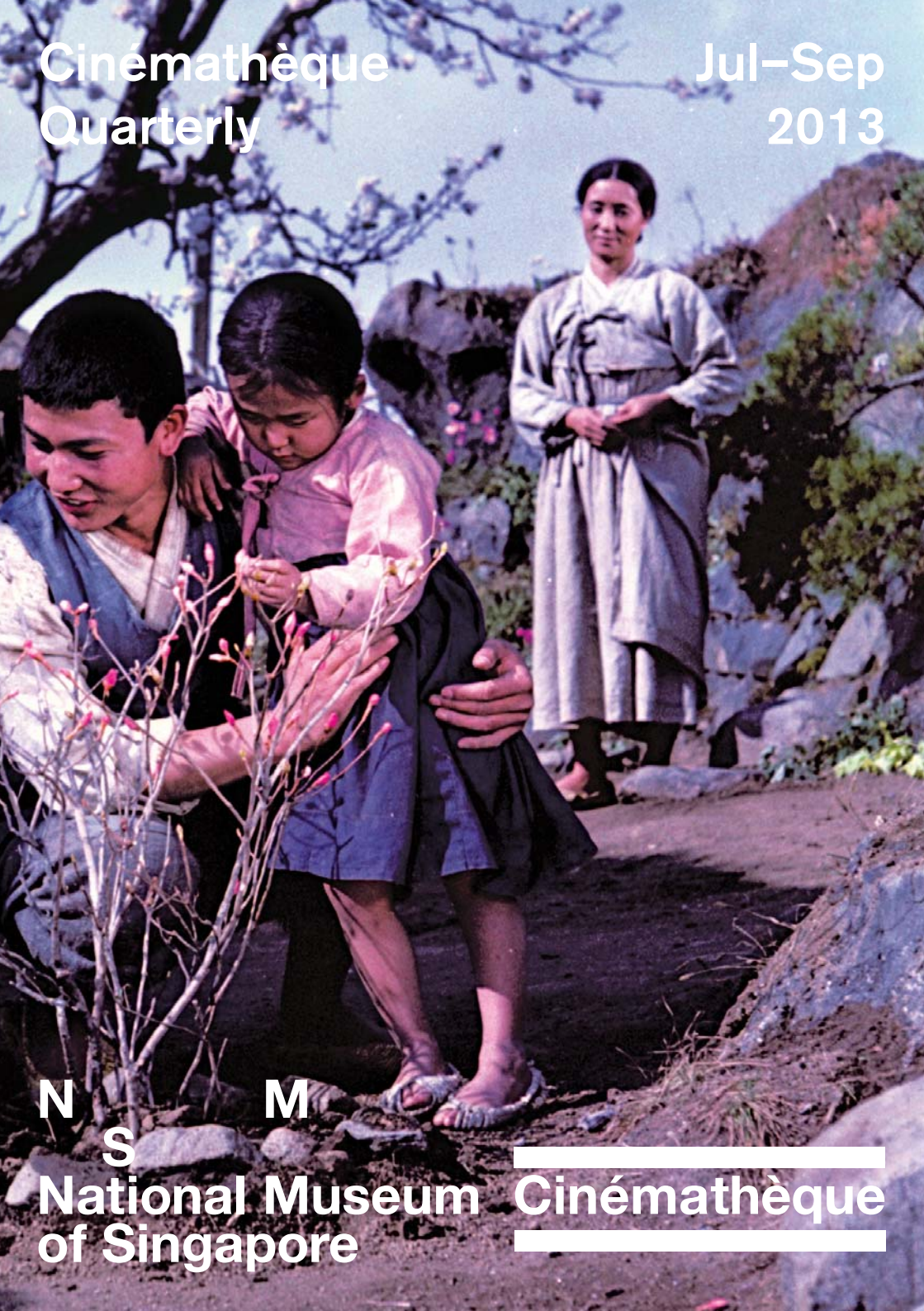
Cinémathèque Quarterly

Jul–Sep 2013



N S M

National Museum of Singapore

Cinémathèque

“I still have the seed; the fire is not gone yet, it’s not lost. If the veteran actors from my time are still around, let them work some more.”

– Wahid Satay

Contents

4 **Editor's Note**

8 **World Cinema Series**
10 *Mandala* by Im Kwon-taek
14 *Autumn Moon / 秋月* by Clara Law
18 *The Flower Girl* by Choe Ik-kyu & Pak Hak

Special Programmes
22 *10th Singapore Short Cuts*
24 *Film Restoration School Asia*

26 **Lost Films of Southeast Asia: Part Two – Buried Treasures**
28 *Gods and Ghosts in Kuala Lumpur* by Davide Cazzaro
36 *Sitora Harimau Jadian / Sitora the Were-Tiger, 1964* by Amir Muhammad
42 *Interview* Wahid Satay
54 *Superpowers and Miracles: How to Stay Positive Despite the "404" Sign* by Lisabona Rahman
64 *Gema Dari Menara / Echoes from the Minaret: A Conversation with Mervin Espina about the Lost Cinema of Brunei*
76 *The Lost Action Hero: Mario O'Hara's Bagong Hari* by Dodo Dayao

84 **Write to Us**

85 **Credits**

86 **About Us**

87 **Ticketing Information**

88 **Getting to the Museum**

Autumn Moon / 秋月 (1992) by Clara Law
Image courtesy of Fortissimo Films

Editor's Note

Lost Films of Southeast Asia: Part Two – Buried Treasures

In the first half of 1957, Cathay-Keris (which along with Shaw Brothers' Malay Film Productions was producing Malay movies in Singapore for the regional market) had its biggest success to date. *Pontianak*, directed by the Tamil veteran B.N. Rao, was an enormous and unprecedented hit, taking a notorious and much-believed folkloric Malay "monster," the titular female devourer of flesh, and telling its tale through a blend of comedy, period melodrama and atmospheric horror. *Pontianak* became a phenomenon that delighted and terrified the public in equal measure. It was reported that audiences of all races flocked to see the film, and a sequel, *Dendam Pontianak / Revenge of the Pontianak* (1957), was rushed into production and released that same year. These films made their leading actors, Maria Menado and S.M. Wahid (soon to be known as Wahid Satay) stars, and are a crucial part of the cinematic heritage of the film industry from that era. Many readers will be aware that neither film has been available to be seen for decades. When the Malay film industry in Singapore collapsed after the country's independence, prints of both titles apparently disappeared. In Lim Kay Tong's history of Cathay's endeavours in film, *Cathay: 55 Years of Cinema* (1991), the director L. Krishnan and the "*pontianak*" herself, Maria Menado, confirmed the rumour that producer Ho Ah Loke (the founder of Keris Film Productions) had the canisters of all copies of the films buried, either in the bottom of a "river somewhere in Malaya" or flooded mine. This wilful destruction of something so precious may seem appalling today, but it's worth remembering how little value was placed on "old movies" in an era before that of home video, cable TV, DVD, etc. The afterlife of a film that had been theatrically released and (if it was popular) re-released was practically nil. Once exploited in all possible markets, it was simply taking up space in somebody's warehouse and few people realised how precious these artefacts would be in the long term. That may be the single biggest reason why so many films from the first 50 years of Southeast Asian Cinema are missing. Of course, there's long been speculation that a stray duped print or muddy tape transfer

of the *Pontianak* films is lying around in some TV station's back offices, but until that's unearthed, the original *Pontianaks* remain, quite literally, buried treasure.

And so we return to the subject of "Lost Films" for the *Cinémathèque Quarterly's* second in a two-part series of explorations of Southeast Asian films missing, disappeared and forgotten. Truth be told, it wouldn't be difficult to gather material for many more issues on this theme, which is both a depressing fact (there are a lot of lost films) and a testament to many film writers' passionate enthusiasm for the secret gems that exist out of range for most, including (often) the writers themselves.

In the last issue, I attempted to widen the definition of "lost" to include not only films like those aforementioned *Pontianaks* that never made it to the archive, but also films that were completed but hardly or rarely seen, films that have been essentially forgotten since they were released, films censored and banned, and even tantalising projects abandoned before they were made. Indeed, a glance through newspaper archives of any decade in the twentieth century and beyond will show you that triumphantly "announcing" forthcoming films that never get made is something of a hobby of overzealous film producers everywhere. The Straits Times is full of such shimmering mirages, from Bobby Suarez's *Bionic Woman* (and Bobby had plenty of these, see our last issue) through to *Point Break 2* and many more highly anticipated projects that are just about to start shooting any day now. One shouldn't be too cynical, that's the business; and as with buried treasure, there's always a chance they'll be excavated and reactivated.

In this issue, we introduce a new category of "lostness" with a film that has been destroyed by its own author, and Davide Carazzo, one of the few to have seen it, documents the story behind Amir Muhammad's original *Malaysian Gods* (2008). Amir himself gives us a glimpse of a P. Ramlee film from 1964 which was missing, presumably banned, and has since been recovered in a different medium. Lisabona Rahman imagines and contextualises a lost film adaptation of mind-blowing Indonesian comic-book superheroine Sri Asih; Dodo Dayao grapples with a mostly forgotten political thriller by the late, great Mario O'Hara; and we have a conversation with Mervin Espina about Brunei's first feature film

and the lesser-known film industry of that diminutive state. Returning to where I started, we also feature a rare interview with a true cinematic icon, Wahid Satay, star of those buried *Pontianak* movies, and Cathay-Keris' reigning funnyman from the mid-50s through to the end of the Malay film industry in Singapore.

Before you begin to dig in, I'd like to draw attention to something beyond these pages, Toh Hun Ping aka "The Hunter," a dedicated writer and researcher who brings together history, architecture, geography and cinema as he explores the spaces used in dozens of films shot on location in Singapore. He uncovers secrets and arcane knowledge that simply don't exist elsewhere, and his website (www.sgfilmhunter.wordpress.com) is a revelation, put together with love and care.

Finally, as I write this, the Cannes Film Festival wrapped two weeks ago, and it's a time of the year when I often think of my friend Alexis Tioseco, who was killed in 2009. Alexis was a film critic and relentless champion of Southeast Asian film, and would have been pleased this year to see how well *Norte Hangganan ng Kasaysayan / Norte, the End of History* (2013) by Lav Diaz, his favourite Filipino director, was received in the official selection of the festival. Also, I'm sure he'd have been excited that for the first time in the festival's history, a Southeast Asian film, Anthony Chen's *Ilo Ilo* (2013, a Singaporean film with a strong Filipino connection) won the prize for best first feature, the Caméra d'Or. Alexis was fascinated by the lost and inaccessible, but he also believed that we had to take care of what is currently available; that we should furiously watch, discuss, write about and watch again, in order to create a vibrant film culture that celebrates and debates rather than buries its treasures.

Ben Slater

Ben Slater is a Lecturer at the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University. He is a writer, screenwriter and a film historian.

