures, and discussions in order to contribute to the audiovisual literacy education and discover new talents in film criticism.

The three online film journals share the same characteristics in terms of paradigm and practice. They were created as experiments to respond to the lack: to fill the gaps in knowledge production when film studies is largely

absent from the academia. The scenario of experiment can be seen in their independent, experimental nature as well as their location outside the formal (higher education system). There are, of course, film scholars who work within the academia such as Budi Irawanto and Novi Kurnia from the Communication Department, Gadjah Mada University. However, they cooperate more with international scholars in the same trajectory chosen by the independent writers (discussed in the next section), and they are actively involved in independent cultural activism such as Jogja Netpac Film Festival (for Irawanto) and v Women's Film Festival (for Kurnia).

The interest in film studies in Indonesia begins with an alternative pedagogical practice, that is, through informal ways such as Jurnal Footage's torrent files or Cinema Poetica's film criticism workshop. The DIY mode of obtaining information outside the formal and legal channels is viewed as a solution to the lack of infrastructure. All of these experiments reveal strong aspirations for establishing the field of film studies with Indonesian cinema as its main object of study. This explains why, despite their eagerness to discuss world cinema, Indonesian film writers endorse a discussion of national cinema of all genres (including the commercial comedy and horror films) and promote films that they consider as having aesthetic values but do not attract mainstream audience. In this case, the discourse of national cinema is strong, though it is not expressed in the ways that older film critics like Salim Said put it: through a search for 'the real face of Indonesia' on screen. The people involved in the practice of writing through independent websites propagate a cosmopolitan view of film criticism and film studies by writing about international cinema and incorporating both film Western film theories and perspectives from Indonesian intellectuals. In this context, the international dimension of cinema is in line with the discipline of film studies itself. The category of World Cinema, despite its problematic and ambivalence, has emerged as one of the earliest attempts for—in Robert Stam's and Ella Shohat's term (1994)—'unthinking Eurocentrism' in film studies. The awareness of the international characteristics of film studies manifests in writings about Western cinemas or Asian Cinema. Meanwhile, we are also reminded that the desire for cosmopolitanism is one of the characteristics of the post Soeharto generation; such desire has also inspired them to engage in a different kind of writing practice in order to transnationalize Indonesian cinema.

Academic Publications: The Transnational Connections

In 2010, Ekky Imanjaya compiled a bibliography for the *Asian Cinema Journal's* special edition on Indonesian cinema. In his introduction, he wrote, 'When I read the bilingual special edition of *Cahiers du Cinema* in 2007, I felt upset because there was not a single Indonesian movie mentioned in that magazine' (Imanjaya 2010: 164). *Cahiers du Cinema*, a French film magazine founded in 1951, has achieved a classic status in film studies because it featured writings by critic Andre Bazin as well as the Nouvelle Vague directors such as Jean-Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut. Imanjaya's statement reveals an anxiety about the field; the lack of attention toward Indonesian cinema in *Cahiers du Cinema* tells much about the visibility of Indonesia in the discipline of film studies. He further mentions that films from other Southeast Asian countries achieve more visibility because there are more critics and scholars who actively write in English, whereas in Indonesia, despite the entrance of some filmmakers in the global festival circuit, they are not 'supported by critics and scholars at home who might provide resources and references for a global audience' (Imanjaya 2010:165). Being exposed to global film history, Imanjaya realizes that Indonesia has not accumulated sufficient cultural capital, in this case an extensive bibliography, in order to be recognizable in the field. Publishing in English is viewed as necessary to situate Indonesian cinema in the larger map. Even though Imanjaya and his peers have published English-language articles in their own online journals, they still find it important to put themselves in transnational academic network and intervene in the global trajectory of film studies.

