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Collaborative Filmmaking with Traditional Performers in Highland Java:
A Practice-Based PhD Thesis

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2019

Declaration of Authorship

I, Tito Imanda, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:



Date: 2 November 2017

Acknowledgment Page

This is not the end of the road, but at this point I would like to express my special gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Gareth Stanton, for his patience and support. He flew a thousand miles to attend a conference in my faraway country. He visited my city, went to my fieldwork site and met my informants. Moreover, at the end of my study he showed me an article about magic that inspired me to make the film about magic that became the final work in this collaborative project. If I can be a dissertation supervisor in the future, I want to be like him. I would also like to thank my other supervisor, Professor Tony Dowmunt, for continuously providing useful references and resources for this project. His support was priceless. I also want to express my gratitude to various members of staff at Goldsmiths' Media and Communications Department: Dr Richard MacDonald, Robert Smith, Dr Rachel Moore and Dr Mirca Madianou. My thanks also go to my examiners, Dr Felicia Hughes-Freeland and Professor Matthew Isaac Cohen, who brought me back to the local performance traditions and provided me with fresh inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the process of collaboration with a Javanese traditional performance group in adapting their work to film. The project has both practical and research goals. The practical goal is to collaborate with a traditional performance group from a rural area, and help facilitate their exploration of a new medium and to express themselves through film. The research goal of this project is to record, understand and analyze the process, while laying the groundwork for further collaborations and research in other contexts and with different communities. The underlying research question for this thesis is: “how does collaboration contribute and facilitate the group’s adaptation of its aesthetics and artistic expression to film?”

To answer that question, it is important to first understand the group itself as local collaborators, including their members, their identities, their problems and needs, and the role of other villagers. The thesis establishes that the group has a long tradition and history, particularly in performance arts, and the village community is constantly in tension with ongoing social, political, and ecological changes, which often provide inspiration for the themes and contents of their films. The next aim is to understand the development of collaboration between the rural farmer-artists and their urban filmmaker-academic collaborators: the backbone of this thesis. We can see here that building “common ground” between collaborators from different contexts is a long and challenging process. Another important theme of the thesis is exploration of the adaptation process of performance arts to film, and how the years of collaboration shapes this process and its products. Here we can see that it is specific cultural values –not lack of access or sophistication– that drive the Tjipta Boedaja dancers towards particular film production methods as well as particular messages. When we look closely at the aesthetics of the films produced, we observed how they represent the group’s and the village’s culture, and the members’ and the villagers’ identities as well as the new set of film aesthetics that emerged from the collaboration. The local collaborators relate their techniques and approaches to storytelling to the varieties of local performances. Film in this context is largely determined by the complexities of the locale and its aesthetics and audience preferences. Finally, the project works with the group’s latest film productions, exploring what the collaborators had learned from the long collaboration process, adaptation of filmmaking methods, and establishment of film aesthetics. At this point, the thesis offers empirical confirmation that the filmmaking collaboration between two factions from different backgrounds must establish trust, build complex insights into all the collaborators’ cultures and power relations, and foster willingness for intensive investigation of the most salient local aesthetics and messages possible.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Background

This thesis is a study of a collaborative filmmaking project with a performance art company the members of which also work as farmers and attempt to retain their traditional links with the land. The project aimed to produce films that explored community identities and enabled community members to fight for important causes impacting on their lives. The project resulted in the production of a range of films (mostly shorts). This thesis attempts to evaluate the collaboration practices as they evolved and studies the traditional group's adaptation process as the collaboration developed and matured. It also aspires to identify the aesthetic choices made in the production of these films and proposes an overview of the mutually negotiated journey represented by the project as a whole. The group in question is Tjipta Boedaja. They are located in a small hamlet called Tutup Ngisor, in the region of Magelang, located in the province of Central Java, thirty five kilometres from Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The thesis is focused on identifying local ways of filmmaking, developing traditions, and examining adaptation to media technology and film collaboration practice.

