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FILM WORLD INDONESIA
THE RISE AFTER THE FALL

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Introduction

I'm on the set of *TARIX JABRIX 2* (Indonesia: 2009, Iqbal Rais). This Indonesian comedy chronicles the adventures of five young bikers, portrayed by *The Changcuters*, one of the country's most popular bands. Bottles of the beverage Teh Gelas are carefully placed into the shot and posters of Class Mild cigarettes can be seen on the walls of the set. In the corner of the set a man is praying to hold off the rain, while dozens of children from the neighborhood are trying to get close to the stars. The two HD cameras of *Sony* are put into position for the next scene, while the director of photography is texting on his *Blackberry*. Everyone is ready, the director gives the sign and the scene starts.

The film industry in Indonesia seems to be alive and kicking, from 2006 to 2008 the number of films produced has tripled. It went from a mere 15 productions in 2003 to over 90 productions in 2008 as seen in table 1. *The Jakarta Post* notes in the article "Cinema comes out of the dark ages" that in 2009 over fifty-five percent of the movie goers went to see an Indonesia film in the local theatres.¹ (Even though the number of Indonesian feature films, released in 2009 was lower than the year before). The title of that article indicates that the film industry has had tough times in the past. During President Suharto's reign, the film industry was under strict rules and regulations. In the nineties, the film industry plummeted to almost a standstill, hardly producing films anymore. It went from 115 films in 1990 to just three in 1999.² Many analysts linked the fall of the number of feature films to the spread of private television, which was legalized in 1987.³ The student uprising, for a political reform in Indonesia, would be the start for a "transformation from authoritarianism to democracy."⁴ The fall of President Suharto in May 1998, brought *Reformasi* or the Reform, not only for the country, but also for Indonesian cinema and its film industry. At the start of the new millennium the number of feature films started to slowly increase again; eight in 2001 and twelve in 2002.⁵ After 2003, circumstances seemed to have changed, in regard to the increase of productions; from 2004 to 2005 the number has tripled.⁶ What are these changes that caused the increase of Indonesian film productions?

¹ Triwik Kurniasara, "Cinema comes out of the dark ages" available on *The Jakarta Post*, <<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/12/27/cinema-comes-out-dark-ages.html>>, 27 Apr 2009.

² Krishna Sen "Indonesia: Screening a Nation in the Post-New Order" in *Contemporary Asian Cinema*, ed. A. Ciecko (New York: Berg, 2006): 97-107, 102.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Sonja van Wichelen, *Religion, Politics and Gender in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 14-15.

⁵ Based on statistics of the number of Indonesian feature films produced provided by IMDB.com, gathered through the advanced title search option. <<http://www.imdb.com/search/title>>, 01 Apr 2011.

⁶ See table 1.

Year	Number of feature films
2010	85
2009	80
2008	91
2007	47
2006	32
2005	24
2004	8
2003	11
2002	12
2001	8
2000	4

Table 1, Number of feature films in Indonesia⁷

The purpose of this thesis is to look at the domestic position of the Indonesian film world. Which changes have affected the position of the Indonesian film world, locally in the period after the Reform? This thesis explores the different factors that caused the increase of Indonesian productions after the Reform and focuses on the period between 2003 and 2009. The increase of feature film productions in this period is massive, as can be seen in table 1.

Before continuing, I will explain what I understand as a film world. When you are watching a movie, you often look at the story that is shown, the actors that are playing the story, the scenery it is played in. You hear the sounds and music that accompany the scenes. Most people do not take in mind the director or the producer. Not only the director and the producer and cameramen, but also people who take care of food, the paychecks, and the companies that provided goods or cash to make that movie happen and in some cases even the equipment that was used. After that, distribution decides who is going to be able to see a film. The audience, press and critics watching the film, determine its success or reputation. An important part is also the government who make up the rules and conditions to which a film industry has to conform. People produce a movie together and it is viewed accordingly.

These forms of cooperation, producing patterns of a collective activity are what Howard Becker calls an Art World.⁸ Howard Becker is an American sociologist who sees

⁷ Based on statistics of the number of Indonesian feature films produced provided by IMDB.com, gathered through the advanced title search option. <<http://www.imdb.com/search/title>>. 01 Feb 2011.

⁸ Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 1.

art not as the focal point, but puts the focus on who and what made a piece of art happen. Not only does he cover the creators of a piece of art, but also relations to reputation, changes, resources and government, revealing a network of activities and collaborations between people. Many people have used Becker's view on art to analyze or perceive certain kinds of art and its world. Bart Hofstede has used this idea for what he calls film world. Hofstede is a Dutch sociologist who used the notion of art worlds to take a look at the position of the Dutch cinema in the world. Instead of using the term art world, he uses the term film world, which focuses on film specifically. I will be primarily using the theory of Becker, as I will look at the state, mavericks, conventions, changes, and resources of the Indonesian film world. More about these terms shall be discussed in the following chapters. Hofstede's work has been proven insightful as well.

Explanations in this thesis are based on an analysis of different literary and internet sources, newspaper articles, reports, interviews, Indonesian films, and my own experience as a trainee at the production house *Kharisma Starvision Plus* in Indonesia. The report I have written about my traineeship, was the start for my thesis. I have to make a note, that finding material and studies on contemporary Indonesian cinema has been difficult, as there are not a lot of studies about the topic at the time I am writing this. Especially studies about the last five years are in limited supply. Fortunately, Krishna Sen, who is a professor of Asian Media, has written a lot about Indonesian media and cinema. Her work has helped in detailing the political ordeals that occurred before, during and after the fall of President Suharto. Furthermore, anthropologist professor, Karl G. Heider has written *Indonesian Cinema*, which has been the base for me in understanding Indonesian cinema. The dissertation of Katinka van Heeren, *Contemporary Indonesian Film* has given a lot of insight in the more recent years of film in Indonesia. Other literature, articles found in books and on the internet have provided additional information.

I shall start to explore how Indonesian cinema is intertwined with the history of the country, in chapter two. This introduction will cover the history and changes Indonesia and its cinema went through, throughout the years.

In chapter three, the relationship between state and the film industry within the Indonesian film world will be explained. The state and the film industry both have their interest in the success of its film world. A partnership between the two is undeniable, however that does not mean they always share the same thoughts, needs and goals. What was and what is the relation between film and the state in Indonesia and how did it contribute in the position of its film world?

Chapter four explores Indonesia's independent cinema that emerged in the late nineties when The New Order was at its end. Katinka van Heeren explains in her article, "Indonesian <side-stream> film", that *Film independen*, Indonesia's independent cinema,

was more than just films that oppose mainstream or Hollywood cinema. It also was a rebellion that principally stood against the rules and regulations of the New Order.⁹ Why was the emergence of *film independen* important for the local film world?

The genres that are most frequently used from 2003 to 2009 are horror, drama and comedy. In his book *Indonesian Cinema*, Karl Heider has categorized certain genres as being typical Indonesian. What are the similarities and distinctions between the genres Karl Heider describes and the genres of the 21st century? I will explain the role of genres in a film world and the inevitability of change within these genres in chapter five.

In chapter six, I will look at the changes in resources. Resources are not only limited to equipment; personnel can be seen a form of resource too, according to Becker.¹⁰ Innovation and change plays an important role in the longevity of a film world. I will use Hofstede's interpretation of innovation: "The ability of an artistic entrepreneur to optimally use the structural conditions of his activities. These conditions can be of all sorts: from a legal and political climate to organizational circumstances, the presence of certain personnel, and new technologies."¹¹ Which conditions were met in the area of personnel and technology? How did they contribute to the position of Indonesia's film world?

Chapter seven elaborates on the size of the Indonesian film world. Hollywood is the largest and most central of all film worlds with a large domestic and international market. Hollywood became the standard, the mainstream cinema all over the world. This also counted for Indonesia over the years, but the scale tipped in favor of Indonesia in 2009, with over 55 percent of the audience visiting Indonesian films.¹² We look at the ancillary markets and the connections it makes outside the film world and how this centralizes the position of the Indonesian film world.

All of the findings and descriptions will be concluded in the last chapter. The main question will be answered: 'What is the position of the Indonesian cinema in Indonesia from 2003 to 2009 and how did it get to this position?' I will end with giving my opinion of what the future is of the Indonesian film world, based on my findings in this thesis.

⁹ Katinka van Heeren, "Indonesian <side-stream> film" in *Asian Hot Shots*, ed. Y. Michalik and L. Coppens (Marburg: Schuren, 2009), 72.

¹⁰ Becker, 77.

¹¹ Hofstede, 31.

¹² Kurniasara.

2: A brief history tour

Indonesia is a country with 19.000 islands and spans over five-thousand kilometers from east to west. This mighty archipelago harbors over 200 major cultural and language groups.¹³ Its culture is as diverse as its country and has a rich history to boot. . Parallel to the Indonesian history, from the 1900s and onwards, stands its cinema. Influenced by the country's political turmoil, the Indonesian cinema has its highs and its lows. In this chapter, I cover the history of Indonesia and the relation it has to its cinema.

Indonesia times past

In the thirteenth century, Muslim traders visited the archipelago and brought along the Islam, which spread over the different kingdoms that was Indonesia. From 1605, The Dutch began to colonize the archipelago calling it the Dutch East Indies.¹⁴ At the beginning of the twentieth century the Indonesians started to organize and join forces against the Dutch colonizers. These national movements grew over time. In 1942 Japan invaded the Dutch Indies and this was a catalyst for the Indonesian Independence. During the occupation, the Japanese recognized the *Sang Saka Merah Putih* as the national flag, acknowledged Indonesia Raya as the national anthem, and accepted the national language, *Bahasa*.¹⁵ The country was declared The Republic of Indonesia on august 17th 1945 and Sukarno became the first president, right after the Japanese surrender to the allies. Allied by British troops, the Dutch tried to retake Indonesia soon after. After political pressure, diplomatic negotiations, and military actions, the Dutch gave in and The Republic of Indonesia was internationally recognized in 1949.¹⁶

In 1965, six of the country's generals were killed by a group of military officers. Said to be a coup by the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia) the Indonesian Communist Party, General Haji Mohammad Suharto set out a military campaign to stop the PKI in its actions.¹⁷ The situation in Indonesia became more and more hostile. Under these circumstances, the pressured president Sukarno gave Suharto full power and authority to restore order on 11th march 1966. In 1967, Sukarno was relieved of his duty and Suharto

¹³ Adrian Vickers, *A history of modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: CUP 2005), 1.

¹⁴ "Indonesia's History and Background" *Asian Info*, <<http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/indonesia/pro-history.htm>>, 01 Apr 2010.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Adrian Vickers, 112.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 156.

became the second president of Indonesia.¹⁸ The reign of Suharto is also known as the New Order movement and would last more than 30 years.

In 1997, Indonesia had fallen into an economical crisis. Under Suharto's presidency, the standard of living had slowly declined. The political system was found inadequate to support the country and its people. The country was once again in an uproar. Students began to demonstrate and, demanding political and economic reform. Eventually President Suharto gave in and resigned in 1998. Vice president Habibie became the third president and formed the Reform Development Cabinet.¹⁹ This period is also known as the *Reformasi*. After 2000, we have entered the post reform period. President Susilo Bambang Yudhono is the sixth president of the republic since 2004 and recently won his second term in 2009.

Cinema History

Cinema was introduced to Indonesia, still under Dutch rule, in the beginning of the twentieth century. Even though the Dutch Indies were part of Holland, American films were the most popular in Indonesia during that time and were imported through other channels than Holland, according to Kirstin Thompson in *Exporting Entertainment*.²⁰ In fact, the majority of the 250 theatres on Java showed American films.²¹ The first local film that was produced in the Dutch Indies was the silent film *LOETOENG KASAROENG* (Indonesia: 1926, L. Heuvelcorp). Although the director was Dutch, the actors involved were Indonesian. In the first years, most of the "local" film makers were European or Chinese. *LOETOENG KASAROENG* or the *ENCHANTED MONKEY* was based on a Sundanese folktale. The first Chinese production was *MELATIE VAN JAVA* (Indonesian: 1929, Wong) by the Wong Brothers. In 1937, the Wong brothers collaborated with the Dutch director Albert Balink and created *TERANG BOELAN* or *FULL MOON* (Indonesia: 1937, Balink). This movie was a great success and brought Indonesia more than just a film. "The one that gave birth to Indonesia's first movie star: Miss Roekiah."²² She became a real celebrity and an idol for the common people in Indonesia. The story was not original; it was an adaptation of an American film called *THE JUNGLE PRINCESS* (USA: 1936, Wilhelm Thiele).

