

THE PARADOXICAL POLICIES, POLITICS OF TASTES, AND CLASSIC INDONESIAN EXPLOITATION CINEMA OF THE NEW ORDER REGIME

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ABSTRACT. Although the New Order Regime (1966-1998) was widely known for its strict censorship and government control, there was a simultaneous rise in producing exploitation films with graphic and provocative images. This kind of cinema was exported internationally in the 1980s and re-released in the 2000s by transnational DVD distributors. This article analyzed the transformation of exploitation films, which were disregarded and undervalued by the Government, cultural elites, and cinema critics. It explored how these films became a battleground for the politics of taste and resulted in a series of contradictions within the political policies of the New Order. The study focused on policy studies, examining film-related policies (such as presidential decree and censorship regulations), and analyzed the findings by thoroughly examining the regulations' trends, patterns, and anomalies. As a result, paradoxically, the New Order had to undertake trial and error towards the films that they were actually shunned, which resulted in the blooming of this kind of movie.

Keywords: Paradoxical policies; New Order Regime; Politics of Tastes

INTRODUCTION

Film scholars, journalists, and critics who specialize in the era of the New Order regime may question this trivial paradoxical fact: the widespread production and distribution of exploitation films—those with sexual and sadistic scenes—during the period of government control and strict censorship from 1966 to 1998. This inquiry pertains to the factors that led to the proliferation of low-quality exploitation films on both national and international levels.

During President Suharto's tenure, this era was characterized by a strong emphasis on security and stability, as well as extensive state control and censorship in all areas of life, including ideology, politics, society, economy, and culture (Sen, 1994; Van Zanden & Marks, 2012).

During this period, the Government enforced rigorous censorship and exerted complete control over all facets of the film industry, encompassing film production, film organizations, distribution, and exhibition (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992; Said, 1991; Sen, 1994, 1994).

According to Said (Said, 1991), the media at that period documented a significant increase in the production and popularity of exploitation films, which featured violent and sensual content. On the other hand, under President Suharto's leadership, this period was marked by a significant focus on security and stability, with substantial government control and censorship in all areas of life, including ideology, politics, society, business, and culture (Van Zanden & Marks, 2012). The film titles include *Noda Tak Berampun* (Unforgivable Stain) (Turino Djunaidi, 1970) to *Pembalasan Ratu Laut Selatan* (globally known as *Lady Terminator*, 1988). In addition, Krishna Sen coined the term "prostitute genre films"

to describe films that exploit the female body to promote the movie while simultaneously criticizing the objectification of that body (Sen, 1994).

During this period, the Government enforced strict censorship and exercised full authority over all aspects of the film industry, including film production, film organizations, distribution, and exhibition (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992; Heider, 1991; Nugroho & Herlina, 2017; Sen, 1994). The concept of 'Film Indonesia' was introduced to represent the true Indonesian culture, aiming to capture Indonesia's actual essence (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992; Barker, 2011; Said, 1991).

These films were anticipated to tackle educational and cultural issues, sometimes called 'Film Kultural Edukatif.' Consequently, domestic exploitation films, which primarily showcase violence and sensual scenes, were subsequently excluded. Concurrently, the cultural elites, academics, journalists, and cinema reviewers completely ignored, underestimated, and, in some cases, strongly criticized and even condemned exploitation films, which contain sadistic and sensual scenes. Nevertheless, these kinds of films were not genuinely marginalized since mainstream audiences were watching them, and a handful of them even attained notable monetary success.

The New Order's policies, together with the political inclinations of the cultural elites, were often seen as conflicting with domestic exploitation films and instead promoting a unique kind of filmmaking. The genuine culture, along with significant works on Indonesian cinema during that period, established the concept of national film (*film nasional*) with distinct characteristics such as "depiction of the essence of Indonesia," "representation of authentic Indonesian culture," and the creation of cultural and educational films (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992; Barker, 2019;

Said, 1991; Van Heeren, 2019). Consequently, the Indonesian authorities in charge of film history and cinema studies categorically dismissed domestically produced exploitation films.

The discourse around the importance of Indonesian exploitation films, especially those containing violence and explicit content, is seldom discussed in both popular and scholarly contexts in Indonesia and elsewhere. Should they manifest, most academic publications regarding the films emphasize the negative influence of said flicks.

Therefore, this paper examines Indonesian exploitation cinema to emphasize its importance as a focal point in taste conflicts and subjects of interest within Indonesian film industry policies. Additionally, it offers an alternative interpretation to the established narrative of Indonesian film history.

The paper also discusses that, while mainstream scholars highlight the dictatorship of Suharto's era, the findings of the paper show that the New Order regime did not apply the regulations and state control strictly. Instead, the Government made some "trial and error" attempts in the film industry and negotiated the rules, particularly with the two poles of approaches: quantity and quality/audience (Imanjaya, 2016; Said, 1991). This phenomenon happened due to the politics and tastes of many interest parties. Thus, the New Order justified some regulations to balance political stability and economic growth.