The project is an interaction of practice and research. The practice element consists of the series of film workshops and productions in which I (working with different urban-based filmmakers) collaborate with the group to explore film aesthetics based on their life and art as well as their statements on issues of identity, tradition, and social changes. As a research element, I observe, describe, and analyse the collaboration process and the results of practice. In the process, early research findings help collaborators to decide the direction of the practice side. Through discussions, film workshops, and film productions, collaborators explore the filmmaking methods and film styles that are most suitable for the group's need to express its art and views on the world. As the producer in this process (and, several times, as director), I facilitate the process, but as an ethnographer, I observe and analyse these engagements.

My curiosity regarding this subject began when I visited and met these performers in 2008, after reading some articles about them in a Jakarta newspaper. The hamlet of Tutup Ngisor is located at the foot of Mount Merapi, one of the most active volcanoes in the world. The group, Tjipta Boedaja, promotes Magelang-style

folk dances, but is mostly famous for *wayang wong* or *wayang orang*, an opera-like staged dance-drama that had only been found in the Javanese royal courts until the end of the nineteenth century. While dancers accept performance invitations, income from their art does not cover daily needs. All members are required to continue farming, and they make most of their living from agriculture. As an agricultural community situated very close to an active volcano, the group initially used their artistic performances as rituals to guarantee safety from volcanic eruptions and to enhance farming yields, but later the art also came to explore the group's close connection to the environment and constitutes a commentary on the lives of marginalized farmers and peasants.

When I visited Tjipta Boedaja in 2008 and learned that the group did not have any visual documentation of its performances, I offered to record their performances, produce documentaries, and train them to use video equipment so they could record themselves. The performers accepted my offer, as they realized the benefit of having audio-visual documentation of their works. I thus travelled between Jakarta, 550 kilometres away, where I was teaching at a university, and the village to provide a basic filmmaking workshop. When the workshop finished, I left the community with basic film equipment, letting them produce their own films and make most of the artistic decisions. The first five short films that were produced constituted strong statements about their identities. Soon, these artists—especially those with good networks and experiences outside the village—realized that film is another solid medium for artistic exploration and expression and as they were eager to initiate longer and more intense film productions. It thus felt natural to begin filmmaking collaborations with them.

The initial process, with its sporadic experiences and insights, convinced me of the need to sit down and properly plan a follow up project. I decided to use this project as part of my PhD programme, and the project's practical and experimental nature led me to start a practice-based PhD programme in 2013. This first set of films and productions became a model for bigger film workshops and productions, which began in 2014. The project grew beyond simply helping the group create audio-visual documentation and became an exploration of modern technology's ability to support the existence of traditional culture.

The project has required in-depth understanding of and strong camaraderie with the artists. After the initial workshop and productions, I mainly travelled to

and from the village to record performances and build rapport. In mid-2014, I moved with my family to Yogyakarta so I could spend as much time as possible in the village. To some extent, my project is highly experimental, but the collaboration process has required holistic and qualitative comprehension. As someone with an anthropology background, I have positioned myself as an ethnographer doing fieldwork. I have tried to become involved in village life, beyond the need of the project, to ensure—among other things—that the project does not destabilize the villagers' fundamental needs as farmers, peasants, and artists to serve their specific livelihoods, customs, and culture.



Figure 1. Position of Central Java in the Map of Indonesia.

1.2. Situating the Project in an Indonesian Context

From a practical point of view, this project explores the possibility of supporting traditional artists through two overlapping issues: developing capacity and expressing discourses, engaging mass media to represent local cultures and marginalized voices. In the case of Indonesia, the transition from centralized media control under a totalitarian regime to a liberal media policy after political reform (*Reformasi*) has shown that many things must still be done to get to "democratic media". For most of its history, the mass media in Indonesia has been used as a form of political control. Populations are generally thought of as passive audiences, objects that can be manipulated by means of radio and television programmes, propagandistic movies, and a controlled press. Different laws and policies have regulated the production, distribution and exhibition of film since the colonial era,

