GLOBALIZED TV PROGRAMMES AND NATIONAL RESPONSE IN INDONESIA

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Introduction
This paper aims at a better understanding of the globalized television programmes in Indonesia and the patriotic and cosmopolitan discourse caused by them. It will explore how the globalization of media has constantly struggled with a policy of national integration and with diverse preferences of local audience. This paper focuses on a variety of global television contents in the programmes of Indonesian television stations. For example, children enjoy Japanese animated cartoons such as Doraemon and Dragon Ball in Sunday mornings, housewives and their maids like to watch Latin American telenovelas (soap operas) in the evening and men watch enthusiastically football games of the leagues in Italy and England at night. In the twenty-first century new globalized programme, that is, Taiwan and Korean dramas have become favourites with Indonesian audience. In the context of social and cultural change in the nation-state of Indonesia I will discuss how these new programmes have been introduced and how they have got great popularity.

Globalization has been vigorously discussed in several intellectual fields. There is a widely held belief that globalization leads to a uniformity often said to be conterminous with Americanization. The basic hypothesis of my paper conflicts with this view of globalization. I think of globalization as entailing not only tendencies of homogenization but also those of heterogenization. As Barker argues, “It will be suggested that the outcome of globalization is a set of unpredictable, disjoined and multidirectional cultural flow rather than the simple expansion of western institutions and cultural formations to the rest of the world” (Barker 1999: 33).

The programmes in Indonesia show that the flow of television contents among East and South-east Asian countries are much more significant than American productions. The special attention is paid to the regional flow of cultural products. Straubhaar’s suggestion is relevant to this topic.
This chapter will focus on the importance of regional or geo-linguistic cultures (and television markets). However, this focus on regions needs to be placed within a context that includes several levels of television flow and impact. There is a level that is truly global, one that is regional or geo-linguistic, one that is national, and others that are sub-national or ‘regional’ (within the nation), and even local (Straubhaar 1997: 285-286).

The part of Asia the paper is concerned with is, however, not an area some cultural and linguistic similarity prevails, but an area in which similar consumer cultures are developing almost synchronically. The great success of Taiwanese drama series *Meteor Garden* based on a Japanese comic *Hanayori Dango* is a good example through which we can approach the problem of cultural flow among the Asian countries.

The global flow of TELEVISION dramas does not lead to the homogenized popular culture in many parts of the world, but provides the audience with the national sphere of discussion. Wilk who did a research about the “television invasion” to the Caribbean country of Belize suggests this topic.

The beam from satellites provides a new image of the foreign “other” that furthers an emerging consensus about the content and identity of Belizean culture. Paradoxically, television imperialism may do more to create a national culture and national consciousness in Belize than forty years of nationalist politics and nine years of independence (Wilk 2002b:184).

I am interested in how the fans of *Meteor Garden* talk about their idols, F4 in the fan site of Indosiar.

**Television in Indonesia**

In 2001 new five nation-wide commercial stations, Metro TV, Trans TV, TV 7, Global TV and Lativi were established in addition to five private stations and a government-owned TVRI (Televisi Republik Indonesia). This increase in commercial stations has opened up the new era of Indonesian television. In this section I will describe a brief history of Indonesian television.

Television started as a medium promoting the nation-building and national integration. TVRI was established in 1962, and under the regime of New Order TVRI
developed with three goals: (1) the promotion of national unity and integration; (2) the promotion of national stability; and (3) the promotion of political stability (Kitley 2000: 3-4). However, television is a global medium in nature and this character has become more evident with the development of new television technology such as satellite television. In his book, *Television, Nation, and Culture in Indonesia*, Kitley discusses a tension in the development and use of Indonesian television. The tension exists between an audience-cantered television system that mediated a mix of domestic and transnational values and products and a system more narrowly concerned with national values (Kitley 2000: 15). The priority given to the audience-cantered television led to the second era of Indonesian television.

In 1989 when the first commercial channel, RCTI began to broadcast, the monopoly of TVRI came to an end. After RCTI, successively, SCTV began in 1990, TPI in 1991, Anteve in 1993 and Indosiar in 1995. It is a well-known fact that Suharto’s family were involved with some new private stations. As Sen and Hill (2000: 131) state, ‘Television was a creature of the New Order’. The thirty years of New Order produced both the national broadcaster of TVRI and the commercial television which defeated it. Since the fall of Suharto, the commercial stations have played much more important part in the Indonesian society.

