

= Roekiah =

Roekiah ( Perfected Spelling : Rukiah ; born 1917 ? died 2 September 1945 ) , often credited as Miss Roekiah , was an Indonesian kroncong singer and film actress . The daughter of two stage performers , she began her career at the age of seven ; by 1932 she had become well known in Batavia , Dutch East Indies ( now Jakarta , Indonesia ) , as a singer and stage actress . Around this time she met Kartolo , whom she married in 1934 . The two acted in the 1937 hit film Terang Boelan , in which Roekiah and Rd Mochtar played young lovers .

After the film 's commercial success , Roekiah , Kartolo , and most of the cast and crew of Terang Boelan were signed to Tan 's Film , first appearing for the company in their 1938 production Fatima . They acted together in two more films before Mochtar left the company in 1940 ; through these films , Roekiah and Mochtar became the colony 's first on @-@ screen couple . Mochtar 's replacement , Rd Djoemala , acted with Roekiah in four films , although these were less successful . After the Japanese invaded the Indies in 1942 , Roekiah took only one more film role before her death ; most of her time was used entertaining Japanese forces .

During her life Roekiah was a fashion and beauty icon , featuring in advertisements and drawing comparisons to Dorothy Lamour and Janet Gaynor . Though most of the films in which she appeared are now lost , she has continued to be cited as a film pioneer , and a 1969 article stated that " in her time [ Roekiah ] reached a level of popularity which , one could say , has not been seen since " . Of her five children with Kartolo , one ? Rachmat Kartolo ? entered acting .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Roekiah was born in Bandoeng ( now known as Bandung ) , West Java , Dutch East Indies , in 1917 to Mohammad Ali and Ningsih , actors with the Opera Poesi Indra Bangsawan troupe ; Ali was originally from Belitung , while Ningsih was of Sundanese descent and came from Cianjur . Though Roekiah learned acting mainly from her parents , she also studied the craft with other members of their troupe . The trio were constantly travelling , leaving Roekiah with no time for a formal education . By the mid @-@ 1920s they were with another troupe , the Opera Rochani .

Roekiah insisted on becoming an actress , despite the opposition of her family , and asked her mother for permission to perform on stage . Ningsih agreed , with one condition : Roekiah could only perform once . When the seven @-@ year @-@ old Roekiah took to the stage for the first time , Mohammad Ali ? unaware of the agreement between his wife and daughter ? rushed on stage and insisted that Roekiah stop singing . Afterwards , she refused to eat until her parents ultimately relented . Roekiah performed regularly afterwards with the troupe .

By 1932 , the year she joined Palestina Opera in Batavia ( modern @-@ day Jakarta ) , Roekiah had become a well @-@ known stage actress and singer of kroncong music ( traditional music with Portuguese influences ) . She was admired not only for her voice , but her beauty . While with Palestina she met Kartolo , an actor , pianist , and songwriter with the troupe ; they married later that year . The new couple soon left Palestina , then took a month 's hiatus before joining the group Faroka on a tour in Singapore . They returned to the Indies in 1936 .

= = = Film career = = =

= = = = Partnership with Rd Mochtar = = = =

In 1937 Roekiah made her first film appearance as the leading lady in Albert Balink 's Terang Boelan ( Full Moon ) . She and her co @-@ star Rd Mochtar played two lovers who elope so that Roekiah 's character need not marry an opium smuggler ; Kartolo also had a small role . The film

was a commercial success , earning over 200 @, @ 000 Straits dollars during its international release ; the Indonesian film historian Misbach Yusa Biran credited Roekiah as the " dynamite " which led to this positive reception .

Despite the success of Terang Boelan , its production company Algemeen Nederlandsch Indisch Filmsyndicaat stopped all work on fiction films . Now jobless and depressed after the death of her mother , according to journalist W. Imong , Roekiah " kept silent , constantly musing as if she were mentally disturbed " . In order to distract his wife , Kartolo gathered the other cast members from Terang Boelan and established the Terang Boelan Troupe , which toured to Singapore to popular acclaim ; this snapped Roekiah out of her melancholy . After the troupe returned to the Indies , most of the cast switched to Tan 's Film , including Roekiah and Kartolo ; the two also performed with the Lief Java kroncong group .

With Tan 's , the Terang Boelan cast appeared in the 1938 hit Fatima , starring Roekiah and Rd Mochtar . The film , in which Roekiah played the title role ? a young woman who must fend away the advances of a gang leader while falling in love with a fisherman ( Rd Mochtar ) ? closely followed the formula established by Terang Boelan . Roekiah 's acting received wide praise . One reviewer in the Batavia @-@ based Het Nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch @-@ Indië wrote that Roekiah 's " sober personification of injustice in the Malay adat wedding captivates even the European spectator " , while another , in the Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad , found that Roekiah 's performance was appreciated by everyone .

