

= Pareh =

Pareh (Sundanese for " rice ") , released internationally as Pareh , Song of the Rice , is a 1936 film from the Dutch East Indies (modern day Indonesia) . Directed by the Dutchmen Albert Balink and Mannus Franken , it featured an amateur native cast and starred Raden Mochtar and Soekarsih . The story follows the forbidden love between a fisherman and a farmer 's daughter .

Balink began work on the film in 1934 , working with the Wong brothers , who served as cinematographers . They gathered a budget of 75 @, @ 000 gulden ? several times the budget of other local productions ? and brought Franken from the Netherlands to assist in production . The film was edited in the Netherlands after being shot in the Indies . The film was a commercial and critical success with European audiences , but disliked by native ones ; despite this success , Pareh bankrupted its producers .

Pareh resulted in a change in the cinema of Dutch East Indies , which had been Chinese @-@ oriented for several years ; films began to make more effort at targeting local audiences . Balink later found commercial success with Terang Boelan (1937) . The American visual anthropologist Karl G. Heider considers Pareh and Terang Boelan the two most important cinematic works from the Dutch East Indies during the 1930s .

= = Premise = =

Mahmud (Rd . Mochtar) , a fisherman , is in love with Wagini (Soekarsih) , a farmer 's daughter . However , local superstition dictates that their relationship will bring disaster . This seems to prove true after the village leader 's keris is stolen , but eventually Mahmud and Wagini are able to unite with the help of his fellow villagers .

= = Production = =

During 1934 and early 1935 , all feature films released in the Dutch East Indies had been produced by The Teng Chun , based on Chinese mythology or martial arts , and targeted at low @-@ class audiences , generally ethnic Chinese . This situation was created by the Great Depression , which had led to the Dutch East Indies government collecting higher taxes , advertisers asking for more money , and cinemas selling tickets at lower prices ; this ensured that there was a very low profit margin for local films . During this period cinemas in the country mainly showed Hollywood productions .

Albert Balink , a Dutch journalist , began work on what was to become Pareh in 1934 . Unlike The Teng Chun , the inexperienced Balink chose to target his film at Dutch audiences . He brought in two of the Wong brothers , Chinese filmmakers who had been inactive since making Zuster Theresia (Sister Theresa) in 1932 . The Wongs donated their studio ? an old tapioca flour factory ? as well as filmmaking equipment . Meanwhile , much of the funding came from other backers . According to the Indonesian film historian Misbach Yusa Biran , the money came from the cinema mogul Buse , while EYE Film Institute records indicate that the film was backed by the Centrale Commissie voor Emigratie en Kolonisatie van Inheemschen and meant to promote migration from Java to Sumatra .

Balink and the Wongs spent most of two years compiling the necessary funds , with Balink in charge of general operations as the head of Java Pacific Film , a joint operation . Balink insisted on perfection and had a clear idea what kind of actor he wanted in the film . Unlike earlier filmmakers in the country , Balink invested time and money in searching for the best locations and actors possible , without considering whether a person was already a celebrity . Ultimately , most of those cast for Pareh had not acted before , including stars Mochtar and Soekarsih .

The role of Mahmud was filled when Balink was out with coffee with Joshua and Othniel Wong and saw a young man , tall , strong , and handsome ? as he expected for the role ? driving by . Balink called the Wongs and they got into their car , then chased and caught the young man . The man , Mochtar , a Javanese of noble descent , was told to use the title Raden for the film , which he and his family had already abandoned . According to the Indonesian anthropologist Albertus Budi

Susanto , the emphasis on Mochtar 's title was meant as a way to draw a higher @-@ class audience .

Artistic direction and some of the screenwriting was handled by Mannus Franken , an avant @-@ garde documentary filmmaker from the Netherlands , whom Balink had brought to the Indies . Franken insisted on including ethnographic shots to better present the local culture to international audiences . Franken took an interest in the documentary and ethnographic aspects of the film , directing the shots for these portions , while the Wongs handled the general shots . According to Biran , this was reflected in the camera angles used .

Pareh , which had been recorded on 35 mm film using single @-@ system devices , was brought to the Netherlands for editing . There the original voices of the cast were dubbed by actors in the Netherlands , resulting in stilted language use and heavy Dutch accents . Though initially the filmmakers had planned on using gamelan music , the poor quality of the recording equipment in the Indies led to the soundtrack being redone , using European @-@ style music , in the Netherlands .

From start to finish the production of Pareh cost 75 @,@ 000 gulden (approximately US \$ 51 @,@ 000) , 20 times as much as a regular local production . After editing there were 2 @,@ 061 metres of film , equivalent to 92 minutes of runtime .

= = Release and reception = =

Pareh was screened in the Netherlands as Pareh , een Rijstlied van Java (also noted as Het Lied van de Rijst) beginning on 20 November 1936 . The film was also shown in the Indies . It was unable to recoup its costs and bankrupted the producers . The film was critically acclaimed in the Netherlands , partially owing to the emphasis of Franken 's involvement . Although it was a commercial success amongst the intelligentsia in the Indies , Pareh was a failure with lower @-@ class native audiences . Mochtar never viewed the film in full .

Historical reception of Pareh has generally been positive . Writing in 1955 , the Indonesian author and cultural critic Armijn Pane opined that Pareh was technically unparalleled in contemporary Indies cinema , with careful continuity and dynamic cuts . He was critical , however , of the film 's tendency to see the Indies ' native population through European eyes and depict them as " primitive " . The American film historian John Lent , writing in 1990 , described Pareh as a " meticulously detailed and costly " film which attempted to not only earn money , but show the local culture . The American visual anthropologist Karl G. Heider considers Pareh one of the two most important cinematic works from the Dutch East Indies during the 1930s ; Balink 's later work Terang Boelan (Full Moon ; 1937) was the other . Heider , John H. McGlynn , and Salim Said note that the film was of acceptable technical quality but is best remembered for changing the path of cinematic developments in the country .

= = Legacy = =

The release of Pareh was followed by a shift in genres popularised by the local cinema . The Teng Chun , who ? together with Balink ? continued to be the only active filmmaker in the country until 1937 , began focusing on more modern stories and those which would be popular with native audiences . Biran suggests that this was influenced by Pareh . Other filmmakers in the late 1930s , partially inspired by Pareh , began to improve the quality of the audio in their films . Pane notes that , following Pareh , films produced domestically no longer centred around ethnic European casts .

Mochtar and Soekarsih , who first met on the set of Pareh , married after appearing together in Terang Boelan . This later production included much of the same cast and was highly successful , leading to a renewed interest in filmmaking in the Indies . Terang Boelan proved to be the most successful local production until 1953 's Krisis (Crisis) , released after Indonesia had become independent .