Since the mid 2000s, Indonesian writers have been publishing their work in various international journals, including film studies journals such as *Jump Cut*, *Asian Cinema*, and *Film Quarterly* as well as journals in other fields, including cultural studies and Asian studies. Special-issue journals and anthologies deserve special attention since they demonstrate how young film critics and scholars are connected to the network. The anthology *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*, edited by Tilman Baumgartel, features two articles on Indonesian cinema by Indonesian writers as well as an interview with film director Nia Dinata. A special issue on independent Southeast Asian cinema in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* (Vol. 8, No. 2) features articles on Indonesian short films after 1998 *Reformasi* written by film programmers/ activists Lulu Ratna (2007) and Agus Mediarta (2007). An anthology of essays on women directors edited by Yvonne Michalik, *Indonesian Women Filmmakers*, was published in 2013, adding up to books and articles on women, gender, and sexuality in post-Suharto Indonesia. Further, as a PhD candidate at the University of East

Anglia, Ekky Imanjaya cooperated with the Philippines-based journal *Plaridel* and edited a special issue on Indonesian cult, exploitation, and B movies, films that were not taken seriously in the past except in Karl Heider's book on genre films.

One of the most notable publications was *Asian Cinema Journal's* special issue on Indonesian cinema (2010), co-edited by Gaik Cheng Khoo and Thomas Barker, because it was translated into Indonesian and published as *Mau Dikawa Ke Mana Sinema Kita* (What's the Direction of Our Cinema, 2011), with Ekky Imanjaya as the Indonesian-language editor. The special issue consists of articles by, among others, Maimunah on queer films, Budi Irawanto on documentary films, and two articles on Islamic cinema by Eric Sasono and myself. The topics on queer, documentary, and Islamic cinema are new issues that become prominent in contemporary Indonesian cinema in relation to the shifting ideas in the socio-political contexts. Queer cinema and Islamic cinema result from two different trajectories of the 1998 *Reformasi*. While gender, sexuality, and religion were carefully contained during the Suharto regime, democratization has allowed both the celebration of gender expression as well as piety to have a place in the public sphere.

The edited volume on Southeast Asian Independent cinema as well as special-issue journals on Indonesian/ South East Asian cinema demonstrate the transnational connections made by Indonesian writers, particularly in their encounters and collaborations with the Association of Southeast Asian Cinemas (ASEAC). ASEAC is a new regional network that connects scholars, critics, filmmakers, and film activists in Southeast Asia. It has played a significant role as a platform that connects scholars and practitioners in the region. The conference, unlike the more established conferences in the Western hemisphere, has a guerrilla characteristic that makes it more relatable for independent critics and scholars in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. It travels through Southeast Asian cities (Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Jakarta, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City) with limited funding, builds partnerships with independent film communities in addition to universities, and it always includes panels of practitioners consisting of indie filmmakers, film programmers, and film activists. This guerrilla nature of the organization is in line with the DIY practice of moviemaking that is widespread in South East Asia. Most of the young scholars working on Indonesian cinema within and outside the country, including Ekky Imanjaya, Tito Imanda, Budi Irawanto, Veronica Kusumaryati, Thomas Barker, Katinka Van Heeren, Dag Yngvesson, and myself, are part of the ASEAC. They have been involved in the co-organizing the past conferences, and they have also created SEA cinema panels in other conferences. My own interest, for instance, is to bridge studies on East and South East Asian independent cinemas, and I co-

operated with the NYU Asian Film Media Initiative to organize a workshop involving ASEAC scholars and those working on East Asian cinema.²

The involvement of Indonesian film critics and scholars in the transnational academic network marks their difference from the previous generation. The older generation of critics and scholars such as Salim Said, Misbach Yusa Biran, Gayus Siagian, Tanete Pong Masak, D.A. Peransi, and JB Kristanto wrote with an Indonesian audience in mind. Often, they posed a sharp criticism of films, knowing that their articles would be read by the filmmakers. Both generations are invested in the discourse of national cinema, but members of the new generation aspire to a more international readership as well as a more cosmopolitan network. With more awareness of film history, contemporary writers aim at situating Indonesia on the map of global film studies. For this generation, transnationalism is not the opposite of the conception of nationhood; rather, it is a new way of redefining the nation.