During the Japanese Occupation, the Indonesian cinema underwent some important changes that would shape it even more. The Indonesian cinema was taken out off European and Chinese hands and given to the Indonesians. Indonesian film makers

¹⁸ Adrian Vickers, 160.

¹⁹ *Indonesia's History and Background*, 01 Apr 2010.

²⁰ Kirstin Thompson, *Exporting entertainment* (London: BFI 1985), 76.

²¹ *Ibidem*, 144.

²² Ekky Imanjaya. "Idealism versus Commercialism in Indonesian Cinema: A Neverending Battle?" *Rumah Film*, <http://old.rumahfilm.org/artikel/artikel_neverending_2.htm>, 01 Apr 2010.

learned Japanese production styles and more attention was given to a proper version of the Indonesian language spoken on screen.

Furthermore, the Japanese showed the importance of using film to carry social and political messages. Heider explains that, thanks to the Japanese teachings, the leaders of the Indonesian cinema emerged after the independence.²³ One of these persons is Usmar Ismail; his film *DARAH DAN DO'A* (Indonesia: 1950, Usmar Ismail) OR *BLOOD AND PRAYER* carries the message: "Indonesian film raised the issues about events in national scale."²⁴ Furthermore, this is one of the first films produced entirely by Indonesians. It signifies Indonesia's independence and the importance of this movie. Ekky Imanjaya says in the article "Usmar Ismail, The Father of Indonesian Cinema": "Dewan Film Indonesia (Indonesian Film Council), in its conference on 11th October 1962, declared the first shooting day of *DARAH DAN DOA*, March 30th 1950, the National Film Day."²⁵ The title of this article is actually an official title bestowed on Usmar by the government of Indonesia.

The censorship board that was founded by the Dutch in 1925 remained active even after the declaration of independence together with the state's role that was formed during the Japanese occupation. The censorship board, now called the Board of Film Censorship or *Badan Sensor Film*, BSF had its mission to keep political and sexual "excesses" out of Hollywood cinema, until their import was banned in 1964 as Krishna Sen elaborates in "Indonesia: Screening a Nation in the Post-New Order."²⁶

In 1967, after Suharto had taken over, the ban was lifted and the market was once again flooded by Hollywood pictures and other imported films. Within three years, the number of import films rose to nearly 800. The film industry had to adhere the state ideology of *five* principles or *Pancasila*, which was introduced by President Sukarno. "These principles were: belief in one and only God; just and civilized humanity; the unity of Indonesia; democracy guided by the inner wisdom of deliberations of representatives; and social justice for all Indonesian people."²⁷ In the era of the New Order, the film industry expanded in the seventies as the Indonesian economy recovered rapidly.²⁸ The number of feature films produced in the seventies went from twenty-one in 1970 to a staggering 124 productions in 1977, also due to the fact that the import of foreign films was reduced from 1974 to 1978.²⁹ In that same year, 1977, the Censorship Guideline states that films that emphasize sex and violence and films deal with colonialism, imperialism, fascism as well

²³ Karl G. Heider, *Indonesian Cinema National Culture on Screen* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 17.

²⁴ Ekky Imanjaya, "Film is not a Dream. Life is" *Multiply*, <http://ekkyij.multiply.com/photos/album/75/Usmar_Ismail_The_Father_of_Indonesian_Cinema>. 01-04-2010.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ Krishna Sen, "Indonesia: Screening a Nation in the Post-New Order," in *Contemporary Asian Cinema* (New York: Berg, 2006), 97.

²⁷ Krishna Sen, David T. Hill, *Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2007), 11.

²⁸ *Ibidem*. 97.

²⁹ Heider, 19.

as socialism and communism are all subjected to being censored or banned. Additionally, films that would destroy the unity of Indonesia, be it by exploiting or arousing sentiments of religion, class, politics, ethnicity or race, ran the risk of being banned. Although the number of films decreased after 1977, the number of films produced remained between fifty and over one hundred productions a year in the next decade. This changed in the nineties however.

According to Sen, this could be related to the spread of private television. The number of feature films plummeted from one-hundred-and-fifteen in 1990 to a mere three productions in 1999.³⁰ Yet there was more going on than just private television. The economical crisis and the student uprising influenced the production rate of feature films as well. Another problem was the cousin of Suharto, Sudwikatmono, who founded the Sinepleks 21 group, the leading cinema chain in Indonesia. He favored the screenings of Hollywood films over national ones and this contributed to the demise of the Indonesia film industry in the early 1990s³¹ In fact, looking back at the history of Indonesia and its cinema, the number of productions corresponds to the country's political status. As Heider shows in a table of "Yearly production figures for Indonesian feature films," the number of films do relate to the country's standing.³² For instance, from 1939 to 1941 the number of films increased from five to thirty but decreased to a complete standstill until 1947. This is the period where the Japanese occupy Indonesia and Indonesia fights for its independence. From 1964 to 1968, the amount of films slowly drop again as the country is overtaken by Suharto. During the New Order the movie industry stabilizes only to fall again in the nineties partly due to the economical crisis. After Suharto stepped down and the country entered an era of reform, the number of feature film productions slowly started to increase again. In the late period of the first decade of the 21st century, the film industry boomed once more. From 2003 to 2009, the number of films went from eleven to eighty productions, peaking in 2008 with ninety-one productions.³³ In the next chapter, we will look at this relationship between state and film and how it affected the Indonesian film world.

From 1997 to 2003 it was a period of unrest and turbulence. The country was trying to rediscover itself in these times. It was not until 2004, when Susilo Bambang Yudhono became president of Indonesia, the political and economical situation started to settle down.³⁴ The movie industry was trying to rediscover itself as well in those first few

³⁰ Sen, "Indonesia: Screening a Nation", 102.

³¹ David Hanan, "Changing social formations in Indonesian and Thai teen movies" In *Popular culture in Indonesia*, ed. A. Heryanto. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 54.

³² Heider, 19.

³³ Based on statistics of the number of Indonesian feature films produced provided by IMDB.com, gathered through the advanced title search option. < <http://www.imdb.com/search/title>>, 01 Apr 2009.

³⁴ Sonja van Wichelen, *Religion politics and gender in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 15.

years. It really started to thrive after 2003. More about that will be discussed in chapter four. In the next chapter, we take a closer look at the role of the state.

3: State and Film

According to Bart Hofstede in his book *Nederlandse Cinema Wereldwijd*, the political and economical position of the government is an important factor that determines the position of a film world. There are two reasons why this is of importance. First, there is the insurance that the government can aid strategically, for instance by blocking external film worlds. This has been seen in the past in Indonesia itself, where Hollywood films were banned in 1964. Help can also come in a financial way. A lot of countries have set up subsidiary funds that help the production of films. For instance, in the Netherlands there is a national film fund that supports its domestic film industry. Another reason for the alliance is to strengthen the position of the country. Film can be used as a country's calling card.³⁵ On the one side the film industry profits from the state and on the other side the state profits from the film industry. In chapter two, we saw the number of feature films relate to certain political events in Indonesia, but what is the direct influence of the government in cinema in Indonesia throughout these last years? An alliance suggests a partnership with a common goal, which in terms of Hofstede's research on the Dutch film world might be accurate. The relation between Indonesia and its film industry can best be described as an intervention by the state, a term used by Howard Becker in *Art Worlds*.

“The state, finally, affects what artists do and produce by directly intervening in their activities. Intervention takes various forms: open support, censorship, and suppression. In this case, the state acts in behalf of its own interests...”³⁶

Even though intervention sounds negative, Becker explains that an intervention can be positive in forms of support. I shall explain that the state's interference and passiveness contributed in strengthening the position of the Indonesian film world, in this chapter.

Support

Over the years, Indonesia struggled with the influences of other film worlds. The government tried to intervene by banning imported films in 1964. The ban had little effect on the number of productions. When this ban was lifted, the home market was overrun with Hollywood films.

³⁵ Hofstede, 27.

³⁶ Becker, 180.

The state also acknowledges that Indonesian film can be used for promoting Indonesia. In 2006, two Indonesian films were shown at the Cannes Film Festival. Jero Wacik, Minister of Culture and Tourism, was very eager to witness this event as described in an article on <http://www.budpar.go.id>.

“The Minister of Culture and Tourism of RI, H.E. Jero Wacik, who is scheduled to attend the festival, said that being participating in this event is not only to introduce Indonesia’s film industry, but also to set a standard in attaining such prestigious achievement. Minister Wacik, who is extremely eager to introduce Indonesian vast cultures to the eyes of International viewers, would be the first Indonesian minister who is responsible for national film industry to attend the Cannes Film Festival.”³⁷

Wacik did not just attend to support the two films, but he used it as promotion for Indonesia’s culture. He also hopes to open Indonesia for foreign filmmakers to use Indonesia as a location for their films. In an article by the *Jakarta Post*, Wacik says: “Anybody wanting to know about India, for example, can find out by simply watching the films the country has created and produced,” This is what he wants from Indonesian cinema as well. Film festivals abroad can help Indonesia to get a more centralized position in the global film world. The state sees Indonesian film as a way to strengthen the position of the Indonesian film world globally. Plus, film is a way to market Indonesia itself.

The example of the Cannes Festival is a way for the state to use it for its political value; to promote its own culture. Even in these examples the support is limited to a moral one. It is unclear which films earn the support of the state. Krishna Sen explains in “Indonesia: screening a nation” that the film policy during the New Order, was part of the Department of Information. However, after the fall of Suharto, this department was abolished and was replaced by the Department of Communication. This new department had neither the capacity nor the will to follow this old policy. As a result, most filmmakers operated outside these old regulations.³⁸ This coincided with the emergence of independent film makers who operated outside regulations anyway. There will be more about the independent cinema in chapter five. In the new situation, the state helped, by not intervening in the progress the Indonesian film industry went through. This created a freedom that benefited the film industry. Recently though, new rules have been announced that will affect the film industry. Let us take a look at these rules.

³⁷ “Two Indonesian Films in Cannes Film Festival” *Ministry of Culture and Tourism* <<http://www.budpar.go.id/page.php?id=942&ic=612>>, 12 Apr 2009.

³⁸ Sen, “Indonesia: Screening a Nation”, 98.

Rules and regulations

Before the *Reformasi*, filmmakers were restricted by bureaucracy and rules that limited freedom to create a film. The rules set out by the government that involve the film industry seem to have had an effect of limitation rather than support. The censorship board made sure certain topics couldn't be addressed. Topics that were prohibited in film were: political views, religious preference, and any theme, story or plot that could damage the unity of the republic of Indonesia; "differences in 'ethnicity, race and religion' were forbidden topics in the media."³⁹ Cinema was not seen as art but as mass medium, restricting it as such. It fell under the Department of Information instead of the Department of Education and Culture. ⁴⁰ Krishna Sen explains one of these hassles in her article "Indonesia: Screening a Nation in the Post-New-Order."

"Since the 1970s every member of a film crew- from the star to the studio-assistant – had been required to get approval from their respective government-appointed industry bodies prior to start of shooting."⁴¹

This means that everyone involved had to get approval before production could commence. Another significant limitation was the notorious censorship board. During the New Order, the censorship board was a tool to censor or ban films that "destroy the unity of religions in Indonesia, harm the development of national consciousness or exploit feelings of ethnicity..."⁴² An extension of this censorship was the Code of Ethics. Katinka van Heeren explains in her dissertation *Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and ghosts from the past*, that the Code of Ethics was a strict set of rules that had to be followed. Every filmic story had to uphold the code.

"The code of Ethics of the film council was modeled by eight commissions, including the commission for 'film and national morality' (*film dan moral bangsa*), the commission of 'film and the awareness of national discipline' (*film dan kesedaran disiplin nasional*), the commission of ' film in its relation to devotion towards the One and Only God' (*film dalam hubungannya ketakwaan terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*)"⁴³

³⁹ Vickers, 214.

