



Sjaman Djaya

Photo: *Sinematek*

IN MEMORIAM: SJUMAN DJAYA (1934-1985)

S. M. Ardan

*Remembering a Pal**

That Friday (July 19, 1985) I didn't go straight home. Leaving the office at about 15.00 (3 in the afternoon), I went to a friend's house in Cijantung. As a result of my talks with that friend I had to go on to another friend's house in Kwitang. It was only then that I returned to my own home in Rawabelong.

Tired from the journey of about 60 kms., even though a friend from the office had driven me round on his motorbike, I received a "blow" as I reached home. How could it be otherwise? My wife greeted me with the words: "Sjuman is dead. The TV-RI has just broadcast it. You've just come home to attend the funeral, haven't you?"

My whole body felt crushed. One of my old pals had died. Only at that moment at 7.30 in the evening was I aware that Sjuman Djaya "had gone forever" at 3.30 that afternoon. He was born in Jakarta on August 5, 1934. (This is according to what he himself wrote when he filled out a biographical form circulated for *Sinematek Indonesia*, although more people give 1933 as the year of his birth.)

Even though his father came from Central Java, still this fifth of eight siblings was bred and brought up in Jakarta, so that "Sjumanjoyo" became "Manjoy" for those close to him. "It is not strange that Sjuman was intimate with Betawi culture, so that several of his films had a Betawi atmosphere, such as *Si Doel Anak Betawi* [Si Doel, Child of Jakarta], *Si Doel Anak Modern* [Si Doel, A Modern Child], and *Pinangan* [The Proposal]," so wrote *Kompas* on July 20, 1985.

I had known Manjoy for more than 30 years since we first went to school together at the Taman Siswa School, at Jl. Garuda No. 25, Jakarta. Even though we were not in the same class, eventually, together with Misbach Y. Biran, we became pals. All because we were given the job of putting on a play for the school celebrations. In accordance with the Taman Siswa principles, "tut wuri handayani [the teacher leads from behind]," a master was appointed director, with Misbach as his assistant.

In the play "Awal dan Mira" by Utuy T. Sontani, Manjoy took the part of Awal, while Mira was played by Savitri (Pity), daughter of the Pujangga Baru poet, Sanusi Pane. My part was that of the Old Man. Because my role was small, I also acted as assistant director. The more so after we "kicked out" the master directing the play. He was still present at the rehearsals in one of the school rooms, but "observed from a distance" while Misbach directed.

* *Sobat* in the Betawi dialect, drawn from the Indonesian *sahabat*.

Still strong among my impressions is the dead man's "sentimentality." Losing his father (1943) when he was not yet quite 10 years old, and then being brought up by his mother, made Manjoy an emotional/romantic person. The role of Awal, who was "hard on the outside but soft within" was easy for him to play, particularly as he was still young, a teenager, a high school student. During the rehearsals Manjoy instructed me towards the end of the play to hum plaintively the song "Bulan Sabit" [Crescent Moon].

Meanwhile our other friends were to keep absolutely quiet. If there was any noise he would stop. And ask for time to "recover." Sometimes this would irritate Misbach, but he couldn't do anything about it. Only in this way could Manjoy satisfactorily portray his role at the moment when Awal is about to go crazy and wreck the stall of Mira, the girl with whom he is secretly in love. In the end Awal/Manjoy "collapsed" after seeing the reality that his love is crippled. Curtain!

At that time too I began writing poems, essays, then short stories, book reviews, and so on. Manjoy and Misbach did so too. We were all members of the "Senen Artists" group who would meet almost every night near the shopping area of Senen (now called the Senen Project). There practitioners of the various arts associated closely with each other. Other "members" included Zulharmans, now General Chairman of the PWI Pusat, and Harmoko, Minister of Information since 1983. In 1956 a collection of my short stories was published, "Terang Bulan Terang Dikali" [Full Moon on the River], where the dialogue is in the Betawi dialect. The same title was given to a film for which I wrote the screenplay together with the director Wim Umboh and where Manjoy took one of the parts.

In 1956 Sjuman Djaya's story "Kerontjong Kemajoran" [Kroncong Music of Kemayoran] was made into a film by [the company] Persari, with the title "Saodah," and I helped Misbach with the screenplay. The plot resembled those of the famous "real life Njai Dasima" story, the special favorite of the Betawi people. His next story "Anakku Sajang" [My Beloved Child] (1957) was also filmed by Persari, and he [Sjuman Djaya] became an assistant to the director, Lilik Sudjio. In 1958 he worked in Persari.

A year later he was sent by the government to take a Preparatory Course at the Moscow State University. From 1960 to 1964 he continued his studies at the All Union State Institute of Cinematography, in Moscow. There he was in the same generation as Ami Prijono. In Moscow he also met Farida Utoyo, the dancer/choreographer who later became his first wife. He graduated "cum laude" with the film "Bajangan" [After-image], based on the story by Erskine Caldwell, the American writer (!).

