Ariel Heryanto

Identity and Pleasure. The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture. Singapore: NUS, 2014, xiv + 209 pp. ISBN: 9789971698218. Price: USD 36.00 (paperback).

In his latest book, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*, leading scholar of Indonesian politics and culture Ariel Heryanto investigates contemporary media and screen culture to trace how urban middle-class youth seek to redefine their identities in the first decade of the twenty first century. Through cinema and television in particular, the book examines how middle-class Indonesians engage with various issues, including the discourses of Islam, the history and memory of the 1965–66 mass killings, and discrimination against the ethnic Chinese after the fall of the New Order military dictatorship in 1998. While treating the term 'post-1998' with caution, arguing that one needs to probe into overlaps and continuities instead of viewing it as a clean break, Heryanto contends that contemporary Indonesia allows us to see—among others—the rise of Islamic politics, Asia's economic power, digital revolution, and public debates on past human rights violation. From Islamic-themed films to the K-Pop consumption, screen culture serves as a window to view how identity politics is forged and reworked in everyday life in globalized Indonesia.

The book is structured around two major themes. The first area consists of highly visible and intensely debated issues with regards to identity politics and pleasure, including Islam in popular culture (Chapters 2 and 3) and the popularity of screen culture from Northeast Asia (Chapter 7). The second area delves into cultural politics that has been erased or forgotten, including the history of 1965–66 massacres (Chapter 4 and 5) and discrimination against the ethnic Chinese (Chapter 6) as well as the lower classes (Chapter 8). Given Heryanto's authority in the history of post-independence Indonesia, the strongest chapters of this book are the ones that revisit history and locate it in the popular imagination. Chapter 4 and 5 reflect Heryanto's expertise in the topic of cultural politics of Indonesia's mass killings with its focus on official and counter-narratives of the 1965–66 events that led Suharto to power. While international media drew their attention on Indonesia's violent history only recently, due to the visibility of Joshua Oppenheimer's high profile film *The Act of Killing* (2013), counter-narratives since the fall of Suharto discussed in Chapter 4 and 5 indicate that many activists and filmmakers have not been silent. Similar to these chapters, Heryanto's historical approach in investigating the ethnic Chinese minority in Chapter 6 demonstrates his mastery of the subject, detailed observation, and extensive data. This chapter contributes largely to the study of Chinese in Indonesia as well as Indonesian film historiography through an

analysis of the roles of Chinese Indonesians in the film industry and how they are erased from the institutionalization of national cinema.

In investigating Islam and popular culture, Heryanto uses Asef Bayat's 'post-Islamism,' a concept developed based on the condition in Iran in which 'discontent, disenchantment, and disillusionment' of the Islamist rule produces new thinking, aspirations, and ways of performing Muslim identities (pp. 39–40). Heryanto acknowledges the different contexts between Iran in Indonesia in a sense that Indonesia has never been under an Islamic rule, yet he argues that the term is still productive. He argues that Islamism is still 'steadily creeping' into formal political institutions, but expressions of post-Islamism are strongly reflected in popular culture. I am still wondering what the implications are when we detach post-Islamism from its historical specificities (exhaustion and dissatisfaction resulted from Islamism in the Middle East) in order to re-appropriate it in Indonesia, when Islamism is assertive precisely because it is still an ongoing project. Yet regardless of the terminology, Heryanto's discussion of the Islamic contestations on and off the cinema screen, especially with regards to the commercially successful Islamic-themed film *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (Verses of Love, 2008), challenges the monolithic view of Islam in Indonesia by underlining conflicting Islamic voices and aspirations.

The book raises a number of questions that might allow us to think of further research directions. First of all, what constitutes the urban middle class youth, the focus of Heryanto's study? Does it refer to the cultural/media producers, consumers, or imagined spectators? The book suggests the author's attempt to cover all sides.

In his chapter on Islam and cinema, Heryanto delves into the social practice of Jakarta-based upper-middle class media producers. His discussion of the discourse of the 1965–66 massacres focuses on the wide range of films and their contents. Heryanto explains that these films were produced by different groups (commercial filmmakers, NGOs, and former political prisoners), but the connections and gaps between different players in the field of cultural production are yet to explore. In his discussion of K-Pop, Heryanto deploys ethnographic methods of observation and interviews to study the K-Pop fans, which shifts our attention from cultural production to consumption. While the book offers us different voices, the challenge is how to draw a link between the wealthy producers who reap profits from box office Islamic-themed films, the independent film activists invested in the history of the political left, and the Muslim female fans of East Asian stars. How do we situate these various agencies within the map of the 'urban middle class youth'? How young is this 'youth' (can we speak of generation[s])? If the category is not coherent, how do we approach tensions and ruptures and examine how they are produced?

Second, how have issues of visibility and invisibility complicated the notion of 'popular culture'? Popular culture in this book refers to 'commercially mass-produced sounds, image, and messages,' thus involving 'top-down profit driven process of supplying commodities *for the people* as consumers' (p. 15). Yet Heryanto does not dismiss the more independent, non-industrialized communicative practices, arguing that it is still popular culture in a sense that it is 'created and distributed *by the people*.' He rejects the overemphasis on the distinction between the two, as suggested by cultural studies scholar Chua Beng Huat who differentiates between popular culture and pop culture, in order to examine realms of intersections and 'mutual borrowings' (p. 15). However, we might also think of how the degree of publicness creates inequality and friction within the broad umbrella of popular culture. If we compare the box-office film *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, praised by the Indonesian President as a sample of national cinema, and the LGBTQ! Film Festival, which had to organize clandestine events due to threats by Muslim vigilante groups, we are confronted with the questions of the power and the cost of visibility, of which voice is legitimized to be 'in the public' and which is not.

Finally, how does the book contribute to the recent developments in the other fields outside Indonesian studies and Asian studies? As media studies scholars have been questioning the potentials and the risks of the blurring boundaries between media producers and consumers in the age of media convergence and participatory culture (e.g. Jenkins 2006), it would be fruitful to bring the Indonesian case of the digital revolution, its success and failure in fostering political engagement, and its negotiation with surveillance, into the debates. It would also be enriching if the discussion of Islam, cinema, and popular culture can be put in dialogue with a pre-existing body of work that examines how media inform religious practices and ideas in the field of religion and media (e.g. Meyer and Moors 2006; Hirschkind 2006; Hendershot 2006).

While these questions have not been thoroughly explored in the book, it is notable that Heryanto's work is an important contribution to the study of media, politics, and culture in Indonesia. The book offers a very comprehensive and up-to-date bibliography of works in Indonesian studies, and it highlights the importance of popular culture as an area often overlooked by those who study Indonesian politics mainly through top-level political elites and government policies. The political elites, as the book reminds us, 'can never fully dictate or control how texts, sounds, and images are disseminated, received, understood to across this remarkably diverse population' (p. 12).

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