The discussion of the politics of tastes and paradoxes of New Order's policies related to exploitation films is rare to find. Most scholarly publications on films emphasize the negative influence of the movie, particularly when discussing specific subjects such as gender studies, as discussed by Sen, Heider, and Said (Heider, 1991; Said, 1991; Sen, 1994). Only recently has there been a need for published works exploring the intersection of exploitation films with the politics and economics of culture. More recent works (Barker, 2010, 2019; Izharuddin, 2017; Kristanto, 2004; Nugroho & Herlina, 2017; Van Heeren, 2019) did not specifically focus on exploitation cinema and the politics of tastes, let alone paradoxical policies in Indonesia. Recent papers on cultural policies and creative economy (Irawanto, 2017; Jones, 2012; Panuju & Juraman, 2019) which is closely associated with the creative industry. Therefore, this article analyzes various official documents regarding cultural policy and the position documentary films within that policy. While Singapore's cultural policy is quite comprehensive and visionary in managing and regulating arts and culture, it tends to neglect documentary films as it celebrates commercial feature (fiction have yet to discuss the topic. There is only an introductory paper as initial research on the subject (Imanjaya, 2009)

In conclusion, this study aims to demonstrate that local exploitation films, which have been marginalized and overlooked within the framework of the New Order's national cinema, emerged due to inherent conflicts in the policies pursued by the New Order administration.

In this paper, I mostly employ Annette Kuhn's concept of prohibition/institutions (Kuhn, 1990). This idea defines censorship as the deliberate act of limiting, suppressing, or eradicating. Kuhn (1990) perceives the agents of censorship as a constraining and tyrannical force imposed by the authorized authority. In this context, censorship is not limited to regulations but also the actions of particular groups, from the Government to social and cultural communities.

Nevertheless, in certain situations, censoring might provide favorable results (Kuhn, 1990) and be closely connected to power dynamics and the handling of varied interests. Addressing censorship issues frequently faces resistance from various organizations and alliances, rendering it a multifaceted and power-centric undertaking. According to Kuhn (1990), this can result in unforeseen consequences. Therefore, censorship has dynamics and could lead to positive and negative results.

When it comes to exploitation films, censorship primarily focuses on the appropriateness and morality of the content, as well as the controversial position these films have about mainstream society, particularly those that include sexual and sadistic scenes (Barber, 2011; Mathijs & Sexton, 2011). In this context, censorship functions as a method of exercising authority and granting approval to ensure that films comply with societal standards and are considered acceptable (Mathijs & Sexton, 2011). According to Mathijs and Sexton (2011), censorship and controversial issues in films might stimulate interest among spectators.

In short, censorship can result in both constraining and unjust consequences and advantageous results. Furthermore, it might lead to unforeseen collaborations amongst those in positions of power when dealing with diverse artistic inclinations.

Below, I present a historical account of how censorship, whether enforced by official legislation or other methods of government and cultural elite control, can result in various inconsistencies and unexpected consequences, including the production of films considered inappropriate, the kind that New Order was trying to avoid and limit.

METHOD

This study analyzed the impact of a series of political policies on film production, subsequent

distribution, and exhibition of exploitation cinema, which ironically were the type of films these regulations aimed to suppress. The author scrutinized the political policies and regulatory restrictions enforced by the New Order regime on cinema and media in general and assessed the impact of these actions on producing influential exploitation films. The policies include Presidential decrees, Ministerial decrees, Censorship regulations, Film directorial decrees, and Circular Letters (*Nota Edaran*).

Some of the policies include topics regarding Film Development (*Pembinaan Perfilman*), Benefits from Imports for Interests of increasing production and rehabilitation of the National Film Industry, National Film Production Council (Dewan Produksi Film Nasional), National Film Development Institute (*Lembaga Pengembangan Perfilman Nasional*).

The documents were analyzed using the New Film History approach, an archive-led research method, to understand the trends, patterns, and anomalies within particular contexts and answer the research questions. The objective is to examine cinema as a venue for social and cultural engagement, as delineated by Maltby (Maltby, 2011). New Cinema History, as defined by James Chapman, Mark Glancy, and Sue Harper, is a study technique that entails the empirical investigation and analysis of primary sources about the creation and reception of feature films (Chapman et al., 2009). Chapman et al. (2009) argue that this method focuses on the cultural elements that impact cinema production and acknowledges how the production environment influences the style and content of films. Film historians do historical research by analyzing primary sources, including film and nonfilmic resources such as trade papers, publicity materials, reviews, fans' writings, and other archives (Chapman et al., 2009).

The objective is to detect the contradictions within these policies that directly impact the production culture of exploitation films. By taking this approach, I demonstrated how the strict and powerful political control over stability and national identity in political policies can paradoxically produce films of "thrashy" quality instead of those in the "Film Nasional" category.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the subsequent subchapters, I analyze the New Order's conflicting choices and their explicit correlation with regional exploitation films.