Wahid Satay (second from right), Latifah Omar (far left) and Rose Yatimah (second from left), cinematic icons from the golden age of Singapore cinema. Image courtesy of Wahid Satay

The Flower Girl (1972) by Choe Ik-kyu & Pak Hak
Image courtesy of the Korea Film Export and Import Corporation

World Cinema Series

9 July , 13 August , 10 September / 7.30 pm

Gallery Theatre, Basement
$9 / $7.40 Concession
Prices inclusive of SISTIC fee
A programme of the National Museum Cinémathèque

World Cinema Series is a monthly screening of works by the boldest and most inventive auteurs across the world, ranging from renowned classics to neglected masterpieces. Witness the wonders, possibilities, textures as well as the revelatory moments that have contributed to the rich history of cinema. Take a leap of faith and discover the art of cinema that continues to affect and inspire us on the big screen – as it was meant to be seen – with the *World Cinema Series*, shown every second Tuesday of the month at the National Museum of Singapore.

Tuesday 9 July / 7.30 pm

Mandala

Director **Im Kwon-taek**
1981 / South Korea / 112 min / 35 mm / M18
In Korean with English subtitles

Special thanks to the Asian Film Archive

Image courtesy of the Korean Film Archive

Arguably the greatest film ever made about Buddhism, *Mandala* is also a personal milestone in director Im Kwon-taek's prodigious filmmaking career. Although *Mandala* is widely regarded as Im's first notable film, faint auteuristic tendencies were already percolating in his 1976 film, *Wangsimni / My Hometown*. Even so, the artistic leap from his earlier features to *Mandala* (his 76th feature-length film) is nothing short of astounding.

Mandala charts the journey of a young Buddhist monk, Beob-wun, and an older, world-weary itinerant monk, Ji-san, as they serendipitously meet and part while roaming the Korean landscape in their quest toward enlightenment. Ji-san, who always has a bottle of booze on hand, is a cross between an enlightened saint and a reprobate infected by secular life. At first, Beob-wun regards Ji-san's eccentricities as mere outward show and despises him for it, but increasingly, he finds himself strangely drawn to his travelling companion. After repeated meetings and partings, the two monks settle down at a small temple deep in the mountains. One day, while Ji-san is climbing up to the temple in an inebriated state, he falls asleep in the snow and freezes to death. Beob-wun burns Ji-san's remains and seeks out his own mother. He also meets Ok-sun, an old flame of Ji-san's. His meetings reaffirm the futility of all secular relationships, and young Beob-wun sets off on his ascetic path once more.

The film essentially unfolds as a series of metaphysical conversations between the two monks. The only discernible trace of conventional drama is found in flashback scenes detailing Ji-san's and Beob-wun's past. In essence, there are two different worlds presented in *Mandala*: one is the world of the monks' present in which their struggle to attain enlightenment is fraught with pain and hardship, and the other more ephemeral world of human drama, of desire, and of their ties to their past and relationships. The two worlds are in constant conflict with each other, with the monks' worldly past threatening to devour their present struggle to attain enlightenment, often at the turn of the next shot within a scene. In a sense, the monks' battle against the encroachment of their past desires posits that immersion in crime, sex and gluttony is not a barrier to enlightenment but may in fact offer a path to the Buddha.

Mandala transcends its Buddhist origins to encompass life itself and what it takes to live it fully and completely, and how beautiful it is to live one's life fiercely.

Image courtesy of the Korean Film Archive

Im Kwon-taek

With a body of work that spans the past 50 years, Im Kwon-taek has become recognised internationally as a leading force in Korean Cinema. Im began his filmmaking career in the lower rung of the Korean film industry as a prop assistant to the lighting assistant. He climbed up the industrial hierarchy through the traditional apprenticeship system to become a director, and in 1962, Im made his directorial debut with *Farewell to the Tumen River*, an action film about the plight of the Independence Army of Manchuria. Im worked in a variety of genres throughout the 60s and 70s. The key films he made during this period include *Wangsimni / My Hometown* (1976), *Jokbo / Genealogy* (1979) and *Jagko / Pursuit of Death* (1980), in which he built a reputation for his artistry and craftsmanship. With *Mandala* (1981), Im became distinguished internationally as a master filmmaker. In 1989, he made *Aje Aje Bara Aje / Come Come Come Upward* with Taeheung Film Studios, and has been working consistently with the studio to this day. Throughout the 90s, Im's films continue to enjoy unprecedented box-office successes such as *The General's Son* series (1990–1992) and *Seopyeonje* (1993). In 2002, he won the best director prize in the Cannes Film Festival for the film *Chihwaseon*, and in 2005, Im was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Berlin Film Festival for his life's work in film.

Tuesday, 13 August / 7.30 pm

Autumn Moon / 秋月

Director **Clara Law**
1992 / Hong Kong & Japan / 103 min / 35 mm / Rating TBC
In Cantonese, Japanese and English with English subtitles

Image courtesy of Fortissimo Films

Before *Autumn Moon*, director Clara Law dealt with the problem of transmigration, displacement and identity in a string of films for the Hong Kong film industry ranging from *The Other Half and the Other Half* / 我愛太空人 (1988), to *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus* / 潘金莲之前世今生 (1989) and *Farewell China* / 愛在別乡的季节 (1990). The films ran the gamut of genres from light comedy to fantastical period costume drama. With *Autumn Moon*, it appears that Law was momentarily unburdened by box-office concerns. The film bristles with an authenticity and thematic lucidity unseen in Law's works since her graduating film *They Say the Moon is Fuller Here* / 外国的月亮圆些 (1985).

Autumn Moon revolves around a chance meeting and an unlikely friendship between a teenage Hong Kong girl, Li Pui-Wai, and a male Japanese tourist, Tokio. In the film, Li's parents and brother re-locate to Canada, leaving Li behind with her grandmother, who is presented as an obstacle in the family's emigration plans. Li spends her days skipping classes and wandering the streets. Tokio drifts into Hong Kong looking for bargains, sex and authentic Chinese cuisine.

Although neither is a migrant in the conventional sense, the theme of migration dominates their lives. For Li, it is her sense of displacement for having been left behind by her family and the uncertainty looming in the near future, while for Tokio, his past catches up with him, unleashing an existential loss of identity and purpose in life. When their paths intersect, an awkward relationship develops amidst smatterings of broken English with which they strive to understand each other. In one of their numerous conversations, both Li and Tokio found themselves on the verge of an interpersonal breakthrough when they both discover that the Chinese and Japanese (*kanji*) character for "boredom" is written in the same way. In the Hong Kong of *Autumn Moon*, such connections are few and fleeting; they are invariably drowned out by the cacophony of the city where modern objects and technology reigns over and obscures any real communication. The budding friendship between Li and Tokio becomes an anchor for them in their search for self-identity in an increasingly alienating world inundated with clichés and indifference.

Image courtesy of Fortissimo Films

Image courtesy of Fortissimo Films

Clara Law

Clara Law was born in Macau. At the age of 10, she moved to Hong Kong. Law joined Radio Television Hong Kong in 1978 where she was involved in various aspects of television from screenwriting to directing. In 1982, she began studying film direction and writing at the National Film and Television School in England. She graduated in 1985 with her thesis film; *They Say the Moon Is Fuller Here* / 外国的月亮圆些. Law returned to Hong Kong to embark on her career as a film director. Her first feature film *The Other Half and the Other Half* / 我愛太空人 was released in 1988. This was followed by a series of films that are diverse in genres but shared a unique preoccupation with diasporas, transmigration and displacement. Law's thematic concerns culminated in 1992 with the release of *Autumn Moon,* which was a hit in the film festival circuit where it won the Golden Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival. In 1994, Law and her partner Eddie Fong (who collaborated with Law in all her projects) moved to Australia. Their creative partnership persisted and Law released *Floating Life*, the first film after the move to Australia, in 1996. The film received the Silver Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival and was nominated for various awards in both Europe and Asia. *The Goddess of 1967* was completed in 2000, followed by Law's first foray into documentaries, *Letters to Ali* (2004).

Tuesday, 10 September / 7.30 pm

The Flower Girl

Directors **Choe Ik-kyu & Pak Hak**
1972 / Democratic People's Republic of Korea / 127 min /
Digital Beta / Rating TBC
Korean with English subtitles

Image courtesy of the Korea Film Export and Import Corporation

Based on a revolutionary opera written by Kim Il-sung, the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from 1948 to 1994, *The Flower Girl* is set in the 1930s during the Korean independence movement and tells the tragic story of a poor family oppressed by their cruel Japanese colonial masters.

The film stars the 17-year-old Hong Yong–hee as Koppun, a young girl who picks flowers from the mountainside to sell at the market to help support her sick mother and blind younger sister. The injustices that the oppressors inflict upon Koppun and her family pile up to extreme levels of anguish while Koppun anticipates the arrival of her brother who promised to elevate the family from their abject circumstances. The incoming nationalistic revolution offers a grand finale and resolution to their plight, as well as a clear expression of the film's ideological purpose. However, it is the dignity and resilience of Koppun in her suffering which serves as the most endearing aspect of the film.

The Flower Girl is a prime example of a revolutionary film that was meant to move the masses and communicate state ideals. It shares the conventions of communist propaganda films, such as the crop of agitprop films made by the third and fourth generation of filmmakers in China during the 50s and 60s. But it stands out with its gracefully epic scale which positions it as a benchmark North Korean film, and an entry point to the otherwise obscure cinematic history of the country.

Winner of a special prize at the 18th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 1972, *The Flower Girl* was the first international breakthrough for North Korean cinema. Shot in colour and filled with epic, soul-stirring songs about the struggle against injustice and oppression, the film encapsulated communist ideals during the era and became massively popular in China during the Cultural Revolution, where the heart-wrenching story has been ingrained into the collective memory of an entire generation of Chinese movie goers. In North Korea, the film was such a huge success and cultural phenomenon that the image of actress Hong Yong–hee was printed on the national currency.

This screening is made possible with the kind support of the Korea Film Export and Import Corporation.

Image courtesy of the Korea Film Export and Import Corporation

Choe Ik-kyu

Choe Ik-kyu was born in 1934 in Hwadae County, North Hamgyong Province. He played an important role in the cinema of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea when its Propaganda and Agitation Department, under the leadership of Kim Il-sung's son, Kim Jong-il, made a conscious decision to harness the potential of film as a propaganda tool. Choe is most known as the director of the revolutionary classic *Sea of Blood* (1969) and the co-director of *The Flower Girl*. He served as the director of the Korean Film Studio (Pyongyang), periodically as the vice director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department, and later became the Minister of Culture from 2003 to 2006.

10th Singapore Short Cuts

3 & 4 August / 2 pm, 10 & 11 August / 2 pm

Gallery Theatre, Basement
Free admission with tickets
Co-presented with The Substation Moving Images

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, Singapore Short Cuts continues to be one of the most popular and widely anticipated showcases of local short films in Singapore. The program features a diverse selection of Singapore short films from documentaries to animation and experimental work with post-screening discussions with the filmmakers. Some of the filmmakers whose films have been featured in Singapore Short Cuts include Victric Thng, Eva Tang, Boo Junfeng, Wee Li Lin, Tan Pin Pin and Eric Khoo.