In the Habibie government following the collapse of New Order, Muhammad Yunus, Information Minister approved the issue of five new commercial television licences, which formed a series of media reforms including the cancellation of the notorious printing and publication permit (SIUPP) (anon. 2001; Kitley 2003b: 108). After Metro TV began to broadcast in February 2001, the other 4 stations, Trans TV, TV 7, Global TV and Lativi, started successively in the same year. In contrast to the establishments of commercial television in 1990s which were linked inextricably with the family business of Suharto, some of these new stations are under the control of the media companies. Kompas Gramedia Group publishing the newspaper *Kompas* and many magazines owns TV7 and the company publishing the newspaper *Media Indonesia* owns Metro.

Now the Indonesian audience in the urban areas have a good choice of channels for their pastime. This means the television has become more market-driven medium as the global consumer culture is increasingly penetrating to the urban lives. The biggest amount of advertising expenditure was paid to the television stations. In 2002, television got 8,383 billion rupiah, that is, 61.8 per cent of the total expenditure. Nowadays, the ten stations...
compete keenly for this big money. The ranking and percentage of advertising income of each television station in 2002 is as follows: 1. Indosiar (22.6), 2. RCTI (22.4), 3. SCTV (20.4), 4. TPI (10.9), 5. Trans (7.8), 6. Metro TV (5.2), 7. Global (3.7), 8. TV7 (2.4), 9. Anteve (1.9), 10. Lativi (1.9)\(^1\) (Katoppo (ed.) 2003: 58). The old-established stations such as Indosiar and RCTI are ranked high while the new stations have tough games. The share of advertising revenue reflects the television rating: 1. Indosiar (29.7), 2. RCTI (18.4), 3. SCTV (13.7), 4. Trans (11.4), 5. TV7 (8.9), 6. TPI (7.6), 7. Anteve (3.1), 8. Lativi (2.2), 9. Metro TV (1.7), 9. Global (3.7), 11. TVRI (1.2)\(^2\) (Ibid.: 58). Indosiar which got the most revenues was the highest ranked in the ratings.

**Globalization in the programming of television**

Television is a sphere in which the global power collides with the national one. In this section I will summarise how the balance of the two powers has changed since the era of TVRI. The history of TVRI shows the increased proportion of domestic productions. In the beginning TVRI relied on imported programmes, but increasingly produced its own local programmes. The percentage of imported ones which was 60 per cent in 1968 decreased to 37 per cent in 1975/76 and to 12 per cent in 1985/86 (Kitley 2000: 68-69). As most audience were bored to watch local programmes which seemed monotonous, some imported dramas were very popular among the audience in Indonesia. Especially, *Return to Eden* (Australian prime-time soap, broadcast in 1986), *Dynasty* (U.S. soap opera, broadcast in 1988) (Kitley, 2000: 151), and *Oshin* (Japanese drama, broadcast in 1986) were astonishingly successful. Some intellectuals were concerned about the ‘negative effect’ the American and Australian drama series had on the Indonesian society.

When private channels began broadcasting, their programmes were dominated by foreign productions as in the initial stage of TVRI. The percentage of foreign production on RCTI amounted to 90 per cent and the other 10 per cent was the news programmes relayed from TVRI. Though imported programmes are still very popular, their proportion soon decreased, and the number of domestic productions quickly increased. In 1996 the proportion of foreign productions is as low as 35 - 40 per cent on most private stations (Sen and Hill 2000: 120-121). The most popular programmes among the domestic are a variety of *sinetron* (television

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\(^1\) The data of Trans and Global do not show the total amount of advertising income they earned in the whole year of 2002.

\(^2\) The data shows the rating of 18:00 to 19:59 in the fourth quarter (1 Oct to 31 Dec) of 2002.
drama)\(^3\) serials which dominate prime time of most private stations. One of the reasons of the popularity of *sinetron* is that the ordinary audience prefer Indonesian dramas to American ones with Indonesian subtitle.

