

## Music in Indonesia on the Ideological Debates in the Soekarnoian Era

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to explain about a position of music on the ideology debate in Indonesia of Soekarnoian era. The defined ideology debate that is between a concept of Soekarno about Nasakom (an acronym of Nasionalisme, Agama, Komunis or Nationalism, Religion, Communist) and a market ideology (entertainment). Each of these ideologies affects a reality of music at that time, both its creation and its presentation. Based on it, a collected data is derived from various resources, such as observations, interviews, documents, and audio and video recordings. The data is analyzed using Davis's concept of art and ideology and Navits's concept of art and identity. There are three founded conclusions, namely, firstly, Indonesia in Soekarnoian era was being held to seek the identity by inventorying a local music in Indonesia and introducing to the international arena; secondly, Soekarno seceded from the culture of Nekolim by categorizing a good and bad music for Indonesian; and thirdly, it was occurred the ideology debate between the musicians and the government in the Indonesian cultural politics of Soekarnoian era. This debate had put the music in an un-neutral field in fact as a traumatic language that had rose from a personal will of creator.

Kata kunci: music, culture, ideology, Nasakom, market ideology.

### ABSTRAK

Tujuan artikel ini adalah untuk menjelaskan tentang posisi musik pada perdebatan ideologi di Indonesia era Soekarno. Debat ideologi yang maksud yaitu antara konsep Soekarno tentang Nasakom (akronim Nasionalisme, Agama, Komunis atau Nasionalisme, Agama, Komunis) dan ideologi pasar (hiburan). Masing-masing ideologi ini mempengaruhi realitas musik pada waktu itu, baik kreasi maupun presentasinya. Berdasarkan hal tersebut, data tulisan ini berasal dari berbagai sumber daya, seperti observasi, wawancara, dokumen, dan rekaman audio dan video. Data tersebut dianalisis menggunakan konsep seni dan ideologi Davis dan konsep seni dan identitas Navits. Ada tiga kesimpulan yang dibuat, yaitu, pertama, Indonesia di era Soekarno dilakukan untuk mencari identitas dengan menginventarisasi musik lokal di Indonesia dan memperkenalkan ke arena internasional; kedua, Soekarno melepaskan diri dari budaya Nekolim dengan mengkategorikan musik yang baik dan yang buruk untuk Indonesia; dan ketiga, terjadi perdebatan ideologi antara musisi dan pemerintah dalam politik kebudayaan Indonesia era Soekarno. Perdebatan ini telah menempatkan musik sebagai bidang yang tidak netral dan pada kenyataannya sebagai bahasa traumatik yang muncul dari keinginan personal pencipta.

Kata kunci: musik, kebudayaan, ideologi, Nasakom, ideologi pasar.

## INTRODUCTION

Arts and politics constitute two inseparable entities. Particularly in a social field, between the two will mutually support one another. The art is often became the political devices or even the actors itself participated in politic to achieve a certain benefit. A phenomenon of such, has already no stranger anymore and would be always seen indeed.

For instance, if leading the thought to the post-revolution of the Soviet Union for a while, was found one occasion where a work of arts used as a media of politic. One painting used by a group of counter-revolution to deceive the public. Why it is said deceiving the public, because Stalin at the time resided in Batun prison, while on the other hand, he drawn in a painting as the leading figure of the rebellion movement at the same time (Trotsky in Camus etc., 1998: 32).

The phenomenon explained above not only occurred in European region. In Africa, this also occurred. One of an interest cases was occurred in South Africa. In that country, before the works of music entered in a record company, beforehand, it had to pass through an inspection of censor agency of the country. Here, clearly seen how the country became a main patron of sustainability the works of music (Storey, 1996: 139).

Between music and politic, both relationships had also identical in constant with a prohibition toward the certain music. As occurred in Germany when Hitler occupied as the ruler. Several works of music were avowed to be forbidden. Even in more extreme, because of those forbidden works of music were categorized as “a depraved music” (work of communist and Jewish composer). On the other hand, a good music was a Germanic music of Aryan in which one of those was the works from Richard Wagner (Wibisono, 2012: 54).

How about in Indonesia? In this archipelagic country, the events between arts and politics were easily seen, especially in the world of music. If tracing from nowadays still an early of the independence, were founded the several events of music and politic. It was started from the involvement of music groups Slank and musician Ahmad Dhani in the campaign of president 2014, the existence of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono through pop music, the idea of national music day by Megawati, the debate of Rhoma Irama with Gus Dur (Abdurrahman Wahid)

about Inul Daratista's music style, about the song of "Sepasang Mata Bola" became as Habibie's pleasure, the prohibition of the song of "Genjer-genjer" by Soeharto, till the imprisonment of Koes Bersaudara by Soekarno.