This year's edition gazes back at the history of short filmmaking in Singapore with a focus on a collection of local short films that were previously showcased in the 80s at the Singapore Video Competition which was organised by the People's Association and the Singapore Cine and Video Club. This focus aims to expand the history of short filmmaking in Singapore by reframing a community of filmmakers who found a medium for expression through grassroots efforts and the growing accessibility of video cameras in the 80s.

Ticketing Information
Free tickets can be collected at the National Museum of Singapore (Stamford Visitor Services Counter) a week before each weekend's screening. Tickets are available on a first come, first served basis, and limited to four tickets per person. Any remaining tickets will be given out at the door on the screening day.

3 & 4 August screening (Ticket collection from 27 July)
10 & 11 August screening (Ticket collection from 3 August)

Ticket Collection
Stamford Visitor Services Counter, Level 1
National Museum of Singapore, 93 Stamford Road
Singapore 178897, Tel: 6332 3659
Opening hours: Monday to Sunday, 10 am to 7.30 pm

Valid identification showing proof of age is required for all screenings.
For the latest ratings and information, please visit www.nationalmuseum.sg

Singapore Panda (2013) by Sun Koh
Image courtesy of Sun Koh

Film Restoration School Asia

18–23 November

National Museum of Singapore
Applications are open until 1 September 2013

The National Museum of Singapore, in collaboration with the Cineteca di Bologna, L'Immagine Ritrovata and Martin Scorsese's World Cinema Foundation, will host a six-day Film Restoration School to provide film preservation and restoration training to help safeguard our shared cinematic heritage.

The six-day programme will be held in Singapore and will include screenings, lectures and practical hands-on lessons, conducted by experts from around the world and the staff of L'Immagine Ritrovata. The programme's goal is to address the current issues surrounding film preservation and restoration while providing participants with practical training of current restoration and archival best-practices.

For further information, please visit:
www.nationalmuseum.sg/NMSPortal/Cinematheque/FilmRestorationSchoolAsia
or write to: nhb_nm_cinematheque@nhb.gov.sg

Lewat Djam Malam / After the Curfew (1954) by Usmar Ismail

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Part Two –

of
theast Asia:

Buried
Treasures

Gods and Ghosts in Kuala Lumpur; or, Notes on the Importance of Losing a Film

Davide Cazzaro

"[The first] *Malaysian Gods* was meant to be lost."
- Amir Muhammad[1]

An anecdote to begin and to help situate this particular article: crossing the circulation desk of my favourite research library in London – the Senate House Library – I often try and peek at the latest additions to a shelf peculiarly labelled "ALIEN RETURNS." "Alien" is used here as an adjective (without its largely pejorative connotation), and the "returns" comprise those library books which do not belong to the Senate House collection, yet are nonetheless returned to the Library by inattentive users. I recently mused on the disappointment of such a shelf, yearning to host a collection proper but relegated to anomalous, misplaced, almost intrusive books – but that's

Production still from *Malaysian Gods* (2008).
All images courtesy of Danny Lim

a digression. Rather, I would like to draw the following parallel: if, for a moment, we think of the contribution to a themed collection of writings as the return of a book to the right (relevant) library, then the present article and the work it concentrates on – namely, what could be roughly called the first version of Amir Muhammad's *Malaysian Gods* (2008) – might well be an "alien return" within the *Cinémathèque Quarterly's* focus on the lost films of Southeast Asia.

The first *Malaysian Gods* does not easily fit into either Ben Slater's expansive definition of "lost film" or Nick Deocampo's tribute to the "lost, lost" films of Asia[2]: after all, this is a work which has been voluntarily destroyed or deleted[3] by Amir after three screenings held in a Kuala Lumpur multiplex on the afternoon of 20 September 2008 (a date chosen to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the momentous demonstration that sparked off what has come to be known as the Malaysian Reformasi movement).

Yet, the "alienness" of a work which was purposely lost by its own maker adds an important and, in my view, compelling angle to the theme of "Lost Films" as it places the very act of "losing" a film – its rationale, its aim and purpose – at the centre of attention. Indeed, the act of destroying a (newly-completed) film in spite of the current age of sheer accumulation, "archival hubris"[4] and endless circulation, seems to bridge and collapse the persistence and demise of cinema so as to remind us that we cannot – and should not – always be able to see everything.

Before continuing, I should point out how the film's fate inevitably influenced my choice to not attempt a full synopsis or a close textual reading here. This is both because I have a patchy recollection of the film (something I make no secret of given that this *Malaysian Gods*, perhaps more than Amir's other films, would have required repeated viewings to appreciate and account for the constant, dense work between the image and the word[5]), and because I want to respect – and reflect – Amir's long-withheld intentions that the work should belong to the hazy

Production still from *Malaysian Gods* (2008).

and elusive realm of memory (more on this below).

Let us go back to the late 2000s: most sources cursorily list Amir Muhammad's *Malaysian Gods* as a 2009 film, made in the year that marked the beginning of Amir's protracted hiatus from filmmaking. Pointing out that it was first screened in December 2008[6] might seem pedantic. Rather, looking at *Malaysian Gods* in/and 2008, it is worth reminding (and remembering) that what was screened in December was actually a "second version" of the film at the centre of this article. In the matter of a few months,[7] indeed, Amir completed a diptych of sorts: two very different projects "bound" by the same title, format (digital video), topic (the Malaysian Reformasi movement), approach and setting (a personal exploration of a specific set of physical and historical spaces within the capital), and, more broadly, intent (namely, to mark the tenth anniversary of the Reformasi by reflecting, in different ways, on the socio-political awakenings of both 1998 and 2008 Malaysia[8]).

Despite these points of contact, however, the "inside" (i.e. the structure, plot, performances, camerawork, etc.) and the "outside" (i.e. the production, reception, dissemination, etc.)[9] of the two *Malaysian Gods* could not be more dissimilar. The first version develops the powerful mix of impulsiveness, intimacy and essayistic density of Amir's *6horts* (2002)[10] by following the thoughts, reminiscences, and steps – quite literally in this case, given the bold sixty-minute-plus hand-held "long, long take" which practically makes up the entire film – of a quasi-fictional, off-screen male narrator as he walks along the same path that the 20 September 1998 demonstration took. On the other hand, the second, more "polished" *Malaysian Gods* strongly echoes the hybrid structures of *The Big Durian* (2003) and *Lelaki Komunis Terakhir / The Last Communist*

(2006)[11] as it delves into areas of Kuala Lumpur where later Reformasi demonstrations took place in order to present a number of interviews with the present day's Tamil-speaking Malaysians who frequent, work, or reside in such areas. The first film existed within that "grey area" of non-mainstream production and exhibition which, from the very beginning of his filmmaking career, Amir sought to uncover and variously take advantage of[12], and was shown in what could be described as three semi-private screenings before being "lost" soon after; whereas the second version, despite being partly facilitated by that same "grey area" was shown rather extensively both at home and abroad and is widely available through legal (as well as not-so-legal) channels.

During the course of an extended interview, Amir had this to say on his unusual choice regarding the first film: "I thought about [developing two different films] since the very beginning, although I preferred not to state it openly. [. . .] Since [the first version of *Malaysian Gods*] retraces the same path of the September 20 demonstration, I wanted it to be like a demonstration, something temporally limited, so I screened it for one day only, and then deleted the audio and video files. I liked this quite romantic idea; normally you don't think of films in that way."[13] His careful elucidation suggests how the destruction of this *Malaysian Gods* was far from a belated, capricious *coup de théâtre*, but rather, a necessary – almost urgent – undertaking.

The destruction of the first *Malaysian Gods* drastically changed the meaning and significance of its three screenings, transforming them into a self-organised creative protest, a presence-event of, in, and about a certain time and place (namely post-Reformasi and post-March 8 Kuala Lumpur and, "synecdochically," Malaysia).

As a result, the most engaged among the attendees – or shall we say spectators-demonstrators? – would now have to hold tight to their very own memories and recollections of that afternoon: memories, in my case, of those I have met in the cinema's foyer, of those I sat next to and, more broadly, of that eventful September 2008 in Kuala Lumpur; memories of the noises, people, landmarks, and "ghosts" that the film's narrator (re-)encountered along the way; and, lastly, memories of a walk (and a long take) which starts from the roundabout near the Old Kuala Lumpur Railway Station and the National Mosque but, crucially, does not reach (and hence, does not show) its original destination – namely, the Mount Olympus of "(demi-)gods" that is the UMNO complex, with the Putra World Trade Centre flanked by the UMNO headquarters – but rather, ends at the junction right before the complex, between Jalan Chow Kit and Jalan Raja Laut… a remarkable, powerful finale, perhaps even more relevant after the very complicated electoral result of the country's 13th General Election, for it asks and reiterates the crucial question: can Malaysia be(come) anything else?

Production still from *Malaysian Gods* (2008).

1 Conversation with author. Surabaya, 26 January 2013.
2 See the Editor's Note to the *Quarterly's* previous issue (April-June 2013) in which Ben Slater broadened the definition of "lost" to include "un-made projects, censored or banned works, films made but never seen, films drastically re-edited or altered." (Singapore: National Museum of Singapore, 2013), 5. See also Nick Deocampo (ed.), *Lost Films of Asia* (Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, 2006). It should be noted that this *Malaysian Gods* had been "restricted" by the Film Censorship Board of Malaysia (i.e. barred from official cinema and/or television release) – a peculiar, nebulous decision even for the notoriously censorious local censors as it was neither a "pass" nor a "ban"; such ruling, however, would not have impeded Amir from keeping the film and showing it abroad (or even at home through "informal" channels), as he did with his two banned works *Lelaki Komunis Terakhir / The Last Communist* (2006) and *Apa Khabar Orang Kampung / Village People Radio Show* (2007).
3 Amir announced this decision on his personal blog the day after the three screenings. See Amir Muhammad, "After the premiere" Writing by Amir (blog), September 21, 2008, http://amirmu.blogspot.co.uk/2008/09/after-premiere.html (accessed May 20, 2013). Some might speculate that the film is (and has been) "permanently withheld" rather than actually deleted but Amir has always insisted that he no longer possesses the master files.
4 Christopher M. Kelty, *Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2008).
5 Davide Cazzaro, "The Page and the (Video) Camera: Conversation with Amir Muhammad," in Tilman Baumgärtel (ed.) *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema: Essays, Documents, Interviews* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press, 2012), 227–244.
6 The event took place on December 20 at the Annexe Gallery in central Kuala Lumpur during the "Art for Grabs - Xmas Special 2008."
7 The actual shooting of this *Malaysian Gods* (i.e. the "long, long take" at the centre of the film) took place in mid-2007 but Amir came back to this work (and wrote the dense text and narration) one year later.
8 Socially and politically, the period between late 2007 and late 2008 was the most heated since the Reformasi demonstrations. The Bersih and HINDRAF rallies, as well as the March 2008 elections arguably represented the key events of those months. See, among others, Julian C. H. Lee, *Islamization and Activism in Malaysia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010).

