

The First ASEAN Film Archive's Role and Operation

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Abstract

The article involves with The First ASEAN Film Archive's Role and Operation as part of the research project "A Historical Review of the National Film Archive in ASEAN"; The research objective aims to study the role and operation of national film archive in the Association of South East Asian Nations: ASEAN, particularly the first film archive in The Republic of Indonesia. A qualitative methodology through in-depth interview is applied, observations and surveys of the documents and related material from the period 2014 - 2015. The results showed that "Sinematek Indonesia" cannot serve as the basis of a National Film Archive completely because of budget problems. But pioneering approach can create an important example to set up film archive in the countries of the ASEAN Community.

Keywords: Film Archive, Sinematek Indonesia, ASEAN Communication

Introduction

Film or movie was invented in France in 1895, and it was spread rapidly around the world. Film then became industrial and commercial media, but in several cases, it can be used to cultivate human intellect, emotions, and knowledge in general. Consequently, film is considered a branch of mass communication and as one of the old fields of media studies. (<http://www.fapot.org/th>)

For those reasons, it can be said that film could be a medium recording history of a society, and there should be a support of national film archive establishment to preserve a cultural heritage, as Boleslav Matuszewski, a Polish cameraman proposed and wrote about the importance of film archives in 1868. However, for 35 years thereafter the first "Film Archive" was created in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1933, because more people realized the extent of the significance of film preservation. As a result, many countries established film archives. Therefore, in 1938, New York City, Berlin, London, and Paris jointly founded the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAPF). At the present time, there are 150 film archives in 77 countries around the world.

For the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the collection of film as a cultural heritage is becoming apparent, but comparing to other similar organizations such as library, museum, art center and cultural center, a national film archive draws only little support as it is still unknown to many. The researchers of this project were interested in reviewing the establishment and existence of the first ASEAN film archive during the past four decades and analyzed the role of this organization by employing a theoretical framework

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of qualitative methodology to study how national film archive of The Republic of Indonesia, operate.

The benefits of this project were 1) Public and private sectors of ASEAN community could use the information from this project to establish a national film archive with only little adjustment to the target society's context, and 2) The result of this study could draw members of the ASEAN community's support of conducting research, archiving films and relevant information, and this will lead to creating a reliable database, along with possibly creating the film archive's positive image.

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Research Methodology

The researchers used a qualitative approach to conduct a field research at the national film archive: SINEMATEK INDONESIA in Jakarta, The Republic of Indonesia. For a preparation and data analysis we made at Chiang Mai University, Thailand. The research process took two years within 2014 - 2015.

Results

The results obtained from in-depth interview conducted with related persons, observation, and related paper study showed as follows.

1. Establishment and Organizational Structure of the First ASEAN Film Archive

The concept on establishment of "Sinematek Indonesia" or SI was originated in 1970 and it was formally opened on October 20th, 1975. "SI" is the first institution for film conservation of Southeast Asia and the term, "Sinematek", was inspired by the term, "Cinematheque", in French. Whereas, Indonesia uses the term, Sinematek, with the purpose to eliminate the feeling that this institution is out of date and being the policy for managing antiques. On the other hand, Sinematek Indonesia has aimed to make itself as the cultural activity that becomes the center of education and development of film cultural activities. In addition, SI is also a non-profit private organization that has been supported by Indonesian government since 1995. It is located on the land inside a building of National Film Center or PPHUI Foundation located on the 4th floor, Pusat Perfilman Usmar Ismail Film Center, JL. H.R. Rasuna Said, Kuningan in the southern part of Jakarta. In 1977, it engaged as a member of FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives) and SEAPAVAA (Southeast Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association) therefore it has board international relationship.⁴