The Indonesian government has been concerned with the proportion of foreign productions and tried to impose legal controls on them. It was claimed that the government should protect the national culture (*kebudayaan nasional*) against the danger of imported materials. This is the case of national response to the globalization of media which has seen to a ‘global’ extent. Article 32 of Broadcasting Law # 24 which was enacted in 1997 prescribed that the proportion of domestic materials should be at least 70 per cent. However, Broadcasting Law # 32 established in 2002 relaxed the regulation to prescribe it should be 60 per cent (Article 36). The proportion of domestic productions on TPI is 60 per cent as on RCTI. Though the law prescribes the proportion, really it is sometimes ignored. The proportion of foreign productions on a new station of TV7 amounts to 60 per cent. This station contracted with an American film company of Warner Brothers to acquire the broadcasting right of hit series of *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Ring* (Pamuji 2003).

Along with the proportion of imported materials, the use of foreign languages was also regulated by the government. The Broadcasting Law of 1997 prescribed that all the foreign languages except for English should not be used in entertainment programmes (Article 33). According to the law of 2002, the distinction between English and the other languages is abolished and foreign languages can be used on television. Nowadays, the news programme in Chinese is approved and Metro broadcasts *Metro Xin Wen* in the morning. This Mandarin news programme shows a striking contrast with the era of Suharto when the representation of Chinese culture is banned tightly on the media in Indonesia.

**The flow of dramas in Asia**

The rapid increase in television channels in 2001 led to the scarcity of television contents with which they fill their programming. In addition to imported programs such as Hollywood and Bollywood films, Latin American *telenovela* and Japanese animated cartoons, which have been popular in Indonesia since the 1990s, the new type of soap operas from Taiwan and Korea began to be broadcast and soon become very popular in Indonesia. We should pay

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3 The word of *sinetron* was coined in the 1980s, in the period of TVRI. It is an abbreviation for *sinema electrnonik* (electronic cinema). There were a lot of *sinetron* in the history of TVRI. One of the hit *sinetron* was a serial of *Losmen* screened from 1985 to 1988.
attention to this new flow of cultural products among Asian countries.

Initially Indosiar had a deal with the Hong Kong television station TV-B and imported a lot of Mandarin dramas (Sen and Hill 2000: 120). Especially, a Kung Fu serial, titled Return of The Condor Heroes, had great success in 1994 (Rachmah 2004: 10). In Indonesia dramas produced in Hong Kong and Taiwan are generally called ‘Drama Mandarin’. In 2001 a new type of Drama Mandarin, that is, Meteor Garden, was broadcast on Indosiar and was very popular among the young audience (its popularity will be discussed more fully in the next section). Since the astonishing hit of this Taiwanese series, dramas produced in Asian countries have been highlighted by the private stations.

In 2002 a Korean drama series, Endless Love was screened on Indosiar at 18:00 from Monday to Friday and its rating reached 10 per cent which means 2.8 million viewers in five major cities. This story of tragic love was watched by not only the young but also housewives (CP 2002). The success of Endless Love induced the other television stations to broadcast successively Korean drama serials, for example, Winter Sonata on SCTV, All About Eve and Hotelier on Indosiar, and Glass Shoes on Trans TV. The boom of Korean dramas was first remarkable in China and Taiwan, and then spread to South-east Asian countries including Indonesia. Incidentally, Japan is not an exception, and Winter Sonata and other Korean serials were very popular in Japan. Especially, a Korean actor starring in Winter Sonata, Bae Yong-joon, was called ‘Yong-sama’ (Sir Yong) in Japanese and won amazing popularity among the middle-aged women in Japan. Before the drama serials from Taiwan and Korea won popularity, Japan exported a lot of dramas to Asian countries. Japanese television serials targeted on the young have been popular in Taiwan and Hong Kong since the 1990s. The Japanese drama series Tokyo Love Story, broadcast in Taiwan in 1992, ignited interest in Japanese dramas in East Asian countries (Iwabuchi 2002: 143). Their popularity expanded to Indonesia, and Japanese drama serials such as Tokyo Love Story and Beautiful Life were screened successively on Indosiar. If we shed attention to the regional flow of television dramas, we find not a one-way traffic from the sole centre, for example, Japan or Hong Kong, to the peripheries, but multi-lateral flow among Asian countries. However, it is important that Indonesia and other South-east Asian countries have remained importers so far.

