

# The Development and Competition of Cinemas in Jakarta, 1950-1966

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## Abstract

The return of Jakarta as the capital of the Republic of Indonesia was followed by significant developments. The development of Jakarta cannot be separated from the massive increase population. Jakarta is also going through numerous infrastructure developments as well as the resurgence of its entertainment industry, particularly cinemas. This article questions, why cinemas in Jakarta experienced their ups and downs during 1956-1966 and how could be it survived through the difficult times? The period 1950-1966 become a unique period for Indonesia because of the influx of pop-cultures and trends from the west amidst the euphoria of nationalism. In the mid of the surging nationalism after the revolutionary, the western culture had entered and become trend among young people. The cinemas in Jakarta were gaining popularity with the large number of western films (Hollywood). However those paradoxical situation then developed into a political problem. Imported films were deemed not in accordance with the nation's character and contradicted to the revolution's spirit so they needed to be banned. It was actually connected to the nation's situation at that time, which was currently in conflict with Malaysia and the United States of America. This political conflict escalated in the early 1960s and subsided after the Coup Attempt of 30 September Movement. Those conflicts made Jakarta's cinemas suffered a difficult time. The absence of imported films, especially from India, Malaysia and Hollywood, had an effect on the declining number of spectators. However, it was surprisingly emerged another entertainment genre such as *Sandiwara* which gaining popularity. During 1960s, cinemas in Jakarta not only had to deal with the political issues but also had to compete with *Sandiwara*.

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## Introduction

Jakarta is a city with a long history. Starting from a port area known as Sunda Kalapa in the 14th century AD, until then changing its name to Jayakarta after the forces led by Fatahillah (Falatehan) managed to expel the Portuguese and reign in the area in 1527 (Noviyanti, 2017, p. 55). After the VOC successfully took control of those areas in, they changed the name Jayakarta to Batavia (Noviyanti, 2017, p. 58). Batavia developed into a central city of government and an economic center during the colonial era. Jakarta (Batavia) then become one of the oldest of the colonial cities established as a result of European incursion into South East Asia (Cobban, 1971, p. 108). During the Japanese Occupation, Batavia changed its name

to Jakarta, the name that continues to this day. The shift of power from the Dutch colonial government to the Japanese occupation government did not change the existence of Jakarta as a central city. Until the return of Jakarta as the capital of the Republic of Indonesia in 1949.

The return of Jakarta as the capital of the Republic of Indonesia, makes Jakarta the center of all affairs, both political-administration and economic matters (Candiwidoro, 2017, p. 58). Jakarta has experienced various growths, starting with population growth, infrastructure development and the growth in the entertainment sector. The cinema was one of the most enjoyable entertainment activities in Jakarta during the 1950s and 1960s, as it was also affordable and also easy to reach. The increase in the number of cinemas in Jakarta is also quite impressive. The new cinemas in Jakarta are built to be as grand as possible with the capacity of over 1000 spectators, as well as equipped with facilities that provide increasing comfort for the audience. The growth of cinema in Jakarta in the 1950s period itself was not apart from the conditions of the national film production that also experienced development.

The development of cinema in Jakarta and national film production reached its peak in 1955. Unfortunately, entering 1956 Indonesian film production experienced a decline that later impacted the conditions of the cinemas in Jakarta. Indonesian films suffered a decline in production due to the inability to compete with imported films that are increasingly flooding the cinemas in Jakarta. Various forms of action were then launched to protect the national films, but those actions too focused on bring the better condition of the national film and forgot the fate of the cinema in Jakarta itself. Cinema in Jakarta not only had to face the various issues that arose when entering 1956, but also had to compete with *Sandiwara*, as another form of entertainment. The political problem that heated up in the early 1960s had a distinct impact on the sustainability of cinemas in Jakarta. This condition then makes it an interesting phenomenon to explore further.

Research on the development of cinema in Jakarta itself, especially when the 1950s-1960s have not been done extensively. Previous research mostly focused on discussions about the development of national film production, and rarely paid special attention to the development in cinema. For example, Misbach Yusa Biran (2009), *Sejarah Film 1900-1950: Bikin Film di Jawa*, discussed the history of Indonesian film in 1900-1950. The discussion of the Indonesia film production is also being the part of the research of M. Abduh Aziz (2019), *Dari Layar Perak: Film di Hindia Belanda 1926-1942*. M. Abduh Aziz focused on the Indonesia film production during colonial era. Handrini Ardiyanti's research (2017), *Perfilman Indonesia: Perkembangan dan Kebijakan, sebuah Telaah dari Perspektif Industri Budaya*, also focused on Indonesian's film industry. Handrini Ardiyanti discussed the impact of the development of film policy on the growth of Indonesian's films industry. On these research, Handrini Ardiyanti also discussed about the cinema but has not yet focused on the cinemas in Jakarta.

The focus of discussion about the cinemas all over Indonesia was made on a group of writings compiled by Haris Jauhari et al, *Layar Perak: 90 Tahun Bioskop di Indonesia*, also research of H. M. Johan Tjasmadi (2008), *100 Tahun Bioskop di Indonesia*. Unfortunately, those books have not been focused on the cinema in Jakarta area. The latest study that focuses on the development of cinemas in Jakarta is the research of Dwi Deani Danishya (2021), *Pasang Surut Bioskop di Jakarta (1950-1986)*. Dwi Deani Danishya narrated the history of cinema in Jakarta from 1950 to 1986. Dwi Deani Danishya's research has a longer period, until 1986 and that research has not discussed the struggles of cinemas in Jakarta during 1950s-1960s to compete with *Sandiwara*. This study try to complete the previous studies which focused on the development of cinemas in Jakarta and also attempts to analyze things that have had an impact on the development of cinema in Jakarta in the period 1950-1966.