According to the record of H. Misbach Yusa Biran, 1933 - 2012), the first Director and founder of Sinematek, mentioning on background of this organization that the effort n establishment of "Sinematek Indonesia" was started in 1970 as a part of establishment project of Academy of Cinematography and preparation of information for lecturing history of Indonesian film. With realization that film and related documents were considered as the important cultural heritage of the country, they were required to be stored and maintained correctly and systematically in order to protect them from loss and damage. In addition, after

⁴ Source: http://perfilman.perpusnas.go.id/lembaga_perfilman/detail/64

joining a study trip to visit the film archives in Netherland in 1973, he considered that film maintenance and storage was very valuable for society. Consequently, he decided to stop his career as a film director and spent his personal fund to seek for old film and related documents (including old photos, newspapers, journals, invitation letters of movie premiere) for storing. Moreover, he also held some exhibitions to exhibit these film and documents in order to make people realize on the importance of film and all documents related to film's life cycle. Subsequently, he accelerated to write the proposal of "Sinematek Indonesia" establishment project for proposing to Indonesian government then his project was responded by the Governor of the capital city or Jakarta Special Capital Region Province at that time. He received the fund for building a building consisted of library and film storage room. Finally, Sinematek Indonesia was formally opened in October 1975 with a part of operational capital from Jakarta Special Capital Region Province as well as fundraising from several companies and organizations in Indonesian film industry although most people often considered that having an organization to store film and related documents were luxurious and extravagant project for a developing country like Indonesia that also lacked of experts in this field.

"Sinematek Indonesia" is consisted of film storage room, library, document storage room, some spaces for sorting film and related information, some spaces for film maintenance, Department of Photography with laboratory, and some spaces for storing film posters as well as equipment of film production. Moreover, there were some theatre rooms and offices of employees and Organizational Management Department. This Film Archives has encountered many problems from the past to present are problem it has insufficient fund for employees' wages and utility costs, for example, high cost of electricity for maintain the temperature of film storage room to be 5 degrees Celsius for 24 hours (according to standard temperature of film storage room). However, this Film Archives is able to maintain the temperature between 10-12 degrees Celsius only because Indonesia is a tropical country and high cost of electricity fee and maintenance.

In addition, Sinematek is a Film Archives storing documents related to everything in Indonesian film industry as well as documentary film because film companies or organizations in Indonesia are various and changing rapidly. Consequently, related information is scattered and hard to be collected. Some film may be personal collection that are hard to be obtained therefore duties of Sinematek Indonesia is collecting all related materials including brochures, handbills, or even invitation letters to film premiere. In addition, this organization also stores some information on Box office films although there are some people consider that such information should not be stored. However, Sinematek Indonesia is required to store this kind of information in order to support marketing researches and to solve problems that are not resolved on films and related documents storage. Consequently, Sinematek Indonesia will become the source of some important information for researches in other fields.

For an establishment and operation of Sinematek Indonesia, there are 2 suggestions including basic idea and organization with the following details:

Basic idea

1. Organization Naming

Although the term, "Cinematheque", has been recognized generally as an institution for storing and maintaining films, Indonesia chose to use the term, Sinematek, instead because it has been popular and understood by their people. Simultaneously, the term, Film Museum, may lead to misunderstanding causing people to think that this institution is the place for storing old films or historical objects of this country.

2. Organization's Scope of Work

A. To store and maintain films and collect film materials and equipment as well as some related documents and information that will be the important sources of further education and researches. The major objective of this institution is to keep all information of Indonesian film production and related activities as well as to expand the scope of this project to all films among ASEAN countries and international level.

B. To be an organization for researching and managing education, whereas, all activities must be consistent with urgent demands of research projects and educational projects on film.

3. Objectives Setting

A. To be the center of national films storage.

B. To be the center of film information record and preparation that will become the references of national film researches.

C. To be the center of all research activities related to film production;

D. To develop film industry in Indonesia and Asia through utilization of information and materials stored in film archives.

E. To improve skills and knowledge on film of Indonesian people.

F. To be the best center for lending and providing services on film as much as possible in order to improve admiration on films and realize the value of Indonesian films.

