

Contesting Identity and Evoking Irony: How Football leads Indonesians to Reimagine National Identity and Postcolonial Memory

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INTRODUCTION

Football and National Identity are inextricable

Domination of Dutch-Indonesian Naturalized Players in Indonesia National Football Indonesia

Pros and Cons of the massive naturalization football players across social media platforms

Celebrating the national football team's elevated performance

Questioning their legacy to play for Indonesia

Reimagining national identity and postcolonial memory through football

LITERATURE REVIEW

Football under FIFA's influence, has become a powerful cultural force that both reflects and challenges enduring forms of nationalism and postcolonial dynamics (Sugden and Tomlinson, 2020)

FIFA operates as a powerful geopolitical actor that perpetuates historical inequalities and uses "opportunistic nationalism" to advance its global economic and ideological influence (Bar-On and Escobedo, 2016).

Football in Anglophone Africa evolved from a colonial tool into a potent medium through which marginalized groups criticized power, asserted identity, and challenged political oppression both during and after colonial rule (Choto and Ncube, 2023).

Digital fan reactions often reduce Africanness to black indigeneity, leading to racialized support for local coaches and hostility toward white expatriates (Ditlhokwa and Ncube, 2025)

Memory studies and postcolonial studies need to increase interdependence to gain deeper understanding about how technology and the media are involved in postcolonial world (Rothberg, 2013; Keightley, 2022)

Engaging with past narratives and everyday memories through interactive technologies plays a vital role in fostering collaborative memory-making processes in Postcolonial Namibia (Kambunga, Winschiers-Theophilus, and Smith, 2020)

The digital age enables ordinary citizens to reinterpret and trans-mediate cultural archives to construct and disseminate alternative narratives about the present for postcolonial Afro-European society (Cruz and Miranda, 2022)

METHOD



Cultural Studies Approach



Perspective

Postcolonial Studies

Media Studies

Memory Studies



Method

Digital Ethnography

Qualitative Content Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis

Negotiating Postcolonial through Football

Reshaping Postcolonial National identity through the Lens of Pop Culture

- The Stardom of Dutch-Indonesian players
- Prianti (2019) highlight that masculinity in Indonesian context reflects the enduring influence of colonial ideologies on contemporary Indonesian society

Reworking Colonial Subordination into Postcolonial Ironic Pride

- Football fandom address the Netherland football national team as "timnas pusat" while Indonesia national team as "timnas cabang"
- FIFA geopolitically maintain the inequality of football development (Bar-On and Escobedo, 2016),
- the inequality that place European and Chinese football players into a higher layer than local players had been established by the colonial government in The Dutch-East Indies (Harjo, 2022).
- negotiating the meaning and authority of the dominant narrative through humor and laughter to as subversive mechanism (Mbebe, 2001).

Negotiating Postcolonial through Football

The Legacy of Naturalized Players

- Romanticizing the past glory of the Dutch-East Indies National Football Team
- the pioneer generation of naturalized players before the social media era
- Replacing the term “diaspora players” instead of “naturalized players”
- Han and Zhao (2023) highlight that public reaction to naturalized athlete in Asia is conditioned by ethno-racial views.
- Shin, Park, and Peachey (2020) show that The media legitimate the naturalized athletes' acculturation to new identity through emphasizing their commitment by performing the culture of the nation.
- Chiu (2021) emphasizes that the active roles of fans and athletes in producing meanings of these contents, contributing to the imagination of nationhood through football



Colonial Memory Reimagined: From Misfortune to National Pride

Forget the painful history of colonial history and make ironic statements

Negotiating Traumatic Memory by Turning them into Humor and admiration

Using the term “Aura VOC, Barudak VOC, Aura Meneer, Aura Kompeni” to address naturalized players charisma, prestige, and excellence

Popularizing a redemption humor that say “The Dutch once took spices from Indonesia, now it’s Indonesia’s turn to harvest players from Dutch academies.

Framing colonial-era sexual exploitation in a humorous tone

Colonial Memory Reimagined: From Misfortune to National Pride



Andriaansen and Smit (2025) propose that Memory are actively and continuously (re)shaped by the infrastructures and logics of digital platforms. They insist, “mnemonic practices enabled by social media demonstrates how platform features both democratize and manipulate historical narratives.”



Forgetting is a is a way to reorganize memory, a way to define the political present, to give meaning to specific events, and to control contingencies (Hannoum,2019)



public forgetting and remembering is communicative actions in which memory and forgetting are interconnected and the ways we communicate and commemorate the past influence the present and future (Errera and Deluliis 2022).

CONCLUSION

The stardom of Dutch-Indonesian players reflects the ongoing negotiation of postcolonial identity in Indonesia. Social media becomes a crucial site where irony, humor, and popular culture are used to rework colonial hierarchies. Through public discourse, these players are framed not just as athletes, but as cultural figures who challenge, affirm, or reimagine national belonging in a postcolonial context.

Social media serves as a key arena for public acts of remembering and forgetting, where the presence of Dutch-upbringing naturalized players enables the negotiation of historical trauma through humor, irony, and admiration.





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THANK YOU!