⁴⁰ Sen, "Indonesia: Screening a Nation", 99.

⁴¹ Ibidem, 102.

⁴² Ibidem, 99.

⁴³ Katinka van Heeren, *Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and ghosts from the past* (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden, 2009), 98.

Not following the code could result in censorship or even prevent a film to be released. She also says that every film had to be composed in a way that whatever the path may be, the outcome of the film had to be positive; it had to have a happy and rewarding ending to compensate for the suffering and pain endured. Furthermore each film could not be in conflict or oppose the unity of Indonesia; the state and the group stood above the well being of the individual. Sex and violence were taboos. Every scenario had to be approved by Directorate of film in the department of information before shooting could commence and every film had to be screened prior to release.⁴⁴ David Hanan, who teaches film and television studies at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, writes in his article “A tradition of political allegory and political satire in Indonesian cinema” about a few films that were created during the New Order, which had to deal with the meddling of the state. He writes about the film *MATT DOWER* (Indonesia: 1969, Nya Abbas Akup) which deals with contemporary political issues.

“The overall impact of the film is not only to significantly allude to the behavior of both leaders, but to produce a sense of the Indonesian State as caught in a pervasive lack of reality by its leaders.”⁴⁵

According to Hanan, the movie was not properly released in cinemas due to its political content. It was delayed for six months or more. When it was released, it was in black and white, even though it was shot in color. Since the rage at that time was Indonesian color films, the movie died very quickly in the box office.⁴⁶ Even though the department of Information had funded the film and knew the screenplay, they probably did not understand it. Only when it was completed it was disfavored by the authorities.⁴⁷ Even if a film passed the censorship board, certain relatives of President Suharto could prevent a film of being shown in theatres. Adrian Vickers writes about the film *MY SKY, MY HOME* (Indonesia: 1989, Slamet Rahardjo), a story about the differences between rich and poor: “The film was controversial in Indonesia, and Suharto’s stepbrother, who owned the major film distribution chain in Indonesia, attempted to have it withdrawn from screening.”⁴⁸

During the *Reformasi*, the Code of Ethics was abolished, resulting in a much-relaxed atmosphere as one was not forced to follow certain themes and plot. “Almost overnight Indonesia experienced a much more open political climate and the relaxing of

⁴⁴ Sen, Hill, 140.

⁴⁵ David Hanan, “A tradition of political allegory and political satire in Indonesian cinema,” in *Asian Hotshots* ed Y. Michalik and L. Coppens, (Marburg: Shüren, 2009):14-45, 25.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 27.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 27.

⁴⁸ Vickers, 191.

restrictions on mass media”, as Marshall Clark, a lecturer in Asian studies, explains in his article “Indonesian Cinema.”⁴⁹

Like mentioned earlier, there was not a body to intensively oversee all the productions, filmmakers had a greater freedom to make films. Filmmakers did no longer screen their film before production, nor did anyone ask for approval to work for a film production. Topics that could shake the foundation of the New Order were now free to be translated onto film. These were topics that address corruption, politics, drugs and sex amongst others. Movies, such as *VIRGIN* (Indonesia: 2005, Hanny Saputra) and *GERBANG 13* (Indonesia: 2005, Nanda Umbara) or *GATE 13* deal with contemporary topics such as abuse, drug addicts and criminality. These were topics that were taboo during the days of the New Order. Films that dealt with topics concerning Islam became popular as well. Films that would deal with topics such as religion were allowed.

It was at the end of the eighties and the beginning of 1990 that Islamic groups were allowed to start a political party. Despite the fact that film makers operate outside the old regulations, the censorship board is still in effect. Every film is still screened by the censorship board or the Lembaga Sensor Film before being released. Each movie is classified as suitable for adults only (*Dewasa*), or teenagers (*Remaja*), which can be found on every Indonesian DVD release, as seen in figures 1 and 2.⁵⁰



Figure 1 Screen for adults



Figure 2 Screen for teenagers

The Censorship Board can still order a film to be re-cut before being passed. For example, *3 HARI UNTUK SELAMANYA, OR 3 DAYS UNTIL FOREVER* (Indonesia: 2006, Riri Reza) received eight cuts before it was released. The missing pieces, which are literally blacked out, suggest that two cousins, a boy and a girl, are getting intimate with each other. These scenes did not make the cut. Films don't have to be approved before production starts, only afterwards, they might need to be adjusted. Films that might damage the unity of Indonesia or that show differences between ethnicities, religion or class will not be

⁴⁹ Marshall Clark, "Indonesian cinema: exploring cultures of masculinity, censorship and violence," in *Popular Culture in Indonesia*, ed. Ariel Heryanto, (New York: Routledge, 2008): 37-53, 42.

⁵⁰ Figure 1 is taken from *RADIT & JANI*, figure 2 is taken from *THE TARIX JABRIX*.

censored, just because they are dealing with these themes. Censorship is limited to provocative imagery or when the certain groups demonstrate against a film. An example is the Indonesian film, *BURUAN CIUM GUE* (Indonesia: 2004, Findo H.W.) or *KISS ME QUICKLY*, which was initially passed by the censorship board. Islamist groups and individuals opposed to this film as there were two people kissing each other. *The Jakarta Post* reports that the censorship board was "Put on the spot by the onslaught of criticism, the Film Censorship Board (BSF) withdrew the film from circulation on Friday, citing ""societal unrest"" as the reason"⁵¹ People did not react to the movie itself, but more to the offensive title.⁵² The movie was rereleased under a new title: *SATU KECUPAN* (Indonesia: 2004, Findo H.W.), *ONE SMOOCH*.⁵³

Things stirred up, as a new anti pornography bill was about to tighten the rules in 2006, just as the film world was enjoying its freedom to express itself. Many filmmakers objected to the bill, afraid it would stop the progress the film world had been in. This bill didn't come without warning, as the global political climate had changed rapidly stirring up anti western feelings. The freedom gained thanks to the fall of the New Order also meant that every group or movement had the freedom to advocate its thoughts and beliefs. Islamic groups seized the opportunity to promote the Islam and to fight for their ideals. When there were plans for an Indonesian *Playboy*, it resulted in upsetting many Islamic groups: The magazine as a symbol for "western decadence" was threatening the Islamic way of life.⁵⁴

That bill was rejected at first, partly due to protests from the media industry who saw this as another form of censorship. The anti-pornography bill passed in 2008.⁵⁵ Sonja van Wichelen explains in her book that the bill had a clause that promoted vigilantism; the public was encouraged to "help the government in eradicating pornography."⁵⁶ She explains further that even though the bill was passed, it all depends on how the new law will be utilized; will it be relatively untouched and act more as a symbol towards Muslim wishes or will it be used to Islamize morality.⁵⁷ It could suggest that certain conservatism, when dealing with sexually or even pornographically imagery in films, is advised. One has to be careful which movie you want to make. Marshal Clark elaborates, that no cinema wants Muslim radicals thrashing the theatre, angry about any erotic or homosexual

⁵¹ "Kiss me quick please for I'm indecent" *The Jakarta Post*. <<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2004/08/22/kiss-me-quick-please-i039m-indecent.html?>>, 01 Dec 2010.

⁵² Imam Cahyono, "The morality police must face reality" *The Jakarta Post*, <<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2004/09/19/morality-police-must-face-reality.html>>, 01 Dec 2010.

⁵³ Ve Handoyo, "Biography for Ve Handoyo" *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2431836/bio>>, 01 Dec 2010.

⁵⁴ Clark, 42.

⁵⁵ "Indonesia passes anti porn bill" *BBC News*. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7700150.stm>>, 06 Aug 2010.

⁵⁶ Clark, 42.

⁵⁷ Van Wichelen, 100.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, 107.

content, nor do the film production companies want to risk their investment. Clark suggests that the freedom is restricted by the wary eyes of Muslim groups on the marketplace. This creates a self-imposed censorship by the filmmakers or at least a caution of what is being produced.⁵⁸ If we look at the movies after 2006, we see a number of films that still deal with certain themes. In 2009 *VIRGIN* had a sequel which involves themes such as sex and abuse. *RADIT & JANI* from 2008 is about a young couple who spiral down a path of drugs and criminality. The comedy genre has become more mature, as seen in the *QUICKIE EXPRESS* (Indonesia: 2007, Dimas Djayadiningrat) and *EXTRA LARGE* (Indonesia: 2008, Monty Tiwa). The *QUICKIE EXPRESS* is filled with sex jokes; in one scene, the father of a one of the boys' girlfriends declares his love for the boy. *EXTRA LARGE* and its sequel are about being able to perform in bed and finding true love. Just examining these films gives the suggestion that there is nothing to worry about. More about these genres will be examined in the next chapter. However, in 2009 another bill was proposed and almost immediately passed to the surprise of most if not all filmmakers.

In 2009, a new bill passed that restricts film makers in their future plans. In addendum 1, there is a summary of the most important rules that have been laid upon the movie making industry. Most of these rules indicate a bigger role for the government, which wants to closely overlook scheduled productions and have to be approved prior shooting. Furthermore, certain themes or items like drugs or pornography are prohibited. Just as before the Reform the government wants to tighten the rules again. For instance, in accordance with Article 18 of the bill, filmmakers once again will have to submit their ideas before shooting.⁵⁹ According to Becker, a player, such as the state, operates partly out of self conservation. With the popularity of the Indonesian cinema, it seems to be crucial to regain total control again. The state possibly fears, that films become too provocative or uncontrollable. The bill is mainly to gain control once more after a decade of freedom. It is a power struggle where the film making party has to stand and obey. But they are not that passive. Many film makers complained and openly demonstrated about the lack of development, innovation and financial support from the government. Every time the state seems to be willing to make a change, it turns out to be beneficial for the state, not the film industry. This is not surprising as most actions done by the state are done "in pursuit of their own interests, which may or may not coincide with those of the artists making the works" as Becker says.⁶⁰ With that said, the state also allows things to happen in the film world without interfering; giving a freedom that enables film makers to

⁵⁸ Clark, 44.

⁵⁹ See Addendum 1.

⁶⁰ Becker, 165.

make their projects. This form of pacifism might be the most important thing the state has done for the film industry. Unfortunately the new bill might put an end to that as well.

The relation between government and film industry is one of the factors that determine the position of the film world, according to Hofstede.⁶¹ A good relation between the two does not automatically mean a better position nor does a bad relation always create a worse position. The relaxed film climate was partly the reason for an explosion of local films being produced. Until 2009, The Indonesian film industry could produce films with little interference by the government. The state was playing a passive role, giving the film industry, which had almost disappeared, time to develop and become thriving once more. It was in this atmosphere that the Indonesian cinema had room to flourish and explore its boundaries. However, by touching those boundaries the state seemed alarmed and set up new boundaries to which the film industry had to comply, reverting to old rules and tightening the leashes once again. In addition, the state wants to gain more control and to make sure, that there are not any ideas that might interfere with the policies, morality, and ideals as envisioned by the government. The new bill contains new rules that give more control to the state, reduce external influences, and yet orders the film industry to keep the flow of Indonesian film going. The state knows that film can be a cultural billboard for Indonesia and does not want this lucrative endorsement to die out. Time will tell how the Indonesian filmmakers will react. But if we look at the past, it were those strict rules that eventually made the film industry break free and revitalize itself, by going down a new path. In the next chapter, we look at how *film independen* blew a wind of change through the Indonesian film world.

⁶¹ Hofstede, 27.

4: Independent Film Independen

Indonesia's local independent cinema, *film independen*, started to thrive after the Reform. There was already an independent film scene in Indonesia during the New Order. However, as Katinka van Heeren explains in "Indonesian <side-stream> film, it was barely covered by the Indonesian media. "Such films were taken from one district to another and screened on walls, or sometimes bed sheets..."⁶² The independent cinema was underground, off the radar. This changed with the Reform and the feeling of limitless freedom. Filmmaking became very popular in Indonesia.⁶³ I will explain that *film independen* was important for the development of the Indonesian film world after the collapse of the New Order. The significance of *film independen* will be clarified through the use of Hofstede's models.