G. To be the center of communication among international film organizations.

4. Activities

The main activities of national film archives are able to be classified into 7 major activities as follows:

A. Films storage

B. Related documents storage

C. Data preparation and sorting process

D. Film conservation

E. Research

F. Research Projects

G. Films and information exchange among ASEAN countries.

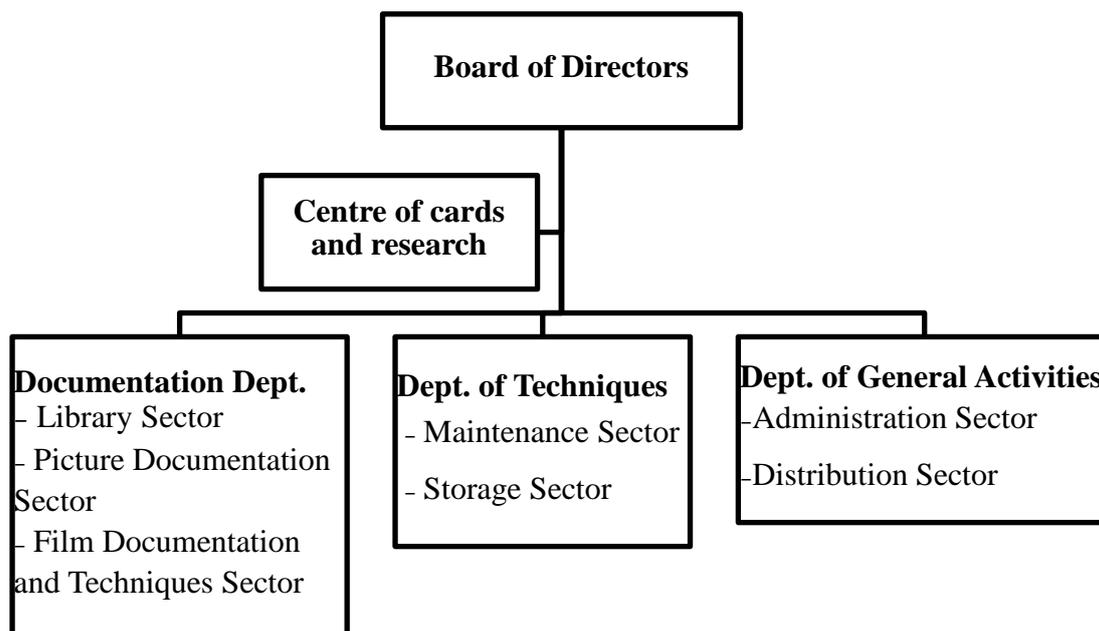
Organization

1. Legal Foundation

Sinematek Indonesia was established as the legal foundation for reliability of its organization towards public in order to make film producers to be reliable in providing their films and related documents to this film archives for storing.

2. Organization Form

There are two critical parts of organizational structure including organizational structuring and rules and duties of each sub-section. Whereas, the size of film archives' structure may be vary depending on obtained budget. Some sections may be dissolved or merged with others upon necessary of the organization, for example, merging Technical Section with Document Storage Section or Film Storage Section may be established specifically in the event of promptness. The complete organizational structure is shown in the following diagram.



Organization Chart of SINEMATEK INDONESIA

2. Operation and Roles of the First ASEAN Film Archive

Adisurya Abdy, the current Director of Indonesian Film Archives or “Sinematek Indonesia” who has been holding this position from June 2013 and considered as the 5th director from its establishment in 1975, stressed that “Sinematek Indonesia” has complied with rules and regulations on operating the film archives as defined by SEAPAVAA (Southeast Asia-Pacific Audio-Visual Archives Association) with the office located in Philippines. However, it is impossible for Sinematek Indonesia for comply with all clauses due to the problem on support budget, especially, the budget to transform technology from analog system to be digital system requiring transforming all films to be in digital format causing high cost of expensive and modern equipment, venues, and utility costs while Sinematek Indonesia is the private institution relies on main income from interest of fund allocated by government that is such a small amount and another fund from the Governor of Jakarta and PPHUI foundation.