9 Victor Burgin, *The Remembered Film* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004).
10 Lost, the opening work of *6horts* is available on the streaming platform Vimeo. http://vimeo.com/50466323 (accessed May 20, 2013).
11 Both *The Big Durian* and *Lelaki Komunis Terakhir / The Last Communist* are available in full on the streaming platform YouTube. See, respectively, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uT-kSfYuvEw; and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTM0BwgDXn8 (accessed May 20, 2013).
12 I am thinking about the so-called "multimedia plays" that Amir organised in order to bypass permits and regulations and screen his debut feature film, *Lips to Lips* (2000).
13 Quoted in Cazzaro, "The Page and the (Video) Camera," 242.

Davide Cazzaro is an Italian scholar and film critic whose work focuses on certain aspects of East and Southeast Asian Cinemas, cultural and media geography, digital moving images and film festivals. His research on Kuala Lumpur's alternative screen culture is in progress and will be published in 2014.

Sitora Harimau Jadian / Sitora the Were-Tiger, 1964

Amir Muhammad

There is a case for saying that *Sitora Harimau Jadian / Sitora the Were-Tiger* (1964) is the "least lost" of all the lost films of the world.

The fact that the film is lost is something no one really questions. Released in the commercial cinema circuit of Malaysia in the November of 1964, *Sitora Harimau Jadian* was not as big a hit as most of the writer-director P. Ramlee's previous films which he made in Singapore. In fact, this was the first film that P. Ramlee made after moving from Singapore to the less developed city of Kuala Lumpur, and he would go on to make another 17 before his death in 1973. It was shown at least once on Malaysian TV in the 1970s. But after that, no one has seen it. Efforts to unearth it have been in vain, although there's still hope that it might turn up somewhere (such a shame we don't have attics).

Sitora Harimau Jadian was the 17th film out of P. Ramlee's 34 as director. As in almost all his other films, he was the lead actor. It was the first film that he made under a

new studio called Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur, after leaving the relatively efficient Shaw Brothers studio system in Singapore. The equipment in Merdeka was substandard and the crew untrained. Production values for this film were reportedly shoddy, with lame make-up and effects. In fact, when a print of the just-completed film was screened for the bosses of Shaw Brothers in Singapore, they walked out.

Why then do I claim that this might be the "least lost" of lost films?

The reason is this: A year after the film was released, P. Ramlee was persuaded to come up with a novelisation of it. It was published by Angkatan Baru and P. Ramlee was given copyright as author (with an "as retold by" credit to Zakaria Mohd Yassin). This book has been out of print for decades and the publisher folded in the 1970s. When I bought the book from an antiquarian seller in 2012, I read it in a few hours and it virtually confirmed what I had half-hoped: the 124-page novel was a slightly fleshed-out screenplay.

We are given what seems to be every line of dialogue in the film, and there are even prose cues for what should be fade-ins and fade-outs. Lyrics to both the love songs are printed in full, and we are also told what the actors do while warbling (the recorded songs can be heard sans movie visuals on YouTube). There are even stills from the movie, although the publisher could not resist including a line in the preface about how "P. Ramlee had somewhat valiantly failed" in making the film.

So reading the book, looking at the few pictures and even listening to the songs can give us an almost-complete experience of the movie. I re-published the novel in 2012,

after contacting P. Ramlee's family for permission and modernising the spelling.

Sitora Harimau Jadian is "about" the clash between scientific rationalism, personified by the protagonist Dr Effendi (played by P. Ramlee), and the more atavistic forces of mysticism, as exemplified by reported sightings of a "were-tiger" in the village the doctor is stationed at. Dr Effendi initially dismisses such reports as nonsense, but gets into trouble when he is attacked by the creature and finds himself transforming (getting hairier, for one thing…).

Many films of the Malay studio era were inspired by those of other countries (the 1939 film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights,* for example, left an indelible impact on Malay romantic melodramas for decades). *Sitora Harimau Jadian* was inspired by *The Wolf Man* (1941) starring Lon Chaney Jr. and Bela Lugosi, with the titular predatory mammal changed into something more indigenous.

Sitora Harimau Jadian is an adaptation of this Western tale that is wholly relevant to Malay society then and now. For centuries, Malays have had a rather syncretic belief system that combines Hindu-animist traditions with Islam. It was only in the late 20th century that the search for an "untainted" Malay-Muslim identity became a big political project.

In fact, when this *Sitora Harimau Jadian* was not endlessly shown on our TV screens in the 1980s and 1990s as P. Ramlee's other films are, most people simply assumed it had been "banned" due to regulations at that time that forbade un-Islamic *tahyul* (superstitious) content on our screens. The title *Sitora Harimau Jadian* alone evokes the film's "mystical" theme. Some conspiracy theorists thought the film had therefore been destroyed due to censorship,

although the truth is likely more banal (and sad): the film has been lost due to neglect, and the studio that made it ceased operations by the late 1970s.

The movie/book, by the time it ends, seeks to reconcile atavistic traditions with modernity. Dr Effendi – and by implication the viewer – is made to realise that although science is necessary and good, there are certain things that cannot be explained rationally (The identity of the "were-tiger" is unmasked as a person, not a monster, who has an interest in chasing the doctor away; but the existence of such supernatural creatures is something we are made to acknowledge).

When I republished the novel and released it in April 2012, many who reviewed it online remarked that reading it was just like watching any other P. Ramlee movie. They could "see" the action and "hear" the dialogue thanks to (let's face it) hack novelisation. So I am glad that this hitherto missing part of the director's filmography has been almost – but not quite – filled. A blogger who reviewed the film cheekily wrote, after looking at the surviving stills with "creature make-up," that he was somewhat glad the film did not survive.

As for the parts which are still "lost" – the precise looks on the actors' faces; the way in which the camera moves; the actual props – perhaps it is better to just dream of them.

Amir Muhammad is a Malaysian writer, publisher and occasional movie-maker.

Sitora Harimau Jadian / Sitora the Were-Tiger (1964) by P. Ramlee

Interview

Wahid Satay

Wahid Satay (far right) with actresses Rahmah Ali and Fatimah Ahmad during a promotional road trip to Malaysia during the late 1950s.
Images courtesy of Wahid Satay

Abdul Wahid bin Haji Ahmad, better known as Wahid Satay, was a legendary comic star in the 1950s and 60s, performing (often as a bumbling, clumsy servant) in numerous Malay films produced by Cathay-Keris studios in Singapore. Born in Indonesia, he came to Singapore as a youth, and had to work to survive. He was a sailor for several years and got a taste of performing in both *bangsawan* theatre and on the radio before drifting into film almost by accident. He became an overnight success (and earned his new name) after appearing as the *satay* (grilled skewered meat) seller in the first *Pontianak* (1957), a blockbuster horror-comedy hit based on the female vampire of Malay folklore. It spawned several sequels, but is a film that remains lost to

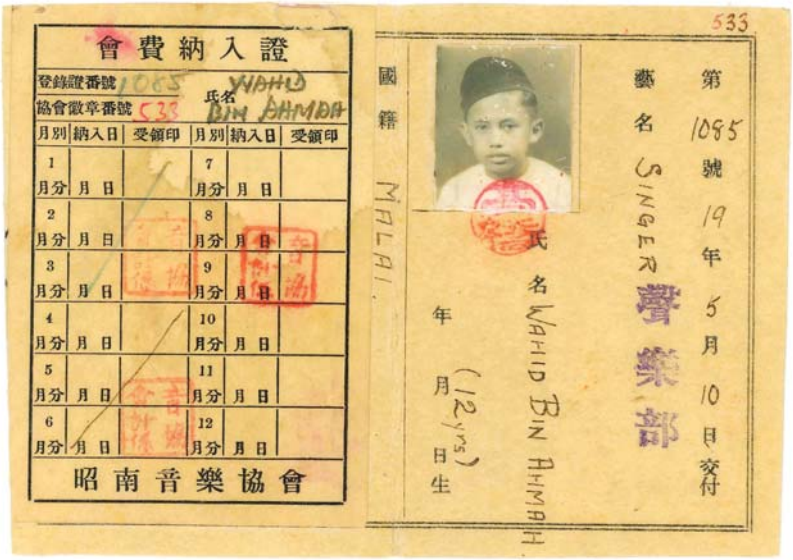
this day. As film-maker Abdul Nizam points out, Pak Wahid belongs to a vanished generation of "men of the sea, tradition and community. Men who used to build things with their bare hands, then got into the world of show-business." The National Museum Cinémathèque programmes manager, Zhang Wenjie, along with Nizam, conducted the following interview and Zhang describes the experience of spending a day with this icon of Malay cinema.

"Pak Wahid took a while to warm up to us, but eventually it was a really heartfelt interview, and he really opened up when he could tell that we cared about the old Malay films. It was not a straightforward interview; he would often meander in his speech and sometimes would not answer questions directly. Occasionally, he would break into song, and he has a startlingly beautiful and soulful voice. He sang Japanese songs that he learned during the Occupation, snatches of old Hainanese opera tunes and old Malay folk songs. His public persona has always been that of a clown. But he comes across as an artist who's very thoughtful about his craft; aware and knowledgeable about many different aspects of filmmaking. After the interview at the National Museum, we brought him to where he lives, in Eunos, hung out at a coffee shop nearby and talked until the evening. Older folks who passed by would stop and say hello, but I don't think any of the younger people today knows who he is."

On Arriving in Singapore by Boat

I was working as a sailor, and I got "caught" on Singapore because my skipper had no permit (to leave). I would often drink kopi at Hainan Kongsi at the Singapore River, which was our end port to disembark the goods. At Boat Quay, I used to see the Chinese carrying rice from the boats. In the morning, the Hainanese would ask me to help them grind the coffee. I remember they had Hainanese songs on Redifussion (a popular cable radio service in the 1950s). I was 16 to 18 years old.

At that time, I didn't normally watch films, but we had a Chinese man on a three-wheeled bicycle with a box on it, and in the box you could watch cowboy film clips. I liked to watch *bangsawan* at the Happy World


會費納入證

登錄證番號 1085 氏名 WAHID BIN AHMAD

協會徽章番號 533

月別	納入日	受領印	月別	納入日	受領印
1 月分	月 日		7 月分	月 日	
2 月分	月 日		8 月分	月 日	
3 月分	月 日		9 月分	月 日	
4 月分	月 日		10 月分	月 日	
5 月分	月 日		11 月分	月 日	
6 月分	月 日		12 月分	月 日	

昭南音樂協會

533

國籍 MALAI.