In his book *Nederlandse Cinema Wereldwijd*, Hofstede explains three models of cinematic convention: Hollywood, independent and national cinema.⁶⁴ Each model consists of conventions that are used. The three models described earlier consist of different conventions that create a general consensus. Not all national cinemas are the same, but they do use similar conventions. Each national cinema has its own characteristics. For instance, Dutch cinema primarily uses its national language, has a certain freedom in portraying sex and uses local humor.⁶⁵

Hollywood is the mainstream cinema and focuses on entertainment. Hofstede calls it: "the major league."⁶⁶ The movies watched in theatres use commercial conventions and are intended for a wide and global audience. Hollywood utilizes easily recognizable genres and plots. A western is easily identified, by its setting in the Wild West, and the showdown. Independent cinema, on the other hand, is the little league and the opposite of Hollywood. It uses different, less commercial conventions and is more interested in acquiring cultural wealth instead of a financial one. According to Hofstede, innovation is one of the thriving factors within independent cinema.⁶⁷ These two models share one similarity; internationality. This is where national cinema differs from both of them. National cinema is locally oriented in contrary contrast to the previous mentioned models and it is not aimed at an international market. Hofstede explains it further in the table below.

⁶² Katinka van Heeren, Indonesian side-stream film, 72.

⁶³ Ibidem, 72.

⁶⁴ Hofstede, 136.

⁶⁵ ibidem, 142.

⁶⁶ ibidem, 137.

⁶⁷ ibidem. 137.

	Central production	Peripheral production
Transnational distribution	Global mainstream, Hollywood film	Independent film, film d'art et essai, festival film
Local Distribution	---	National mainstream, telefilm, comedy

Table 2: Principle of films in models of production and distribution.⁶⁸

Independent cinema is one of the three models by Hofstede and operates on an international level. When Suharto stepped down, *film independen* emerged in Indonesia and would play a pivotal part in the Indonesian film world. *Film independen* should not be confused with the independent cinema as the counterpart for Hollywood cinema. Katinka van Heeren describes in her article "Indonesian <side-stream> film" that it principally stood for the rebellion against the New Order.⁶⁹ Van Heeren is right that *film independen* is not the same as the Independent cinema, but there are similarities. Independent film is a movement that opposes the mainstream, mainly Hollywood.⁷⁰ *Film Independen* rebelled mostly against the New Order⁷¹. This movement tried to make films outside the regular scope. They revolted out of discontentment with the rules and regulations. It is the counterpart of the Indonesian mainstream cinema as independent cinema is to Hollywood cinema. Four directors aimed for something different and succeeded in doing so. The makers of KULDESAK (Indonesia: 1999, Riri Reza, Nan Achnas, Rizal Mantovani, Mira Lesmana), did not use the common path; they did not register their production plan, nor did they obtain the membership of the Union of Film and Television employees. They were the first that started the *film independen*. The national success of KULDESAK inspired other Indonesian young filmmakers to follow its path. A whole community emerged, with festivals, organizations, and newsgroups.

Becker calls these artists Mavericks: artists who found the current art world unacceptably constraining and try to follow their own path.⁷² That is what the filmmakers of KULDESAK did; they did not follow normal procedures but regulated the production outside the film world's normal conventions and innovated the way of filmmaking. The four directors of KULDESAK were already filmmakers with each their own share of experience. The timing of the release of KULDESAK was perfect, many rules and restrictions for film production and exhibition succumbed to the process of *Reformasi*, which was at its peak at the time, van Heeren explains. The film was a huge success and caused many young aspiring filmmakers to follow suit. Communities, networks, and festivals spawned

⁶⁸ Heider, 139.

⁶⁹ Katinka van Heeren, "Indonesian <side-stream> film", 72.

⁷⁰ *ibidem*, 72.

⁷¹ *ibidem*, 72.

⁷² Becker, 232.

across the country giving independent filmmakers the opportunity to share, distribute and exhibit their work.⁷³ It was not on walls and bed sheets anymore, there were festivals that would cater the needs of independent film makers and enthusiasts. It was a community of mavericks and aspiring filmmakers that became part of an emerging independent film industry that did not follow the regular ways of filmmaking in Indonesia.

If you would place *film independen* in Hofstede’s model of production, National mainstream of Indonesia becomes the central production on a local level, while film independent becomes the peripheral one. It establishes domestically, what independent cinema does on an international level.

	Central production	Peripheral production
Transnational distribution	Global mainstream, Hollywood film	Independent film, film d’art et essai, festival film
Local Distribution	National mainstream, tele-film	National sidestream Film independen

Table 3: Principle of films in models of production and distribution, with the Film Independen as 4th model.

To explain this further, I will compare Independent Cinema with *film independen*. It is all about innovation and originality, in the model of independent film. Unlike mainstream cinema, it finds its way on film festivals. *Film independen* follows the same path, yet on a domestic level. Before the rise of *film independen*, films were hardly produced anymore in Indonesia. This was partly due to privatizing and the increase of television stations since 1988.

Another important factor was the popularity of tele-films and *sinetron*, the Indonesian equivalent of a soap or television drama series. The financial crisis of the nineteen nineties also had an impact on the film industry. Many workers from the film industry went to work in the television industry, Krishna Sen explains in *Media Culture and Politics*.⁷⁴ The film industry was almost at a standstill and nothing seemed to change. KULDESAK’s independent approach innovated the way films could be made in Indonesia and was a rebellious act towards the current film industry, which had become more of a television industry. KULDESAK and the *film independen* movement that followed, created an innovative, refreshing alternative for the current film industry.

Each model can be called a unique film industry with its own distribution channels, own filmmakers and resources. In the first few years, the *film independen* was its own film industry. Of the many films shown at independent festivals, only a handful got picked up for major local distribution.

⁷³ Van Heeren, “Indonesian <side-stream> film”, 74.

⁷⁴ Sen, Hill, 137.

Making use of the rising availability of digital equipment such as cameras, digital tapes and projectors, production costs could be cut significantly. They primarily used digital cameras and it had its own makers, from amateurs to the more acknowledged filmmakers like Riri Reza and Hanung Bramantyo. More about these digital resources will be explained in chapter six.

Many directors started independently and made the transfer to commercial cinema. Robert Rodriquez, an American director is the prime example who started as an independent film maker to one of Hollywood's a-list directors and was the inspiration for the makers of KULDESAK.⁷⁵ This also happened with *film independen* makers, such as Bramantyo and Reza, who started out as local independent filmmakers and are now a few of the leading mainstream directors in Indonesia. The *film independen* movement label scattered into many different groups who all had their own definitions and ideas about the context of the label. Because of this, *film independen* as a movement that opposed against the new order faded away in 2003. However, its importance is undeniable and the independent cinema is still a part of the Indonesian film world. The fourth model was crucial to innovate and revitalize the film industry that was constrained by New Order rules and regulations. The two domestic cinemas, independent and mainstream, are not as separate as before 2003, yet they work together in one film world, sharing resources, artists and conventions. To quote Katinka van Heeren again:

“...the indie communities decided to forget about debates to find a single definition for film independen. They decided that no matter what format, formula, subject or label was used to describe their movement, it was best to just focus on the goal of bringing domestic film back to the people of Indonesia”⁷⁶

This consensus is an innovation as they came to an understanding on how to go forwards. For Indonesia, the jolt of independence sparked new ideas and increased chances of survival. A national independent cinema can bring forth new filmmakers with new ideas and new ways of storytelling, which are not used by local mainstream cinema. In my opinion, a healthy national film world has at least these two models in order to survive. This is also important for its position. The mavericks of the *film independen* movement became integrated into the ever evolving Indonesian film industry and linked the two local models together. Nowadays there are plenty festivals that focus on domestic films, some of them are even restricted to a certain Indonesian regions. As Lulu Ratna, a research and

⁷⁵ Van Heeren, “Indonesian <side-stream> film”, 73.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, 78.

development officer of boemboe.org, a website about Indonesian short films, explains: “They have the ability to create public appreciation on the local level, which is the baby step toward creating a prospective Indonesian film market.”⁷⁷ The independent film is now an integral part of the Indonesian film world that can sprout new film makers, new ideas and new innovations. Even though the new film bill, passed in 2009, might prevent aspiring film makers to be as free as Riri Reza and his fellow film makers were a decade ago. A small note of optimism can be found in the closing sentence in Ratna’s article: “Even though most local film festivals are under the radar of national publications, I have no doubt that local film festivals have a big role in the Indonesian archipelago.” At least, there are festivals now, where independent film makers can show their work; no more bed sheets. Let us hope that most local film festivals can remain the stepping stones for new film makers to be.

⁷⁷ Lulu Ratna, “Indonesian Local Film Festivals” *Fipresci*.
<http://www.fipresci.org/undercurrent/issue_0609/ratna_indonesian.htm>, 01 Jul 2010.

5. Genre conventions

The importance of genres in the Indonesian film world lies in its conventions. Becker describes conventions as follows: “Every art world uses, to organize some of the cooperation between some of the participants, conventions known to all well-socialized members in the society in which it exists.”⁷⁸ Conventions are identifiable rules; (written and unwritten) that signifies art. In this chapter, I will set out the importance of genres in Indonesia and how they help the position of the national film world. Furthermore, I will define the most common genres and explain why these genres are popular at the moment.

The word “genre” is originally French and simply means kind or type.”⁷⁹ According to Bordwell and Thompson in their book *Film Art*, each popular cinema of most countries rest upon genre filmmaking. Genres define popular cinema of a country. The question raised here is, which genres define the popular cinema in Indonesia? Genres, and its popularity, are not fixed; they can change overtime. Furthermore, a single film can be categorized into multiple genres. It is also described, that a genre is easier to recognize than to define.

“Genres stand out by their subjects or themes....Genres can be defined by their manner of presentation...and some genres are defined by the distinctive emotional effect they aim for...”⁸⁰

Genres are based on a tacit agreement among filmmakers, distributors, reviewers and audiences. Shared genre conventions give films a common identity which reappears in film after film.⁸¹ Genres are the conventions in filmmaking that Becker is talking about. In Indonesia, there is a dominance of three different genres, which can be divided into several subgenres. A convention in genre often becomes one, when one film exceeds expectations, becomes successful and is used by other filmmakers. After *ADA APA DENGAN CINTA*, the number of drama films increased, most of them sharing the same plot points, story. In 2006, the *Pocong* was introduced in the eponymous film; many followed this example, as seen in table 4. Filmmakers and their financial backers are apt to lift on the success of a genre or theme by producing similar films. As a result of this, genres and themes often become conventions.

⁷⁸ Becker, 42.

⁷⁹ David Bordwell, Kirstin Thompson, “Film Art: An introduction “(New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001),94.

⁸⁰ Ibidem p.95

⁸¹ Ibidem p.96

"When any text becomes exceptionally popular you can be certain that 'follow-ups' will not be far behind. These are in the form of sequels and other producers attempts to get on the 'band wagon' with their own version of these texts. These 'versions,' inevitably, take their cue from the genre."⁸²

Pocong titles
40 HARI BANGKITNYA POCONG (Indonesia: 2008, Rudy Soedjarwo)
POCONG 2 (Indonesia: 2006, Rudy Soedjarwo)
POCONG 3 (Indonesia: 2007, Monty Tiwa)
POCONG JALAN BLORA (Indonesia: 2009, Ian Jacobs)
POCONG KAMAR SEBELAH (Indonesia: 2009, Ian Jacobs)
POCONG SETAN JOMPO (Indonesia: 2009, Findo Purwono)
POCONG VS KUNTILANAK (Indonesia: 2008, David Purnomo)
SUMPAH (INI) POCONG! (Indonesia: 2009, Helfi C.H. Kardit)
SUMPAH POCONG DI SEKOLAH (Indonesia: 2008, Awi Suryadi)
SUSUK POCONG (Indonesia: 2009, Findo Purwono)
TALI POCONG PERAWAN (Indonesia: 2008, Arie Azis)
THE REAL POCONG (Indonesia: 2009, Hanny Saputra)

Table 4: films that revolve around Pocong⁸³

Art becomes craft for commercial reasons as Becker said in *Art Worlds*. "The requirements of culture-industry distribution systems produce more or less standardized products, the standardization resulting from what the system finds convenient to handle rather than from any independent choice made by the maker of an art work."⁸⁴ Additionally, trying out new themes or new genres is always risky in cultural industries as it is hard to speculate what conventions the public finds interesting.⁸⁵ Genres do change and evolve constantly; "genres change as society changes"⁸⁶. Nick Lacey, author of *Narrative and Genre* writes:

"Genres do not only change because society changes, they also evolve as distinct entities... So producers of genre texts have to be knowledgeable about the appropriate genre and, if they successfully (that is, is it popular) offer a substantial variation on conventions, they are likely to be 'clued'-accidentally or otherwise- into the particular Zeitgeist."⁸⁷

⁸² Nick Lacey, *Narrative and Genre*. (London: Macmillan press, 2000), 225,226.