Each round of leaderships of president above shows a presence of viscosity between music and politic in Indonesia. However, this article will just emphasize one of those rounds. That is the events of music and politic in the leadership of President Soekarno. The interested event from its period is a presence of serious effort of the government to involve a culture element, particularly music, in its political practice. Besides, Indonesia as a new independence country actively counted to find its nation identity. Thus, put forward three questions at this point, how the model of the Indonesian cultural politics in the Soekarno's government period? Why Soekarno made a selection of music on its strategy of cultural politics? How the ideology position in a case of Soekarno's cultural politics at that time?

## METHODS

In this article, the data is derived from various resources, such as observations, interviews with some musicians, documents, and audio and video recordings. The data is then analyzed using two important concepts. The first is Davis's concept of art and ideology (in his *Art and Politics. Psychoanalysis, Ideology Theatre*, 2007) and the second Navits's concept of art and identity (in "Art, Culture, and Identity, 2005).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### **Art, Politic, Culture, and Identity**

Reading the phenomenon between arts and politics certainly needs one point of view to see it. In this respect, it has to be a theoretical framework used to see the phenomenon of such. On this article will be used two concepts by Davis and Novits about the relations between art, culture and politics.

In his book titled *Art and Politics*, Davis puts forward the ideological concept in seeing a political and art problems. The ideology, he intends as a thing that actually obscures an essence of art in fact. It works as "censor" and divides a creation of art from its creator. According to him, the arts born when someone seeking an artistic

language to express or even communicate his traumatic experience (Davis, 2007: 17). So, when certain ideologies take control the creation process of work of art, of course, its work is not original from the traumatic experience of its creator (Davis, 2007: 32).

The concept above has used by Davis to see the phenomena of arts and politics in the United States of America. He maps two big ideologies, namely between a conservative faction and an artistic freedom supporter. For the conservative faction, the work of art should be accordance with the applied norms of custom in the United States of America that has a background of church power. While the other groups support a free expressive of work of art as a reflection of free work from the conservative-smelled things. However, they put those works in the middle of global capitalism current.

Davis is in the neutral position seeing its event. According to him, both the ideological groups respectively stunt the presence of work of art. The adhered ideology by these two groups actually just censor the work of art as a language articulation of traumatic experience of its creator. Thus, he is concluded that art under the political interests merely stunt the art as an entity that should be neutral.

Further, that is a viewpoint from Novits. In seeing the phenomena of culture and identity, he introduces one concept, namely about "a cultural demarcation". This case he is used as an answer form of Hegel's response of culture as *geist*. According to him, every culture has its character each one. Different from Hegel's view point who seen the culture as one intact unity and united by a soul. By this viewpoint, Hegel concluded that there is no differences between one culture and another. It is which not agreed by Novits.

Concerning the identity problems, every community will use their culture to show their identity. Through the culture, one community would distinguish oneself with another group. Even, the community would find their cultural character till choose a rock and a swamp as their identity. This seeking of identity that is considered by Novits as a political action (2005: 197).

The position of work of art in the community functions as a media which articulates the identity of the culture. Therefore, the art considered can represent a characteristic of a community that becomes their identity subsequently. Though, the

works of art righteously articulate those culture in smooth. It is not be clearly showing the things that want to be communicated through its artistic language.

This viewpoint which is used by Novits to see a trend of the ex-colonized countries that always want to differentiate one-selves from their colonies. The efforts of distinction were used till the culture sphere. And the works of art were created to articulate their culture; such as New Zealand that always want to be differentiated from England, and also the other colonized countries.

### **Indonesia of Soekarnoian Era**

In the period of Soekarno, one of Indonesian focus political strategy is wanted to arise in the map of world politics. In fact, Indonesia had faced with two power currents of the world politics, namely the East axis which consisted of the Soviet Union countries along the other socialist countries. Besides, there was also the West axis by the United State of America powers and the Western Europe countries in it.

In keeping with facts, Soekarno along with several leaders of the ex-colonized countries made one political breakthrough in order to compete the two currents of the politics. They established a unity of new countries known as a name of “the third world country” afterwards. The members consisted of the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and several revolutionary groups of capitalist countries.