According to Antariksa, cinema is not just a form of entertainment but also a representation of movement and development (Antariksa, 2005, p. 127). Johan Tjasmadi (2008) showed on his study that the growth of the cinemas all over Indonesia is strongly influenced by the political issued that occurred. This study want prove that the growth of cinemas in Jakarta is strongly influenced not only by the political issued but also by the conditions of the national film industry, and the presence of the other forms of entertainment. This study used the historical methods on four stages: heuristics, sources criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Those stages are used to answer three main questions 1) how is the development of cinemas in Jakarta? 2) what are the factors that affect to the development of cinema in Jakarta? 3) why is cinemas in Jakarta experienced their ups and downs during 1956-1966?

## Method

This article uses social historical research method, which uses qualitative-descriptive analysis. Literature study is used to focus the analysis on the dynamics of cinema development in Jakarta during the 1950s-1960s. This study is uses a social approach to analyze the social conditions in Jakarta in relation to the development of cinema. The analytical descriptive method is carried out through the following steps, the first that is done is the *heuristic* stage that is to find and find the necessary sources, both primary and secondary sources (Colby, 2020, p. 358). The author uses primary sources such as archives from The National Archive of The Republic of Indonesia and also some articles or image from newspapers and magazines from The National Library of The Republic Indonesia. Archives that related to cinema and film industry all over Indonesia can be found on the collection of *Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Menteri Koordinator Kompartemen Perhubungan dengan Rakyat (Menko Hubra) 1963-1966*. For newspapers and magazines that used as the sources on this study are published newspapers and magazines during 1950-1966 such as *Abadi, Aneka, Antara, Berita Yudha Sport & Film* (1966), *Indonesia Raya, Sin Po, Sunday Courier*. The secondary sources are also used to complete the information or the facts that has been collected from the primary sources. The secondary sources used are reference books that have related to the topic of this research. Those reference books are collections of The National Library of The Republic Indonesia, Film and Photograph Library (Sinematek Indonesia).

After those sources have been collected at the heuristic stage, source criticism is carried out (Milligan, 1979, p. 178). At this stage, external and internal criticism are carried out to test the authenticity and reliability of historical sources based on their physical condition and their content. Based on the source criticism (external and internal), the authenticity of those primary sources has been guaranteed since they are obtained from the institutions that are authorized to conserve them. The credibility of those sources is also guaranteed since they used the spelling of Indonesian Republic, and occasionally some terms or words in Dutch could also be found. This corresponds to the period in which the sources were published. On these stage, there is also a distinction between primary and secondary sources.

After doing the critical analysis of sources, the next step is to do the interpretation of historical facts based on previously collected and selected sources. The final stage of the process is writing the synthesis result obtained from the heuristic stage, sources criticism, and interpretation to produce a chronological historical work, or historiography.

### The Emergence of Cinemas in Jakarta, 1950-1955

A fairly massive development of Jakarta began when it returned to being the capital in 1949. The massive construction to establish Jakarta as a capital was becoming increasingly cluttered especially after 1958, with the enactment of the Indonesian-Japan war compensation treaty. During the 1950s, modernity became a mandatory element to represent, and Jakarta was formed into a city with a variety of new buildings. (Fakih, 2005, p. 126). The symbols of the colonial era that existed in Jakarta sought to be replaced with new forms that more represent Indonesian nationalism. The direction of Jakarta's development seeks to present a completely new urban city, not as a continuation of Batavia by rejecting the existence of the old city (Fakih, 2005, p. 129). One of the elements of modernity that lives in Jakarta society is the existence of a cinema.

The 1950s became an important period for the development of cinema in Jakarta. Cinemas in Jakarta experienced rapid development and increased in number (Danishya, 2021, p. 5). It began with the inauguration of the most luxurious cinema at that time, the Metropole Cinema in 1951 (*Aneka*, 1951). The Metropole Cinema will add the number of cinemas in Jakarta to 60 cinemas. (*Abadi*, 11 April 1951). This number seems to include not only cinemas that have buildings but also cinemas without buildings such as *Luxor* and *Luna* (Jauhari (ed.), 1992, p. 60). This number makes Jakarta one of the cities in Indonesia with a considerable number of cinemas. The total number of cinemas in Indonesia until 1953 was 513 cinemas (Jauhari (ed.), 1992, p. 53). Cinemas become more popular than the folk entertainment, especially among the young, because their location is in the center of the city and their security and facilities are guaranteed (Batubara, 2020, p. 17).

The most striking characters of the cinemas in the 1950s and 1960s were the cinema class system and the audience class. The cinemas in Jakarta are divided into I, II, and III classes, while the audience class is divided into classes *balkon*, *loge*, and *stalles*. The division of this class system is a characteristic feature of colonial societies that actually survived post-independence. The distinction, then, is that the class arrangement is no longer politically discriminatory (based on race). After independence, the people of Jakarta had the freedom to choose the cinema they wanted. The division of the cinema class and the audience class after independence was more to distinguish the cinemas in Jakarta based on the facilities of the movie theater and also the film played, which of course further implied the size of the ticket price (HTM) charged.

Class I cinemas have the best facilities such as a bench used in the form of a comfortable sofa, vigilant hygiene, and good ventilation with the presence of an exhaustor or blower that makes the air in the room cool. This is definitely not going to be found in the class II and III cinemas. Class II and Class III cinemas are not equipped with room coolers, or the existing ventilation is not good enough. The seats are rotan seats, even in some cinemas, those rotan chairs become a nest of bedbug (*kutubusuk*). This division of the cinema classes then affects the film characters played on each cinema classes. As can be seen in the Table 1.