In Indonesia, those Asian dramas are termed generically ‘drama Asia’ and broadcast with English titles such as Tokyo Love Story from Japan, Meteor Garden from Taiwan, and Winter
Sonata from Korea. Moreover, the original speech is always dubbed into Indonesian, which is in striking contrast to American dramas using Indonesian subtitles. There is a question how the audience can discern the producing countries of their favourite dramas though researchers can discuss them. I suppose that there are two kinds of drama viewers, ordinary audience who just enjoy the programme without knowing the producing country and fans who have much more knowledge about the actors and background of their favourite series.

One of the reasons why many serials of drama Asia are screened is the lower cost of the programmes compared to that of sinetron (local dramas) and American imports. Because they are less expensive than the American films and television dramas, serials of drama Asia are preferred by the private stations competing for attractive but cheaper materials. For example, Winter Sonata cost $3,000 per episode while American serial (30 minutes) cost $4,000 to 5,000 and Hollywood hit movie $20,000 to 50,000 (Pamuji 2003).

Indonesian television seems ‘global’ if we focus on the prevalence of imported materials on the programming the paper discussed above. However, considering the blocks of time the imported materials are broadcast, obviously there are only a small number of imported programmes on the prime time of each private channel. Most of globalized programmes are broadcast at the peripheral time of the programming. Latin American telenovela and Korean drama serials are usually screened early in the afternoon. A lot of Indian movies except for Bollywood hits are broadcast in the daytime or late at night.

By contrast Indonesian serials of soap opera (sinetron) and a variety of local reality shows are dominant from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. on the major private stations such as Indosiar and RCTI. The print media have sometimes paid nationalistic attention to not imported materials but Indonesian sinetron which are popular among diverse audiences in Indonesia. For example, “Cheap sinetron makes the nation stupid (Sinetron Picisan Pembodohan national)” is a title of an article on the newspaper of Media Indonesia on 5 January 2002 (Daf 2002). Another article titled “President said, our sinetron sells dream (Presiden: Sinetron Kita Jual Mimpi)” carried by Kompas on 10 January 2002 reported that the president Megawati uttered a critical comment on sinetron (Cay 2002). It was stated that she criticized many serials of sinetron because of their non-Indonesian character (kurang mengambil kebudayaan Indonesia sendiri). Also, it is often claimed that the escapism which serials of sinetron present to the audience has a negative effect on Indonesian society, especially the youth.
From Japanese Comic to Taiwanese drama

*Meteor Garden*, a television drama series which was produced in Taiwan in 2001, won amazing popularity in Asian countries, especially among the youth. The story was based on a Japanese comic *Hanayori Dango* (the author: Yoko Kamio) which literally means “Preferring Dumpling to Flower”. It depicts a relationship between a heroine and a group of male students who attend the same school, who are played by four young actors called F4. After the success in Taiwan, *Meteor Garden* is exported to the mainland China in 2002, in which the broadcasting was banned by the government because of its reputed negative influence towards the young. Its popularity spread beyond Mandarin countries to South-east Asia. In Indonesia in 2001 *Meteor Garden* was screened at 10 p.m. every Monday on Indosiar and had a 12 rating which means 3 million viewers (Rachmah 2002: 20). The series was rerun on Trans TV in the next year. It was broadcast twice a week earlier at 7 p.m., because it was targeted on the young viewers. *Meteor Garden* averaged a 7.8 rating from 20 October to 16 November and hit the first in the ratings of Trans TV. While Indosiar paid only $6,000 per episode at first, Trans TV had to pay $1,000 to the broker. Though Trans TV paid more, it gained enough advertising income which reached Rp 79 million only in the first episode (Pinidji 2002).

Following the success of *Meteor Garden*, *Meteor Garden 2* and *Meteor Rain* were broadcast on Indosiar. One of F4, Jerry Yan starred in *Meteor Rain* which was based on the original script by a Taiwanese writer. Another serial *Come to my Place* starring F4 was broadcast on Indosiar. This serial was also based on a Japanese comic *Heyani Oideyo* (the author: Hidenori Hara). The flow of cultural products from Japan to Indonesia via Taiwan is not peculiar to *Meteor Garden*.