One of conducted political breakthrough was holding a forum of KAA (Asian Africa Conference) and a non-block KTT (*konferensi tingkat tinggi* or high level conference). Its effort attracted attention of the Western Block and Eastern Block because of the incorporated countries on the forum had a number of citizens more than a half of the world population. Consequently, this situation made the third world country also took part to be discussed in the map of the world politics.<sup>1</sup>

The other efforts in order to unite the political flows of Asian Africa countries were continued to be conducted by Soekarno. He was often visited to several Asian and African countries and also invited those delegations of the countries to Indonesia. The interested things from this activities that were doing a cultural

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<sup>1</sup>The information was obtained from personal accounts of Hersry Setiawan. He was one of member of LEKRA and a historical witness at the time (unpublished).

approach. One of those by conducting a literature conference of Asian Africa (National Archives of RI).

Not just that, Soekarno was also shown his political strategy by unifying the revolutionary groups in Indonesia becoming one big power. The form was constituted an idea of ideologies abbreviated as name Nasakom (Nationalism, Religion, Communism). This ideology that was became a main weapon of Indonesia at the time because of *pro rakyat* (pro-people, namely stand up for the people interests) by becoming a main opponent of Nekolim (Neocolonialism, Capitalism and Imperialism) (Ongkokham, 2009).

### **Soekarno and Local Music**

As explained before, that Indonesian political direction of the post-independence was a seeking level of nation identity. In the efforts, of course, an invention of identity and personality became the main purpose. Therefore, Soekarno as the leader of the country attempted to realize its nation aspiration by setting the concept of MANIPOL USDEK (Manifestation of Politics, 1945's Constitution, Indonesian Socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economy and Indonesian Identity) through his state speech by 1959.

Based on the concept of MANIPOL USDEK, an emphasized one was the Nation Identity. The Nation Identity constituted a typicality to represent Indonesia as the country having the culture. One of the conducted efforts to realize the aspiration was conducted by inventorying the local arts including the music and introducing to the other countries.

The inventories and introduction of local music in Indonesia conducted with any ways. Soekarno himself, often played a gamelan and invited his wife and children to love that local arts. The gamelan often played in the State Palace by Soekarno together with his wife and children (Putra, 2012).

Apart from it, Soekarno also appreciated Cianjuran local music. This kind of music frequently was performed in the State Palace, in Cipinas. One of his favored music was, *Degung Kahyangan* because there was a flute voice of Sundanese on its music composition (Affandi, 2010: 84).

The other conducted efforts by Soekarno was inviting the artists to come to the State Palace and playing their works of art, such as Mrs. Ani Sapada and Daeng Romo and also Daeng Maggau from South Sulawesi. They were ever invited to the State Palace to play the *Pakkarena* dance and the Makassar *gendang* (drum) music. Even the artists of South Sulawesi were often involved in a culture trip of Indonesia to China to perform their works (Sutton, 2002: 52-83).

The efforts to collect the arts, especially the local music in Indonesia also involved LEKRA (the Establishment of People Culture). Along with LEKRA, then was formed LMI (the Establishment of Indonesian Music) that its main purpose consisted of seven points (*Harian Rakjat*, 14/2/1959), as following:

1. Menjelenggarakan registrasi musik [-tari] Rakjat diseluruh daerah (Organizing a registration of folk music [-dance] throughout the regions).
2. Meluaskan dan mengintensifkan pendidikan musik [dan tari] dengan jalan (Expanding and intensifying the education of music [and dance] by way of).
  - a. Penerbitan dan penjiaran (Publication and broadcast).
  - b. Seminar-seminar dan lingkaran-lingkaran diskusi (Seminars and discussions).
  - c. Perlombaan dan pertundjukan (Contest and performance).
3. Menggiatkan pentjegahan dan pemberantasan pentjabulan serta gejala-gejala dekaden lainnya dalam musik [dan tari] (Invigorating the prevention and eradication of abusement as well as the other decadent symptoms in music [and dance]).
4. Memperjuangkan pengintensifan peladjaran musik [dan tari] disekolah-sekolah, terutama disekolah-sekolah guru. (Struggling the intensifying of music [and dance] subjects in the schools, particularly in the normal school).
5. Menjelenggarakan tukar menukar musik [dan tari], baik antar daerah maupun antar negara. (Holding the exchange of music [and dance], either interregional or interstate)
6. Menggiatkan kerdja seleksi dan kreasi dilapangan musik [dan tari]. (Invigorating the works of selection and creation in the filed of music [and dance]).

7. Mengingatn kerdja penggalian, pengembangan dan peningkatan musik [dan tari] Rakjat serta alat-alatnya (Reminding the works of finding, development and enhancement of folk music [and dance] as well as its instruments).