Fatima was a massive commercial hit , earning 200 @, @ 000 gulden on a 7 @, @ 000 gulden budget . Following the film 's success , Tan 's continued to cast Roekiah with Rd Mochtar . They became the colony 's first on @-@ screen celebrity couple and were termed the Indies ' Charles Farrell ? Janet Gaynor . The popularity of Roekiah ? Rd Mochtar as a screen couple led other studios to follow with their own romantic pairings . The Teng Chun 's Java Industrial Film , for instance , paired Mohamad Mochtar and Hadidjah in Alang @-@ Alang ( Grass , 1939 ) .

In order to keep their new star , Tan 's Film spent a large amount of money . Roekiah and Kartolo received a monthly holding fee of 150 gulden and 50 gulden respectively , twice as much as they had been given for Terang Boelan . They were also given a house in Tanah Rendah , Batavia . Roekiah and Kartolo , for their part , continued to act for the company ; Kartolo often had small , comedic , roles , and Roekiah sang songs her husband had written . In 1939 they appeared together , again with Rd Mochtar as Roekiah 's romantic foil , in the Zorro @-@ influenced Gagak Item . Though not as successful as Roekiah 's previous works , the film was still profitable . A reviewer for the Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad praised Roekiah 's " demure " acting .

Roekiah 's last film with Rd Mochtar , Siti Akbari , was released in 1940 . Possibly inspired by a poem of the same name by Lie Kim Hok , the film featured Roekiah in the title role , portraying a long @-@ suffering wife who remains faithful to her husband despite his infidelity . The film was well @-@ received , earning 1 @, @ 000 gulden on its first night in Surabaya , but was ultimately unable to return profits similar to Terang Boelan or Fatima .

= = = Partnership with Djoemala = = =

Amidst a wage dispute , Rd Mochtar left Tan 's for their competitor Populair Films in 1940 . Accordingly , the company began looking for a new on @-@ screen partner for Roekiah . Kartolo asked an acquaintance , a tailor @-@ cum @-@ entrepreneur named Ismail Djoemala to take the part ; though Djoemala had never acted before , he had sung with the group Malay Pemoeda in 1929 . After Kartolo asked him six times to act for Tan 's , Djoemala agreed . The company found the tall and good @-@ looking Djoemala a suitable replacement , and hired him , giving him the stage name Rd Djoemala .

Roekiah and Djoemala made their first film together , Sorga Ka Toedjoe ( Seventh Heaven ) , later that year . In the film , Roekiah played a young woman who , with the help of her lover , is able to reunite her blind aunt ( Annie Landouw ) with her estranged husband ( Kartolo ) . This film was a commercial success , and the reviews were positive . One , for the Soerabaijasch Handelsblad , opined that Djoemala was as good as , if not better , than Rd Mochtar . Another review , for the

Singapore Free Press , wrote that " Roekiah fills the part of the heroine in a most praiseworthy manner " . In April of the following year Tan 's released Roekihati , starring Roekiah as a young woman who goes to the city to earn money for her ailing family , ultimately marrying . Her performance received praise from the Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad , which wrote that she had performed well in the difficult role .

Later in 1941 Roekiah and Djoemala completed Poesaka Terpendam ( Buried Treasure ) , an action @-@ filled film which followed two groups ? the rightful heirs ( Roekiah being one of them ) and a band of criminals ? in a race to find treasure buried in Banten . Roekiah and Djoemala worked on their final film together , Koeda Sembrani ( The Enchanted Horse ) , in early 1942 . In the film , adapted from One Thousand and One Nights , Roekiah took the role of Princess Shams @-@ al @-@ Nahar and was shown flying on a horse . The film was still incomplete when the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies began in March 1942 , though it was screened by October 1943 .

Altogether Roekiah and Djoemala acted in four films in two years . Biran argues this is evidence the company " wasted their treasure " , as its competitors used their stars more often ; Java Industrial Film , for instance , completed six films starring Moh . Mochtar in 1941 alone . Though Roekiah 's films continued to be financial successes , they did not earn as large a profit as her earlier works .

