

# QUESTIONING FILM CENSORSHIP: BETWEEN SELF-CENSORSHIP OR THE MASTERS OF TERROR

**Hardiwan Prayoga**

*College of Performing Arts and Visual Arts Studies  
Graduate School of Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta*

E - m a i l : Notinyahoomail@gmail.com

## A B S T R A C T

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**F**ilm became the only arts that is still required through the sensor in the post-New Order. Contained in Law No. 33 Year 2009 About the Film, Article 57 paragraph (1) Each film and films ads that will be distributed and / or displayed, mandatory need to retrieve letter passed the censorship. More clearly mentioned also in Article 24 paragraph (1) That every films and advertising films that will be distributed and / or displayed to the public, mandatory censored first by the Film Censorship Board.

Film Censorship Board / (Lembaga Sensor Film/LSF) in Indonesia has a longer history than the national film industry. Officially national film, set at the March 30, 1950, whereas in functions, film censorship has been in effect since 1916 to maintain the good image the Hindia-Belanda colonial government. Until now LSF still trusted by the government as an institution which keeps public from the films containing ethnic group, religion, race, specific groups and ideologies that are considered potentially “disturbing” the country’s stability. Interesting notes from pages <http://www.lsf.go.id/publik/content/582de17ccbb82> about the idea of self-censorship to respond the access of technologies that are not unstoppable today. Stated that public are expected to, can select on their own films that circulate in the media without a Letter Passed Censorship (Surat Tanda Lolos Sensor/STLS).

Basically the film censorship is common in the countries of Southeast Asia. In the case of Indonesian films, most questionable LSF function when “The Act of Killing” and “The Look of Silence” was release on the alternate film screenings. Not without a problem, because almost every screening of both films was always haunted by the terror of specific community organizations. Is it true that this is meant by LSF as self-censorship?

The other question, how terrifying films is? Until should be fenced in such a way by censorship. When the other arts move so aggressively voiced injustice, intolerance terror, and racial discrimination, films still lined with strictly on condition to qualify the censor, which is exhausting and convoluted.

For filmmaker, LSF took first place in the list that should be eliminated in the universe of cinema. But for LSF, public still need to be guided and directed to do not get misleading spectacle mind.

This paper will contain about questioning LSF position amongst public and filmmakers. From the New Order era, when so many adult films in national theaters, until now the era of technology that became heaven of freedom for circulation of film without STLS, which then led to the idea of self-censorship. The data will be collected with critical discourse analysis on the documents and archives of films that ever revised by LSF and ethnographic studies on a few alternative film screenings.

**KEYWORDS :** Sensor Film, Film Censorship Board (LSF), Letter Passed Censorship (STLS), Self-censorship, Alternative Film Screenings, Critical Discourse Analysis.

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- Yes indeed, the movie if it must be meaningful,  
and the inspiration must exist, yes –  
**Melancholy Is A Movement (Richard Oh, 2015)**

#### **Self-censorship, which is plenary Sensor?**

I will start this paper with the question, why film still need sensors? In Indonesia, the film becomes the only art that is still through the censorship after the New Order. Perhaps the quote from Lance's character in the *Melancholy Is A Movement* film above is a bit of an illustration. Compare with the vision of Film Censorship Institution (Lembaga Sensor Film/LSF). "The establishment of an independent, strong and professional Film Censorship Institution to protect the public from the negative effects of film and encourage the development of competitive national films in accordance with the nation's superior cultural values".

There are two interesting points to be observed, the first "to protect the public from the negative effects of film" and the second "competitive national films in accordance with the nation's superior cultural values". It is contained in Law number 33 Year 2009 on Film, chapters 2, 3, and 4 which contains the principles, purposes and functions of the national film industry as an affirmation of the vision of the LSF. (The contents of these chapters can be accessed at <http://www.lsf.go.id/publik/content/582da392cace3> accessed on May 27, 2017). It can be said that the film is the only art product that has a special law. If you look at the complexity of the above law, whether it is a privilege or a joint. This is what triggers the question why movies need censorship.