年 月 日生 (12 yrs)

氏名 WAHID BIN AHMAD

藝名 SINGER

第 1085 號

19 年 5 月 10 日交付

聲樂部

A permit with a photograph of a young Wahid Satay listing his profession as a singer during the Japanese occupation of Singapore.

Wahad Satay during his sailing days in the early 1950s.

(amusement park). At that time, people who watched *bangsawan* would write their names on stickers and paste them on the seats reserved for each kind of show, be it Chinese *wayang*, *bangsawan*, etc.

Starting off in Singapore's Film Industry

I did not think I could get into film. When I came back from sailing overseas, I started to watch films made by Shaw (The Shaw Brothers Studio). Before I worked at Cathay (Cathay-Keris Films), I loved P. Ramlee films and listened to his songs like "Cinta."

In those days, I could draw. One day, I met a boy who did board drawings in Tampines for Cathay (where their studio was located). The boy drew backgrounds for film sets and he brought me to the studio. At that time, Datuk Krishnan (L. Krishnan, one of Cathay's main in-house directors) was around and he asked me to try to draw. So I went to see Babjan (M. Babjan, then chief of Cathay's art department). I remember him sketching with a brush. As I watched him, I saw how his rough sketches transformed into a house, trees, etc. Babjan asked me if I could draw: "Can or not?" I told him that I didn't know, but that I could learn. So I learnt from him slowly. In three weeks, I could draw trees for (film) backgrounds.

At that time, Cathay was calling for extras, so I went along. *Pertaruhan* (1954) was the first film I acted in as an extra. In my role, I had to follow a crooked boss in going against the hero. I tried to learn how to punch from the older chaps. They would say, "It's not a real punch, just action and camera tricks," so I'd brag and say, "This is easy, lah." But during the actual shooting, the hero whacked me really hard, and so I retaliated. I screamed, "*Sakit, sakit*! (Pain, pain!)" Datuk Krishnan said "Cut!"

As an extra, I could earn $30 a day. At that time, I was not yet a "permanent" actor for Cathay. But two to three months later, Datuk Krishnan asked me to sign a contract. I thought that since he was asking me to sign, then "OK, lah."

By that time, I was around 18 or 19 years old. Cathay was in Tampines

but then moved to Ocean Park (on the East Coast). *Buloh Perindu* (1953), *Pertaruhan* (1954), and *Selamat Hari Raya* (1955) were all made in Tampines. One day, I came back from a shooting of *Selamat Hari Raya* in Tampines and Krishnan said to me, "We are moving in a few days." As I was still an assistant art director for Cathay, they asked me to do up the "Cathay" sign at the top of the new studio roof. For that, I had to climb high up onto the top of the building!

I still did a bit of sailing work when I started out in films. I only worked when I had roles to do. Krishnan gave me the parts. Early on, I played a lot of servants and I'd get around $600 per role. As Shaw studio provided barracks for their actors to live in, the actors there were paid less compared to what Cathay was paying theirs.

I became famous from the success of *Pontianak* (1957). Loke Wan Tho (the founder and boss of Cathay Organisation) said, "We must fight (Hollywood's) *Samson and Delilah!*" *Samson and Delilah* was playing at the Odeon and *Pontianak* was showing at Cathay. *Pontianak* was sold out throughout and *Samson and Delilah* ended its run first.

Becoming a Star and Memories of Loke Wan Tho

The success of a Malay film like this was unprecedented. The newspaper reporters called me "The Jerry Lewis of Malaya." Chinese audiences who saw me on the streets would call me "Satay, Satay!" (Wahid's character in the film sold satay). Loke Wan Tho said to me, "We want to change your name to Wahid Satay, can?" I joked and asked him, "My father's name is Satay?" Finally, I agreed to change my name.

I met Loke Wan Tho many times at the studio. When he realised that my films were more successful than Mat Sentul's (Cathay's other comic star of the era), he began to like me, and started to pay attention to and observe my work. Loke knew I could do many things in the studio, like dubbing and editing. Whenever he visited the studio, he would always ask, "Where's my son?" If I wasn't there, the manager would say, "Hey, just now your father came."

Wahid Satay (second from left) on set with director B.N. Rao (first from left) and Loke Wan Tho (far right).

Once, I was sick, and had hurt my back. I was staying in the *kampung* in Jalan Ubi then and it was the flooding season. On one of the rainy days, I saw a white car approaching my house. Then I saw Loke Wan Tho himself wading in knee-high water to visit me. He was a very nice man. My wife would always bake a cake for him every Hari Raya.

When Loke was killed (in a tragic plane crash in 1964 on his way to attend the 11th Asian Film Festival), I cried. I was making a film then, so I could not go to the festival. If he was still around, the studio would not have closed down.

Shooting the First *Pontianak*

During the filming, Loke would always say, "What is the real story of the *pontianak*? What is *hantu* (ghost)?" He wanted to know everything as a producer. So they told him the history and facts of *pontianak*.

When we shot at the graveyard, I was to carry the satay in the scene. Normally we'd have the "tombstones" in the studio, but not this time.

They brought me to a real gravesite, but I didn't know it was real because the location was filled with lights. For the scene, I had to walk, sing and then fall. As I was acting out the scene, I looked closely at my surroundings and realised there were real tombstones! I was shocked!

After this, they told me that I had to run far away for the next scene, and be alone. I was scared and told them that I didn't want to. Then, I saw a mysterious white cloth flying around on location. It was filmed by the cameraman and everyone on set had seen it flying around. We waited eagerly for the film canisters to be processed and to watch the rushes, but to our surprise, there were only panning shots of tree branches, but no white cloth!

All the exteriors were shot at Siglap, Jalan Azizah, Padang Terbakar and Tanah Merah. It was during *pontianak* season (when the film was released) and there was a lot of fear in the country. During the Cathay screenings, some pregnant women were so frightened by the film that they gave birth in the cinema. They say that Loke offered free milk to these women. Some gave birth in taxis after seeing the film.

The Great Director: L. Krishnan

Datuk Krishnan didn't like the Indian style that was prevalent in Malay movies at the time. He didn't like Indian directors, nor their presentation and narration. "Want to sing, must find tree!" He believed that Malay stories at Malay locations should not be made in that style.

I spoke to him in a straightforward manner. I would tell him, "Mr Krishnan, about your dialogue – I'm not confident that it will make people laugh." He would always say, "Go ahead. What idea have you got?" I would discuss the story with him and we were very open with each other. By that time, I already had many life experiences, and he said these would help if I were to become a director, "You know how to feel about this."

Datuk Krishnan is *tegas* (firm). If he visualises something, we must try, as hard as possible, to get what he desires. What he didn't know, cannot do, or could not think of, he would ask. He was also eager to learn.

Wahid Satay with director L. Krishnan (second from right) on set.

The Master Editor: Hussein Haniff

Hussein Haniff don't play play! I learned a lot of film editing knowledge from Hussein and observed how he would "intercut" as he edited. Hussein explained to me that this helps audiences to understand the story better. If it was a very long film, he could make it short. He would always cut out a lot of footage. I asked why. He would illustrate by saying, "If I want to go to the kitchen and show all the action it takes to go to the kitchen, it will seem like the kitchen is very far. But after editing, it only takes a second and I am there. I don't show the full action because it takes too long and wastes film."

Hussein was a specialist. I used the cutter when I edited, but he could cut with his bare fingers, and even that way, made clean cuts, too! I tried and tried to do that, but I bled. Hussein said, "If you cannot, don't try. I've been doing this since I was a child." He was really something.

Wahid Satay (far right) with director Hussein Haniff (third from right) during the 1960s.

Making Films at Cathay-Keris

The staff at Cathay would give actors the script one month before filming starts. The actors would read it, so that they would already know the dialogue by heart by the time shooting commences. As actors, we should also know whether to speak fast or slow. We shot on film so we would throw away those parts that were not good. Good takes were marked to be used by the director and the cameraman for editing but we had to wait until the processing was done to see the results. Each film took around three to four months to be made. After watching the edited film, the director would watch again and might ask to cut some more footage, to make the film shorter or something, so there had to be editing again!

I would take care of the dubbing process. After learning from the old dubbing guys and picking up some tricks of my own, I learned to first cut the dialogue into small sections so that it would not run out of sync for the whole film if there were major edits to be made. Editing a long roll of dialogue is painful; you would have to return to the start every time it goes out of sync. So we would dub the dialogue line by line, before cutting it together at the end to make a whole film. That was my idea.

Wahid Satay (first from left) with Cathay music composer Zubir Said (second from left) during the 1960s.

Wahid Satay (seated first from right) enjoying a stick of satay from his fans.

Aside from dubbing, I also tried my hand at foley, recreating everyday sounds such as that of a person walking into *lalang*, or running, and the sounds of thunder, lightning and rain. All we had to do was visualise and try our best to achieve the sounds. Sometimes, I would use my voice to recreate bird sounds. I'd do punching sounds (Wahid demonstrates by punching his chest).

On His Comic Persona and Acting

I once asked Datuk Krishnan, "I am a comedian. How do you see me? As a comic or not?" To this he replied, "Whatever you do, it's no problem. If an actor wants to take a serious role, that person must take care and be careful." While in my heart, my *diri* (self) has always been comedy, my comic-looking face had already slipped off into seriousness. In *Badang*, there were serious scenes which I played without a problem, but in one scene where I punched trees, the audience look at me like it was a comedy, then they laughed.

P. Ramlee was not a comedian, but when he played comedy (as in the *Bujang Lapok* series), people were not laughing at him, but at Sudin (S. Shamsuddin) and Aziz (Aziz Sattar) (his comic sidekicks in the film). P. Ramlee is smart and good at accommodating people and adapting to different situations. If an actor wants to play a hero, he must know himself. If a hero wants to do comedy, it will be difficult for him. People (the audience) already determine and decide who is a hero, who is funny, and who plays the old man. Everyone has his own character and *watak* (persona).

It is a heavy responsibility when you play a role. It becomes a burden. We have to work when we get the script, make it sound right and situate ourselves within the words and the story. Then, we must talk to the director to discuss what is demanded of our role in the script. The acting must always be in harmony with what is written. Each actor works on a personal level with the director alone and no one else.

Looking Back

It's hard to tell my whole story. When I recall the old studio, I feel like it is still alive. Sometimes, I feel like I'm still in the films. That's why I don't like to watch the VCDs of films that I have been in. When I watch them, I know my feelings for those bygone days are still strong! When I see my films, I feel like I see "him" (Loke Wan Tho). He is the one who managed us from the beginning. I still have the seed; the fire is not gone yet, it's not lost. If the veteran actors from my time are still around, let them work some more. They still can do it; they still have the *bergaya* (style).

The new Cathay officer Suhaimi (Rafdi) called me for the opening of the new Cathay building, and the first thing he said was "I can't believe you are still alive..."

Wahid Satay and Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Communications and Information, at the opening night of *MAJULAH! The Film Music of Zubir Said*., October 2012.