= = = Japanese occupation and death = = =

Film production in the Indies declined after the Japanese occupation began in early 1942 ; the overlords forced all but one studio to close . In their place , the Japanese opened their own studio in the Indies , Nippon Eigasha , to produce propaganda for the war effort . Kartolo acted in the studio 's only feature film , Berdjoang ( Hope of the South ) , without Roekiah in 1943 . After a hiatus of several years , Roekiah also acted for the studio , taking a role in the short Japanese propaganda film Ke Seberang ( To the Other Side ) in 1944 . However , much of her time was spent touring Java with a theatrical company , entertaining Japanese troops .

Roekiah fell ill in February 1945 , not long after completing Ke Seberang . Despite this , and a miscarriage , she was unable to rest ; the Japanese forces insisted that she and Kartolo go on tour to Surabaya , in eastern Java . Upon her return to Jakarta , her condition became worse . After several months of treatment , she died on 2 September 1945 , mere weeks after Indonesia proclaimed its independence . Roekiah was buried in Kober Hulu , Jatinegara , Djakarta . Her funeral was attended by several luminaries , including the Minister of Education Ki Hajar Dewantara .

= = Family = =

Roekiah said that she felt Kartolo was a good match with her , stating that the marriage brought them " great fortune " . The two had had five children . After Roekiah 's death , Kartolo brought the children to his hometown at Yogyakarta . In order to support the family , he took a job with Radio Republik Indonesia , beginning in 1946 . There he spent most of the ongoing Indonesian National Revolution , an armed conflict and diplomatic struggle between newly proclaimed Indonesia and the Dutch Empire in which the newly proclaimed country attempted to receive international recognition of its independence . After the Dutch military launched Operation Kraai on 19 December 1948 , capturing Yogyakarta , Kartolo refused to collaborate with the returning colonial forces . Without a source of income , he fell ill , and died on 18 January 1949 .

One of the couple 's children died in Yogyakarta , aged ten . The remaining children were brought to Jakarta after the Indonesian National Revolution ended in 1950 , where they were raised by Kartolo 's close friend Adikarso . One , Rachmat Kartolo , went on to be a singer and actor active up through the 1970s , known for songs such as " Patah Hati " ( " Heartbroken " ) and films such as Matjan Kemajoran ( Tiger of Kemayoran ; 1965 ) and Bernafas dalam Lumpur ( Breathing in the Mud ; 1970 ) . Two other sons , Jusuf and Imam , played in a band with their brother before finding careers elsewhere . The couple 's daughter , Sri Wahjuni , did not enter the entertainment industry .

= = Legacy = =

The press viewed Roekiah fondly , and her new releases consistently received positive reviews . At the peak of Roekiah 's popularity , fans based their fashion decisions on what Roekiah wore on @-@ screen . Roekiah appeared regularly in advertisements , and numerous records with her vocal performances were available on the market . One fan , in a 1996 interview , recalled that Roekiah was " every man 's idol " , while others christened Roekiah as Indonesia 's Dorothy Lamour . Another fan , recalling a performance he had witnessed over fifty years earlier , stated :

Roekiah always left her audiences riveted to their seats when she began crooning her kroncong songs . She always got applause , before or after singing . Not only from the native [ Indonesians ] . Many Dutchmen diligently watched her performances !

After Roekiah 's death , the Indonesian film industry searched for a replacement . The film scholar Ekky Imanjaya notes one instance where a film was advertised with the line " Roekiah ? No ! But Sofia in a new Indonesian film , Air Mata Mengalir di Tjitarum " . Roekiah 's films were screened regularly , but most are now 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 . Of Roekiah 's ?uvre , JB Kristanto 's Katalog Film Indonesia only records Koeda Sembrani as being stored at Indonesia 's film archive , Sinematek Indonesia .

Writings about Roekiah after her death often cite her as an idol of Indonesia 's film industry . Imanjaya describes her as one of the industry 's first beauty icons ; he also credits her and Rd Mochtar with introducing the concept of bankable stars to domestic cinema . Moderna magazine , in 1969 , wrote that " in her time [ Roekiah ] reached a level of popularity which , one could say , has not been seen since " . In 1977 Keluarga magazine styled her one of Indonesia 's " pioneering film stars " , writing that hers was " a natural talent , a combination of her personality and the tenderness and beauty of her face , always filled with romance " .

= = Filmography = =

Terang Boelan ( Full Moon ; 1937 )

Fatima ( 1938 )

Gagak Item ( Black Raven ; 1939 )

Siti Akbari ( 1940 )

Sorga Ka Toedjoe ( Seventh Heaven ; 1940 )

Roekihati ( 1940 )

Poesaka Terpendam ( Buried Treasure ; 1941 )

Koeda Sembrani ( The Enchanted Horse ; 1942 )

Ke Seberang ( To the Other Side ; 1944 ; short film )

= = Explanatory notes = =