⁸³ "Advanced Title Search", *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://www.imdb.com/search/title>>, 20 Jun 2010.

⁸⁴ Becker, 128.

⁸⁵ *ibidem*, 123.

⁸⁶ Lacey, 228.

⁸⁷ Lacey, 142.

Karl G. Heider has identified the Indonesian cinema in the past and extracted its characteristics. He studied the different genres in Indonesia during the New Order. He describes categories into which most Indonesian films will fit comfortably. His criteria for these genres are similarities in plot, time period, sadistic sexuality and supernatural powers. He describes several genres that are typical to the Indonesian cinema with a certain plot and theme.⁸⁸ The *Kompenie* genre are movies about the Dutch colonial period. The Japanese period genre is a small selection of films that cover the Japanese occupation, and *Perjuangan* is about the struggle for independence right after Japanese occupation.⁸⁹ These all have a historical background and are very nationalistic. Then there is the Legend genre that tells the stories of legends and the folktales 'usually set in the Hindu-Buddhist or early Muslim period. The sentimental genre is also known as drama films in a contemporary setting. The horror genre is similar to the western horror genre, but it uses creatures, monsters and ghosts from Indonesian folklore.⁹⁰ It is worth mentioning that his book dates from 1991 and it is remarkable that Heider has four genres just for movies that depict a historical period. Three of these have a strong nationalistic character.

Not surprising, during the New Order, the film industry was under strict rules. Local films, with its themes and stories that could affect the *Pancasila*, were in jeopardy of being banned or heavily censored. Every film had to uphold the *Code of Ethics*, as explained by Katinka van Heeren.⁹¹ Not following the code could result in censorship or even prevent a film from being released. She also says that every film had to be composed in a way that, whatever the path may be, the outcome of the film had to be positive; it had to have a happy and rewarding ending to compensate for the endured suffering and pain. Film makers used work-arounds or certain elements to prevent their film to be affected by censorship. Of course, by doing so, their films were already contaminated.

During the *Reformasi*, the *Code of Ethics* was terminated and filmmakers were no longer forced to follow certain themes and plot. If we look at the genres of the last few years, it is noticeable that the historical genre is almost absent. The historical genres were in essence what the *Code of Ethics* stood for. These movies strengthened the national moral of the New Order and did not fit with the zeitgeist of the Reform and the period after it. After the New Order, film makers were practically free to create whatever they wanted. But many of these films were not yet part of the mainstream cinema.

When things politically and economically started to settle down, the film industry began to expand rapidly. Independent film makers went mainstream. Indonesia's diversity is a mixture of tradition, progress, religion, ideology, democracy, modernity and

⁸⁸ Heider, 47.

⁸⁹ Heider, 48.

⁹⁰ Heider, 39-45.

⁹¹ Van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and ghosts from the past", 99.

conservatism. This was reflected in the movies that were made during this period. The Islam became more prominent in the media. Movies that dealt with Islamic topics, such as polygamy, were part of this emergence. On the other side were films, which showed a darker side of Indonesia; films dealing with topics such as drugs and abuse, for instance, and topics such as homosexuality and gender issues. There also were films that juxtaposed rich versus poor. Some of these movies were based on true stories, from personal stories, to national events, such as the Bali bombing in the movie, *LONG ROAD TO HEAVEN* (Indonesia: 2007, Enison Sinaro) Opposing these serious subjects, were films about teenage love affairs, sexual tinted comedies and the horrors of mythical ghosts.

There is a multitude of genres that Indonesia produces and uses. However, all these genres share a common ambition; to translate the current interests of the Indonesian people onto the silver screen. That is why some genres have been almost absent since the New Order. Topics about war, or Indonesia's own history, which were popular during Suharto's reign are absent this time. These films were used as a form of propaganda to signify the importance of the *Pancasila* and the unity within Indonesia. This is literally not of this time.

The teenage factor

Horror, comedy and drama currently dominate the Indonesian film market. In 2008, there were approximately twenty-two horror productions, 30 comedy productions and 29 drama productions and some films that can be categorized into multiple genres.⁹² Most visitors to these films were teenagers and young adults. Heider discussed cinema in the New Order he already concluded that most of the audience consisted out of teenagers and young adults. As seen on Cineplex21.com, 38 percent of the moviegoers that visit the theatres of the Cinema 21 Group are between 16 and 21 years old and 31 percent of the moviegoers are between 22 and 26 years.⁹³ "The rise of the teen movie can be related to the emergence of consumer culture." David Hanan writes in his article that the rise of teen movies is paralleling consumerism in Indonesia. This started in the Suharto period and continued after he stepped down.⁹⁴ He writes about the differences between Asian and American teen movies. From his article certain conventions can be derived, that indicate a genre which is directed to teens. Teenage films in Indonesia are about teens often from middle to upper class families. An element that is also typical for the Indonesian teen movie is, the language of the youth, or *bahasa Gaul*. This is a mixture of Jakarta dialect, *Hokkien*, invented terms, *bahasa prokem* and language that is used extensively by gays and

⁹² "Advanced Title Search", 20-06- 2010.

⁹³ "Daftar Harga Advesting 21cineplex.com" *21cineplex.com*, <<http://iklan.21cineplex.com/index.htm>>, 12 May 2010.

⁹⁴ Hanan. "Changing social formations in Indonesian and Thai teen movies", 54.

transvestites.⁹⁵ Teenage love stories are easily identifiable as teen movies. But we shall see that the other genres frequently target this category. It is not surprising that films target teenagers; they are a large group of the audience visiting cinemas.

Let us now take a look at the three dominant genres which can be divided into several subgenres. According to Lacey you can divide a text into setting, characters, iconography, narrative and style to place it into a genre.⁹⁶

Indonesia	#Films	Drama	Horror	Comedy	Historical
2009	86	29	29	30	1
2008	95	38	22	29	0
2007	52	11	24	5	0
2006	35	12	7	4	0
2005	25	7	5	2	0
2004	13	6	0	3	0
2003	15	9	1	4	0

Table 5, Indonesian films in different genres⁹⁷

Drama

According to Karl G. Heider, the sentimental genre handles “...the basic Indonesian cultural patterns ... the interaction (or social embeddedness) as well as the concern with order and disorder...”⁹⁸ This is in contrast to Western tendencies where it is frequently about good versus evil. Heider claims that the basic conflict of life in Indonesian culture revolves around order versus disorder. The well being of the group is more important and outweighs the well being of the individual. It is an obvious sign of New Order Indonesia. In the sentimental genre, this is carried out on a domestic level, where family plays an important part. “There is usually no sensuality and certainly no supernatural power at play. Violence is limited to the disciplining of children.”⁹⁹ The sentimental genre moved to the TV screen when the *sinetron* became more and more popular. Most *sinetron* use the conventions of this genre.

The new drama of cinema has still signs of the sentimental genre after the *Reformasi*. The struggle between order and disorder is still present, but more emphasis is put on the individual. The drama genre for film can be divided in several subgenres, the most common ones being the teenage love story, *film islami* and the social drama.

⁹⁵ Hanan, “Changing social formations in Indonesian and Thai teen movies.” 66.

⁹⁶ Lacey, 136.

⁹⁷ “Advanced Title Search,” 01-02-2011.

⁹⁸ Heider, 43.

⁹⁹ Ibidem, 43.

Teenage love story, Remaja

The love story for and about the adolescent has been popular since the 1970s. The love stories about teenagers take place in a contemporary setting. These are middle to upper-class kids, either living alone in large apartments or still at their luxurious parents' home. The family does not play a major part in the films; it is about the teenagers and their romantic struggles. The use of language is often regular Indonesian language mixed with *Bahasa Gaul*. Another typical element of this romantic subgenre in Indonesia is that it balances between drama and comedy. Let me explain by looking at the two following examples: ADA APA DENAGAN CINTA (Indonesia: 2002, Rudy Soedjarwo) and LOVE IS CINTA (Indonesia: 2007, Hanny Saputra).

ADA APA DENAGAN CINTA or WHAT'S UP WITH LOVE translated, is one of the first teen romance dramas released after the *Reformasi*, and revolves around a boy and a girl. When Rangga is separated from his girlfriend Cinta (which means love), he vows that one day they will be reunited. The film's ambiguous ending suggests that this will be indeed be the case, even though we never see it actually happen. ADA APA DENAGAN CINTA is often deemed a comedy, but because of the film's overall dramatic tone, IMDB.com classifies it as romance/drama. The Romeo and Juliette inspired theme of star-crossed lovers is used in a number of Indonesian romantic dramas. The Remaja or Teenage love story is the genre that at first glance might resemble American Romantic Comedies. In fact, many of these films have comedic elements, evoking laughter and positive emotions. But it is closer to a tragedy than comedy. Unlike romantic comedies from Hollywood, the *Remaja* does not have a true happy ending. Two people are in love or fall in love, but as destiny has it, their relation is interrupted, by death or another tragic event. Although they will never be together again, the one that is left, usually the female protagonist, is content with the fact that their love will last forever. *Remaja* might as well be called the emotional rollercoaster, as the audience will be laughing at one moment and in tears at the next.

Some of these films include supernatural invention, an element that, according to Karl Heider, would be absent during the New Order.¹⁰⁰ In LOVE IS CINTA, When high school student Ryan is killed in a car accident, his spirit laments the missed opportunity to declare his love to fellow student Cinta (cinta also means love). An angel grants him the possibility to do so after all, using someone else's dead body. Choosing the right body is a hard choice, should he pick a female, a transvestite or a fat guy's body? Eventually he picks the body of a boy his age that just died. Again, this hilarious segment of the film, feels like you are watching the comedy. Convincing other people that he is Ryan and the fact that his borrowed body has a past too, can be both funny as tear jerking. His father does not

¹⁰⁰ Heider, 43.

believe him at all and beats him with a stick. Cinta does not believe him either. But, after Ryan finally managed to convince Cinta he is who he claims to be, Ryan's time is up. In one final dance together, Ryan disappears and Cinta is left all alone. She knows now, however, that he loves her.

Social dramas

This category dares to show the other side of Indonesia; the world of violence, abuse, addiction and prostitution. During the New Order these themes were hardly touched upon. But with the Code of Ethics lifted, various film makers felt the necessity to show the other side Indonesia. Many of these stories resemble the *Remaja*, with sometimes using the star crossed lovers theme. The comedic element however is clearly missing; furthermore, relations are often between different classes or even between the same sexes. The setting is often much darker. The stories are realistic and confronting. *Bahasa Gaul* is sometimes used as well. Explicit elements, like drugs alcohol, violence and sex play a pivotal part in these films. *VIRGIN* and *RADIT & JANI* (Indonesia: 2008, Upi Avianto) are all examples that show the perils of urban youth. Even though the setting is frequently contemporary, the plot might at first show signs of the traditional theme of order versus disorder. The family or group intervenes in the struggle of the individual who has strayed from its path. However the movie does not end with intervention and the restored order gets disturbed once again. Domestic violence, criminality, and abuse are elements that reoccur frequently. Many of these contemporary social dramas revolve around narcotics and how they negatively influence young people. *RADIT & JANI* deals with two drug addicted lovers. The girl is saved by the family and order is restored. Radit, however still loves Jani but cannot escape his lifestyle.

DETIK TERAKHIR (Indonesia: 2006, Nanang Istiabudi) or *FINAL SECONDS*, based upon a true story, tells the story of Regi and Vela, two girls who have a relationship, become drug addicts. Regi comes from a rich family, while Vela is from a lower class. After intervention from their families, both girls are sent to rehabilitation. They remain restless and Vela ultimately dies of aids, leaving Regi all alone.