Included in chapter 57 paragraph (1), every advertisement and film to be distributed and / or displayed shall be required to obtain the Certificate of Passed Sensor (Surat Tanda Lolos Sensor/ STLS). More clearly mentioned in chapter 24 paragraph (1), that any film and advertising to be distributed and / or displayed to the public must first be censored by the Film Censorship Institution. Let's move out of the act over practices to production, distribution, and exhibition of national cinema, particularly in the digital era and the openness of access to information and communication technologies.

The film through the audio visual medium and widespread to the personal level, feared misleading the mind, because people are basically not ready to face extreme opinion differences. Especially with regard to racial issues, communism (Clash '65), and religion. This unpreparedness was conveyed by board member, Arif Suditomo, in an interview in the national media. Also mentioned several times in Hearings (Rapat Dengar Pendapat/ RDP), between the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia/ KPI), LSF, and Commission I of the House of Representatives (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Republik Indonesia/ DPR RI) in 2014. Before wading through what ideology is perceived by LSF, I will describe first what films must be through the sensor.

LSF, censored all audio-visual content in both cinema and TV screens, from movies, TV shows, until the ad. For Indonesian films (feature length films) in the form of a ribbon 35 mm, the sensor is carried out before its release in theaters nationwide. For international films in the form of a digital cartridge, this device can't be cut, so for the international film of choice between the air without censorship or not running at all. The film that totally banned such as Noah, Balibo Five, until the most viral is The Act of Killing, and The Look of Silent. For short films that have to go through censorship, as far as I know are the films produced by government agencies as executive producers, such as films produced using privileged funds (Dana Keistimewaan) from the Yogyakarta Cultural Office (Dinas Kebudayaan Yogyakarta).

In the technical stage of censorship, the practice is complicated. Before obtaining STLS, the film will go through several stages of censorship, re-censor, even if it takes until the plenary session between LSF and filmmaker. So the process traversed before commercial films until the public long enough, when compared to the distribution of other art products. LSF not only censor film content, but also titles, movie posters, and all matters relating to aspects of movie promotion. The question is, whether this complexity makes the film production reduced? Basically, film sensors never reduce the amount of film production drastically (Kristanto, 2007). Interestingly, a lot of resistance from filmmakers. Starting from producing a movie with a theme called Rosihan Anwar as a "back to basic", the film with the theme of horror, comedy, sex, and violence, especially for films circulating in the era of the 70-90s (Sasono

(Ed.), 2011: 82). Up to the latest, distributing films to international film festivals, beyond commercial cinemas.

Periodically, film censorship has been conducted since 1916 by the Dutch colonial government. At that time, film sensors were used to stem the development of discourse in the Dutch East Indies. Film sensors maintained in the Old Order era. Through LEKRA, PKI voiced film censorship in order to continue the business revolution. Simultaneously fence imported films, especially America that is considered potentially damaging to the morale and behavior of the nation's children. In the New Order era, film sensors tend to be used as protection for the growth of critical narrations, even film censorship is done since the writing stage of the script (pre-censorship). Until now, the LSF is still trusted by the government as an institution that keeps the public away from films with the potential to "disturb" the stability of the country. Then came the idea of self-censorship to respond to unstoppable technology access today. Film censorship is renamed every era, the Film Inspection Commission (Komisi Pemeriksaan Film) of the Dutch East Indies (1916-1940), Sendenbu in the Japanese occupation (1941-1945), back to the Film Inspection Commission by the Indonesian government and Film Commisie by NICA (1946 -1950), Film Supervisory Committee or Film Censorship Board (Panitia Pengawas Film atau Badan Sensor Film) (1952-1994), later became the Film Censorship Institution (Lembaga Sensor Film/ LSF) from 1994 to present (Djamalul Abidin Ass (Ed.), 2011).

For me, self-censorship is called as a way of thinking, the process of cultivating public awareness of audio visual media spectacle, not technical practice at the institutional level. The purpose of the way of thinking is the hope of LSF so that people can choose their own movies to watch. This is a response to the openness of technology that enables easy movies in circulation without STLS. This discourse is expressly articulated in the above RDP, and is broadly approved by board members. The development of communication and information technology access, being a very open era for movies can be circulated freely without STLS. Prior to the level of awareness of the community to choose their own movie show, many film screenings are thwarted by certain parties. Is that what the LSF meant as a self-censorship?