The differences in film characters played in each cinema class are also not exempt from the influence of the two major groups that dominated most of the cinemas in Jakarta in the 1950s, *United Cinema's Combination* and *Independent Cinema's* (Kristanto, 2004, p. 373). The two groups are closely tied to the distributor of imported American films, AMPAI (*American Motion Picture Association in Indonesia*). They are required to show a specified number of films over a certain period of time. Films that have been screened in one of the cinemas in the group will be shown in other cinemas that are members of the same group (Kristanto, 2004, p. 374). This method is then used to carry out monopolies.

Table 1. Characteristics of Cinema Classes in Jakarta in the 1950s

No.	Cinema Class	Film	Spectator Class	Character Spectacle Tax	Film Access
1	I	Prefer high-quality films that are categorized in grade A films	Balkon Loge Stalles	33.3% of the entrance ticket price	Obtaining the right as <i>the first runner theater</i> (cinemas that have their turn supplying class A films in the first round for <i>weekend days</i> ), have the first turn supplying class B films for <i>midweek</i> .
2	II	Prefer quality films that are categorized in class A films, and also films with class B quality	Loge Stalles	25% of the entrance ticket price	Obtaining the right as <i>second runner theater</i> (cinema that gets supply of class A films in the second round for <i>weekend days</i> , the first supply of class B films for <i>weekend days</i> and supply of class C films for <i>midweek</i> ).
3	III	Prefer almost all classes of film, whether class A films, class B films or class C films	-	12.5% of The entrance ticket price	Get the last shift for class A supply, the second turn for class B film supply and the first turn for class C film supply.

Source: Compiled from Tjasmadi, 2008, pp. 5-6.

The monopoly on the arrangement of film screenings by those two groups of cinema rulers in Jakarta did not have much impact on national cinema. Indonesian film production was able to cope with pressure and continued to experience an increase from 23 titles in 1950 to a peak in 1955 with 65 titles (Kristanto, 2007). Film studios also experienced an increase in numbers. Jakarta is home to most film studios, including PFN, Perfini, Persari, Golden Arrow, Bintang Surabaya, Tan & Wong Bross, Studio Garuda, and Jakarta Film Co. (*Sunday Courier*, No. 30, 1952). In 1953, the film by Usmar Ismail entitled *Krisis* was the first Indonesian film to be screened in Jakarta's elite cinema, the Metropole Cinema. The film lasted 35 days in Metropolis. It is not that easy for Indonesian films to be played in the elite cinemas of Jakarta given that most of the class I cinemas are dominated by *United Cinema's Combination* and *Independent Cinema's*, where the two groups are strongly bound to distributors, especially distributors of imported films (the advertisement of *United Cinema's Combination* and *Independent Cinema* can be seen in Figure 1). The success of the *Krisis* was then continued by Tiga Dara, Rodrigo de Villa, and Djanjiku.

The flood of imported films in the 1950s was a rather unique phenomenon. As a newly independent nation free from physical revolution, the sense of nationalism and love for national culture and art are still so strong. Being an Indonesian in the 1950s meant being modern. (Lindsay, 2011, p. 18). But on the other hand, films and pop culture from abroad

(especially from Hollywood) gain more popularity among young people in Jakarta than Indonesian films. They often watch western films and try to follow trends from abroad (Blackburn, 2011, p. 262). However, the healthy competition between imported films and Indonesian films in the early half of the 1950s created a good atmosphere in support of the development of cinema in Jakarta.