Superpowers and Miracles: How to Stay Positive despite the "404" Sign

Lisabona Rahman

A "404" error message was popping up on my screen as I clicked on a link to Indonesian film critic Totot Indrarto's Pinterest board. Increasingly, memory on the Internet seems to have become a privilege. Luckily, as I switched to Camino – a somewhat outdated browser – I was easily led to the cache for the page. Immediately, something caught my eye.

There were two images at the bottom of the page and each had a very different impact on me. The picture on the right was quite familiar. A young soldier in his khakis, reclining on a window sill with a cigarette. I could imagine this figure blowing smoke or roaming anxiously in his room. These sequences are indelible, being part of the *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI / The Treason of G30S/PKI* (1982), Arifin C.

Sri Asih di Singapura (Sri Asih in Singapore) in Majalah Komik No. 21, no date. (Source: http://www.purwokertoantik.com)

Noer's infamous film fictionalisation of the 1965 putsch in Jakarta. The film was rerun every year by the national television as a warning against communism in Indonesia up until 1998.

The image on the left, on the contrary, brought up nothing but curiosity. An illustration of a woman, apparently flying over a tropical landscape. The picture's caption read (my translation), "Indonesia's first superhero film: *Sri Asih* (Turino Djunaidy and Tan Sing Hwat, 1954). Adapted from RA Kosasih's comic book with the same title. The film's copy and other materials have perished."

By training, I should cite the archivists' credo that a film is never lost – it's just not found yet. But then again, as Jacques Derrida said in a seminar on "Refiguring the Archive" in Johannesburg in 1998, an archivist's job is as

much about remembering as it is about forgetting. I share his view that an archivist's work is a kind of mourning; that it is as much a work of memory as a struggle to forget someone or something through a ritual.

I try to accept this loss at the moment, therefore what I'm writing now should be something in lieu of an obituary. I am glad that I am not doing this rite of mourning by myself. Comic book enthusiasts have blogged about the character and its author, Raden Ahmad Kosasih (1919–2012). It is through the traces they have left that I could discover *Sri Asih*.

Sri Asih is registered in JB Kristanto's *Indonesian Film Catalogue* (2008) as the first comic adaptation made in Indonesia. In the early 1950s in Indonesia, nationalism prompted experiments with film forms and content alongside similar efforts in visual arts, theatre, literature and music. Besides creating stories about the recent War of Independence, filmmakers found new production companies and labelled them *pribumi* (indigenous), drawing a racialised line with a past when the film companies were owned by European or Chinese producers. Along with this new trademark came a new challenge: inventing *pribumi* narratives.

Most texts about Indonesian Cinema of the time concentrate on the role of Usmar Ismail's film studio Perfini or Djamaluddin Malik's Persari, two of the pioneering *pribumi* producers in the post-revolution period. Few writers have noted the existence of Gabungan Artis Film (Film Artists' Collective/GAF) Sang Saka, a company founded by actors Turino Djunaidy and Ismail Saleh, together with the young director Basuki Effendi in 1953. GAF Sang Saka was an artists' collective funded exclusively by the sales of film stock to artists working

on *pribumi* films. The company was famous for its internationally acclaimed production *Pulang / Going Home* (1952), a drama directed by Basuki Effendi, about an accused traitor going back to his village after the war. So far, this film is the only one from GAF's minuscule filmography that has survived.

What is interesting about GAF and its founders is the type of stories they explored. While Usmar Ismail and his group were preoccupied with adapting Western and Japanese literature or films into their works, GAF founders were more interested in local stories and folk tales. In 1954, GAF initiated a new experiment. Actor-cum-producer Turino Djunaidy decided to produce the comic book adaptation *Sri Asih*.

At least two influencing factors led GAF to take this daring step. Firstly, a Filipino film called *Darna* (1951), directed by Fernando Poe and based on writer Mars Ravelo's comic character, charmed the Indonesian audience. Its popularity provoked Indonesian filmmakers to match their Southeast Asian counterpart's commercial success. Secondly, the forms of popular nationalist art were being constantly reconfigured by combining traditional vocabularies and modern media. As the first comic book published in Indonesia with an original story, *Sri Asih* was an instant hit. RA Kosasih's comic book was a perfect example of the new hybrid nationalist art form.

The heroine in *Sri Asih* has an alter ego called Nani, an awkward member of staff in a private investigator's office. In the comic book, Nani can turn herself into Sri Asih by saying the magic words "Dewi Asih." Sri Asih possesses tremendous power; she can fly and multiply. She is also bullet-proof and capable of turning herself into a giant. In the comic series, Sri Asih fights different kinds of villains,

including pirates, and she transcends national boundaries to fight in Singapore or in Macau. Her magical abilities are juxtaposed with the threats of modern instruments such as trains or aeroplanes, and the men behind these machines. The superheroine wears *kemben* (strapless top), *kain* and *selendang* (waist and shoulder cloth) tied around her body. This costume combination is commonly used by actresses in *wayang orang* performances which feature adapted stories from the *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana* epic. The comic books show the traditionally dressed heroine with uber-human abilities like the goddesses or warriors in *wayang* stories.

Women's costume served as an important barometer for ideas of nationalism of the time. The *kain* has been associated with the traditional realm, especially in the epicenter of Java's nationalist movement since the turn of the 20th century. The *kain*, as well as the *kebaya* (fitted blouse), became the signifying elements for nationalism and carried a message of political struggle against colonialism. In *Sri Asih*, RA Kosasih echoes this political statement through his heroine's costume. He juxtaposes the western one-piece dress with *kemben* and *kain* in the human Nani's transformation into the super-heroine Sri Asih.

Unlike other superhero stories in the 20th century, which have quasi-scientific explanations about superpowers, Kosasih's character seems to entirely depend on *keajaiban* (miraculous wonders). Just like *wayang* heroes, Sri Asih was blessed with mysterious heavenly powers. When asked to explain Sri Asih's abilities, Kosasih simply replied, "I haven't found the reasons yet." He, however, had a clear idea about what he wanted his heroine to do and was quoted saying that he wanted to show that his traditional

(Top), *Sri Asih & Gerombolan Bersendjata* (Sri Asih & the Armed Gang) in Majalah Komik No. 16–15, August 1954. (Below), *Sri Asih di Surabaja* (Sri Asih in Surabaya) in Majalah Komik No. 18–15, September 1954. (Source: http://www.purwokertoantik.com)

heroine can defeat modern enemies. Scholar Gary Nathan Gartenberg noted, in a 2011 article for *Inside Indonesia* that it was President Soekarno, who urged Kosasih to create local stories in line with the new nation's search for a new identity.

It came as a surprise when I learned that his comic books came under fierce attacks from left-wing Indonesian artists and were accused of being mere copycats of American formulas. I was even more puzzled when I learned that Tan Sing Hwat, the co-director of the film *Sri Asih,* was one of the prominent leaders of these leftist artists. It is, however, unclear if Tan was part of the group criticising Kosasih. Responding to the criticism, Kosasih later changed the course of his works to explore popular local tales. During the 1960s, he created what will later be remembered as the best of his oeuvre – the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* series.

Sri Asih, both as comic book and film, was clearly a pioneering work. Alas, the Indonesian political situation in the 1950s and 1960s was not conducive for the development of comic books or their adaptations into film. Comics-based films in Indonesia would not attract much attention from film producers until the 1970s.

It is exciting to imagine how Turino Djunaidy and Tan Sing Hwat turned Kosasih's superheroine into a film in 1954. *Sri Asih* might mirror the spirit of its time, when the search of new hybrid forms of local art was taking its toll. For me, having the chance to see *Sri Asih* would mean as much as seeing an Usmar Ismail film of the time. Being able to appreciate auteurs such as Usmar Ismail or Djajakusuma is one thing, but to understand the extent of the experiments undertaken to create a nationalist film language – a film like *Sri Asih* – would reveal a different realm from that era.

A scanned page shows Nani, a woman dressed in Western-style sleeveless one-piece dress turning into super woman Sri Asih dressed in wayang princess costume from *Putri Bintang & Garuda Putih Menggulung Komplotan Kelelawar Jilid 4* (Putri Bintang & Garuda Putih Defeating The Bat Gang Vol. 4), ca. 1960s. (Source: http://paksrimo.blogspot.com)

Djunaidy and Tan would have had to translate the fantastic elements of Kosasih's story into a modernised tale, which was quite a contrast to Usmar Ismail's way of working, based on the traditions of European realism in dramaturgy and visualisation.

I have not seen *Sri Asih*, nor have I heard from anyone who has. But just like a rite of mourning for a heroine, let alone for a superheroine, the loss is passed on to us, who have never seen her. But as the archivists' credo goes again, maybe it's true, that a film is never lost. I will keep on following the traces and search for more clues. And hopefully, some day, the annoying "404" sign will miraculously stop turning up in the search for *Sri Asih*, the film.

Lisabona Rahman is the editor of online Indonesian film catalog, *Film Indonesia* (http://filmindonesia.or.id). In 2007, she founded Sejarah adalah Sekarang (History is Now), an annual Indonesian film classics festival organised by Kineforum, Jakarta Arts Council. She is currently studying moving image preservation and restoration in Amsterdam and Bologna.

Gema Dari Menara / Echoes from the Minaret: A Conversation with Mervin Espina about the Lost Cinema of Brunei

Ben Slater: How did you get interested in the cinema of Brunei?
Mervin Espina: My parents were like a lot of Filipinos who left the country in the 70s and 80s for better job opportunities abroad. That's why I grew up in Brunei. Around 2001, I read *The Films of ASEAN* (2000), edited by Jose Lacaba. It had a chapter on Brunei Cinema, authored by Haji Yacob Sunny of the Radio Television Brunei (RTB). So the initial seed of curiosity was planted. But it wasn't until late 2006, when I was looking through my old files, that a photocopy of this chapter surfaced.

This was just before a trip back to Brunei. I was particularly intrigued by the mention of Brunei's first feature film. So I took it upon myself to scope things out during my trip. I was hoping that there would be more information about the film once I got to Brunei. Unfortunately, there wasn't. Also, my initial snooping already revealed some factual errors in the original essay. I liked mysteries, especially those concerning fairly recent Southeast Asian history. 1960s Brunei had all the elements of a good mystery – political upheaval, rock 'n' roll, and an obscure film. This was how my "odd-ventures" in Brunei film research began.

In terms of popular culture, or at least those reported in the newspapers at that time, Brunei was pretty exciting in the late 1960s. It was a time of peace and the emerging middle class Bruneians were catching up for time lost in the curfew years of the Brunei Revolt from 1962 to 1963.

There were also several movie theatres in Brunei showing a variety of films. And, as in most of the former British Malaya territories, P. Ramlee movies were quite popular. But by that time, Malay Cinema had seen better days.