The inaugural phase of the New Order: Period of Resurgence

Immediately following the 1965 Event, President-elect Suharto tried to enhance the nation's

economy, politics, and culture. The New Order made diligent attempts to revitalize the film industry (Van Heeren, 2019). As per cinema authority, Krishna Sen highlights that, after the chaotic political and economic situation during 1965, the new Government needed to build political stability and economic growth, particularly to improve business with Western developed countries, such as the USA (Sen, 1994).

Sen argues that this novel form of authority sought to cooperate with Western nations, specifically their film sectors, as opposed to the strategy and behavior of its forerunner in the preceding decade.

In 1966, the Department of Information was granted the power, as stated in Presidential Decree No.1/1964, to oversee and regulate film production. Consequently, the department resumed operations (Hukum, n.d.; Said, 1991). In this particular context, "film development" refers to providing instructions and guidance regarding the import, export, production, distribution, and supervision of films. According to the decree, filmmakers in Indonesia must obtain permission from the Ministry of Information to import, export, develop, and present a movie. This decree reflects the New Order's attempt to establish governmental control over the film industry.

The National Film Production Board (DPFN, Dewan Produksi Film Nasional) was established on May 30, 1968, under Minister of Information BM Diah (Said 1991). This organization's primary duties were film policy-making, which encompasses decisions about the approval of film scripts, the selection of artists and technicians, the estimation of production expenses, and the appointment of producers responsible for overseeing the development and completion of assigned films.

Before this, Sjumandjaya, a budding filmmaker and the recently appointed Head of the Directorate of Film, requested the Minister of Information, BM Diah, to safeguard the domestic film industry. In response, Diah enacted Ministerial Decree No. 71/1967 (SK 71), which remained in effect until 1976. The order stipulated that film importers must pay a fixed tariff of Rp 250,000 for each imported film. Fund management was entrusted to an independent film foundation and overseen by the DPFN. Moreover, this fund would support local film creation, with the funding import firm being recognized as a co-producer (Kristanto, 2004; Sen, 1994). Within three years, local film production increased significantly to 20 films and further rose to 50 films in 1971. In contrast, the number of imported films remained stable at approximately 750. According to Krishna Sen, the increase in cinema production can be attributed to the overall growth of

the Indonesian economy during the early years of the New Order (Sen, 1994).

In 1968, approximately 400 American films were imported into Indonesia. As Sen stated (Sen, 1994), Hollywood cinema was reaffirming its dominance over the Indonesian film market and setting a noteworthy precedent for the future of Indonesian film production. During this time, successful Hollywood films greatly influenced the genres and styles of Indonesian films, particularly those deemed exploitative.

During this period, the DPFN funded four films: *Djampang Mentjari Naga Hitam* (Djampang's Search for the Black Dragon) by Lilik Soejio in 1968; *Matt Dower* by Nyak Abbas Akub in 1969; *Apa yang Kau Tjari Palupi* (What are You Looking for, Palupi), by Asrul Sani in 1969; and *Nyi Ronggeng* (the Ronggeng Dancer) by Alam Surawidjadja in 1969 (Sen, 1994). However, these films faced financial failure, leading to the termination of the DPFN on December 19, 1969, due to an "excess of funds" (Said, 1991), which is a euphemism for "corruption" (Barker, 2019). Additionally, during the proposal discussion, H. Djohardin, the Director General for Film, stated that the film industry also needs to pay attention to the tastes of the general audience and evaluate the commercial failure of films funded by the Government (Barker, 2019).

Djohardin's statement above demonstrates the policymakers' need for more cohesion. It exposes contrasting viewpoints, particularly about the films' marketing strategies. The statement also criticizes the cultural elites' politics of tastes, emphasizing the "Film National" concept.

In 1969, the National Film Council (DFN) was established on July 29, under Ministerial Decree No. 59/1969, with Marshal (Ret) Boediardjo from the Ministry of Information appointed its leader. The DFN served as an advisory council to the Minister of Information, providing support in the overall development of the film industry. They have the authority to decide the overall strategy for producing, organizing, and scheduling films. They can also adapt and react to public opinion and establish and supervise the application of ethical norms in the film industry. The authority possessed jurisdiction over various aspects of the film industry, including financial matters, film production, regulation of films, distribution of films, performances, and movie theatres, import and export of films, acquisition of raw materials and spare parts, employment matters, and other issues related to the advancement of cinema (Hukum, n.d.).

Despite implementing multiple laws and regulations, the production of B-movies persisted. In 1968, Turino Junaedi directed Jakarta-Hongkong-

Macao, a film released at the same time as the founding of DFN. The film had romantic scenes with kissing. Later, several bold films surfaced, such as *Orang-Orang Liar* (Wild People, 1969), *Hidup, Cinta, dan Air Mata* (Life, Love, and Tears, 1970), and *Bernafas dalam Lumpur* (Breathing in Mud, 1970).

The last film is considered a groundbreaking piece that highlights explicit sexual content, rape, and filthy language (Patoha, 2009, 2009; Yngvesson, 2014). In 1975, the picture received the prestigious "Box Office Film" award (Hadiah Kehormatan Piala Box Office) at the FFI (Kristanto, 2004). In addition, this film, along with *Noda Tak Berampun* (Unforgivable Stain) (Turino Djunaedi, 1970), initiated a trend of "prostitute genre films" that exploit the female body for promotional purposes while also offering a critique of it (Sen, 1994).