Halaman 4 Harian „ABADI“

<p><b>United Cinema's Combination</b> Mempertunjukkan hari ini!</p> <p><b>Menteng</b> 2.30 - 4.30 - 6.15 8.30 - 10.30 Bag-Ming. extra 10.30 siang</p> <p><b>Astoria</b> 10.30 - 2. - 4. - 6. - 8. - 10.</p> <p><b>„A CONNECTICUT YANKEE“</b> Mig Crosby-Rhonda Fleming-William Hedges Paramount Pict. Utak semua umur</p> <p><b>Cinema</b> 10.30 - 1.30 - 4.30 8.30 - 10.30 Bag-Ming. extra 2.30 siang</p> <p><b>Grand</b> 2 - 4 - 6 - 8 Mingg extra 11 siang</p> <p><b>„TASK FORCE“</b> Gary Cooper-Jane Wyatt-Wayne Morris - Walter Brennan Warner Bros Pict. 11 tahun kelas</p>	<p><b>Capitol</b> 10.30 - 4 - 6 - 8 8.30 - 10.30 Bag-Ming. extra 2.30 siang</p> <p><b>„Stage fright“</b> Jane Wyman-Melvyn Douglas-Richard Todd Warner Bros Pict. 11 tahun kelas</p> <p><b>Rivoli</b> 2 - 4 - 6 - 8 8.30 - 10.30 Bag-Ming. extra 10.30 siang</p> <p><b>„Daring Fighters“</b> Gamban Film Corporation</p> <p><b>Alhambra</b> 1 - 7 - 9.15 Utak sa hari minggu AHAD Clark Gable - Rosalind Russell</p> <p><b>„THEY MET IN BOMBAY“</b> Auntie - Emma - Arle - MENJUNJUL Film MEXIN M.G.M.</p> <p><b>„IDJAZAH FI DJAHANNAM“</b> Abbas Faris - Sanjak Djinnal</p>	<p><b>„Pedoman bahasa INDONESIA I“</b> oleh UYMAN EFFENDY Dijaja oleh:</p> <p><b>„Pedoman bahasa INDONESIA II“</b> oleh UYMAN EFFENDY Dijaja oleh:</p> <p><b>PUSTAKA DEWATA</b> Membaca dan Menulis</p> <p><b>Rialto-Senen</b> 8 sore - 7 dan 9 malam Mingg: Extra 10.30 malam 11 tahun kelas Film M.G.M. yang terkenal:</p> <p><b>„ON A ISLAND WITH YOU“</b> (TECHNICOLOR) dengan: ESTELLE WILLIAMS, Peter LAWFORD dan Peter Ustinov 11 tahun kelas</p> <p><b>TONG CHUI HIAP</b> Dijaja oleh 1</p>	<p><b>Sin Tho</b> 2.30 - 7 - 9 Mingg extra 11 siang</p> <p><b>„MARK OF A GORILLA“</b> Johnny Weissmuller - Tracy Marshall - Suzanne Dalbert Columbia Pict. Utak semua umur</p> <p>Buku baru: <b>Perjuangan Diplomasi dan Politik Luar Negeri</b> oleh Mohd. Mu'n B.A. Kata Pengantar dari JM Menteri Luar Negeri Mr. Mohd. Rum. Isinya antara lain: ..... Diplomasi lama dan diplomasi baru. Pengawasan atas Politik Luar Negeri. Tugas seorang diplomat. Kementerian Luar Negeri. Prosedur diplomatik, tafsiran seorang diplomat..... Diterangkan dengan populer, mudah sekali dimengerti. Baik sekali untuk para pemimpin, para kader kursus politik dan para peminat perjuangan Luar Negeri. Per buku R. 7.50, pesanan tambah ongkos 10%. Untuk partai dan dijual lagi, rabat memuaskan. Bernubunglah dengan: 1. SINAR ILMU, Kramat 62, Djakarta. 2. PUSTAKA DEWATA, Djakarta.</p>	<p><b>Globe</b> 11-4-9</p> <p><b>„PITFALL“</b> Dick Powell - Lizabeth Scott - Jane Wyatt - Raymond Burr UNITED ARTISTS</p>	<p><b>Independent Cinema's</b></p> <p><b>Garden Hall</b> 4.30-4.50-5.15</p> <p><b>„Everybody does it“</b> Paul Douglas - Linda Daryel - Colette Hoban - Charles Coburn 20th Cent. FOX Pict. Semua umur.</p> <p><b>Roxy</b> 4-4.30-5</p> <p><b>Metropole</b> 1.30-4.30-9.15 Septa - Minggu extra 10.30 malam</p> <p><b>„BATAVAN“</b> 11 tahun kelas</p> <p><b>Majestic</b> 4.30-4.50</p> <p><b>„Waterloo Bridge“</b> ROBERT TAYLOR VIVIAN LEIGH M.G.M. Pictors.</p> <p><b>Rex</b> 1.30-4.30-9</p> <p><b>Orion</b> 1-3-7-9 ED. MOCHTAR KOMALAKARI dalam</p> <p><b>„MARUNDA“</b> dengan A. SAROSA DJURJIAN GIL Geog Film Syndikat Semua umur</p>	<p><b>Djangan putus asa</b> Orang yg. ingin punya anak, Sakit Kepulan, Waair (ambel) Pelah (kurang tenaga laki) Exceem. Mengobati dengan garansi sampai baik.</p> <p><b>TABIB M. JACOB</b> Salemba No. 61 muka Tangsi KW III. Djak. KOL-I-NOOR, Bk12, Hillam Rambut isi 5 gr R. 15.- Minjak bikin krlinar rambut p. b. R. 15.- Obat bikin hilang Rambut dalam 3 menit. R. 15.- PIL Tamb. tenaga laki per botol R. 25.- Beri advies hal Rumah tangga, Perijinan, peridoodan dll. dengan lima Bintang2 (PALAK). Ongkos oesanan luar kota R. 2.-</p> <p><b>DITJARI</b> Seorang pemuda Indonesia mentjari</p> <p><b>„satu kamar atau paviliun“</b> dilindungi mana sadi Surat hendaklah dialamatkan kepada Hs Djaulis da Har. Abadi Prepalan Gambir 31-</p> <p><b>Pakalilah PETJI SINGAPORE Merk „BANAMA“</b> DIJAKARTA: Djaji Esra Gg. V - 17 BANKING: Situ Saour 144</p>
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**Daftar Penarikan Resmi**  
DARI UNDIAN UANG UNTUK KEPERLUAN  
Jajasan „Dana Bantuan“ di Djakarta  
PENARIKAN TGL. 27 - 28 APRIL 1951 DI DJAKARTA

1 Hadiah utama dari f 100.000.-	No. 24435
2 Hadiah masing' dari = 50.000.-	No. 53222 121764
2 Hadiah masing' dari = 25.000.-	No. 32043 117467
5 Hadiah masing' dari = 10.000.-	No. 12599 74660 88072 119764 153645
15 Hadiah masing' dari = 5.000.-	No. 14355 44007 44370 45445 47994 49304 45401 44588 78054 81353 90793 91405 101834 120429 134353

55 Hadiah masing-masing dari f 1000.-

Figure 1. United Cinema's Combination and Independent Cinema's Groups in an advertisement  
Source: *Abadi* (1951, 19 May).

The popularity of the cinema as entertainment for the people of Jakarta is also driven by the entrance ticket price (HTM), which is still considered affordable. The highest HTM is for the *balkon* class 1 cinema, which is about Rp 3,-, while for the loge class in class 1 cinema it is Rp 2,- and Rp 1,- in class II cinema. The stalls cost Rp 1,- in class I cinema and Rp 0.5,- in class II cinema. The class III Cinema Class does not apply classes for seats; its cost is around Rp 0.25 (Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Menteri Koordinator Kompartemen Perhubungan dengan Rakyat). The affordability of the cinema's HTM can be seen by comparing the lowest ticket prices, which are in class III cinemas, with the price of rice, which is the main food of the people of Jakarta. If compared with the cheapest rice price (TC quality) in 1950, it cost between Rp 68 and Rp 85 per quintal, which means Rp 0.68 up to Rp 0.85 per kilogram (*Antara*, 1950). The lowest cinema's HTM is still cheaper than the price of 1 kilogram of TC-quality rice. This makes cinema a popular form of entertainment among the Jakarta community.

