

= Oriental Film =

Oriental Film was a film production company in Batavia , Dutch East Indies ( now Jakarta , Indonesia ) . Established by ethnic Chinese businessman Tjo Seng Han in 1940 , it completed four black @-@ and @-@ white films before it was closed in 1941 . All the company 's films were screened into the 1950s but may now be lost . They were directed by two men , Njoo Cheong Seng and Sutan Usman Karim , and launched the careers of actors such as Dhalia and Soerip .

Established during the revival of the Indies film industry , Oriental released its first film , Kris Mataram , in July 1940 . It starred Njoo 's wife Fifi Young , and relied on her fame as a stage actress to draw audiences . This was followed by a further three films , which were targeted at low @-@ income audiences and extensively used kroncong music . Their final production was Panggilan Darah in 1941 , which was completed after Njoo and Young had migrated to Majestic Film . Oriental was unable to recoup its expenses of renting a Dutch @-@ owned studio , and the company was shut down .

= = Establishment = =

Following the commercial successes of Terang Boelan ( Full Moon ; 1937 ) , Fatima ( 1938 ) , and Alang @-@ Alang ( Grass ; 1939 ) , the Dutch East Indies film industry ? which had been severely weakened by the Great Depression ? was revived . Film production increased and , in 1940 , four new production houses were opened , including Oriental Film . Funded entirely by the ethnic Chinese businessman Tjo Seng Han , the company 's first headquarters were at 42 Matraman Street , in eastern Batavia ( now Jakarta ) ; according to the weekly Sin Po , this studio had simple facilities . Another ethnic Chinese businessman , Tjan Hock Siong , was brought on to manage the day @-@ to @-@ day activities of the studio .

Tjo and Tjan hired Njoo Cheong Seng , a dramatist who had previously worked with the Orion Opera before establishing his own troupe , and his wife Fifi Young . The two had gained wide recognition through their stage work , and it was hoped that name recognition would bring in audiences . The hiring of Njoo and Young was part of a trend of bringing theatrically trained actors and crew into the film industry . Terang Boelan had used stage starlet Roekiah and her husband Kartolo to great effect , and the actors had brought similar financial success to Tan 's Film after they were hired .

= = Productions = =

Oriental 's first production , Kris Mataram ( Kris of Mataram ) , was directed by Njoo and starred Young and Omar Rodriga . It followed a young noblewoman ( played by Young ) who marries a nobleman despite her parents ' disapproval . For this film , Njoo drew Joshua Wong from Tan 's as cinematographer , then used the Wong name as part of his advertising : " [ Kris Mataram has ] the J. Wong guarantee " . Released in July 1940 , the film was targeted at low @-@ income audiences ? particularly theatre @-@ goers who would recognise Young . A review in the Soerabaijasch Handelsblad praised it , calling Kris Mataram " captivating to the last metre " .

Before its studio 's second production , Oriental began renting the studios of Algemeen Nederlandsch Indisch Filmsyndicaat ( ANIF ) in Molenvliet , Batavia , for 1 @,@ 500 gulden a month . This rent also included access to the studio 's equipment and cameraman J.J.W. Steffans , as well as facilities such as air conditioning and telephones in each office , and lighting equipment for night @-@ time shots . A large adjacent plot of land was also included . By renting the ANIF complex , Oriental became the largest and most modern studio in the Indies .

Njoo soon showed a proclivity for sensation , which was manifested in the December 1940 release Zuebaida . For the film , a love story set in Timor starring Young as the title character , Oriental used bright , extravagant costumes ; Njoo gave the characters whimsical names which would not be found in the setting . Rather than shoot on location ? which would have been prohibitively expensive ? Oriental constructed sets behind the ANIF Studio . Reviewers of the film noted with disdain that

Zoebaida was exaggerated and clearly reflected its stage influences .

Oriental released its third production , Pantjawarna ( Five Colours ) , in March 1941 . Again starring Young , the film ? in which a young woman must raise two daughters despite her husband 's imprisonment ? featured two new hires , Dhalia and Soerip . Both women , teenagers at the time , had established stage careers and were known for their singing voices , which were put to use in several of Pantjawarna 's twelve kroncong songs . This film was well received by critics , and Young 's acting was praised in both the Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad and Soerabaijasch Handelsblad ; the latter characterised Pantjawarna as " a success for O.F.C. [ Oriental Film Company ] and proof of the progress made in the cinema of the Indies " .

After Pantjawarna , Fred Young drew Njoo and his wife to the newly established Majestic Film . Deprived of their director and main star , Oriental hired the journalist Sutan Usman Karim to direct their fourth production , Panggilan Darah ( Call of Blood ) . This film , written by Karim and starring Dhalia and Soerip , told of two young orphans as they tried to eke a living in Batavia . This film , which debuted in June 1941 , prominently featured the cigarette factory Nitisemito , leading the Indonesian film historian Misbach Yusa Biran to suggest that it may have paid for the advertisement . He records it as a modest success , although he notes that reviews were mixed .

= = Closure and legacy = =

Following Panggilan Darah , Oriental ? which had been losing money steadily ? released its contract for the ANIF studio , which was taken over by the Dutch @-@ run Multi Film . Despite hopes that they would continue producing narrative films , perhaps with less modern equipment , the company was dissolved . Oriental 's actors and crew members migrated to different studios . Suska was signed to Java Industrial Film and directed a single film for them , Ratna Moetoe Manikam . Dhalia went to Populair 's Film and acted in one production , Moestika dari Djemar ( The Jewel of Djemar ; 1942 ) , before the Japanese occupation in March 1942 closed that studio . Soerip , meanwhile , joined Njoo and Young at Majestic Film , acting in two productions before that studio was closed .

Although Oriental was short @-@ lived , several of the actors and crew it hired went on to lengthy careers . Njoo , after handling two films for Majestic in 1941 , spent much of the decade in theatre before returning to directing in the mid @-@ 1950s . Fifi Young , who continued acting for Njoo until their divorce in 1945 , appeared in more than eighty films before her death in 1975 . Dhalia and Soerip likewise had lengthy careers : both acted until the 1990s , Dhalia in 52 productions and Soerip in 25 .

= = Filmography = =

In a period of two years , Oriental released four films ; all were feature length , made in black @-@ and @-@ white , and received wide releases in the Dutch East Indies . Some , such as Panggilan Darah , enjoyed international release ; the film was screened in Singapore ( then part of the Straits Settlements ) by September 1941 . The company 's productions were targeted at low @-@ income audiences and extensively used kroncong music , for the recording of which the company established the Oriental Novelty Five . Though its films were screened at least into the 1950s , Oriental 's output may be lost .

= = Explanatory notes = =