While he was still one of the "Senen Artists" he wrote a piece for H. B. Jassin's magazine "Kisah." This "Kisah Generation" was led by HBJ to appreciate world literature, including Anton Chekov. He later adapted two of Chekov's stories for the screen, namely "Si Mamad" (1974) and "Pinangan" (1976). He also transformed Hollywood's "West Side Story" (1961) into "Laila Majenun" (1975) set in Jakarta.

Because he had studied in Moscow, Manjoy often came under suspicion. The more so when his films, from the time he directed "Lewat Tengah Malam" [Past Midnight] (1971), contained social criticism, even though "I clearly side with the mass of the people. I am anti-injustice. But I am a nationalist," as he stated (*Kompas*, October 25, 1977).

His style was indeed "Russian" but of the period of the late '50s and early '60s. At the time Manjoy was in Moscow, Soviet films were very poetic

and therefore romantic. That is "post-Stalin" works such as Mikhail Kalatozov's "The Cranes are Flying" (1957), together with Grigori Chukrai's "The Forty First" (1956), and "Ballad of a Soldier" (1959). All these left traces on his work right up to "Kerikil-kerikil Tajam" [Sharp Gravel] (1984), which posthumously won him the Citra Prize for an original screenplay, at the Indonesian Film Festival (FFI), of August 7-10, 1985 in Bandung, West Java.

He had received four previous Citra awards for his screenplay for "Laila Majenun" (FFI 76 Bandung), his screenplay and direction of "Si Doel Anak Modern" (FFI 77 Jakarta), together with his direction of "Budak Nafsu" [Slave of Desire] for the FFI 84 Yogya. At the time of his death Sjuman Djaya was finishing "Jakarta Opera." (The remaining 10 percent of the film is being completed by cameraman Sutomo Gandasubrata.) In his final film he returned again to Jakarta, the town he knew so well. As a film-maker "his concept was clear down to the last drop of blood," according to Ami Prijono, someone who was very close to him.

Of the statements on Sjuman Djaya's passing, I agree with that of Film Composer Idris Sardi (winner of 6 Citra prizes including one for "Budak Nafsu"): "He was a real Betawi humorist. His humor was characteristically laced with Betawi swearwords, for he was really a child of Jakarta. When he returned with a degree from Moscow his character had not changed; he was still the same Sjuman Djaya I had always known." (*Suara Karya*, July 20, 1985.)

In this connection, I got a story from the actor Ismed M. Noor (of Minang background but a Betawi person!), a backer of "Pedjuang" [The Fighter], who accompanied that film to the International Festival in Moscow in 1961. Manjoy sought out Ismed (1933-1975). Why? Because of his longing ("*kangen*") to speak Betawi. When he returned from studying cinematography in Russia, he also came to my home. He invited me to Jalan Kotabumi No. 1, the house where he lived until his death. That night he drove us around aimlessly in his car. We had spirited ("*uplek*") discussions in Betawi. During them I told him the joke that had circulated among the "Senen Artists" group concerning his departure for Moscow. To study in the Soviet Union he had to learn Russian. Because of the difficulty of that language the artists imagined that when he returned from Moscow "si Manjoy" would still not be able to speak Russian, but on the other hand "would have forgotten how to talk Betawi." So what language would he use? Only "a-a...u-u" like Tarzan. Right away Manjoy burst into roars of laughter.

Around the time of the National Film Appreciation Week, August 9-16, 1967, I went to see him at the Department of Information. Because I was meeting a government official--for at that time he was Director of the Film Directorate--I acted very respectfully towards him in front of his subordinates. But Manjoy shouted at me, "Hey, you crook--come on in!" Ah, he was a Betawier through and through.

After 1971, when he became a film director, I didn't meet him very often any more. From 1973 he became President Director of the "Matari Film" Company which produced such good, serious films as "Bulan Diatas Kuburan" [Moon over the Graveyard] (1973, director: Asrul Sani), "Atheis" (1974), "Kabut Sutra Ungu" [Mist of Purple Silk] (1979). This last was the most popular film of 1980-81.

One of our rare meetings was when I visited his house while he was preparing to make "Kabut Sutra Ungu" which was based on Ike Supomo's novel. The servant asked me to wait in the guest room, and I sat there for a long time. I thought he was still asleep. And in fact it was not very late in the morning.

My guess turned out to be quite wrong. When I was invited to enter, it was clear he was deep in thought standing close to the wall over which water passed to the small pond below. The splashing of the water recalled the free world of the mountains. Ah, he was still a romantic. As I was leaving he gave me the text of his screenplay for "Kabut Sutra Ungu." On the first page he had written, "For my pal, S. M. Ardan."

These are the reflections of a "pal" on the "pal" he had known as Manjoy.

Jakarta, August 22, 1985