The popularity of cinema that continued to rise during the 1950–1955 period among the people of Jakarta was also seen in the increase in the amount of spectacle taxes deposited on the government of the Kotapraja Jakarta Raya. In 1952, the government of the Kotapraja Jakarta Raya received revenues from the cinema tax of Rp. 4.615.988. In 1954, the amount received by

the government of the Kotapraja Jakarta Raya jumped dramatically to Rp. 13.000.000, which is between Rp. 10.000.000 and Rp. 11.000.000 and comes from the cinema (*Indonesia Raya*, 1954).

Unfortunately, the period of growth of cinemas in Jakarta began to experience turmoil in 1956. National films are not able to compete with imported films in terms of quality, technology, or entertainment, especially Hollywood, Indian, and Malay (Malaysia) films. The main competitor for Indonesian Films actually are Indian and Malay (Malaysia) films (Ardiyanti, 2017, p. 169). The Indian and Malay (Malaysia) films dominate Jakarta's cinema in the middle and lower classes, which are the market share of Indonesian films and also have the largest audience numbers. However, the dominance of Hollywood films is also worrying because it has become a barrier for Indonesian films to be screened in elite cinemas.

The AMPAI's dominance on the share of imported films distribution in Indonesia, especially on the network of the elite cinema in Jakarta, caused Jakarta's class I cinemas to be dominated by Western films (Hollywood). Indonesian films have become difficult to penetrate the elite cinemas because they are seen as not having good stories and cinematographic quality. Reviews about Indonesian films that are published in newspapers or magazines are often also in the form of sharp criticism, and not a few are also insults. Several newspapers then became reluctant to publish news about Indonesian films (Biran, 1990, p. 42). This then leads more and more people to come to the conclusion that Indonesian films are indeed low quality, due to the lack of information in it (Biran, 1990, p. 42). Indonesian film entrepreneurs themselves are too fixated on being able to penetrate high-class cinemas and forget that the Indonesian film market share is in class II and class III cinemas. The films produced became versatile, incapable of reaching the quality of the films played in elite cinemas, and incomprehensible to the audience in lower-class cinemas. This situation makes it difficult for Indonesian films to maintain their market share. The poor atmosphere in the national film industry has more or less influenced the course of the development of cinema in Jakarta.

### **The Struggles of Cinemas in Jakarta, 1956-1966**

Cinemas in Jakarta had a difficult time during 1956-1966 because of the domestic political situation and the emergence of *Sandiwara*. In the early to mid-1950s period, it can be said that the cinemas in Jakarta are in their brightest era. This era is also supported by the development of the national film industry, whereas the national film industry, which at that time had just started. The success of the film *Krisis* penetrated the elite cinema of Jakarta and attracted audiences from elite groups in a remarkable number, as well as the number of film productions that continue to increase, in fact, it is not able to maintain the good conditions of national film. The national film industry began to decline in 1956 after reaching its peak of production in 1955. The number of Indonesian films that were produced from 1950 until 1966 can be seen in the Table 2.

It can be seen that in 1956, the amount of national film production was only half the amount produced in 1955. The Production then continued to decrease until 1966, and it made a huge impact to the cinemas. The decline in the amount of production is not despite the difficulties of Indonesian films gaining market share. Facing these conditions, the government then issued a mandatory policy to screen Indonesian films. The Mayor of Jakarta at that time, Soediro, issued a regulation that requiring elite cinemas in Jakarta to show Indonesian films (Ardiyanti, 2017, p. 169). However, those policies were in fact ineffective in resolving the problems of imported films.

Table 2. Total Production of Indonesian Films 1950-1966

Year	Amount	Year	Amount	Year	Amount
1950	23 titles	1956	35 titles	1962	12 titles
1951	40 titles	1957	21 titles	1963	19 titles
1952	37 titles	1958	19 titles	1964	20 titles
1953	49 titles	1959	16 titles	1965	14 titles
1954	60 titles	1960	38 titles	1966	13 titles
1955	65 titles	1961	38 titles		

Source: Compiled from Kristanto, 2007.

The issue of imported films was also warming up and even growing, which was originally only an industrial issue that became a political issue when it entered 1964 (Irawanto, 2017, p. 97). Indonesian films find it difficult to compete with Western films that dominate the top-class cinemas in Jakarta. It must be acknowledged that, in terms of quality and technology, Hollywood films far outweigh Indonesian films. The surprising thing is that Indonesian films also did not lose their place in the lower-class cinemas because of the presence of Indian and Melayu (Malaysian) films that were actually preferred by the lower-class cinema's audience. The reason why Melayu (Malaysian) films are being popular is because of their strong entertainment elements that suit the lower-class audiences. Melayu (Malaysian) films are easy to understand compared to idealistic Indonesian films, and they also contain many songs that are easy to enjoy for the audience. Several Indonesian films at that time also had songs, but the songs used the Jakarta Studio Orchestra style, which could not suit the taste of lower-class audiences (Biran, 2009, p. 151).