Since its inception, the New Order administration has been characterized by two divergent policy perspectives. The inaugural governing body sought to control the film industry by enacting legislation about "film development." A significant accomplishment was the establishment of DPFN, which sought to create four films supported by the national Government. The enactment of Ministerial Decree No 71/1967 has resulted in two conflicting dynamics: the imperative to bolster domestic cinema production and the subsequent impact of Hollywood films on the artistic styles and genres of Indonesian films. This edict has directly stimulated the development of exploitation films and indirectly contributed to the proliferation of Hollywood films that have influenced the Indonesian film industry.

During the 1970s, there was a notable surge in the creation and appeal of films of poor quality and lacking artistic merit.

In 1970, there was a surge in the importation of foreign films into Indonesia, particularly those that had explicit sexual content. This could be an indication of the inclinations of the broader populace. In response to the increase of imported "sex education" films, Director of Film Directorate Sjuman Djaya issued decree no 45/1970 on January 23, 1970. The edict highlighted the need for the national cinema industry to expand its range of films to include a variety of genres and subjects, including those that explore sexual themes (Hukum, n.d.).

1973 Minister of Information Budiardjo revised Ministerial Decree 71/1967, founded on the "quantity approach," with Decree No. 74/1973. Adopting this new technique directly responded to the financial underperformance of the films backed by the National Film Council, which were created utilizing the "Quantity Approach." This strategy's

primary objective was to prioritize the growth in the quantity of films, with the expectation that a quality improvement would naturally ensue (Kristanto, 2004). The legislation was alternatively known as the “audience approach” (Said, 1991). Tombs (Tombs, 1997) reported a substantial growth in indigenous films, rising from 10 films in 1969 to 134 feature pictures in 1977. Said also observed a rise, indicating 21 titles in 1970, which increased to 52 in 1971 (Said, 1991).

Due to the implementation of the new legislation, the Government started to ease censorship to accommodate the audience’s tastes by augmenting the importation of foreign films. Consequently, this resulted in tax revenue from the imported films. The censorship limitations on local films have been eased. Hence, the film *Bumi Makin Panas* (The Earth is Getting Hotter), directed by Ali Shahab in 1973, was banned in Cianjur (West Java) and Malaysia (Yngvesson, 2014). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that *Bernafas dalam Lumpur* was among the pioneering films to depict explicit sexual interactions in a public environment and include prostitutes as the main protagonists. The film also included daring and sensual scenes in the prevalent atmosphere of the time.

The Minister of Information created the Directorate General of Radio, TV, and Film (Dirjen RTF) in 1975, as stated in ministerial decree no 55b/1975 (Hukum, n.d.). The primary duties entailed formulating technical and operational policies, providing guidance and supervision, and managing activities by licensing regulations. They exerted complete dominion over all facets of the film industry, encompassing film production, actors, technical personnel, business equipment, studio operations, laboratory work, film distribution, raw materials, subtitling, film screenings, film festivals, film weeks, film exhibition, and film import and exportation (Hukum, n.d.).

In addition, Badan Pembinaan Perfilman Daerah (Regional Film Development Body, Bapfida) was created in 1975 to discuss provincial regulation. The institution’s members were appointed by the governor and supervised by the regional leader of the Department of Indonesia. The members were comprised of only delegates from government agencies. The objective of this arrangement was to guarantee that Indonesian films acquired a commensurate share of the province’s market share. Nevertheless, in 1977, the operations of this organization were curtailed and limited by ministerial order no 32/1977. While lacking the power to modify content directly, they could forbid the public showing of a movie in their specific areas (Sen, 1994) to guarantee that the films could effectively fulfill

their intended roles as providers of entertainment, information, and education (Hukum, n.d.).

Cinematic organizations, in addition to censorship boards, were primarily subject to government oversight. After the New Order was established, the KFT became the sole professional organization representing employees in the film and television sector. These institutions, namely SARBUFIS, Lembaga Film Indonesia, and Panitia Seniman Untuk Film, were banned because of their connections to the PKI and communist associations (Sen, 1994). Ministerial Decree No.114A/1976 and 114B/1976, issued on August 24, 1976, designated KFT as the exclusive governing body for all filmmaking professions, excluding acting. This edict effectively instituted governmental authority over the film sector (Hukum, n.d.; Sen, 1994). Enrolling in KFT was a mandatory requirement for anybody with aspirations to pursue a career in the film business.

Furthermore, the Government formed film organizations that assumed the role of exclusive official bodies in their respective domains of operation: PARFI for performers, PPFI for film producers, and GPBSI for movie theatre owners. In addition, there were smaller entities such as GASFI, which catered to film studio owners, and GASI, which focused on subtitlers. Each film organization mentioned earlier had to acquire approval from the Directorate of Film Development. Individuals who did not receive approval were considered to violate the law (Hukum, n.d.). Their primary purpose, as outlined in Ministerial Decrees No. 114A and 114B in 1976, was to support the execution of government programs to promote the development of the Indonesian film industry (Hukum, n.d.). Consequently, starting in 1976, it became essential to become a member of one of these organizations and secure their approval to pursue a career in the film industry. In order to acquire production authorization from the Ministry of Information, persons must initially join PPFI and submit a letter of endorsement from the organization.