Sponsored Publications

The last type of publications are books that receive sponsorship mainly from the government institutions, though some are funded by NGOs such as TIFA Foundation and Utan Kayu Foundation/ Hivos. Many of these publications are written in Indonesian language with limited circulation. Some examples here are two publications: 1) *Menguak Peta Perfilman Indonesia* (Exposing the Map of Indonesian Film, 2004), written by scholars from the Communication Department of Gadjah Mada University, and sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism; 2) *Menjegal Film Indonesia: Pemetaan Ekonomi Politik Industri Film Indonesia* (Impeding Indonesian Film: Mapping the Political Economy of the Indonesian Film Industry), written by the Rumah Film team and sponsored by the TIFA Foundation.

These publications are quite different from the independent online journals or academic publications even though we might encounter some familiar names like the editors of Rumah Film. Sponsored publications do not really reflect the DIY or experimental spirit, nor do they project cosmopolitan aspirations to put Indonesian cinema in the transnational film studies circuit. Rather, their target is very policy-oriented; the analyses provided would be useful for

2 Another example is a workshop on Indonesian Cinema at SOAS University of London in 2013 and 2015. Co-organized by Ben Murtagh, Ekky Imajaya, Tito Imanda, and Eric Sasono, this workshop was tied in to the London Indonesia Film Screenings.

researchers or government's think tank group. The two books, as is quite obvious from the word 'map' used in the title, aim at giving a comprehensive map of the practice of production, exhibition, and distribution of Indonesian films after the cinema revival in the late 1990s. Both of them contain a lot of tables and statistics that explain practical issues faced by practitioners in the film industry. The rhetoric tends to be prescriptive, marked by long sections on 'saran dan kesimpulan' (suggestions and conclusion), which would be relevant for decision makers. Their goal is to provide reliable data and analyses for the government as an evidence of what has been done by the cultural producers as well as a basis to reconsider film policy in the future.

This leads to further questions: Why are the critics invested in this type of publication? What are their long-term goals? Sponsored publications may tell us a larger context: there have been shifts in perspective and practice that come along with the aspiration to strengthen the field of film studies. Film critics and scholars realize that a more sustainable infrastructure is required to institutionalize the field of film studies. Therefore, in the past decade we see a move from experimentation toward institutionalization. This can be seen from the entrance of independent writers to the formal higher education institution. They would either pursue a PhD abroad, following Ekky Imanjaya and Eric Sasono as role models, or they would work as lecturers (as some of the Cinema Poetica writers) and accumulate power to shape the directions of film studies (as exemplified by Tito Imanda, who accepted a position as the Head of the Film Program at Binus University after graduating from a university in the U.S.). These people are currently working to establish the Association of Film Studies Scholars, which would be registered to the Directorate General of Higher Education.

The institutionalizing effort goes beyond accumulating cultural capital through obtaining academic titles and positions. There have been more attempts to negotiate with state institutions, particularly the Ministry of Culture, as a form of cultural intervention. After witnessing a series of trials and errors conducted by the government, such as producing an immature film law in 2009 or spending big budget for extravagant film events rather than allocating it for community development, film critics and scholars realize that it is not only the new generation that is experimenting. Using the term 'damage control,' members of the new generation now view that negotiation and institutional reform are more strategic than street protests.

Final Remarks

One of the main goals of this essay has been to illustrate some of the ways that contemporary writing practices on Indonesian cinema fit in the larger landscape of cultural production. The scenario of experiment, with its celebration over newness and the DIY mode of production, has inspired the emergence of various cultural initiatives in the past two decades. The experiments of this new generation of film critics and scholars has contributed to the formation of film studies at home and helped to transnationalize the study of Indonesian cinema. With the move toward institutionalization, one might ask how this will affect writing practice, film studies as a field, and the continuity of the scenario of experiment. Perhaps in the near future, experiments will need to be recontextualized by taking into account strategic affiliations between the cultural producers and the state.

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