This later made the presence of Melayu (Malaysian) films considered a problem because Melayu (Malaysian) films were considered to seize the share of the Indonesian film market by dominating the lower-class cinemas in Jakarta. The government then attempted to restrict the import of Malaysian films by imposing a 3:1 system: for every 1 (one) Malaysian film title that enters Indonesia, it is mandatory to import 3 (three) Indonesian film titles. This rule led Malaysian entrepreneurs to retreat because they refused to play Indonesian films there. They are worried if the audience in Malaysia turns to prefer Indonesian films, which are actually much better than Malaysian films (Biran, 2009, p. 115). The condition automatically decreased the number of films imported from Malaysia in Indonesia but increased the number of films imported from India. The decline in Malaysian films has made Indian films dominate the market share of Jakarta's lower-class cinemas. The number of Indian films increased dramatically during the 1950s. The comparison of numbers imported films is in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparative Number of Imported Films in Indonesia

Country	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
America	660	660	675	531	352	423
India	12	?	?	15	74	184
Philippines	3	7	23	20	11	3
Malaya	3	3	27	22	8	6

Source: "Referat Bachtiar Siagian: Kebudayaan", *Harian Rakyat*, 13 April 1957.

Table 3 shows that the number of Indian films has continued to increase since 1952. According to Budi Irawanto, in 1952, the number of Indian films had only 7 titles but rose



sharply to 74 titles in 1954 and 184 titles in 1955 (Irawanto, 2017, p. 97). Table 3 also shows that when Malaysian films dominate the lower-class cinemas in Jakarta, Indian films are unable to compete with them. This is because the composition and musical instruments in Indian films still sound strange to the audience compared to Malay songs. The drastic increase in the number of Indian imported films in 1954, although overall still below the amount of Hollywood films, remains worrying because the market share of Indian films is in the lower-class cinemas of Jakarta. Their audience is much larger when compared to the elite cinema audiences. This concern is also due to the fact that since 1956, the number of Indonesian films produced has declined.

This is what prompted a number of Indonesian film artists who joined the Indonesian Film Artists Association (PARFI) to come to President Sukarno and deliver a resolution related to the import of film (*Sin Po*, 14 Maret 1956). In 1956, Indian films became the main target to be limited in number. This is because Indian films dominate the middle and lower-class cinemas that have a larger audience when compared to the audience in the upper-class cinemas. Protests against the many Indian films that flooded the cinemas in Jakarta were also carried out by PPFII (Persatuan Pengusaha Film Indonesia).

The government approved PPFII's request. They restricted imports of films from India. The government also issued regulations on screentime quotas, obligatory weekend screenings, and minimum hold-over figures for Indonesian films (Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Menteri Koordinator Kompartemen Perhubungan dengan Rakyat). The cinemas in Jakarta are obliged to play at least one Indonesian film title every two months, while in other cities, one Indonesian film title is played each month.

In fact, these rules have not yet become a solution to the difficulties faced by Indonesian films. Problems in the Indonesian film industry were even worse because, in 1957, PPFII members closed all their studios as a form of protest against Indian films, which still dominate, as well as the rising prices of goods, which led to an increase in the amount of money required for a film production (*Indonesia Raya*, 1957). In 1958, it was the turn of American films to be targeted for restrictions on imports. These actions were initiated by SARBUFIS (Sarekat Buruh Film dan Seni Drama). American films were accused of taking up the void left by Indian films after they were restricted (Fahmi, 2022, p. 7). The issue of imported films became more serious. It became a political issue in 1964 with the formation of PAPFIAS (Panitia Aksi Pemboikotan Film Imperialis Amerika Serikat). This PAPFIAS action of boycotting imported films, especially from Hollywood, then succeeded in dissolving AMPAI on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1964, by the Ministry of Trade (Kementerian Perdagangan).

Since the boycott action on imported film from America was launched, none of the cinemas in Jakarta have dared to show American films, although there are several cinemas that still have American films in circulation (have been approved by the Film Censorship Committee for public showing). They do not want to take the risk by showing American films. Riots often occur in cinemas that still show American films (Irawanto, 2017, p. 105). People are becoming reluctant to come to the cinema. Cinemas in Jakarta have also had to experience a shortage of film's stock since the suspension of AMPAI activities. Indonesian film production is unable to meet the needs of the cinemas in Jakarta, so they import films from Russia, West Germany, and China to cover the shortage of stocks (Ardanareswari, 2012, p. 48). Unfortunately, people don't really like these substitute imported films. The quality of those films could not compete with Hollywood films, and the economic conditions have worsened since the early 1960s. People do not want to spend money watching films. All of these became the factors that made cinemas in Jakarta face even worse conditions and struggle to maintain

their existence. The declining interest of the Jakarta public in watching films in cinemas can also be seen from the reduced amount of spectacle tax paid by cinema entrepreneurs in Jakarta to the the government of the Kotapraja Jakarta Raya. It is estimated that the deposited spectacle tax was reduced by up to 50% (*Duta Masyarakat*, 22 Juni 1964).

Various actions that took place from 1956 until the dissolution of AMPAI in 1964, influenced on the condition of the cinemas in Jakarta. Jakarta's cinemas were taken to the dark times. The reduction in imported films caused cinemas to lack of audience. The lack of audience forced many cinemas in Jakarta to close their businesses because they could no longer afford operational costs. The striking conditions experienced by the cinemas in Jakarta have been worsening because of The Coup Attempt of 30 September Movement. At a meeting held by the Ministry of Information (Kementerian Penerangan), The representatives of OPS (Organisasi Perusahaan Sejenis) Bioskop said that the condition of cinemas in Jakarta after the Coup Attempt of 30 September Movement was getting worse. Jakarta previously had 45 cinemas, but at that time there were only 20 of them, the remaining 25 have had to go out of business or change their function to become puppet theaters (*News Yudha Sport & Film*, 28 April 1966).