Nevertheless, these forms of government regulation proved to be ineffectual in curbing the rampant production of exploitative films. The main factor for this is the promulgation of Ministerial Decree no. 47/1976 by the Minister of Information, Mashuri Saleh. The decree stipulates that film exporters must produce at least five films (later reduced to three) to be granted the right to import films (Said, 1991). The introduction of this accelerated quota policy directly reacted to the decline in film production from 77 in the preceding year to 41 in 1977. As a result, there was a significant increase in the quantity of films. For example, the 1978 Indonesian Film Festival received the most submissions under the New Order era.

Nevertheless, many of these films receive criticism for their inferior quality. Salim Said emphasizes that the films are not simply made quickly but rather pictures that unduly emphasize topics such as sex and violence. This phenomenon has led to the rise of subpar films.

The Censorship Guidelines, also known as Pedoman Sensor, were officially instituted on January 6, 1977, employing a ministerial directive (Hukum, n.d.). The criteria specify that films must not endorse particular attitudes among the audience. The main emphasis was on films that portrayed explicit sexual and violent content, as well as those that promoted misconduct and amoral behavior. Furthermore, the criteria were designed to deter the production of films that have the potential to incite societal conflicts. According to Sen (1994), films of this nature could be banned or subjected to physical censorship.

Furthermore, more stringent restrictions were introduced to enforce the program effectively in film production. Sen writes that before beginning filming, a movie's screenplay must have authorization from the Directorate of Film, which is part of the Department of Information. Once the shooting concludes, the unedited prints, sometimes referred to as rush copies, must be handed over to the identical authorities. These authorities will offer guidance regarding any required revisions that may need to be implemented (Sen, 1994).

According to Sen ((Sen, 1994), these authorities gave guidance on any required revisions that could be necessary.

In addition, one month later, on February 10, 1977, Minister Mashuri signed a new decree (31/1977) regarding the establishment of a think-tank organization called Lembaga Pengembangan Perfilman Nasional (Lepfinas, National Film Development Institute) (Hukum, n.d.). This organization comprises all facets of the film industry, from the creation of films to their distribution in international markets. Asrul Sani, the chairperson of Lepfinas and a well-known cultural intellectual, argued in an article published in *Angkatan Bersenjata Daily* on April 27, 1977, for a shift away from traditional filmmaking methods. He contended that filmmakers should abandon duplicating commercially successful stories dictated by capital owners, where artists are only granted 20% of creative autonomy. Instead, Sani recommended a novel approach to filmmaking that would provide artists with the autonomy to cater to audience tastes and exert influence over the market. However, Lepfinas had a duration of just one year.

At the 1977 Indonesian Film Festival, academics debated the issue of subpar-quality films. Salim Said asserts that the 1977 jury concluded that most Indonesian films predominantly emphasize

fantasy and fail to portray Indonesian life's realities adequately. Said also noted that the enthralling imaginings depicted in these films frequently originate from a realm alien to us. They made another attempt to eliminate exploitation films and justified their belief in the importance of promoting national cinema.

Minister Mashuri made a notable announcement on September 9, 1977, on a critical regulation. The ministerial decree number 193/1977 was explicitly related to the quota for imported films, commonly referred to as the Indonesian equivalent of the Quickie Quota. As to the declaration, to bring in three film titles, the importer must initially produce a domestic picture under their specific Imported Film Consortium (Hukum, n.d.). According to Said (1991), this direction led to a substantial rise in the production of domestic films and indirectly facilitated the creation of hastily produced pictures.

In 1978, a new cabinet was formed. The Coordinating Minister of Policies and Securities was responsible for overseeing films to the Minister of Information (Sen, 1994, p. 50). In that same year, Indonesia's expedited marriage program encountered resistance from the cultural elite. Shortly after forming the Government's new cabinet, Rosihan Anwar, a renowned journalist and significant figure in the cultural elite, sent a formal request to Daoed Joesoef, the recently appointed Minister of Education and Culture. The film figure, who served as a jury member of Indonesian Film Festivals for three years in a row, explained that he was disappointed with the fact that most of the films circulated in the commercial movie theaters were dominated by sensual scenes "...for purely exploitative purposes" and the need to "...reduce, if not completely eradicate" the phenomenon of "sexploitation" (Said 1991).

Consistent with the previous comments, two days after the formation of the new cabinet, Lieutenant General Ali Murtopo, the recently appointed Minister of Information, announced a similar concern, stating that most films lost their value, even as entertainment, and hindered cultural development (Said, 1991).

Both comments primarily addressed and criticized the occurrence of regional exploitation films. The newly formed cabinet established a favorable basis for evaluating these films and launching new initiatives to prohibit their creation.