It was around this time that Brunei's Religious Affairs

Gema Dari Menara (1968) by Mohasbi Ahmad.
All images courtesy of Mervin Espina.

Department had the idea of creating a feature film. One of the chief proponents of this project was the principal of the department, Pengiran Anak Kemaluddin. I was told that he, along with other Brunei civil servants at that time, had been to Kuala Lumpur to attend Filem Negara Malaysia courses on photography and filmmaking. They wanted to create a film for *Da'wah* (religious propagation), perhaps to address the growing secularisation and Westernisation among the Bruneian populace. They saw film as a potent medium to convey their concerns.

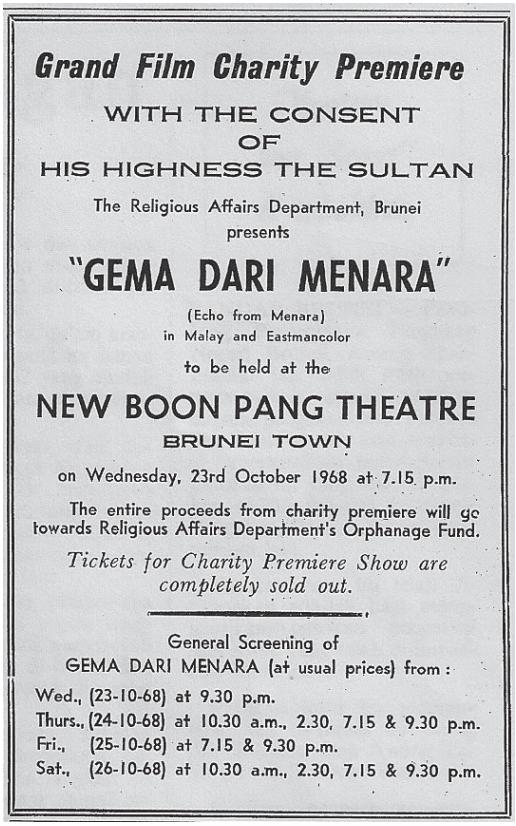
But since Brunei didn't have a national film department of its own, nor qualified personnel or facilities to create a film of any kind, the film for *Da'wah* was produced in cooperation with the Filem Negara Malaysia. Filem Negara had been making documentaries in Brunei since the 1950s, starting with *Abode of Peace* (1952). Filem Negara tasked Mohasbi Ahmad with the role of directing the said project, which was called *Gema Dari Menara / Echoes from the Minaret* (1968). In tow was Othman Hafsham as assistant producer. He would later be known for directing *Adik Manja / Affectionate Child* (1980) and *Mekanik / The Mechanic* (1983).

Reflecting the language policies of the time, the script for *Gema Dari Menara* was written in standard Malay, as opposed to the Brunei Malay dialect (as used in Brunei's most recent feature film, *Ada Apa Dengan Rina / What Is It About Rina*, 2013). Production for the film started in early 1968 and it premiered that same year in October.

How was the film received at the time?

According to newspaper reports, tickets for the premiere were sold out. Proceeds from the ticket sales were all donated to the Religious Affairs Department's Orphanage Fund. I didn't find any local articles in Malay and English

newspapers reviewing the film. It had a regular run after its premiere at the Boon Pang Theatre in the capital. Later on, it was screened for free outside the capital in a series of outdoor screenings by the Information Department's mobile film unit. The people I've interviewed who saw the film in 1968 and 1969 watched it in different venues and said that the screenings were well-attended. All were excited to see their relatives and friends – and friends of friends – in the film, and Brunei's first attempt at feature film production.



Grand Film Charity Premiere

WITH THE CONSENT
OF
HIS HIGHNESS THE SULTAN

The Religious Affairs Department, Brunei
presents

"GEMA DARI MENARA"

(Echo from Menara)
in Malay and Eastmancolor

to be held at the

NEW BOON PANG THEATRE

BRUNEI TOWN

on Wednesday, 23rd October 1968 at 7.15 p.m.

The entire proceeds from charity premiere will go towards Religious Affairs Department's Orphanage Fund.

Tickets for Charity Premiere Show are completely sold out.

General Screening of
GEMA DARI MENARA (at usual prices) from :

Wed., (23-10-68) at 9.30 p.m.
Thurs., (24-10-68) at 10.30 a.m., 2.30, 7.15 & 9.30 p.m.
Fri., (25-10-68) at 7.15 & 9.30 p.m.
Sat., (26-10-68) at 10.30 a.m., 2.30, 7.15 & 9.30 p.m.

The premiere of *Gema Dari Menara* listed in the *Borneo Bulletin* (19 October 1968).

After the premiere of *Gema Dari Menara*, there was little to no filmmaking activity in Brunei until after the establishment of the RTB in 1975. Some people said the movie was a bit controversial as too many people disliked the *haraam*, or "impure" scenes in the movie, of people drinking, gambling, betting on cockfights, etc. Others (like myself) perhaps enjoyed them too much. It didn't help that the people who starred or had cameos in the movie went on to become respected, high-ranking officials. This fact was pointed out to me several times.

What's the film about?

Gema Dari Menara is a cautionary tale of a family in crisis, set against the backdrop of the roaring 60s, in a country that has yet to come to terms with the influx of Westernised ways of life. At its centre is a familial drama, and the main plot revolves around a dutiful son (Azman, played by Pengiran Abbas P.H. Besar) and his rebellious siblings (played by Malaysian actors, Harun Md. Dom as Nordin and Jamaliah Abu as Noriah). Religious Azman and his parents are concerned about the wily ways of his siblings. Bad luck ensues; the family is forced to give up their house in the city and move back to the *kampung*; Noriah and her lover are caught by the Shariah police (Islamic religious

Left, Pengiran Abbas P.H. Besar as Azman in *Gema Dari Menara.*
Right, Jamaliah Abu as Noriah and Harun Md. Dom as Nordin in *Gema Dari Menara.*

The *kampung* setting in *Gema Dari Menara*.

police) for fornication, and Nordin gets into a bad car accident after a long night of partying. Noriah and Nordin are repentant, and the story concludes on a happy note. Still, I found it funny that the "bad guys" were portrayed by Malaysians and not locals.

The film's visuals celebrate the late 1960s Brunei's oil-bought wealth and flaunt the newly-minted urban structures and monuments of the time. However, the traditional *kampung* remains the place where the characters retreat upon finding themselves in dire straits, and it is here, in this humbled setting, where they redeem themselves through religion and strengthened familial ties.

There are also a lot of touristy shots. One moment, the characters are driving in the capital; the next moment, they are in the oil fields. The acting is mostly stiff. There are numerous scenes where you can see the actors obviously reading their scripts which were barely kept hidden from view behind props and whatever was handy. You can see this many times within each frame. The film is peppered with several campy moments, especially in the little skits warning of social evils, as it shows people buying and

Scenes of alcohol consumption and religious police raids in *Gema Dari Menara.*

consuming alcohol publicly, gambling and betting on cockfights. These are rarely seen in Brunei now. Public consumption of alcohol is banned.

Then there's the fabulous cameo performances by Malaysian performers Abdullah Chik and Kamariah Noor, backed by local band Dendang Teruna in a house party scene in the lead characters' house, complete with short-skirted a go-go dancing and a midget. Malaysian dancer Mahani Mydin also made a cameo as Kamariah Noor sang. These are some of my favourite parts in the film.

The film was a revelation to me because I was not aware of any visual record of such a culture in pre-independence Brunei. Until I saw the film, my impressions of Bruneian culture came mostly from hearsay and oral history. Even taking into consideration the social limitations and proper etiquette the film was advocating, it still portrayed a more liberal Brunei. It showed a different way of life. To put it bluntly, *Gema Dari Menara* is not a very good film at all, but is nonetheless a time capsule of Brunei's lost pop history.

How did you first get to see the film, and how did you proceed with your research?
I first saw *Gema Dari Menara* at the Arkib Negara (Brunei's National Archives) in early 2007. Arkib Negara had a 16 mm copy of the film in deplorable conditions. As the Arkib Negara is not a formal film archive, there was no evidence of proper storage for the film. Their copy was still watchable, but suffered greatly from "vinegar syndrome." The film was mostly red, had evident signs of mould and several scratches on it.

Fortunately, at some point in the 90s, the Radio Television Brunei (RTB) made a U-Matic transfer of the film. RTB's U-Matic copy showed that the original film source they were transferring from already had signs of decay, but was still better than the Arkib Negara copy.

In mid-2008, I finally went to Filem Negara Malaysia's archive in Kuala Lumpur, in the hopes that they had a better copy of the film. Their 35 mm print of the film was in very good condition. The colours were just right and there were not many scratches or signs of mould. They might also have the negatives. So I recommended to both the Arkib

Abdullah Chik and Kamariah Noor performing in *Gema Dari Menara.*

Negara and RTB that the Filem Negara's copy was the best, and that if ever they decide to make a digital copy, that this was the best copy to make it from.

Gema Dari Menara has very little private and public documentation. I didn't even find a copy of the script. I only really had the actual film to begin with, and so chased down some of the people who were in it or had something to do with it. Some were dead; some I was not able to contact successfully.

My research eventually branched out, with *Gema Dari Menara* as an entry point. I started a chronological catalogue of films made in Brunei before 1975, as well as a catalogue of recorded releases by Bruneian singers and bands in the *Pop Yeh Yeh / Kugiran* (Band) era. I hoped to address and bring to attention some gaps in the

Viewing the 35mm print of *Gema Dari Menara* at Filem Negara Malaysia.

record which the Arkib Negara and RTB were lacking or were just beginning to address.

The film and the surrounding research it inspired gave me another point of view of contemporary Brunei – the directions the state has undertaken, the issues it faced and addressed, and the state's prospects for the future – and their larger ramifications for nationalism, identity, sociology, philosophy and political history.

I'd like to quote Othman Hafsham on this: "*Gema Dari Menara* – Echoes/reverberations from the minaret. Great title, but sadly, the film did not reverberate."

Have any interesting films been produced since then?

Badik (1979) came to my attention because I was looking for the first Brunei-born film director and the first full-blown Bruneian film production. I met the director (who was also the main actor) of the film through Zefri Arif of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD). I do remember the film as being very campy, and perhaps, unintentionally goofy. It has a very B movie feel. Though, unfortunately, it was not bad enough to be good. The film was also particularly weird because it combined Islamic and mystic elements, as well as folk magic with the Brunei form of silat. I thought that this would have been *haraam*. It was also one of the first (or perhaps the first) homegrown Bruneian film to be screened abroad. It went to the 1984 ASEAN Film Festival in Jakarta.

At the same time, I also became more aware of pioneering ethnographic documentary work by RTB producer Rahim Wali, who also started making films in 1979. Some of the films he made won awards in Japan.