LMI that was formed by LEKRA also bore the music groups in several regions in Indonesia. One of those was the *Angin Timur* choir group, which its songs supported a liberation movement of North Kalimantan under the colony of England. Its music used a Chinese pentatonic scale that was packed becoming a march music. One of its pieces of songs can be seen as below.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G-clef and D major (two sharps). The top staff is labeled 'Soprano' and contains the lyrics: 'Da ri rim ba Ka li man tan U ta ra'. The bottom staff is labeled 'S.' and contains the lyrics: 'ter de ngar je rih ba gi mer de ka'. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with a final long note on 'ra' and 'ka'.

Besides that song, there was the song reserved to support KAA. On the second part of this song, was shown a melody with a minor scale and formed an Arabic nuance. This gamut was played at the time when sang a poem represented of the frontier between Asia and Africa. The piece of its melody can be seen in the below:

The image shows a single staff of musical notation in G-clef and D minor (two sharps and one flat). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, forming a scale-like pattern with an Arabic nuance.

Several LEKRA artists also traveled to the Indonesia regions. For instance, a poet F. L. Risakotta traveled to West Sumatra. One of his agenda was to recommend to the musicians in West Sumatra to insert a music element of *saluang* (Minangkabau music instrument) in creating music (Harian Rakjat, 20/9/1964). In addition, there was also Amir Pasaribu who created music by a technic of combining Batak music idioms with European music titled "Slamat-slamat" (*Harian Rakjat*,



20/10/1961). Then, Pramoedya Ananta Toer in Palembang orated about a danger of American culture including its song and music (*Harian Rakjat*, 15/3/1964).

Introducing the local music to the close countries was also often conducted by Soekarno. Such as *angklung*, one of its evidences when Guruh Soekarno Putra visited the Josip Broz Tito Mausoleum in Belgrade, Serbia in 26/2/2014, he found Tito's music instrument collection of *angklung* that was a gift from Soekarno (Rita, 2014).

The activity alike was also conducted when visited to the other close countries such as Thailand, North Vietnam, North Korea, Soviet Union, and China. On his visit, Soekarno also included the Indonesian arts. This entourage consisted of artists who brought the kind of local arts from Indonesia. One of included music was gamelan and Malay music which used to the arts of *Serampang XII*.<sup>2</sup>

### Soekarno Rejecting *Ngak-Ngik-Ngok* Music

By 17 August 1945, Soekarno orated in the front of his mass supporters. At that time, he conveyed a political message as following:

"...Dan engkau, hai pemuda-pemuda dan pemudi-pemudi, engkau jang tentunya anti imperialismenanti menentang imperialisme ekonomi, engkau jang menentang imperialisme politik, -kenapa dikalangan engkau banjakjang masih rock-n'-roll-rock-n'rollan, dansi-dansian a lacha-cha-cha, musik-musikan a langak-ngik-ngek gila-gilaan dan lain-lain sebagainya lagi? ..." (1965: 380).  
("...And thou, Hi young men and young women, thou, of course, who are anti-imperialism and resist the economy imperialism, thou who resist the political imperialism, why in the circle many of thou who still are *rock-n'-roll-rock-n'rollan, dansi-dansian a lacha-cha-cha, musik-musikan a langak-ngik-ngek gila-gilaan* and even so forth?..." (1965: 380)).

This speech was known as the Manifestation of Politics (MANIPOL) and became the political reference of Indonesia on the leadership of Soekarno. From here, it can be seen that one of Soekarno's will that was the prohibition toward the music category of *ngak-ngik-ngok*.

Responding the mentioned, the State Radio Network of Indonesia (RRI) issued a program of PSBI (the Universal Planning Development of Indonesia). This program aimed to anticipate the danger of the West. By this program, music and

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<sup>2</sup>This account I found from a document of Indonesia embassy letter in Thailand.

songs got attention because both were considered that can build a mental of the society. Consequently, music was directed to give a tranquility of mind and feel, a well and cheerful entertainment (*Harian Rakjat*, 20/11/1963).

Based on the determined orders, it was happened the prohibition to hear the others American rock n' roll and pop musician in several places. Those kind of music were not broadcast anymore in RRI. Even, several other extreme events also happened, such as a combustion of Elvis's phonograph record and Indian songs.

The same as American rock n' roll and pop music, jazz music was also prohibited, but it reaped a controversy. The prohibition toward this music reaped the debate because there was still a jazz music which was allowed by the government at that time (*Selecta*, No. 44, 1960), and there was also prohibited, namely a jazz music which was influenced by a pop style. Thus, this kind of music was categorized as an *ngak-ngik-ngok* music of which its circulation was prohibited in Indonesia.