In addition, the matter was raised once more during the 1978 Indonesian Film Festival (FFI), where the phenomena of local exploitation films were deliberated. The jury determined that while sexual material diminished, there was a noticeable increase in aspects such as brutality and sadism (Said, 1991). This indicates that exploitation films continued to be created and distributed nationally.

About this matter, the newly appointed Minister of Education, Daoed Joesoef, expressed his disapproval of the sexploitation genre during his introductory statement at the occasion. He criticized the genre for encouraging individuals to engage in amorous behaviors that resemble animal behavior rather than human conduct (Said, 1991). In addition, during this event, Soemardi, the Director General of Radio, Television, and Film, made a statement calling for a reevaluation of Mashuri's decision (Said, 1991). Exploitation films have gained more attention from the Government and cultural elites due to their widespread production and vocal criticism by new ministers. Once more, they endeavored to assess the films and the policies about films.

The newly appointed Minister of Information, Ali Murtopo, issued decree no. 224/1978 (Kristanto, 2004) to integrate the quality method used during the BM Diah era with the quantity approach implemented by Mashuri (Kristanto, 2004). On the one hand, the industry would see growth through the production of commercial films, while the private sector would provide educational and cultural films for DFN. The money would subsidize the production of cultural and educational films by selected producers who fit the Film Council's criteria, along with the other three loan types. Furthermore, in the realm of film distribution, to prevent disorder caused by an excess of film production, the National Film Council designated PT Perfin (Perseroan Terbatas Peredaran Film Indonesia or Incorporated Company for the Circulation of Indonesian Films) as the central hub for logistics to oversee all the resultant films. PT Perfin was tasked with repaying the loans used to finance the production of the film council (Kristanto, 2004).

In 1979, Soemardjono, a renowned filmmaker and member of the Jakarta Arts Council and National Film Council, defined national film during his presentation at the National Film Workshop on March 3-4, 1979 (Barker, 2019). He asserted that a national film must meet the following criteria:

1. Embrace and embody the cultural legacy of Indonesia.
2. Replace the dominance of foreign films with something akin to the victory of the Indonesian People in demolishing colonial rule.

Our objective is to facilitate the advancement of the Indonesian population and country by cultivating personal qualities and advocating for the nation's development.

This statement implies that cultural elites actively work together to promote the idea of "film nasional" as a legitimate art form. Within this context, exploitation films are not considered a part of Indonesian culture,

as explained in the introduction. Consequently, their goals do not align with developing authentic character and fostering national unity. Additionally, exploitation films often imitate action and horror films from Hollywood.

Salim Said asserts that the 1970s might be characterized as experimentation and learning from mistakes (Said, 1991). According to Said (1991), businesspeople played significant roles in the cinema industry, leading to the treatment of films as commodities created only for the goal of maximizing profits. In my analysis, the predominant characteristic of this age is a succession of political paradoxes that have intensified and become more intricate compared to the initial years of the New Order. I have explicitly emphasized that some institutions and policies, such as decrees, Indonesian film festivals, and censorship boards, have functioned as mechanisms of state regulation over the film industry. Additionally, certain ministerial decrees have been issued to address economic requirements. Consequently, this period gave rise to several exploitation films, which Said refers to as 'trashy films.' Three of the earliest titles from this era that were exported and circulated internationally are *Primitif* (Primitives, 1979), *Ratu Ilmu Hitam* (Queen of Black Magic, 1979), and *Serbuan Halilintar* (Special Silencers, 1979).

THE 1980s: THE GOLDEN ERA

Between 1981 and 1982, the National Film Board financed and produced five films: *Sorta* (1982), *Titian Serambut Dibelah Tujuh* (The Passage, 1982), *Halimun* (Mist, 1982), *Lima Sahabat* (Five Comrades, 1981), and the unfinished *Peristiwa Don Muang (Woyla)* (The Event of Don Muang (Woyla) (Said, 1991). However, the four completed films generated minimal profits due to excessive production costs and insufficient distribution. As a result, the Minister of Information, Harmoko, disbanded the DFN in 1983 (Said, 1991).

1983, a well-known film called *Bumi Bulat Bundar* (The World is Round, Pitrajaya Burnama, 1983) was produced. The following year, 45 out of the 76 films that participated in the 1984 FFI were classified as sexploitation or "sadistic" films (Kristanto, 2004). This genre experienced rapid growth and reached its peak in terms of quantity during this period. From 1986 to 1994, many filmmakers hired foreign actors for their films, such as Peter O'Brian in *Pembalasan Rambu* (The Intruder, 1986) and *Segitiga Emas* (Stabiliser, 1986).

In 1980, the film censorship board known as Badan Sensor Film (BSF) implemented the Ethical Code (Kode Etik Badan Sensor Film). This code aligned with the Censorship Guidelines the Ministry of Information set in 1977 (Sen, 1994). 1980,

the Department of Information published “Basic Guidelines for the Promotion and Development of National Film.” This publication aimed to assist cultural elites in their mission to promote the idea of showcasing the “Indonesian identity on screen” in national films. The text reads as follows:

“Within the next five years, it is imperative to establish a foundation for both expansion and structural improvement in the film industry. This will guarantee that Indonesian-produced films possess a “national” essence and meet the quality standards aligned with our national objectives. The domestic film industry is anticipated to achieve autonomous expansion in the future. The support for creating national film must be consistent and uninterrupted” (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992).

