

RESENSI



The History of Cultural Policy in Indonesia 1900s-2000s

Tod Jones. 2015. *Kebudayaan dan Kekuasaan di Indonesia: Kebijakan Budaya Selama Abad ke-20 Hingga Era Reformasi*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia & KITLV-Jakarta, 356 pages. ISBN 978-979-461-885-1

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This book investigates how culture, particularly national culture, in Indonesia has been shaped by the government policies from the Dutch colonial period in 1900s to the Reformation era in 2000s. It is an attempt to show the relationship between the state and culture around the process of production, circulation, regulation and reception of cultural policy through different regimes. Although this book discusses government policy, the author has realized that the book needs to overcome contradictions and confusions of cultural discourse by incorporating people as explanatory element. Many aspect of culturality may be influenced by the state, but according to Jones, “it is a field that is not stable and easy to shift that facilitates resistance, and is able to turn against the state, market and other institutions” (p. 31). Jones employs two postcolonial cultural policy tools to review the history of cultural policy in Indonesia: authoritarian cultural policy and command culture. The first means that the state has assumption if majority of citizen do not have capability to inspire a responsible citizenship and need a state’s direction in the choice of their culture. On the contrary, command culture shows that the cultural idea that is planned in fact always been placing the state as center in planning, creating policy and revising cultural practice.

The structure of the book is divided into two parts. Chapter 2 through 6 presents the historical

account of how cultural policy has been constituted from the late colonial period to the Reformation era (p. 37). The first five chapters show how the technology of government developed in Europe was practiced in Indonesia and turned across time because internal and external factors. These chapters are presented chronologically and followed similar pattern, started with a discussion of how culture is formulated in the discourse of the government before moving to the details of official cultural policy to identify the characteristic of cultural policy in the particular era (p. 37). Chapter 2 discusses the genesis of modern cultural policy in Indonesia by examining the cultural policy in the late colonial period and Japanese occupation in 1900-1945. Jones argues both the Dutch and Japanese government adopted authoritarian cultural policy. The Japanese cultural policy, although was successfully implemented and administered, was failed to achieve their goals they formulated (p. 82).

Chapter 3 examines the changing uses of culture in the constitutional democracy (1950-1957) and guided democracy (1957-1965). In this chapter, Jones analyzes the transformation of government role in the cultural policy in the regime change. In the constitutional democracy, the Indonesian government took a role as a regulator in which the government provided an institutional structure for activities focused on the field which was defined as national culture. However, when the regime changes to guided democracy, Sukarno

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altered the government role to a leadership model in which it tried to mobilize people behind its political programs. Chapter 4 and 5 presents an analysis of national culture, cultural institutions and cultural programs in the New Order. First, Jones explores of how political and social change formed the characteristic of national culture in the New Order era, particularly among the power holders (p. 130). Then, he examines that 'cultural process' in the context of cultural institutions and programs. Chapter 6 focuses on four important changes in the context of national culture in the Reformation era: (1) immediate response from artists and media to Soeharto's resignation; an ongoing struggle in the national bureaucracy to complete its long-term goal, namely creating citizen of nation and establishing national unity with a more commercial orientation; the effect of political decentralization on the growth of ethnic identity, local identity and cultural tradition; and the effect of changes in public morality debate in Indonesia about culture and art (p. 210).

Chapter 7 and 8 examines two cases of cultural policy managed by the Directorate of Culture. The first case study discusses two important institutions during the New Order and Reformation era: *taman budaya* (cultural parks) and *dewan kesenian* (art councils). Jones argues that *taman budaya* and *dewan kesenian* provides an opportunity to examine how cultural policy from a centralized state could bring a series of diverse and vary results and events on a more lower government scale (p. 237). Meanwhile, chapter 8 focuses on local culture and traditional value by reviewing a

series of text coordinated by Directorate of Culture. Jones analyzes how the cultural discourse changes as the result of the transition from the New Order era to Reformation era and how the transition affects the construction of local culture in texts (p. 278). In the conclusion chapter, the author concludes while cultural policy has its origins in the technique of liberal democracy, in Indonesia the authoritarian cultural policy held power for almost the entire twentieth century (p.312). The authoritarian cultural policy neglects taste and affiliated groups and individuals to make their rational own assessment, which allows the state with an iron fist to direct the development of culture.

Overall, *Kebudayaan dan Kekuasaan di Indonesia* is the first major study focused on the history of cultural policy and its effect in Indonesia. This book facilitates us to fathom the contingency of the present condition of cultural policy in Indonesia. No less important, this study also stimulates further research of how international influence, for example organizations such as UNESCO, the United Nations and World Bank, have an impact on the direction of cultural policy in Indonesia. However, I have one criticism on the book. In my opinion, Jones overlooks the effect of cultural policy on the socio-cultural life of the ethnic Chinese. It is interesting if the author can explore how the cultural policy was constituted in the context of dealing with the Chinese culture. Aside from that criticism, the book is an important contribution to the historiography of the modern Indonesian culture.