Soekarno's political policy about the prohibition toward the *ngak-ngik-ngok* music reached its peak when decided to imprison the personnel of Koes Bersaudara music group. This music group was regarded subversive which infringed the regulations of Penpres No. 11 Year 1963. They not obeyed the state regulations because often presented The Beatles songs. Hence, the personnel was sentenced in prison for three months in Glodok house arrest, Jakarta.<sup>3</sup>

Koes Bersaudara was widely influenced on American pop music, particularly Everly Brothers (interview with Nomo Koeswoyo, 2013). They followed several things from Everly Brothers, such as a duet vocal technic in interval of "terts". Besides, they also followed a usage of bass of "betol" in their works of music.

Apart from that, Koes Bersaudara in fact admitted still having a nationalist spirit although tended to influence on American pop music. It can be found in its work of music titled "Bus Sekolah". This song constituted its critical representation as Indonesian children because was not facilitated the school bus like international schools. Its critic was reflected on a song lyric as following, "Bis sekolah yang

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<sup>3</sup>This description had many circulated in Indonesia media, from a print media, electronic media to a talk show on a private TV. But, I have also an opportunity to investigate in deep of the description about this through a direct conversation with Nomo Koeswoyo in his residence.

kutunggu-kutunggu, tiada yang datang”. Henceforth, there were many in surprise when Koes Bersaudara was assumed not having the Indonesian character, mental and identity (interview with Yok Koeswoyo, 2014).

If further investigating, the imprisonment of Koes Bersaudara can be also caused by its activities that was more focus in the entertainment world than the state interest. They had committed to live through music. Koes Bersaudara was frequently invited to entertain people and it was the music group which always enlivened the show in Senayan and the several nightclubs in Jakarta (interview with Nomo Koeswoyo, 2013 and Haji Koestono, 2014). This was not accordance with the government will in wanting the music as the part of the country politics.

### **Tracing the Cultural Policy of Soekarno through Music**

As explained before, that the music had become one of media in Soekarno’s political practice. It started from the inventory of local music, introducing it to the close countries, till the prohibition of certain music that were marked by the imprisonment the group music of Koes Bersaudara.

Based on Novits’s viewpoint, Indonesia as one of new independent country tried to conduct the cultural separation from the culture of its political opponent (read: Nekolim). Various seeking activities of the cultural identity were conducted, such as the inventory effort of Indonesia music typicality supported by the cultural organization of LEKRA.

The inventory of music was conducted by the government and LEKRA. They made an activity like a counseling to the artists in the regions, such as Risakotta to West Sumatra, Pram to Palembang, and Amir Pasaribu in Medan. These artists applied an idea of music creation that its inspiration derived from the musical aspects of local music.

In addition to those activities, the government of Indonesia also brought in frequent the artists to attend to the State Palace. There were Ani Sapada from Makassar, Cianjuran Arts in the Cipinas Palace, and Java Gamelan in the Jakarta Palace. Seen that Soekarno gave a main attention to a kind of arts like these. On the other side, there were kind of unallowable music by Soekarno, namely the arts that was assumed in representing the culture of Nekolim.

The reflection of an allowable music by Soekarno was seen on the imprisonment of Koes Bersaudara. His disaffection to the other rock 'n roll and pop music were seen on this case. These kind of music not represented the characteristic of local music in Indonesia indeed, such as a melody, a rhythm, a tempo, and an of its music instrument. While the kind of music that became Soekarno's pleasure were of course assumed can be represented the local music typicality in Indonesia.

However, there was an interesting thing, namely the presence of the ideology debate between the government and the personnel of Koes Bersaudara. Both of them wanted to articulate the Nationalism of Indonesia through music based on the different ideology. On the other one, the government paid attention the local music based on the ideology of Nasakom. On the other hand, the personnel of Koes Bersaudara had its orientation based on the market ideology that accentuated its music character itself of which its inspiration was obtained from West pop music.

As Davis's viewpoint, that the ideology merely stunted the art. By this case, Koes Bersaudara and Soekarno positioned the music with an un-neutral way. The music had no more accordance with the creator intention as the traumatic language. But, each of them were influenced the ideology of Nasakom on the other one, and the market ideology on the other hand; the ideology of Nasakom that was pro-people accordance with Soekarno's concept, and the market ideology.

## CONCLUSION

There are three main points that want to be found by this study. Indonesia in Soekarnoian era was conducting the seeking of identity by inventorying the local music in Indonesia and introducing it to the international arena. Soekarno seceded from the culture of Nekolim by categorizing the good and bad music to Indonesian nation. The ideology debate between the musicians and the government in Indonesian cultural politics of Soekarnoian era. This debate positioned the music on the un-neutral sphere as the traumatic language in genuine originated from the personal will of the creator.

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