### **The Competition between Cinema and the *Sandiwara* Performance**

The other form of entertainment available for the people of Jakarta besides cinemas is *Sandiwara*. *Sandiwara* is a form of performing arts as well as entertainment that was first known and popular before the introduction of *gambar ideop* to Indonesia. The layout design of the *Sandiwara* building, which has a balcony area, was then adapted to the concept of building a cinema hall from the beginning of the emergence of cinema buildings until the end of the 1960s. Some cinema buildings in Jakarta even have double functions as cinemas as well as theaters for *stamboel* plays and *comedies* by removing the screen (Jauhari (ed.), 1992, p. 10).

*Sandiwara* experienced its golden times during the reign of the Japanese Occupation because it functioned as a propaganda medium. The popularity of the *Sandiwara* continued into the early 1950s. Just like cinema, *Sandiwara* is considered to have a certain quality as entertainment and is still accessible to the people of Jakarta (*Berita Indonesia*, 20 Februari 1954). Jakarta, as the capital city of the Republic of Indonesia, has always been a favorable destination for several *Sandiwara*'s troupes from other regions to hold performances. Such as the visit of a quite well-known *sandiwara*'s troupe from West Sumatra, *Ratu Asia*, in 1951. Jakarta also has a legendary *sandiwara*'s troupes which is an permanent troupes, *Miss Tjitjih*. *Miss Tjitjih* is still loved by their audience since they always presents a story that is easy to understand, their story tend to be light and emphasizes the story-telling process. The titles of *Miss Tjitjih*'s plays are often made full of sensations to attract the interest of the audience, such as "*Mati Beranak Diliang Kubur*", "*Setan Djembatan Antjol*", "*Sarinah Mati Dua Kali*". *Miss Tjitjih* performance hall is in Kramat-Senen, next to The Rex Cinema.

With the cinema gradually gaining their popularity among the people of Jakarta, *Miss Tjitjih* lost their audience. One of the reason is that their play was performed in Sundanese. Automatically, the audience for *Miss Tjitjih* was limited to those who understood Sundanese. The youngest generation in Jakarta is not interested in Traditional *Sandiwara* like *Miss Tjitjih*. This urgency that has been faced by *Miss Tjitjih* also experienced by other troupes in the mid-1950s. *Sandiwara* lost much of a nationalistic impetus when compared during the early part of century and during The Japanese occupation (Asmara, 1995, p. 166). The number of *Sandiwara* performances in Jakarta is no longer as high as before. *Sandiwara* only held at certain times,

such as at a theater week or at a celebration or for a charity event (the advertisement of *sandiwara* can be seen in Figure 2).

This condition cannot be separated from the increase in the number of cinemas in Jakarta and their popularity, which is increasingly overtaking *sandiwara's* performance. Cinemas in Jakarta not only more numerous but also available in almost all areas of city, making it easy for the audiences to reach them. Its conditions are different from the *sandiwara*, not all groups of people in Jakarta can reach where the plays are shown. *Sandiwara's* performance usually takes place in The Art Building (Gedung Kesenian) and Gelanggang Samudara, which are both not easy to reach at that time (due to lack of public transportation). Ticket prices for *sandiwara's* performances are also more expensive compared to cinemas. Cinema ticket prices are much cheaper. Watching *sandiwara's* performances can cost up to Rp 10,- and the lowest price is Rp 5,-. Even though the price being reduced by the government up to Rp. 5, - and the lowest price is Rp. 3, - it's still more expensive compared to cinemas. In the cinema, people can afford the cheapest tickets in class III cinemas for only Rp. 1,- . Ticket prices for *Sandiwara's* performances are difficult to make as cheap as cinemas because the operational costs of a *Sandiwara* troupe that can reach 100 members are quite expensive.

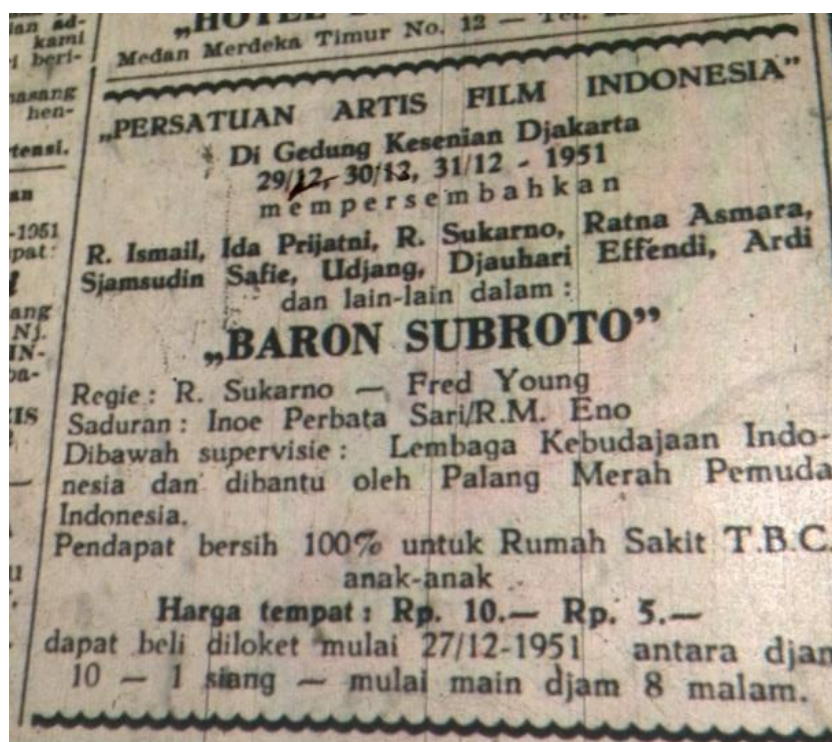


Figure 2. The advertisement of a *sandiwara's* performance for charity was held at the Jakarta Arts Building (Gedung Kesenian Jakarta) presented by Persafi.

Source: *Berita Indonesia*, (1951, 28 December).