In fact, all the films that encounter obstacles in the screening are films that do not have STLS. Everything happens in an alternative movie screening room, from academic campus discussions, community, to film festivals. The series of events above, probably not new when viewed from aspects of practice. Usmar Ismail's 1955 film entitled *Tamu Agung* revolves around the figure of the President who is unable to attend the Sukaslamet village, replaced by a pharmacist with a speech and physique similar to Sukarno. The film is technically pass the sensor, even preferred by Sukarno himself. Problems present when the film is much protested and boycotted by Soekarno's hard line on the distribution process (Hanan, 2010: 24).

The warmest case we can see the controversy of film Soekarno by Hanung Bramantyo in 2013, about the lawsuit of one of Sukarno's family. Another film that is always controversial is erotic horror movies with porn movie player as one of its star. Such films bagging STLS, but rejection and blocking present when the film is released to the public. In some sense, the public has done self-censorship, either on films that have STLS or not. Then the question arises, whichever comes first, the practice or discourse of self-censorship? In my opinion, the Tamu Agung case could be referred to as self-censorship, long before the LSF held a self-censorship. So it can be said that in practice, self-censorship has been done long before the discourse was born. The problem now, if the self-censorship is a reaction, what action is behind it?

### **Repression complexity and Ideology in self-censorship**

That question, will be reviewed from the perspective of Althusserian in the concept of Ideological State Apparatuses (Althusser, 2014). In the context of the state, Louis Althusser mentions that it is important to not only take into account the power and apparatus of the state, but also be aware of the reality of its repression. Althusser distinguishes between the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) with the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA). The state apparatus in this case is like the army, the police, the court, to the prisons, together referred to as RSA. Repression is understood as pressure in the form of physical violence. ISA is a form of institution or organization, ranging from scholastic apparatus such as schools, institutes, universities and educational institutions. Religious apparatus such as certain religious assemblies and religious organizations. Political apparatus namely parliament, faction, and political party. The cultural apparatus (entertainment) includes theater, film, literature, and sports. The information and news apparatus of newspapers, and news portals. Up to apparatus at the family level such as parent associations within a school. Althusser divides 8 types of state apparatus, including: the Scholastic Apparatus, the Information and News Apparatus, the Publishing and Distribution Apparatus, the Cultural Apparatus (Althusser, 2014:75).

These institutions (apparatus) can't be separated from the system as part of its components. Every institution in this system is in a 'non-ideological reality'. That is, at the ISA level, 'state action' already exists in the praxis level, ideology is no longer named ideology, but is believed to be reality. So, ISA is a collaboration of a series of systems that have their respective functions, such as how each apparatus has its own field. This system is a larger order at state power level. In Indonesia, ISA is referred to as part of the communication and information apparatus, under the policy of Commission I of the House of Representatives which also handles defense and intelligence. In the practice of self-censorship, the state indirectly exploits the strength of

certain institutions. So it is not surprising that self-censorship practices are more likely to be done by agencies or organizations outside the LSF.

Another key word of ISA is free will, meaning there is free will to follow certain institutions as subject (Althusser, 2014:78). Nevertheless, the idea in it does not arise from the subject, but is the construction of the reality created by the state apparatus. This reality construction was created one of them by LSF through the discourse of self-censorship. In practice, the act of self-censorship has been done before the birth of the idea.

Before the Supreme Guest, other cases override Usmar in the film *Darah dan Doa* (1950), which many met with resistance from the military authorities, because it tends to show the civilian role in crushing the Islamic separatist group (Sen, 2009:37). This led Usmar to work on the next film, *Enam Djam di Djogja* (1951), with little physical contact, but more to meetings and strategic meetings. Upon the occurrence of a polemic in the realm of film exhibition, in 1975 the government established BAPFIDA (Regional Film Development Agency) at the provincial level. Unlike censorship agencies, BAPFIDA can't cut or change the movie, but is given the power to ban the circulation of a film in the province or territory of its authority (Sen, 2009:116). In addition to institutions, the regulation was not spared from the seeds of self-censorship.