For playing a role as the national film archives, Abdy said that he had tried with full effort upon limited budget including conservation of old films, organization’s public relations, in order to make people recognize and realize on the importance of the institution for conserving things related to national films. At that time, he was developing a website of Sinematek Indonesia to be more modern with his personal fund and some support from some colleagues in film industry (however, there is no such website on online world at present time). Ideologically, he dreamed that there should be establishment of the national film archives with complete elements instead of existing film archives in one building (it should be operated upon the model of film archives in France) including theater, film museum, library, old films conservation building, and film laboratory. In addition, the national film archives should be located in the center of the city in order to make general people recognize and visit or use services as many as possible. Currently, there are 3 elements of Sinematek Indonesia building including office located on the 4th floor, library on the 5th floor, and films

storage room on underground floor of PH Usmar Ismail Building. The Director of Sinematek Indonesia revealed that there is only a small amount of visitors that is consistent with data obtained from observation of the researcher through checking visitors record of office and library that is found that there is approximately 10-20 visitors per week. Visitors could be divided into 2 main groups including teenagers demanding to watch some old films and use library and another group is scholars, researchers, and film directors travelling from several countries throughout the world who are interested in studying and researching related documents in library and stored films for writing academic reports such as researches, thesis, and articles.

Although this institution may be unable to perform its basic duties as the “Sinematek Indonesia” or international film archives completely, i.e., it should be an organization for storing Indonesian films with storage of related documents, library, public reports, services provided to communities, and activities related to knowledge on films and participating in developing Indonesian film industry, due to limited fund and workforce, there are many people visiting and utilizing this institution including film reporters and writers, scholars, and students, for conducting their researches and thesis. Moreover, it has also sponsored some films for using in activities of Indonesian Films Association.

Adisurya Abdi reveals that even though the government is still uncertain of the worth of the film archive to the country, the public already aware of it and starting to pay more attention to the institution, “We believe that film is an extraordinary matter, a thing that could capture the happenings of a country from certain period. It could show us how the human, the culture the development of an era. Film is a definite source to learn about the history of a nation. And with the enthusiasm of public to our service, we are eager to share our collection more for them, because basically, this institution serves anyone that intends to appreciate and to learn both scientifically and intellectually from our archives” Adisurya explains. The director also suggests that it is important to keep the film archive an independent institution, “Ideally, the institution is apart from any political and commercial issue. Because we stand purely for education and science”. (Muhammad Hilmi, 2015)

Moreover, the Director of Sinematek Indonesia also accepted that general Indonesian people may not know and feel proud with existing of this institution but, as the person driving this institution, he expected that if Sinematek Indonesia was supported with sufficient fund, it may be new creation of some methods in the future to attract more people to visit this place. Consequently, the policy on proactive public relations is current established through website and digital media creation for convenience of accessibility as well as production of some souvenirs related to films including photos, posters, books, key chains, and mugs, etc.

Conclusion and Discussion

The results showed that establishment of “film archives” in ASEAN has been connected with establishment of sources for collecting, seeking for, and sharing knowledge and entertainment in western countries. "Indonesia" started to produce films in 1926 but started to apply guidelines from Netherland and France for establishing “Sinematek Indonesia” in Jakarta in 1975 by Misbach Yusa Biran, a film director, and Asru Isani, a scriptwriter. The purpose of this establishment is becoming the important source for collecting and conserving information on several films and related stuffs including screenplay, posters, books, and news. Moreover, it also provides services of library and theater rooms for students and scholars in the amount of 10 – 20 persons per week. Although it has been operated as the first film archives in this region, it receives some grant-in-aid from Ministry of News and Information and participates as the member of International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP). However, after working under Usmar Ismail Foundation in 2001,