The conditions of *Sandiwara* were as terrible as those in Indonesian film industry in the mid of 1950s. Both of them are pressured by the presence of imported films that dominate cinemas in Jakarta. Various attempts were then made by many stakeholders to improve the conditions of *sandiwara*, such as establishing ATNI (Akademi Teater Nasional) in 1956 (Biran, 2009, p. 172). The Association of Indonesian Film Artists (and *Sandiwara*), also known as Persafi, also made great efforts to maintain the viability of *Sandiwara's* troupes by holding

regular performances for charity purposes at the Art Building (Gedung Kesenian), (*Aneka*, 1952).

The government of the Kotapraja Jakarta Raya is also taking part in supporting *Sandiwara's* performances by lowering taxes on their plays and other spectacles such as sports and native people's shows, which are considered weaker than cinemas. The tax was lowered from 40% to 33.5% of gross revenue (*Berita Indonesia*, 12 September 1952). The government of the Kotapraja Jakarta Raya also organizes traveling *sandiwara's* performances to provide entertainment for residents who are unable to go to the cinemas to find some refreshment for themselves after daily routines. The *sandiwara's* performance, which is held by the government of the Kotapraja Jakarta Raya, is also used as a channel for the government to spread any information.

Unfortunately, these efforts are not enough to make a better conditions for *sandiwara's* performance in the mid of 1950s. The people of Jakarta are more interested in watching films at the cinemas. For most of them, watching films at the cinema is not only a way to get the refreshment but also a way to show their existence. It is because the cinema was a symbol of modernity. For the youngest generation in Jakarta, *sandiwara's* performance is less prestigious compared to the cinema. Some people also find that *sandiwara's* performances not that entertaining since their plays are too strange to understand or too spectating because they contain informational interests for the government.

This conditions surprisingly changed in the 1960s. *Sandiwara's* performance was in a better situation while the cinema in Jakarta was facing some struggles. As we know, cinemas in Jakarta have to try hard to survive in the absence of imported films from Hollywood, and also from India and Malaysia. The audiences of cinemas in Jakarta already prefer imported films from Hollywood, and also from India and Malaysia, but due to political and ideological struggles, they were forced to watch the imported films for other country that were not considered not contrary to Indonesia's ideology. The *sandiwara's* performances revived with the attention of the leftists, especially Lekra. Informally affiliated with Indonesia Communist Party (PKI), Lekra encouraged artist to show social commitment in their works (Jurriens, 2013, p.11). Lekra sponsored many *Sandiwara*, which incorporate socialist propaganda into their performances (Asmara, 1995, p. 166). Even though the *sandiwara's* performances are loaded with propaganda purposes aimed at the peasants, laborers, and fishermen, the presence of Lekra has successfully revived *sandiwara's* performances which had been sluggish due to competition with the cinema. Unfortunately, this situation did not last long because of The Coup Attempt of 30 September Movement. Once again, *sandiwara's* performance suffered difficult times. Many of *sandiwara's* troupes were then forced to disband because they were considered or accused of being affiliated with the Lekra. Lekra itself accused of being part of PKI, the mastermind behind the Coup Attempt of 30 September Movement. This accusation was made by the New Order government under President Suharto.

## Conclusions

This study focused on discussing the transformation on the cinemas in Jakarta especially during the 1950-1966. Based on the previous explanation, there are 3 (three) things that can be obtained from this study. *First*, during the period 1950–1966, the cinemas in Jakarta experienced remarkable dynamics. The period 1950–1955 was a golden year for the development of cinema in Jakarta. It began with the inauguration of the most magnificent cinema that later became the pride of the Jakarta community in 1951, the Metropole Cinema. The development of cinemas in Jakarta couldn't be separated from the development of the

national film industries, which also continued to experience development until it reached its peak in 1955 with the successful production of 65 films. The 1950s were also a time when imported films flooded the cinemas in Jakarta. The upper-class cinemas are dominated by western films (Hollywood), while the lower-class cinemas are dominated by Malaysian and Indian films.

*Second*, the development of cinemas in Jakarta did not last long, until 1956. The dominance of imported films in various cinema classes in Jakarta has taken Indonesian film market share, thus becoming an obstacle to the development of national cinema. This then led to a number of actions to limit the number of imported films circulating in order to protect the national film industries. These actions later developed into political acts in 1964–1965. Imported films, especially American and Indian films, were successfully boycotted from the cinemas of Jakarta, but that action had a great impact on cinemas in Jakarta. They must face the threat of a shortage of film stocks. Lack of film stocks and unattractive import-replacement films make the cinemas in Jakarta increasingly secluded from the audience. The situation even became more difficult after The Coup Attempt of 30 September Movement. The imposition of nighttime treatment on the people of Jakarta has made it difficult for the cinemas in Jakarta to stay open at the night. These conditions have caused several cinemas in Jakarta to end their operations or change their functions.

*Third*, the up and down cinema in Jakarta happened in the opposite direction of the *Sandiwara*. When the cinemas in Jakarta are in a growing era, they are able to urge *Sandiwara* performances. Cinema is considered to be more entertaining than *Sandiwara* performances. But, when the cinemas in Jakarta faced a difficult time in 1956–1966, the *Sandiwara* performances, on the contrary, showed their gains in popularity. This cannot be separated from the existence of Lekra which has biggest concern on the traditional art performance. Lekra produces many free *Sandiwara* performances that can reach out to marginal communities for sake of their propaganda. Unfortunately, The Coup Attempt of 30 September Movement, bringing back *Sandiwara's* performance, experienced difficult time, just like the cinema. Some of *Sandiwara* groups have to face charges of involvement with PKI because they are affiliated with Lekra, which is considered to be an *the underbow* of Indonesia Communist Party (PKI).

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