I've been hearing plans of making a homegrown Bruneian feature film for years now. But it was only early this year that we saw the release of the feature comedy *Ada Apa Dengan Rina / What Is It About Rina*, directed by Harlif Hj Mohamad and Farid Azlan Ghani. Production on *Yasmine*, a martial arts feature by Siti Kamaluddin – pegged as Brunei's first female director – has just begun. Hopefully, this recent film activity marks the beginnings of an industry.

But even before those commercially-inclined features came into play, there's been several independently-produced short films, music videos and viral videos circulating and gaining a local following on Facebook and video sharing platforms like YouTube and Vimeo by the likes of Akinari, Adam Groves and Reza Mustappa. Like in any religiously and politically conservative country, Brunei has a very active online social networking culture. Up-and-coming Bruneian filmmakers don't really have physical venues to show their work outside their own homes, so they show them online.

However, I'm not aware of anyone actually looking to conduct research on Brunei's film history apart from the people who are already working in the archives. This is unfortunate, because there's still a ton of research and writing to be done.

Mervin Espina is an artist and organiser. He is co-founder of the institute of Lower Learning (iLL), an experimental art and education initiative based in Ho Chi Minh City; and a curator for Green Papaya Art Projects, Manila's oldest artist-run creative multidisciplinary platform. He lives and works in both cities.

The Lost Action Hero: Mario O'Hara's Bagong Hari

Dodo Dayao

The opening credits of *Bagong Hari / The New King* (1986) unfold over a fight sequence, flying its colours from the get-go, as two shirtless men on the beach viciously attack each other in a brutal, bare-fisted brawl that turns out to be a fight to the death for the prize of a golden butterfly knife that doubles as a totem of kinghood. Fight sequences that tend to go on and on and on; equal

parts brutal and exhausted and cartoony and surreal, are endemic to the Filipino action film. But this combat aesthetic has little to do with the anti-gravity fluidity of Kung Fu cinema or the minimalist ultra-violence of samurai films, but is rather, graceless, chaotic, crude, hewn as it is from the street. It is, in many ways, its own thing, and there's a rawness to it that can be invigorating; in the right hands, it can even attain a brutish poetry.

By "the right hands," I mean those of the late director Mario O'Hara, who has enough acumen for someone who never made the genre his métier, enough that a case could be made for him being the lost action auteur of Philippine Cinema. We're not talking about the balletic hyperbole of John Woo or Yuen Woo Ping, or the sinuous grace of Michael Mann or Johnnie To, but somewhere between the rigorous coherence of Sydney Pollack and the gritty flamboyance of Ringo Lam, with all the requisite macho postures tempered and complicated. The rough dynamism of Lam, the Lam of *Prison on Fire* / 监狱风云 (1987) and *Full Contact* / 侠盗高飞 (1992) in particular, tragic and gritty and flamboyant, feels kindred in energy, attitude and pure nutty brio. The climactic knife fight in O' Hara's *Kastilyong Buhangin* / *Castle of Sand* (1980) is remarkable, on one hand, for how it grafts a doomed love story onto a pop musical and prison drama and somehow makes it all mesh, and yet, is technically only an action film by default, with a scene where action superstar Lito Lapid takes down a roomful of goons by sliding on the wet tiles of a communal shower room. It's frankly an amazing sequence, even if your first response may be to stifle a chuckle, one that corroborates the director's imagination and prowess.

Bagong Hari, ostensibly a political thriller with a street fighter who's in way over his head, centering its vortex

of corruption and treachery, boasts two more action set pieces, an elaborate rooftop chase scene over a network of shanties – subverted by its tonal shifts to slapstick and thrown into a unique loop of oddness by the incongruous post-scoring with a serene folk lullaby delicately plucked on an acoustic guitar – and an icehouse gunfight that's relatively more meat and potatoes in that it's more conventionally and coherently staged but is no less bristling for it. But it's what O'Hara does in the opening credit sequence that remains his most striking inversion of genre tropes here: the way he closes in on the combatants and abstracts the action, then freezes the frame on a contortion of pain every time a blow lands, creating not only this glitchy staccato that underscores the film's own peculiar narrative rhythms, but also practically deconstructs the action film for what it really is but often refuses to assume: an apotheosis of pain, of physical pain more than anything else. This is an action film, sure. But it goes without saying that it has a lot more at stake.

Released in 1986, at a time when the cracks in the previously indomitable Marcos dictatorship had started to show and the oppressive regime had begun to sway and buckle, *Bagong Hari* had lofty plans for itself. The late Elvira Manahan plays an ostentatious Governor. The late

filmmaker Celso Ad. Castillo plays a former movie star who becomes Mayor, and Joel Torre plays the trigger-happy son of a government official. All three were obviously meant to stand in for true-to-life and active political figures of that time and little was done to obfuscate exactly who. Its uncompromising vision mirrored – not too subtly – the political corruption and violence that had held the country in its grip for years, and had all the powder-keg urgency to land a few blows that hurt. It was as if O'Hara and writer Frank Rivera were at last untethered from years of aesthetic repression, and who's to say that was not the case. *Bagong Hari* is shot with a jittery anxiety, it's terribly combative in terms of its sociopolitical intent, with little sobriety to spare. Encasing the film's multi-layered polemic and all its pent-up rage in the violent, hard shell of a revisionist action film remains the creators' canniest move. Then newcomer Dan Alvaro, who plays Addon, the heroic (albeit tragically so) street fighter at the heart of matters and the eponymous new king of the title, was obviously being groomed for action-star iconicity, and that wasn't exactly a stretch – he has the presence and build at least. Sadly, *Bagong Hari* opened to dismal box office sales and subsequently descended into total oblivion.

That's the shame, really. The only copy of *Bagong Hari*

is strung together from adequate VHS and Betacam elements; its sound shrill and atrocious; its image often mucky and petrified. I watched the film for the first time a few years ago in this condition. But its vitality wasn't lost on me and still isn't. The unflinching torture sequence remains a particular highlight, almost unwatchable for its squeamish intensity. Some quarters have hailed this as a masterpiece. And there is some truth in that, although I'm not sure I'd go that far. Some of the aesthetic choices are bewildering, to say the least. The cheesy, obtrusive music can be distracting, if not entirely off-putting; it all but lets the air out of a tender and erotic drinking sequence involving Addon and his girlfriend, played by Carmi Martin. The director's propensity for melodrama does not do the film any favours. But this is irrevocably one of O'Hara's most confident, most courageous and most assured works. It's almost serendipitous how I'm re-viewing the film and writing about it a couple of weeks after local elections in the country. As much as *Bagong Hari* is a product of its time, it also remains distressingly volatile and relevant, given how, in the thirty or so years since it came out, and five presidencies later, the political landscape in the Philippines hasn't changed much. Few films from the late 80s have as much bearing on the present as *Bagong Hari*. It certainly begs to be watched again. That it is practically

a lost film; all but forgotten and survives in an almost unwatchable state, may be its biggest tragedy. Freighted with its own surfeit of historical resonance, history has been, ironically but rather unsurprisingly, quite unkind.

Dodo Dayao writes, films, paints and programmes. He is currently working on his first book of essays due to be published this year, and preparing to make his first feature film. Dodo lives in Quezon City, Philippines.

# of Southeast A

Buried Treasures

Lost Films

Asia:

Part Two –

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We are not looking for academic treatises, nor are we interested in lightly journalistic film reviews. We're keen on writing that is sharp, intelligent and knowledgeable, though not without humour. Each piece should be between 1,500 to 2,500 words long.

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Concession rates for most programmes are available to students (full-time, with valid student pass), seniors (aged 60 years and above, with valid identity pass showing proof of age), NSF (with valid 11B pass), National Museum Volunteers, National Museum Members, NHB Staff and MICA Staff. Passes have to be presented when purchasing tickets.

General Enquiries
(65) 6332 3659 / (65) 6332 5642

Film Classification Guide

G	*(General)* Suitable for all ages.
PG	*(Parental Guidance)* Suitable for all, but parents should guide their young.
PG13	*(Parental Guidance 13)* Suitable for persons aged 13 and above, but parental guidance is advised for children below 13.
NC16	*(No Children Under 16)* Suitable for persons aged 16 and above.
M18	*(Mature 18)* Suitable for persons aged 18 years and above.
R21	*(Restricted 21)* Suitable for adults aged 21 and above.

For further details and the latest film ratings, please visit
www.nationalmuseum.sg

Getting to the Museum

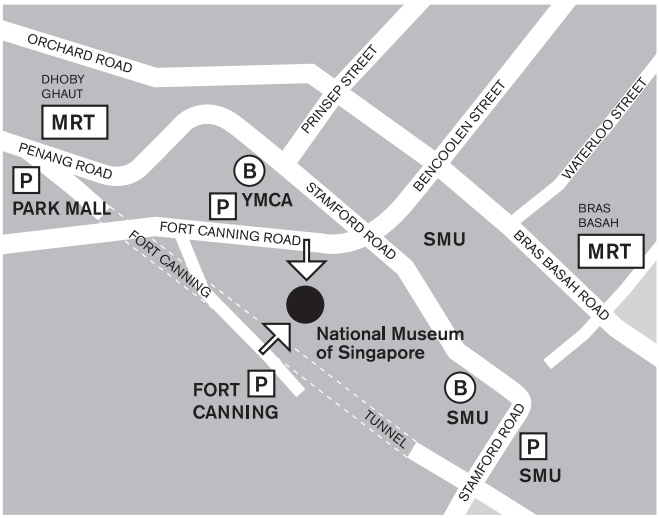
MRT **Train**
Bras Basah MRT Station (5-minute walk)
Dhoby Ghaut MRT Station (5-minute walk)
City Hall MRT Station (10-minute walk)

B **Bus**
YMCA Bus-stop (08041)
SBS: 7, 14, 14e, 16, 36, 64, 65, 111, 124, 128, 139, 162, 162M, 174, 174e, 175
SMRT: 77, 106, 167, 171, 190, 700, 700A, NR6, NR7

SMU Bus-stop (04121)
SBS: 7, 14, 14e, 16, 36, 111, 124, 128, 131, 162, 162M, 166, 174, 174e, 175
SMRT: 77, 106, 167, 171, 190, 700, 700A, 857, NR7

Taxi
Pick-up and drop-off points are at the Fort Canning entrance or the Stamford entrance.

P **Car**
Limited parking facility is available at the National Museum. Other parking facilities are available at YMCA, Park Mall, Singapore Management University and Fort Canning Park.



July

Tuesday 9 July

7.30 pm *(Page 10)*
WORLD CINEMA SERIES
Mandala
Im Kwon-taek

August

3–4 & 10–11 August

2 pm *(Page 22)*
10TH SINGAPORE SHORT CUTS

Tuesday 13 August

7.30 pm *(Page 14)*
WORLD CINEMA SERIES
Autumn Moon / 秋月
Clara Law

September

Tuesday 10 September

7.30 pm *(Page 18)*
WORLD CINEMA SERIES
The Flower Girl
Choe Ik-kyu & Pak Hak

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www.nationalmuseum.sg

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