Indonesian government terminated the policy on supporting activities of all private developmental organization. Consequently, there is only grant-in-aid received from Film Foundation that is very small amount. As a result, the institution has had to encounter with the problem on lacking of resources and budget as accepted by Adisurya Abdy, the film director as the current Director of Sinematek Indonesia that such limitations have hindered the institution from operating its activities to be interested continuously as well as unable to perform its duties as the historical learning source on communication of Indonesia and ASEAN region clearly compared to others, especially Thai film archive.

However, “Sinematek Indonesia” under the supervision of the first director to 2001, performed its duties as the source of major information of Indonesian film completely. It was considered as the learning center of film research and education with utilization of outsiders as students, scholars, reporters, and other persons in film industry or even some researchers from other countries such as Netherland, Germany, Australia. Moreover, this organization also provides services to many schools in preparing films for some film clubs, training courses on film production, and participating in organizing exhibitions in various film festivals. Although its budget is limited, this organization published a book that is important for Indonesian film industry called “Who’s Who of Film People (1926-1978)”.

Expectation of Sinematek Indonesia to perform its duties more completely is expecting Indonesian government to support its organization through National Film Council. However, Indonesian central government has never supported any budget to this organization up till now. Consequently, it is unable to perform its duties completely as expected by its founder. However, Adisurya Abdy, the current Director, still has the determination to make this organization to perform its duties in preserving and maintaining films that are considered as the properties of the country and all humans of the world according to the intention of United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1974) stated that “film is considered as a part of expression on cultural uniqueness of the country with educational, cultural, artistic, technological, and historical value. Moreover, film also serves as a part of cultural heritage of nations”, as well as to find the solution for developing film organizations to reach the highest level of efficiency and effectiveness, under the consistency with conditions and operational budget of each country in Asia.

For inquiry whether Asian countries are ready for establishing the Asian Film Association or federation because there are some countries that have not established their film archives, “Sinematek Indonesia” suggests that there should be establishment of Asian Film Archives Federation firstly whether it is ready or not. After establishing such organization, the guidelines will be defined for each country for applying in order to obtain similar system or standard. In the event that the film archives of each country has different operational system, it may be more difficult in the event of any assembly for establishing the Federation. Moreover, there is the notice that the “film archives” is originated from circle of scientific world more than the film circles therefore it is connected directly in order to support national film industry easily. However, no matter how different conditions and situations of film business in each country, film organizations in several countries (except Thailand) are not ready to have any organization to store documents and researches on film. With such reason, it is necessary to cooperate to establish an organization to be responsible for these duties, for example, successful establishment of “Sinematek” or “film archives” in The Republic of Indonesia.

Suggestion on Operation of National Film Archives in ASEAN

Lessons obtained from the success and problems of the operation of the first “National Film Archives” of ASEAN during the past four decades enables the researcher to conclude “the guidelines for promoting the operation of National Film Archives” in the future” in order to suit with social, political, and cultural context of ASEAN countries as follows:

1. Distribution of knowledge on establishment, surviving, and operation of National Film Archives should be emphasized as the valuable source of historical learning in order to make related organizations (e.g., educational institutions, developmental organizations) and anyone admiring this field of communication arts to realize the importance of films and utilize film archives fully.

2. Government of each ASEAN country should support establishment of film archives as well as all sections related to film industry. Although there are several countries considering film archives as extravagant project for developing countries but film archives helps to reflect cultural heritage of each country clearly for developing science and welfare of people of such country. Accordingly, to archive goals of all sectors of film industry, each country must provide cooperation and responsibility in driving establishment of National Film Archives as well as mutually establish “Asian Film Archives Federation”. Primarily, it is proposed that the organization with capability to drive this establishment is “Film Producers Associations (FPA)” of each ASEAN country.

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