Film Islami

Islamic Drama's or *film Islami* could be seen as social drama's as they often deal with current topics that are related to the Islam. Although Islamic films can be romantic ones, the main theme is the Islam. This is represented by typical iconic signs. Think of the veil, and Arabic writing. But the Arabic language is used as well, usually to cite a passage from the Koran. The Islam is the major religion in Indonesia. It took a while in Indonesia before the Islam became a prominent theme in films. Katinka van Heeren explains: "Representation of Islam and Muslim participation in Indonesian audio-visual media both

increased significantly after the resignation of President Soeharto.”¹⁰¹ Director Garin Nugroho, tells us that “media has become the forum to speak about the Islam.” Yet, that it wasn’t until after the Bali bombings Islam in 2003, Islam became an issue in terms of religion, society and politics.

“Islam was more plural, we never heard about fundamentalism. We never heard about liberalism in Islam. It’s not like the west, where <liberal> has political, social and historical meaning. In Indonesia it doesn’t have this meaning.”¹⁰²

The freedom to express yourself also meant that movements and religions had the freedom to advocate their religion, and the Islam took advantage of this. The most prominent movements tried to influence what was allowed or not. The pornography bill discussed in chapter three is an example of that influence. In 2008 *AYAT AYAT CINTA* (Indonesia: 2008, Hanung Bramantyo) or *VERSES OF LOVE* was released. The protagonist, Fahri, is a student in Egypt who has to deal with polygamy and the ways of the Islam. He is accused of rape, has three women fallen in love with him and has to choose between the three. Ultimately, he chooses two girls, but loses one due to a broken heart. Clearly, the movie does not have a happy ending. More importantly it deals with polygamy. Barbara Hatley, who writes about two Indonesian films about polygamy, writes that polygamy is now promoted by some prominent male figures. Yet, the widespread public response in Indonesia, opposes to the thought of polygamy.¹⁰³ The movie was a great success with over three million people seeing the film in the cinemas. The movie was even viewed by the President of Indonesia, who applauds the film for its positive imagery of the Islam.¹⁰⁴

PEREMPUAN BERKALUNG SORBAN (Indonesia: 2008, Hanung Bramantyo) or *WOMAN WITH A TURBAN*, dares to critique the position of women in the Islam and misguided teachings by religious men. Some religious leaders wanted to boycott this movie, but it attracted around 800.000 visitors nevertheless.¹⁰⁵ Both movies by Hanung Bramantyo were not without risk as people opted to boycott the movies; however, both movies turned out to have a far more positive result as they might suggest prior to release. In the times of President Suharto these movies might have never been released. In those days, Islamic films were frowned upon and called Islamic mission films.¹⁰⁶ In the era of the New Order, the unity of Indonesia, meant that all religions should be treated equally. A film, favoring a

¹⁰¹ Van Heeren, “Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and ghosts from the past”, 81.

¹⁰² Christian Razukas, “Interview with Garin Nugroho” in *Asian Hotshots*, ed. Y. Michalik and L Coppens. (Marburg: Schüren, 2009):146-149, 146.

¹⁰³ Barbara Hatley, “Love, Religion and social difference” in *Asian Hot Shots*, ed. Y. Michalik and L Coppens. (Marburg: Schüren, 2009):46-63, 47, 48.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, 56.

¹⁰⁵ Exact numbers are not known as the data is from April 2009, and *PEREMPUAN BERKALUNG SORBAN* was still running in some cinemas. The movie was released 15 January 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Van Heeren, “Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and ghosts from the past”, 83.

certain religion, would be in violation of that rule. In the new *film Islami* there is no criticism on the Islam itself but there is criticism on how Islam can be interpreted.

Horror

Horror aims to evoke shock and scare from its audience. Superstition, religion, and the belief that there is more between heaven and earth, are embedded in Indonesian culture and contribute to the Horror genre's popularity. When I was in Indonesia, you could ask almost anyone and they would have an experience of the supernatural. Every relative I have in Indonesia has experienced something in the past. Ghost stories are almost as common as talking about food. There are plenty of Indonesian television channels that host reality shows, which investigate the presence of supernatural entities and occurrences.

Heider describes horror in Indonesia as supernatural creatures from Indonesian folklore, which eventually are subdued by a superior supernatural power. He describes that crudely sadistic sexuality is very eminent in these films.¹⁰⁷ Van Heeren adds that the *kyai* was almost always present in a horror movie. The *kyai* is a religious man, a teacher of the Islam that often was used as a *Deus ex machina*. Even though the *kyai* was not mandatory, it was a successful formula to prevent a film from being banned.¹⁰⁸ The horror genre is still popular in Indonesia nowadays. The number of horror films increased dramatically from 2007 to 2009. Katinka van Heeren says that the old formula for horror is abandoned and that anything goes in the new horror.¹⁰⁹

Nowadays, Indonesian horror is frequently set in the present day, a happy ending is not always found in the new horror. The protagonist is either single or part of a group. They are frequently part of the middle and upper class society. The age of these characters ranges from teenagers to young adults. Visual sexual abuse is missing in most horror films though, the protagonist is usually a girl or a young woman who either has a link with the ghost or is destined to stop the ghost while in old films the protagonist was usually a religious person or *kyai*. The protagonist is responsible for the outcome no matter what; one cannot rely on a *kyai* anymore to solve it, nor is there a superior force that stops the supernatural menace. In fact, a happy ending is not required anymore. Urban *hantu* legends, local ghost stories, take a contemporary approach to folktales. One of the first films is JELANGKUNG (Indonesia: 2001, Rizal Mantovani) and is part of the *film independen*. JELANGKUNG became a convention for future horror films.

¹⁰⁷ Heider, 44.

¹⁰⁸ Van Heeren, "Indonesian <side-stream> film", 97.

¹⁰⁹ Van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and ghosts from the past", 104.

Familiar sights and ghosts

Some films, like *JELANGKUNG* or *LAWANG SEWU*, deal with familiar haunted locations such as an old colonial building in Semarang. Frequently recurring ghosts in films are *Pocong*, (a hopping ghost wrapped in linen) and the *Kuntilanak* (an ugly, white female ghost). These ghosts are often victims of a terrible accident or crime. They share a bond with the protagonist who has to face the ghost in order to stop the menace. They are easily identifiable by their characteristics and appearance. From 2006 forth, these ghosts became conventions by itself and appeared in numerous films. These ghosts became a subgenre within horror in Indonesia. Table 4 shows the number of *Pocong* films were made over the years.

Comedy

Comedy is an effective genre and weapon against the supremacy of Hollywood.¹¹⁰ Hofstede explains that the relationship between the spoken language and humor is imperative. He further notes that comedies cannot do without the cultural perception of the spectator, to a certain extent. A joke can be funny to a culture but offensive to another one. In table 5, we can see that in the last two years comedy has increased exponentially. Marshall Clark says that teen comedy is one of the dominant genres.¹¹¹ Its popularity can be explained by the demographic of moviegoers. The difference between a teenage love story and a teen comedy is that a teen comedy does not have to concern star crossed lovers and does have a happy ending. *TARIX JABRIX* and its sequel are about a group of teenage bikers who have their own urban crime mystery to solve. *GET MARRIED* (Indonesia: 2008, Hanung Bramantyo) is about a girl who wants to find the right man. Her three best friends want to sacrifice their friendship for her happiness, but in the end she is able to choose for her love of her life, who is not one of her best friends.

Adult comedy

Adult comedy is one of the latest genres in Indonesia. This genre is also referred to as sex comedy by the Jakarta Post and is comparable to Hollywood films such as *AMERICAN PIE*(USA: 1999, Paul Weitz), but still mild compared to their western counterpart.¹¹² For Indonesian standards, they are explicit, but acceptable. Adult comedies are similar to contemporary drama in terms of exploring the boundaries. Adult comedies can shock the audience for comedic affect. The films that fall into this category are classified by the censorship board as *Dewasa*, which means adults. *EXTRA LARGE* was one of the first adult

¹¹⁰ Hofstede, 31.

¹¹¹ Clark, 44-45.

¹¹² Kurniasara.

comedies and attracted over one million visitors.¹¹³ This success resulted in *XXL: DOUBLE EXTRA LARGE* (Indonesia: 2009, Ivander Tedjasukmana) its sequel in 2009.

The growth started with drama in the period of *film independen*, while horror started to lift off in 2005. The statistics show that comedy had a slow start and only became successful after 2007. Yet if we look at 2010 we can see that each of the main genres encompass approximately a third. In the end, it is always very hard to predict, what the audience might like or not. As a filmmaker, producer or investor you use any means that might guarantee the success of the product. A popular genre can be one of these means. It is a requirement of each film world to make notable films that are unique and new.¹¹⁴ Resources such as celebrities and equipment can aid in the success of a film as well. More about this will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹¹³ Information obtained from Kharisma Starvision, Indonesia, during my Internship at Starvision (obtained May 2009). See appendix II.

¹¹⁴ Hofstede, 31.

6: Resources

“Suppliers of materials do not always constrain what artists do. From time to time inventors create new kinds of equipment and materials available to artists, create new artistic opportunities.”¹¹⁵

Changes in an art world happen continuously, as Becker states in *Art Worlds*. Changes can lead to new conventions, but they can also eliminate old conventions. They can bring diversity and lead to the necessity of hiring new personnel or at least the requirement to learn new skills. Some changes are rediscoveries or a re-imagination of an existing formula and other changes can be called innovations that reshape the ways of a film industry. New rules and regulations or new technologies can lead to new innovations. Any change that can strengthen the position of a film world can be called an innovation.¹¹⁶ Changes in resources play an important part in a film world as movies cannot be created without the proper resources. In this chapter, I will make clear that the changes in resources affected the position of the Indonesian Film World. First, I examine the use of personnel and the rediscovery of the use of celebrities and actors and how these resources helped Indonesian film world. Secondly, I take a look at the technical resources that a film industry depends on and the changes it went through this decade.

Famous resources

Even Becker says it is unfeeling to call people, which help the artist create art, personnel. But as he says “ it is even useful to carry the dehumanization of artistic support personnel one step further and think of them as resources, assembled in resource pools like material resources.”¹¹⁷ Actors can be seen as artists, but from the point of view of a producer or director, they can also be seen as personnel or resources. “The person who does the “real” work making the choices that give the work the artistic importance and integrity , is the artist” . In the case of a motion picture, the director and producer have the last say, and ultimately make the choices to create a film. In the film industry, the trinity of the writer, the producer, and the director is essential for any film. These three are the fundamental parts of a film; without these, no film would be created or exist. The actor is in service of the trinity aiding them in creating their vision and their work; we can see the pool of actors as a resource. Actors are not only important as personnel that help the director

¹¹⁵ Becker, 74.

¹¹⁶ Hofstede, 30.

¹¹⁷ Becker, 77.

form his film. Choosing the right actor can determine the success of a film in terms of visitors and popularity. If actors are personnel, then certain actors are key personnel; stars or celebrities that might or might not excel in acting, but can increase the reputation and fame of the film and maybe even help increase success and popularity. Using these stars is not only an artistic choice but also a strategic one. For Indonesia, the use of stars is nothing new. In fact, as mentioned in chapter two, the stars were already used in the earliest Indonesian films. In 1937, the film makers Balink and Franken used superstar Miss Roekiah for their film *TERANG BOELANG*.¹¹⁸ Heider explains that Indonesian films often use advertising that focuses on the family life of stars.¹¹⁹ There was a sense of moral and family values that were appreciated during the New Order. After the *Reformasi*, everything loosened up, values were re-imagined. Television was an important factor in this re-imagining. Although television in Indonesia contained 90 percent of imported programs during the New Order in the nineties, local productions, such as *sinetron* were still produced. Unlike film which was at a standstill. Since 1998, with the economic crisis at hand, television stations had to look locally for programs, as the inflation caused prices for imported programs to be very expensive. In 1998 the number of local productions was 60 percent, with *sinetron* topping the charts.¹²⁰

With the success of *sinetron* in the late nineties and the rise of infotainment, celebrities have become a new focal point for Indonesians. Infotainment is a combination of information and entertainment that revolves around national and international media, media personalities, gossip and tabloid press. Vissia Ita Yulianto writes that “since 2000 celebrity news shows, popularly known as ‘infotainment’ in Indonesia, have surpassed advertisement and also soap operas as the most influential, and for some, disturbing media product in Indonesia.”¹²¹ According to Yulianto, infotainment is a constant ritual for many Indonesians, who watch the shows, talk about it, and share the acquired information. In 2006 the number of television programs was over thirty that were dedicated to infotainment. In 2006, over thirty television programs were dedicated to infotainment.¹²²

Patricia Pisters, professor of film studies at the University of Amsterdam explains in her article, “In het spiegelpaleis van de roem,” that media stars are closely related to the modern consumption society. They have an economical value because their personality is expressed through characteristics and an accessible lifestyle. Pisters calls them magnets

¹¹⁸ Heider, 16

¹¹⁹ Heider, 98.