Once again, based on the previously specified criteria and description, the policy prohibited the production of exploitation films.

However, despite efforts by the Government to regulate them, the production of low-quality exploitation films continued without interruption. In the 1980s, while these films were still being made, there were multiple attempts to censor numerous titles that contained explicit and violent scenes. Films such as *Ketika Musim Semi Tiba* (When the Spring Comes, Bobby Sandy 1986), *Pembalasan Ratu Laut Selatan* (PRLS, Lady Terminator, Tjut Jalil, 1988), *Akibat Terlalu Genit* (ATG, the Result of Too Flirtatious, Hadi Poernono, 1988) all got withdrawn from the cinema due to erotic scenes were all removed from theatres due to their erotic content (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992).

Lady Terminator is a renowned exemplar frequently cited by film critics and academicians in discussions about the issue of censorship of exploitation films. Kristanto asserts that *Pembalasan Ratu Laut Selatan* was ultimately pulled from the cinema release in Jakarta after nine days, as reported by BSF (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992). Despite receiving funding from the National Film Council, the films failed to generate profits due to production costs exceeding the initial projections. The council was dismissed as a result of this failure. The 1980 Basic Guidelines for the Promotion and Development of National Film did not have an impact, as films with violence and sensual sequences continued to be produced, marketed, and shown.

Additionally, I deduce that specific movies were confiscated from the cinema during this era due to significant protests. This indicates that the censorship board had initially approved the films but reversed its decisions.

THE 1990s: THE FALL OF EXPLOITATION CINEMA

The 1990s is widely seen as a period of stagnation for Indonesian cinema. Several significant aspects characterize this age. The recently implemented rule, Film Law no. 8/1992, was initially enforced. Furthermore, in May 1992, the US trade representative obtained concessions regarding admitting additional American films into Indonesia. In exchange, Indonesian textile exports were extended to the US (Sen, 1994). Consequently, many Hollywood films entered Indonesia, influencing local censorship, filmmaking styles, and preferences. Furthermore, the emergence of private TV stations and concurrent financial difficulties in the area led to a significant shift in the production style of exploitation films. As a result, these films either shifted their focus towards TV production or attempted to create low-budget, straightforward sexploitation content. Now, I briefly discuss each of these trends. Initially, let us consider the Film Law number 8/1992. One of the verses in the text discusses the aims of filmmaking, which involve the preservation and advancement of national cultural values, the formation of the nation's identity and character, the enhancement of human dignity, the promotion of public order and decency, and the provision of wholesome entertainment based on the standards of life. The strategy's objective is to implement censorship on both domestic and international films (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992).

Aligned with the recently implemented censorship legislation and by the principles of Nasional cinema, Narto Erawan, serving as the Director for Guidance in Cinema and Video Recording at the Department of Information and Secretary General of the National Film Board, penned the following statement in 1992:

“It is to be hoped that every national film production can paint a true picture of the society and culture of its people by presenting the beauty of esthetics which are brought together by and originate in the values of the social ethic of the people and their environment....It is hoped that every film is not only created and treated as a commercial commodity, and it is suggested that, at least, it should contain socio-cultural values that reflect the personality and the character of the nation making it. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the artistic values illustrated in Indonesian films present the image and the culture of the Indonesian people or, at the very least, that they will not conflict with cultural values and the policies of the Government in the development of a national culture. Once again, the Government emphasizes the significance of portraying an accurate representation of society and culture,

as well as the values and characteristics of the nation, which are often lacking in low-quality films” (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992).

Erawan further underlines that the primary objective of the new censorship law is to ensure that films accurately depict the behavior of Indonesians who possess the ability to exercise self-control in order to prevent any disruption to the equilibrium, coherence, and uninterrupted progression of social, public, and national life (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992). The Government reiterates the importance of accurately depicting society, culture, and the values and traits of the nation in films. This is often needed in low-quality films. Additionally, the Film/Textile exchange policy also contributed to the rise of sexploitation. The formation of 21 Cineplex, the predominant cinema chain in Indonesia, was mainly founded on this approach. It effectively regulates the cinema exhibition sector in Indonesia (Kristanto, 2011; Tjasmadi, 2008). Moreover, it was directly affiliated with the US Trade Department and MPA (Motion Pictures Association), both serving as advocates for prominent American film companies. In order to secure exclusive film distribution rights and establish an MPA branch office in Jakarta, they threatened to boycott Indonesian textiles, reminiscent of the situation during the AMPAI era in the 1950s.