F4, four Taiwanese actors starring in the serial became idols of the teenagers. Their styles of clothes and hair were astonishingly popular among the young Indonesians. The magazine *Tempo* carried an article titled “Addicted to ‘Meteor’ style” (Keranjangan Gaya ‘Meteor’) which reported, “The actors in *Meteor Garden* become the new idols to the young. All of their styles are imitated completely (Pemeran Meteor Garden menjadi idola baru kaum remaja. Semua gaya mereka ditiru habis)” (Pudjiarti 2002). According to the research by Swastika and Andari, the amazing popularity of *Meteor Garden* caused by not the story itself but the appeal of F4, especially, Jerry Yan playing Tao Ming Se, to the young women. It is claimed that the standard of handsomeness shifted from the Eurasian looks which had been
dominant in Indonesia to the East Asian after the emergence of F4.

Perlu dicatat pula, bahwa sejak serial MG ini menjadi favorit, kriteria-kriteria ketampanan yang selama ini dominan di kalangan remaja perempuan menjadi bergeser. Wajah-wajah “oriental” ala Asia Timur, kini mulai mendapatkan tempat, sama posisinya dengan anggota-anggota boyband yang “sangat Barat”. Tampaknya remaja perempuan memproyeksikan impian mereka atas karakter tertentu yang seharusnya dimiliki seorang lelaki melalui tokoh-tokoh yang ada, baik secara fisik maupun perilakunya (Swastika and Andari 2003).

The group of F4 made the debut as the singers and their musical cassette and CD was a big hit. All the commercial goods related to Meteor Garden and F4 sold like hot cakes. In January 2003 the group of F4 visited Jakarta for their concert. The tickets were sold out though the prices were from Rp 200,000 to 1,000,000. It was reported that the family of the president Megawati appeared in the concert. F4’s extraordinary success (sukses luar biasa) was a remarkable phenomenon throughout the Indonesian society because negative attitude toward the ethnic Chinese still persists.

The discourse on Meteor Garden and F4

In this section I will try to explore how the Indonesian media and audience responded to the popularity of Meteor Garden and F4. First, I will focus on the print media such as newspapers and magazines. There was an article titled “The invasion of F4 spreads out the profit (Invasi F4 Menebar Laba)” in the magazine Gatra on 9 September 2002. Though the author used the word “invasion”, it did imply no feeling of nationalistic repulsion. The article just discussed the commercial aspect of the F4 boom. Another article titled “‘Fantasy 4-ever’: really fantastic (‘Fantasi 4-ever Bener-bener Fantastis)” in the newspaper of Suara Merdeka emphasized the extraordinariness (luar biasa) of F4’s popularity.

Kedatangan F4 ke Jakarta menyusul sukses luar biasa serial televisi yang mereka bintangi, ”Meteor Garden” mendapat sambutan luar biasa dari segenap penggemarnya (Benke 2003).

This article also did not have a negative comment on the popularity of F4.

Kompas carried an article titled “Be careful! Asian pop culture is increasingly maddening (Awas! Budaya Pop Asia Makin Menggila)” on 23 May 2003 which referred to Meteor Garden and F4. The title is rather sensational, but the article did not include any negative comment on the Taiwanese pop culture. On the contrary, the author pointed out the cultural proximity among the Asian countries.

Kalau kemudian ada yang bilang bahwa disukainya budaya pop Asia dari Jepang, Korea, Taiwan, dan Hongkong di hampir seluruh negara Asia lainnya karena adanya kedekatan budaya antarbangsa, bisa jadi benar. Seperti yang sudah dikatakan di atas karena bangsa-bangsa di Asia itu cenderung punya persamaan budaya. Istilahnya kalau kita mendengar lagu serta mengerti lirik-liriknya Utada
Hikaru, F4, atau Jay Cheung, maka kita seperti sedang mendengar kisah hidup kita sehari-hari. Sama seperti menonton adegan pacarannya Jerry Yan dan Barbie Hsu di Meteor Garden, yang bisa jadi mirip dengan gaya pacaran kita sama gebetan (Soedirman 2003).

He felt an affinity for the way the characters love in Meteor Garden and did not have any aversion to the Taiwanese way of behaviour appearing in Meteor Garden.

If we focus on the internet, we can find the negative discussion on Meteor Garden which is not seen in the print media. “Bulletin Remaja Islam – Studia” carried an article titled “Sensational ‘Meteor Garden’ (Heboh ‘Meteor Garden’)” (Toha 2002).