¹²⁰ Rachma Ida, “Consuming Taiwanese boys culture,” in *Popular Culture in Indonesia*, ed. A. Heryanto. (New York: Routledge, 2008):93-110, 96-97.

¹²¹ Vissia Ita Yulianto, “Consuming Gossip,” in *Popular Culture in Indonesia*, ed. A. Heryanto. (New York: Routledge, 2008):130-142, 130.

¹²² *Ibidem*, 130.

that increase the film's appeal.¹²³ Richard Dyer, professor in film studies writes in his book *Stars*, which films can be built around star images. A star image is made out of media texts that can be grouped together as promotion, publicity, films and criticism and commentaries.¹²⁴ *JANDA KEMBANG* (Indonesia: 2009; La Konde) is built around Luna Maya; a star vehicle. This is the notion, where a film is built around star images.¹²⁵ She is an Indonesian celebrity who has starred in numerous films, hosts several television shows, and is the face for a number of consumer products. I had the opportunity to watch Miss Maya work on the set of the motion picture *JANDA KEMBANG* or *WIDOW FLOWER*, during my internship at Starvision. *JANDA KEMBANG*, based upon the film *MALENA* (Italy: 2000, Giuseppe Tornatore), tells the story of Asih (Maya), whose physical beauty is irresistible to the men she encounters, but make the women turn against her. When I was at Starvision during the post-production of *JANDA KEMBANG*, Luna Maya was in the news extensively thanks to her upcoming marriage with Ariel, one of the lead singers of the famous Indonesian band *Peterpan*. A film like *JANDA KEMBANG* can profit from this because one of its lead actors is a hot topic. As pointed out in the previous chapter, it is unclear what people will like or dislike in a film. Filmmakers grab any opportunity that might guarantee the success of a film. If an actor is in the news, then the film is in the news. It is like the proverb goes: "Any publicity is good publicity."

Because of television, actors and media personalities can be chosen for a film for a strategic reason over an artistic one. The difference with the New Order period is the magnitude of the information. With over 30 programs on television, and magazines filled with exclusive content, every celebrity can be followed almost every second. The attraction of a celebrity is its paradox. The celebrity is extraordinary and ordinary at the same time. He is unreachable but is followed by many. The increasing popularity of infotainment is intertwined with the rise of celebrities. The use of celebrities in movies creates a shrewd marketing strategy that can benefit a movie. Their familiarity makes films more appealing to the audience. Although choosing a celebrity does not guarantee success, it is certainly a resource that filmmakers are willing to use for a film. It is actually the growth of infotainment that gave new life to movie stars in Indonesia and contributed in the position of the film world.

¹²³ Patricia Pisters "In het spiegelpaleis van de roem" in *Hollywood op Straat*, red Thomas Elsaesser en Pepita Hesselberth, 201.

¹²⁴ Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 60.

¹²⁵ Dyer, 62.

Lights, Camera, High Definition!

“As with many other technological shifts, such as the introduction of sound, the coming of color, widescreen, and other special formats, it seems that the surge toward digital is not so much about aesthetics as economics, driven largely by market forces and the interests of global manufacturing corporations, not necessarily by the needs of the industry itself.”¹²⁶

Since the beginning of film, technology and its evolution played a huge part in the film industry. The introduction of sound and color changed the way we perceive films. The introduction of the video cassette recorder made it possible to watch film in the comfort and privacy of our own homes and the VideoCD (VCD), the Laserdisc, and the DVD started the digital era of film. However, video compared to film has always been inferior as is described in Thompson and Bordwell's *Film Art*. Film has more scan lines which creates a more detailed picture, light is distributed differently making video recording somewhat brighter than film.¹²⁷ Although the video camera has been a tool for the consumer and independent film maker, the film industry hardly used video because of these deficiencies.

It is not surprising that, in Indonesia, the digital revolution coincided with the rise of *film independen*. Many filmmakers resorted to digital recording because of its low costs. The independent cinema in Indonesia used any kind of digital camera as long as it fitted into the budget. According to Indonesian director Riri Reza, over 80 percent of Indonesian film productions are shot digitally nowadays.¹²⁸ High Definition or HD played an essential part in the transition. The last few years HD became a household term and in the film industry recording in HD and on a hard drive created flexibility and time. The quality differed on each set, ranging from a high-end semi-professional camera to a professional one with 35mm lens mounted onto it. HD cameras are now seen on many film sets in Indonesia. In the three months that I visited several film sets one thing was the same on every one of them, the HD camera. On the set of *TARIX JABRIX 2*, for instance, they used two Sony PMW-EX3 XDCAM Cameras, which record in HD on a small hard disk. As soon as the disk was full, it was taken out and copied onto the computer and immediately sorted and readied for editing. This happens in the back of a minivan on a laptop. It is time-effective and the editors can immediately start using the material. Film first needs to be processed and, if editing software will be used in postproduction, digitalized. Croft states in her article: “I think it's not just about the capture format, it's about the flexibility of being able

¹²⁶ Charlotte Croft, "Digital Decay" *The Moving Image* (April 18, 2009), 8.

¹²⁷ Bordwell, Thompson, 9.

¹²⁸ Laura Coppens, "Interview with Riri Reza" in *Asian Hot Shots*, ed. Y. Michalik and L. Coppens (Marburg: Shuren, 2009), 117.

to use that format when you're creating a project"¹²⁹ HD film making is different to that of film making on film. The medium itself is cheaper than film. The camera's hard disk can be reused; shots can be retaken without losing meters of film. High Definition digital recording trumps standard digital recording by offering quality similar to that of conventional 35mm film.

Film independen benefitted from the introduction of digital resources; it made it easier and cheaper to create films. When *film independen* filmmakers went mainstream, it also already had the experience of handling digital equipment and media. It made the transition into the digital era less complicated. Indonesian filmmakers are now profiting from the technological spurt in HD recording. Digital video, wieldy and cost-effective, enables Indonesian filmmakers to produce motion pictures whose technical qualities can rival 35mm film. The innovation of digital recording and HD did not happen in Indonesia. It was a matter of timing as the technological spurt coincided with Indonesia's film boom. Indonesia's film world profited from these innovations. The quality of the picture increased and the costs were lower to achieve that quality.

Technology is always changing, ever evolving. Hollywood is not standing still either, with new technologies that lure people back to the cinema to see Hollywood blockbusters. Innovations such as the new three dimensional, 3D, effects bring changes to, not only the cinema, but also to the home-theatres as well. This brings new challenges to the local film worlds as well, if they want to compete with Hollywood. Indonesia's best bet, is their home advantage.

¹²⁹ Charlotte Croft, "Digital Decay" *The Moving Image* (April 18, 2009), 8.

7: Mainstream Market

The independent cinema in Indonesia was one of the reasons that mainstream cinema could eventually flourish; films were not only seen on festivals, but cinemas were willing to show Indonesian films again. The Indonesian film world moves to a more centralized position. Hollywood has always had a central position in the Indonesian theatres, but in 2009 the Indonesian audience favored their domestic cinema over global cinema and was the dominant party in the theatres with over 55 percent.¹³⁰ The size of the film world is an important factor, according to Bart Hofstede. A local film world will have to compete against the global film worlds on its own ground. In this chapter, I will explain the role of the size of the film world and that ancillary markets, other media and investments by the private sector keep the Indonesian film industry going.

There has to be a consensus for a producer between his films and the cultural homogeneous local market to gain the competitive advantage. Indonesia is its own greatest consumer of Indonesian films. "Investments will only be made in film productions if the local market is big enough to have the chance to a return of investments," like Hofstede explains.¹³¹ We already saw in table 1 that the number of production has increased over the years. It lacks the quality and funding the global dominant position Hollywood has. Yet, the advantage Indonesian cinema has over global cinema are its language and cultural orientation that identifies with the local audience.

More importantly, the theatres are willing to show Indonesian films again, in contrast to the New Order period where they prioritized Hollywood films. An example is given in a report by the *Persatuan Perusahaan Film Indonesia*, a major film committee in Indonesia. It states that cinemas help national film, by releasing the same movie simultaneously in all its theatres, giving it an advantage to be viewed by people.¹³² According to Yvonne Michalik, there only is a small audience left for the sophisticated Indonesian film. Plus, the large Cineplex theatres mainly host imported films.¹³³ However, according to the *Jakarta Post*, over 55 percent of the moviegoers favored local films over imported ones in 2009.¹³⁴ This means that, at least for that year, Indonesian movies dominated the cinemas. I have to make a note here, that Hollywood films are not banned

¹³⁰ Kurniasara, 27-12-2009.

¹³¹ Hofstede. 27.

¹³² Persatuan Perusahaan Film Indonesia, 4.

¹³³ Yvonne Michalik, "Introduction" in *Asian Hot Shots: Indonesian Cinema*, ed. Y. Michalik and L. Coppens (Marburg: Schuren, 2009): 7-13, 10.

¹³⁴ Kurniasara, 27-12-2009.

from Indonesia. On the contrary, next to the Indonesian films, Hollywood films are shown in Indonesia, often even enjoying a quick release shortly after its release in the USA. Hollywood films and especially blockbuster films have a specific role, besides telling a compelling story. Thomas Elsaesser, professor of film and TV studies at the University of Amsterdam, says films, and in particular blockbusters, connect things with each other: theatres, cinemas, bookstores and food chains. Different kinds of media can be connected as well, such as printed media, radio and television.¹³⁵ A Hollywood blockbuster creates a synergy between different things, from product placement to merchandise, but also from resources such as the movie camera to the movie actor. Everything is connected to this blockbuster. It is not about the movie anymore, but about everything around it. Hofstede explains that if films become more popular locally, they become the advertisement for other products linked to films.

“If the size of a local market increases and the budgets to create movies increases as well, film is not the core product anymore and the ancillary markets gain a bigger part.”¹³⁶

This means that companies become interested in placing their products in films or link their product to a certain film in return for financial aid. A good example is *TARIX JABRIX 2*. The posters of the cigarette brand, Class Mild and products such as the beverage “Teh Gelas” are seen throughout the film. While merchandise and product placement persuade you to buy or use items that are linked with the film but are not the film itself. Resources and artists are responsible to make the film look good enough to make you buy want to those things. The film becomes the billboard for ancillary markets. Other media connected to the blockbuster —television, radio, and magazines— can support, and profit from, the film as well. Hofstede elaborates, that the bigger the market is, the chance of return of investment increases.¹³⁷

Support from other media industries

When you look at the credits of any Indonesian film, chances are high you will see a list of radio stations and magazines that support the film. Magazines and radio stations might get exclusive interviews and insights and in turn promote the film. Television networks that ally with film productions might profit from the same strategy. They can also get exclusive

¹³⁵ Thomas Elsaesser, “De blockbuster als motor van de hedendaagse mediacultuur” in *Hollywood op straat*, ed T. Elsaesser and P. Hesselberth (Amsterdam: Vossiuspers AUP, 2000):27-44, 31.

¹³⁶ Hofstede, 27.

¹³⁷ Ibidem, 27.

rights for broadcasting the film after release. In some cases, a successful film might get a TV adaptation. The success of *GET MARRIED* did not only result into a sequel, *GET MARRIED 2* (Indonesia: 2009, Hanung Bramantyo), it also had a spin off called: *THE SERIES GET MARRIED* (Indonesia: 2009, Starvision) for television.

