

= Pah Wongso Pendekar Boediman =

Pah Wongso Pendekar Boediman (Malay for Pah Wongso the Righteous Warrior) is a 1941 detective film from the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) . The first production by Star Film , it was produced by Jo Eng Sek and featured camerawork by Cho ' Chin Hsin . Starring L. V. Wijnhamer , Jr . , Elly Joenara , and Mohamad Arief , it followed the social worker Pah Wongso as he investigated a murder to clear his protégé 's name .

The first film of its genre to be produced in the Indies , Pah Wongso Pendekar Boediman was made to capitalize on the popularity of Wijnhamer and Hollywood characters such as Charlie Chan and Mr. Moto . Released in April 1941 to popular acclaim , it had a mixed critical reception ; the reviewer Saeroen suggested that its success was entirely because of its star 's renown . A sequel to this film , which is possibly lost , Pah Wongso Tersangka , was released later that year .

= = Plot = =

Pah Wongso is a nut seller , social worker , and schoolmaster who lives in Batavia and takes care of the local poor . One day , his young protégé Wisnoe saves the life of a young woman named Siti when she is almost hit by a carriage . In thanks , her father Haji Abdullah gives Wisnoe a job at his rice mill . Wisnoe 's zeal and diligence quickly make him stand out from his fellow employees , and he begins to woo Siti , who returns his affections .

However , Wisnoe 's cousin Bardja is envious of his newfound success . A gambler who frequents prostitutes , Bardja is smitten with Siti , who does not love him . Hoping to eliminate his competition , Bardja hires some thugs to kill Wisnoe ; this attempt fails , and Bardja 's financial situation becomes increasingly desperate . He decides to steal from his rich uncle , but is caught in the act . In the ensuing struggle , he kills the older man , then frames Wisnoe for the murder .

Wisnoe is arrested , and soon Pah Wongso ? warned by Siti of Bardja 's previous treachery ? begins to investigate the case . Ultimately he discovers that Bardja is the true murderer and confronts him , resulting in a battle to the death . Wongso emerges victorious , and Wisnoe 's name is cleared .

= = Production = =

Pah Wongso Pendekar Boediman was produced by Jo Eng Sek , a businessman who had produced the film Si Tjonat in 1929 . Cinematography on this black @-@ and @-@ white film was handled by Cho ' Chin Hsin , who had recently immigrated from Shanghai . The film was the first production of Star Film , a studio which Jo and Cho ' had established in Prinsenland , Batavia (now Mangga Besar , Jakarta) .

At the time , the Hollywood characters Charlie Chan and Mr. Moto were popular in the Indies , as were imported detective films in general ; however , no films in that genre had yet been produced domestically . This led Jo to make a detective film which he thought would be successful with ethnic Chinese audiences . For this , he approached L. V. Wijnhamer , Jr . , an Indo man who was popular within the ethnic Chinese community for his social work ; Wijnhamer , better known as Pah Wongso , helped educate abandoned children , ran an employment office , and raised funds for Red Cross aid in war @-@ torn China . Wijnhamer accepted the role .

To support Wongso , stage actress Elly Joenara was cast as Siti , making her film debut , while Mohamad Arief appeared as Wisnu . Other cast members included Djoenaedi , R. Sukran , and Miss Satijem . To ensure that fight scenes went smoothly , Jo hired members of Primo Oesman 's silat and boxing group to perform as criminals ; Oesman , a professional boxer , also appeared in the film .

= = Release and reception = =

Pah Wongso Pendekar Boediman was rated for audiences over the age of 17 . It premiered at the

Rex Theatre in Batavia on 1 April 1941 , following a short speech by Wijnhamer . It had reached Surabaya by June , where it was advertised as a film of intrigue , life , and death . Although intended predominantly for domestic consumption , it was also screened in China , Singapore and British Malaya . When the film reached Singapore in July 1941 , it was touted as a " thrilling Malay detective story ... full of thrills and excitement from beginning to end " .

The Indonesian film historian Misbach Yusa Biran records Pah Wongso Pendekar Boediman as a commercial success . Critical reviews , however , were mixed . An anonymous reviewer in the Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad praised the quality of the film , particularly its cinematography , acting , and story . In the Malayan magazine Film Melayu , a reviewer considered the film of similar quality to Hollywood productions and praised its casting of a South East Asian as the titular detective . The critic and filmwriter Saeroen expressed concern that the film 's success was not because of its quality , and opined that it was only popular because of Wijnhamer 's fame .

= = Legacy = =

By September 1941 , Jo had begun production of a second ? and final ? film starring Wongso , titled Pah Wongso Tersangka (Pah Wongso Becomes a Suspect) . Directed by Wu Tsun , this late 1941 release featured Pah Wongso in four roles and showed him attempting to clear his name after being framed for a crime . Arief , Primo , and Sukran were also recast in this film , which was billed as the colony 's first comedy film . Although Joenara did not return for Pah Wongso Tersangka , she acted in three further films for Star ; her acting career continued into the 1950s , and she became a producer in the early 1970s .

Pah Wongso Pendekar Boediman may be lost . Movies in the Indies were recorded on highly flammable nitrate film , and after a fire destroyed much of Produksi Film Negara 's warehouse in 1952 , old films shot on nitrate were deliberately destroyed . Thus , the American visual anthropologist Karl G. Heider wrote that all Indonesian films from before 1950 are lost . However , JB Kristanto 's Katalog Film Indonesia (Indonesian Film Catalogue) records several as having survived at Sinematek Indonesia 's archives , and Biran writes that several Japanese propaganda films have survived at the Netherlands Government Information Service .

= = Explanatory notes = =