From the Islamic view point, the author wrote a negative comment on Meteor Garden. He insisted the contents of Meteor Garden were not suitable to the young Indonesians most of whom are Muslims. As far as I know, however, this is an exceptional discourse on Meteor Garden.

The fan site (Forum Diskusi) of Indosiar is another public sphere of discourse about Meteor Garden. In contrast to the discussions appearing in the print media, interestingly enough, the site is full of nationalistic words such as “our culture (budaya kita)” and “the Indonesian nation (bangsa Indonesia)”. The F4 fans uttered their rather emotional responses to an article titled “Asian Idols F4 a Disappointment in Concert” in the English newspaper Jakarta Post on 12 January 2003, which reported as follows:

It is sad, though, that the rise of Asia has to be so superficial. F4, and the public relations machine and all the hype surrounding them, is really only a copy of all the Western boybands that have come before.

This was succinctly summed up when Vanness Wu danced and sang Like I Love You, a song by Justin Timberlake, a member of American boyband 'NSync.

Unfortunately, he could not even sing it right.

A fan of F4 had a bad feeling toward the criticism of the F4 concert. He identified himself as one of Asians (orang Asia) or Orientals (orang dari Timur) including Taiwanese. Though his discussion is based on the old-fashioned dichotomy of the East and the West, it shows a feeling of attachment to the region of “Asia” implying East and South-east Asia which has emerged only in this decade.

Herannya, org indonesia suka reseh dengan suksesnya film asia (taiwan,korea, jepang), banyak wartawan dan org2 sirik lainnya yg selalu nggejelek-jelekin meteor garden / F4 padahal itu kan film asia dan budaya kita tidak terlalu beda jauh dengan mereka. Kita dan ereka kan sama2 orang asia,orang dari timur.
Sebagian org indonesia tuh malah bilang meteor garden itu ngga cocok dgn budaya kita, jelas2 itu terlihat sikap iri, acuh dan sikap yg tidak berjiwa besar untuk menerima kenyataan.

Tapi kenyataannya: org indonesia selalu mengagungkan budaya barat, penyanyi barat, film barat.
(ivon; Posted - 11 Jan 2003 : 19:21:58)

Another fan showed a feeling of repulsion toward the writer who criticised the performance of F4. According to his emotional and illogical statement, the bitter criticism of F4 means “destroying the Indonesian nation (bikin bangsa indonesia rusak)”.

Orang2 yg suka ngejelekin org lain tanpa mandang diri sendiri (alias ngaca) kaya gini yg bikin bangsa indonesia rusak. Kenapa sih ga bisa deh ga ngirit orang lain. Dia sendiri juga kalo di posisi F4 pasti sakit ati digituin padahal kenal aja kaga. Ngaca donk! emangnya band indonesia semuanya udah ok!? ada yg ok bener2 ok! ada juga yg KKN!! ada juga yg modal tampang doank khan? jujur aja lah! gue sih ngomong gini bukan cuman km gue fans F4..gue ngakui F4 masih terbatas kemampuannya.

Tapi, everybody has sisi + dan sisi --...jadi...tolong ya! jangan biarin bangsa ini rusak deh gara2 sifat2 suka ngejelekin itu! (vita, Freak Fanatics; Posted - 12 Jan 2003 : 21:12:15)

These emotional discussions prevailing in the Internet may be unworthy of serious consideration. However, I suppose they should not be overlooked because the globalized television programmes ignited the discussion filled with patriotic expressions.

Concluding remarks

As far as I know, in the Indonesian newspapers and magazines there is no patriotic discussion on the extraordinary popularity of Meteor Garden and F4, I suppose, which are not regarded as a serious threat to the Indonesian national culture. This is because they are rather peripheral in the Indonesian television as a whole. To the contrary, Indonesian sinetron serials are situated in the centre of the programming and, therefore, they sometimes stirred up the patriotic discussions, in which the President Megawati was involved in 2002. In contrast to the open-minded articles about the boom of Meteor Garden and F4 in the print media, ironically in the Internet in defence of their idols the F4 fans employed patriotic discourse which showed an attachment to “our culture” and “the nation”. “Don’t leave the nation destroyed (jangan biarin bangsa ini rusak)” is a provocative nationalistic expression and they showed a feeling of attachment to the Taiwanese culture. However, it is uncertain that such a regionalism will persist in the future of Indonesian.

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