The Indonesian government's interest to reduce the number of cases intervened directly, because if too much interference, it recognizes the conflict between the authorities and community groups (Sen, 2009:120). This argument was born within the context of the government issuing and socializing regulations on film guidelines, or the National Film Production Code of Ethics (Kode Etik Perfilman Nasional), so as to keep the film from being cut off in front of film censorship. Furthermore, the core of the code of ethics, the film is not only prohibited from criticizing any aspect of state function or power, it is also difficult to discuss many aspects of social conflict. The social conflict in question is the prohibition of showing conflict between the rich and the poor, or presenting interreligious conflicts (Sen, 2009:122).

Meanwhile, not much different in the Old Order era. Lekra continues to voice art as one of the revolutionary tools, quite vocal in correcting the work of the Film Sensor Board (Badan Sensor Film/ BSF). BSF believed to be consciously part of the revolutionary tool as well as other state apparatuses (Yuliantri and Muhidin M. Dahlan, 2008: 210). Even in the newspaper *Harian Rakjat*, Lekra reminded the penetration of imperialist culture through films, especially American films. There are cultural dangers that move anarchist in the body of society (Yuliantri and Muhidin M. Dahlan, 2008: 203). A director from Lekra, Tan Sing Hwat, argues that films as merchandise are not entirely appropriate. According to him, the film's true function is a cultural tool, in which contain both implicit and explicit messages to build a mental education, whether in terms of ideology, lifestyle, or education (Yuliantri and Muhidin M. Dahlan, 2008: 204).

## Self-censorship and Terror

In the strict regulations contained in the Film Law or Film Censorship Act, the government seems to only give permission to circulate films with normative standards (See <http://www.lsf.go.id/publik/daftarcari=YToxOntzOjg6ImthdGVnb3JpJltzOjQ6ImZpbG0iO30=>, posted movie recapitulation that has passed the sensor, for the year 2017 (until June) amounted to 493 films. With 292 movie details 13+, 139 films 17+, 27 films 21+, and 35 movies All Age. It should be noted that this number includes adverts and teaser / trailer promos at the beginning of the movie. Accessed May 30, 2017). Thus, it is not surprising, if film distribution abroad and exhibition at film festivals, and alternate screening becomes an option. Through previous events, it can be proven that the discourse of self-censorship did not come suddenly. Self-censorship may be nothing more than a name or a label, the idea in it is very complicated. Especially looking at the present era, technological development is very possible to film in public circulation without STLS. I'm sure LSF itself is not without a strategy to face this reality. And interestingly, this strategy involves state apparatus, so the practice can be more complicated than that formulated by Althusser on RSA and ISA.

In the phenomenon of the rise of alternative screening films, without STLS, moving aggressively instead of LSF itself as the state apparatus, but the mass organizations. Quoting from Zaki Hussein's writings, this means that both RSA and ISA each contain repression and ideology. However, RSA's main way of working is repression, while ideology is only a secondary way of working. Similarly, the ISA works primarily with ideology, while repression becomes only a secondary way of working (Hussein, accessed 29 May 2017).

When the mass organizations through repression, even lead to violent acts which he considers as 'fairness', needs to be seen more in, what makes it look natural. From this it can not be separated from the idea of LSF through the discourse of self-censorship. This discourse seems to me like a double-edged knife, on one hand successfully infiltrated into the actions of the private apparatus (mass), on the other hand as backs (not to mention deny) the reality of technology access openness. At the same time put the public as the human mindless that is so easily influenced by the film.

I will go back to the comparison when other arts move so aggressively voiced injustice, racial violence, to the deprivation of rights of agrarian. The film is widely circulated in cinemas and witnessed by millions of viewers, has not moved from the erotic comedy and romance of teenage love story. Ironically, when the movie with spice controversy, and starring pornographic movie player pocketed STLS, strongly protested but still aired in theaters to attract hundreds of thousands of spectators (Number of moviegoers can be accessed at <http://filmindonesia.or.id/movie/viewer#.WTegGes1-00>). On the other hand, there are movies with certain content that are banned, and haunted

by terror on every movie screening. If self-censorship is regarded as the LSF's way of dealing with the unstoppable impact of the film, it seems that the social praxis needs to be reorganized. As far as is concerned, self-censorship tends to go wrong, and only legitimizes the way of thinking that teaches physical violence repression.

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