Some films are based upon books, which are re-released as tie-ins (usually bearing the film's poster on its cover) to coincide with the release of their cinematic adaptation. Marshall Clark writes that leading publisher Gramedia is novelizing mainstream films; especially the teen comedies are popular.¹³⁸

The music industry benefits from its link with the film industry. A film score is often released on CD as a soundtrack album. In *TARIX JABRIX 1* and *TARIX JABRIX 2*, the lead characters are portrayed by the *Changcuters*, a popular Indonesian band. Using the *Changcuters'* latest songs in *TARIX JABRIX* entices fans of the film to purchase the band's album; fans of the music might be compelled to go see the film. By casting the *Changcuters*, both media industries profit. All of these crossovers have been proven to be successful in Hollywood and have been adapted by many other local film industries, including Indonesia. Indonesia uses these mainstream strategies and strengthens its position against other film worlds, such as Hollywood.

Product placement

The private sector invests in movies that align with their product. A film industry needs to have a substantial home market to attract investors and financial backers. Product placement and sponsoring are indicators for the success of a film industry. It is unclear whether the support of big companies helped contribute to the rise of Indonesian films. What the companies did do is strengthen the film industry when it was rising. "When ancillary markets play a bigger part the necessity of an adequate substantial market is amplified."¹³⁹ The market has to remain stable; a constant flow of financial resources makes sure that films can be made. One of the branches that contribute is the tobacco industry in Indonesia. In a lot of countries cigarettes are restricted or even prohibited to advertise, however in Indonesia it is a common product where advertisement can be seen on the streets, on television and at the movie theatres. The industry promotes tobacco as a way of life; it is rooted in Indonesian culture.

Catherine Reynolds from the University of New South Wales, Australia explains in her article "Tobacco advertising in Indonesia: "the defining characteristics for success," That the tobacco industry is an important part of the Indonesian economy and "being the

¹³⁸ Clark, 43.

¹³⁹ Hofstede, 27.

government's largest source of revenue after oil, gas, and timber"¹⁴⁰ Even though cigarettes are known to be bad for your health, Indonesia can't just give up on smoking as cigarettes are embedded in the Indonesian way of life. The film industry depends partly on the tobacco industry. "Because the government wants to keep the television stations afloat, without resorting to foreign ownership, it is reluctant to jeopardize this revenue in any way."¹⁴¹ TARIX JABRIX 2 is presented by the cigarette brand Class Mild. Even though no one is smoking in the film, the brand is seen throughout the film. Brand placement and product placement play an important part for investors. When we look at the demographics of the movie going audience we already know that thirty-eight percent is between sixteen and twenty-one years old. Muhammed Joni, vice chairman of The National Commission for Child Protection, tells in an article of the *Jakarta Post* that the tobacco industry is trying to find ways to attract young consumers. Movies are ideal to link media stars to smoking and specific cigarette brands. He adds that, in Indonesia, the age at which people start smoking seems to be dropping.¹⁴² Films profit from the funding they receive from these companies, while companies are using the movies as glorified marketing campaigns. Unknown is how much money is spent by the companies.

Piracy

There might be another factor that could have helped tipping the scale in favor of Indonesian cinema: piracy. The ease for Indonesians to illegally obtain mainstream cinema film on DVD in high quality is surprising. For a mere 7000 Rupiah, which is approximately 60 Eurocents, I have seen hundreds of films from Hollywood, being sold at shops in malls and markets in Indonesia, right in the open. I could only find Indonesian films in its original package, plus you had to wait two to three months until it was actually released. In contrast to Hollywood films, that could be purchased long before being officially released on DVD. Due to its popularity globally, Hollywood films are far more easily obtainable, I guess. Shujen Wang, who teaches film and TV studies at Emerson College, said the following in the article "Recontextualizing Copyright:Piracy, Hollywood, the State, and Globalization":

"For example, the capability to watch a first-run Hollywood film, to wear, buy, or use certain brand-name products shown in movies, or to

¹⁴⁰ Catherine Reynolds, "Tobacco advertising in Indonesia: "the defining characteristics for success" in *Tobacco Control* Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 1999. (New South Wales: BMJ Publishing 1999).

¹⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 6.

¹⁴² "Cigarettes in films must be banned: Commission" in *The Jakarta Post* <<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/09/05/cigarettes-films-must-be-banned-commission.html>>, 09 Aug 2009.

use the latest computer software has come to represent a certain desirable status”¹⁴³

If Hollywood films are easily obtainable on the streets and Indonesian cinema are much rarer, could Indonesian films represent a certain desirable status? It is a bold statement, that I make here and I will keep it as such. Thanks to the popularity and centralized position of Hollywood globally, it is easier to get an illegal copy. Piracy might play a role in the position of Indonesian films in the Indonesian film world.

Whether it are spin offs, adaptations or product placement, they all are indicators and contributors to the size of the market. They are expanding to the ancillary markets. This makes film interesting for investors and keeps the industry going. We already established that Indonesia does not have state funding; instead it uses funds from the private sector. Companies are willing to invest in Indonesian films in exchange for product placement or a share in the profit. Since Indonesia’s market for films is Indonesia itself, it can rely on companies that sell their products in Indonesia; consumer goods and services. The consumer industries are keen to use films as billboards for their products. It is not about selling just the film, but about selling everything around it. This is significant because it means that the film industry can rely on funds from the ancillary markets and bring in the budget to create films. This is nothing new. There are similarities with Indonesian film world compared to Hollywood. In the 70ies Hollywood was in a crisis. Then JAWS (USA: 1975, Stephen Spielberg) was released, a blockbuster that not only had appealing story elements, but also brought along new production and marketing methods. Films did not stand alone, they interacted with other markets.¹⁴⁴ These new methods brought a change to Hollywood, which is still seen today. Indonesia’s film industry is using these same methods to keep their industry going.

¹⁴³Shujen Wang “Recontextualizing Copyright: Piracy, Hollywood, the State, and Globalization” in *Cinema Journal*, 43, Number 1, Fall 2003. (Texas: University Texas Press, 2003), 37.

¹⁴⁴ Hofstede, 37.

Conclusion

The resignation of President Suharto in the late twentieth century was one of the catalysts that led to the rise of the Indonesian film world after the millennium. Thanks to the political reform, the climate became much more relaxed and gave room for people to express themselves. This however, does not solely explain the reason why the Indonesian film world flourished in the first decade of the twenty-first century. For Indonesia, change is a key factor. There were many changes that came into play after the reform, and of course the reform was an innovation in itself. After the Reform, the state did not meddle in film productions. KULDESAK and its makers were the mavericks of the Indonesian film world, setting up a new model on how to make films in Indonesia. Inspired by American film makers and fed up with the rules and regulations they had to endure to make a film, they rebelled. It created a side stream cinema with its own conventions. It was a bubble within the film world. It did not go mainstream, but it went its own way. And that was needed to keep the local film industry alive. In this bubble, the film industry rediscovered itself. Many filmmakers followed the example of KULDESAK and *film independen* was a fact, bringing forth new film makers. *Film independen* also showed the possibilities of digital recording over film. The lower costs and effectiveness of film would be copied by the mainstream cinema and nowadays over 80 percent is shot digitally. The bubble popped and the sidestream cinema merged with the mainstream to become a film world reborn.

The films that are made in these last years, are showing the interests of the Indonesian people. Especially teenagers are targeted as audience, which translates in the use of specific genres, such as the *remaja*. Using conventions of popular genres brings a certainty of success. But another important factor to keep this success going is, either to bring something new or give a variation on what is conventional.

But let us not forget that the domestic film industry in Indonesia was almost at a standstill, partly due to the popularity of television and the increase of stations in the last decade of Suharto's reign. Yet, it was television that increased the popularity of infotainment and the stars it covered. Film makers can now use stars to their full potential to attract moviegoers to the cinema. It uses infotainment and stars in the same way Hollywood uses its celebrities. The size of the film industry increased, thanks to ancillary markets and investors from other private sectors. The film industry thrived once more and even managed to attract moviegoers to visit more Indonesian films than American films in 2009. The Indonesian film industry uses methods that have proven to be successful in

Hollywood. Even piracy of Hollywood films on DVD, might have helped the attraction of Indonesian films in the theatres.

However, the state might tighten the leashes once more and limit the freedom that the film industry has profited from. With new rules and regulations that the state has forced upon the film world, the industry must find ways to deal with it. The danger lurks that old times will relive and that the film world will fall once again. The question remains if the government is able to uphold its own rules. Only the future can tell. Yet if we look at the last decade, the film world has shown that it has been handling itself fine without the state. In fact, KULDESAK was made on the eve of the Reform; it rebelled against the state and went its own way. Although the political climate is not the same, it does not mean it cannot rebel again. Change and a few mavericks might be enough to find the way to overcome this obstacle, if it indeed is an obstacle. The film world of Indonesia stands strong locally and it rebelled against the old rules and managed to win some grounds in the local theatres. Let us hope that it will stand firm and can maintain to support itself even with a weak link such as the state. In this last decade the film world has changed significantly and it is still changing.

As I am writing these final words, the third chapter of TARIX JABRIX is in production. I wonder which changes can be found on the set. Are they using a next generation camera, which products are placed in the scene and are *the Changcuters* still that popular and has the screenplay been screened by the government before production commenced? The next time I will be visiting Indonesia, the film world has undoubtedly changed again.

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Appendum

I: Articles from the new film bill passed in 2009¹⁴⁵

Article 6: Qualitatively prohibits the use of a number of things in movies, such as drugs, pornography and provocations, without clear parameters.

Article 7, Clause 3: Prohibits the screening of films intended for audiences over 21 years of age in non-theater halls or in open spaces, subsequently preventing these movies from being screened at many film festivals, film appreciation forums and forums intended for education or research.

Article 18, Clause 1: Obliges all filmmakers to send a form informing the Minister of Culture and Tourism of the title, story idea and production plan of any films they intend to shoot.

Article 32: Obliges those in the film screening business, ie theater owners, to apportion 60 percent of their total screen time to Indonesian films, regardless of the quality.

Article 53: Stipulates that the government, without the necessity of consulting the Indonesian Film Body, may compile, endorse and coordinate the implementation of policies and strategies intended for the development of the national film industry.

Article 61: Does not allow for a regular assessment regarding the need to change the criteria for film censorship — namely returning films with themes, images, scenes, sounds and subtitles that do not conform to the guidelines of film censorship to the filmmakers to make their own changes until their work meets requirements.

¹⁴⁵ *Mourning the Passage of Indonesia's Film Bill*. September 8, 2009. <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/arts/mourning-the-passage-of-indonesias-film-bill/328748> (accessed May 2010).

II: The number of moviegoers per film production from Starvision¹⁴⁶

Data jumlah penonton film produksi Starvision

No	Judul	Release Date	Jumlah	Ket
1	Kafir	29 Nov.2002	470.596	
2	Peti Mati	1 Feb.2003	69.657	
3	The Soul	24 Dec.2003	417.771	
4	Kanibal	27 May.2004	73.577	
5	Ada Hantu di Sekolah	23 Sep.2004	381.179	
6	Virgin	11 Nov.2004	1.154.578	
7	Me vs High Heels	7 April 2005	323.080	
8	17 Th	30 Dec.2004	114.550	
9	Missing	20 Oct.2005	210.188	
10	Heart	11 May 2006	1.287.259	
11	Hantu Bangku Kosong	16 Nov.2006	865.328	
12	Love is Cinta	16 May 2007	524.366	
13	Lantai 13	7 June 2007	572.036	
14	Get Married	11 Oct 2007	1.389.454	
15	Tentang Cinta	6 Nov. 2007	168.903	
16	Miracle	13 Dec 2007	177.903	
17	Xtra Large	06-Feb-08	1.032.160	
18	Tarix Jabrix	17-Apr-08	966.996	
19	Mengaku Rasul : Sesat	5 June 08	278.029	
20	Basahhh	14 Aug 08	346.131	
21	Barbie3	25-Sep-08	429.194	
22	Sijago Merah	13 Nov 08	527.002	
23	Perempuan Berkalung Sorban	15-Jan-09	790.316	<i>Still release</i>
24	Wakil Rakyat	02-Apr-09	285.892	<i>Still release</i>

¹⁴⁶ Obtained during my internship at Kharisma Starvision in 2009.