The proposal contravened Indonesian regulations as overseas films must be imported into Indonesia solely through Indonesian importing companies. After deliberations, it was unanimously recognized that the MPA could create a representative office in Jakarta and participate in direct distribution. Nevertheless, the management of this office must be delegated to local importers who have a connection with the same organization as the new Cineplex movie network (Kristanto, 2011). Regarding exploitation films, this legislation resulted in a surge in the production of Hollywood pictures, and censorship limits were once again eased for both Hollywood and local films. Moreover, Hollywood films indirectly impacted the audience's preferences and production techniques in the domain of exploitation pictures.

Consequently, these requirements had the inadvertent consequence of conflicting with other rules, such as censorship and the 1992 Film Laws, resulting in a diminished portrayal of “national culture.” Due to fiscal constraints, the administration was compelled to prioritize other sectors. Regarding government regulation of the film industry, their primary concern was predominantly political content, as demonstrated by the films they prohibited during that period. It seems that the “Basic Guidelines for the Promotion and Development of National Film” from the 1980s, as well as the subsequent censorship

standards and Film Law of 1992, had no impact on the creation of exploitation films. Rosihan Anwar agrees that, although eight years have passed since publishing the 1980 Basic Guidelines, there has yet to be much progress in achieving the stated goals, especially regarding structural reform (Baharuddin & Pasaribu, 1992). Although these rules had a minimal effect on a select few films, the creation of sexploitation and other exploitation films persisted. In addition to the decline of Suharto's power in the 1990s, economic hardships and political limitations were significant catalysts for the widespread production of low-budget adult films since they offered a means of financial sustenance.

Although many film companies experienced financial difficulties during the period from early 1990 to June 1992, resulting in the publication of just around 20 films, a small number of directors who focused on exploiting sexual themes were able to produce sexploitation films with minimal funds. Some of them include *Misteri Permainan Terlarang* (Mystery of The Forbidden Game, Atok Soeharto, 1993) and *Ranjang Pemikat* (Bed of Charmer, Pitrajaya Burnama, 1993), *Gairah Malam* (Night Passion, SA Karim, 1993), *Kenikmatan Tabu* (Taboo Pleasure, Ackyl Anwari 1994), *Nafsu Liar* (Wild Lust, Steady Rimba, 1996), and *Bergairah di Puncak* (Passion in Puncak, Steady Rimba, 1996). These films deviate from the established popular genres, such as Legend or Japanese Period Films (Heider, 1991), as they focus exclusively on sexual material and depict feminine bodies while lacking compelling narratives and high-quality performances. According to Kristanto (Kristanto, 2004), the sexploitation genre remained the most influential from 1993 to 1997. Tjasmadi (Tjasmadi, 2008) states that most of these films were screened in suburban cinema theatres. However, none of the previously named films were subsequently released in overseas DVD markets. In addition, film studios traditionally engaged in producing and distributing exploitation films discontinued their film-related activities. Parkit Films discontinued the production of feature films in 1994, rebranded as Multivision Plus, and redirected its primary focus towards the television sector. In 1996, Rapi Film discontinued its film production and redirected its whole focus into making soap operas for a recently founded private television channel, which had already begun operations in 1995. In the latter years of the New Order rule, during a time of stagnation in the Indonesian film industry, the Government launched a last-ditch effort to increase the production of films that meet high standards. In 1994, the revitalized DFN produced two films: *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang* (And The Moon Dances, directed by Garin Nugroho) and *Cemeng 2005* (The Last

Primadona, directed by Nano Riantiarno). One of the project's goals was to produce films eligible for participation in the 1995 Asia Pacific Film Festival. In 1989, a novel phenomenon emerged. The financial challenges encountered by private TV stations began to affect the region significantly, resulting in a critical situation in the film industry (Hendriyani et al., 2011; Kitley, 1999). As a result, a new kind of the Politics of Tastes appeared. Raam Punjabi, a Parkit Film co-founder, founded Multivision Plus, a firm specializing in producing sinetron, the Indonesian name for soap operas or electronic cinema. During the early 1990s, several filmmakers, including Parkit Film in 1994 and Rapi Film in 1996, redirected their focus from film production to television production.

CONCLUSION

The New Order agents, encompassing the Government and cultural elites, embody Kuhn's prohibition/institution model. The authorities utilize censorship to limit and suppress the film industry to exert control and influence over filmmakers to align with their vision of "Film Nasional," "Film Kultural Edukatif," or the exploration of genuine Indonesian identity. However, as Kuhn highlighted, these censorship measures had unintended outcomes and, within the context of this study, led to a range of contradictions in political policies, ultimately resulting in the widespread production of exploitation films, which went against the preferences of the New Order.

By analyzing the trends, patterns, and anomalies of political policies toward the film industry, the paper finds a series of contradictions where the regulations are divided into two poles. On one hand, there were periods when the Government applied a quality approach (funding some films, film national concepts, the establishment of the National Film Council), applying the politics of tastes run by the cultural elites. On the other hand, the New Order regime also applied a quantity or audience approach (quickie quota, softening the censorship standard), negotiating with the general public's taste. Hence, The New Order justified some regulations to balance political stability and economic progress, resulting in the paradoxes of the two poles. Moreover, exploitation films, the kind they were trying to eradicate, were at the center of the conflicts between politics of taste.

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