reflecting anxiety over cinema's power over audiences' political thinking (see Sen and Hill, 2000). This has changed in recent years. Political reform in 1998 was marked by a wave of independent short film productions in Indonesia (Van Heeren, 2012, p. 53). Permit systems for filmmakers are now concerned with the arrangements for shooting in public spaces and the proper business procedures for establishing film companies. Control of political content is no longer the aim. Moreover, the Indonesian government has become more relaxed in accepting different cultural values. Previously, the constitution gave the government a mandate to choose the best arts, traditions, and other cultural elements to represent a national culture (Article 32 and its elucidation, the 1945 Indonesian constitution). Since the political reform of 1998, Article 32 has been amended to read "The state shall advance the national culture of Indonesia ... by assuring the freedom of society to preserve and to develop cultural values" (Article 32, the Amended 1945 Indonesian constitution, 2002). This has helped open recognition of local cultures.

After the beginning of reform, new media corporations have accumulated more power, soon reigniting the trauma of previous repression in the minds of young filmmakers. Discussion of and struggles pertaining to the representation of local values have thus occurred in all media and creative products. The increasing sophistication of media technologies, increased access to digital filmmaking equipment, and various video activism projects, film workshops, and media literacy programs have created and are creating an increased number of film communities across the archipelago. Van Heeren observes that most of the films screened at local film festivals in the early 2000's were "... rather unsophisticated and unprofessional" (2012, p. 55). However, many film communities began to emphasize localities, something that Jakarta-based corporations were less inclined to do at the time (ibid, p. 54).

In Indonesia, media corporations and the government show relatively little interest in local arts, crafts and traditions, despite their popularity for local audiences at the regency or province level. Even today, if we look at the rural villages around Mount Merapi in Central Java, traditional art performances still attract enormous crowds (see also Hobart, 2010, p. 68). The popularity of such performances can be both a relief and a frustration. On the one hand, these performances might not need what cultural activists, advocates, and scholars term cultural "preservation" or "revitalisation". On the other hand, there are strong

tendencies for these local traditions—no matter how popular—to be kept outside mainstream media infrastructures. These days, we can witness regional youth radio programmers who prefer to use the Jakartan dialect, tribal adolescents who go to urban tattoo parlours and get tattoos with western designs, or restaurants that focus on international and urban cuisine while local foods are sold in temporary stalls, or tents, and from push carts.

Meanwhile, when it comes to Indonesian cinema, despite the arguably more relaxed censorship atmosphere since reform, the most intense discussion laments the almost total absence of films which find their inspiration in local social, political and cultural particularities (see Sasono, 2005). Such discussions usually conclude that, aside from the strong domination of a Hollywood-affiliated cinema chain which allocates only relatively few slots for local films, feature film production in Indonesia today follows a simple market logic, assuming that spectators prefer light entertainment and universal values. As in many other countries, Hollywood products dominate Indonesian movie theatres. To secure income from countries with different cultures, Hollywood companies produce more films with universal content and fewer movies with local stories (see Herman, 1995, p. 7 and Baker, 2002, p. 227). In the past decades, we have witnessed Hollywood productions' success at topping box office returns in different countries, as well as various local governments desperately trying to protect their cinemas. However, plenty of best-selling Indonesian films have arguably used local (Indonesian) issues to attract more spectators. Sukardi (2001, p. xi) notes that a similar situation pertained in the 1950s. We have also heard success stories from Bollywood, Korea, and China, in which local products outshine the Hollywood offerings. This gives further support to the idea that the right local content can provide greater appeal for local film spectators.

Expressions of local and marginal voices in cinema have been seen in many parts of the world. Feature films such as *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001), *Whale Rider* (2002), and *Ten Canoes* (2006) show that such films can communicate the sentiments and worldviews of marginal(ized) communities and yet still gain international recognition (Wood, 2008, pp. 7, 53–54). Houston Wood describes such films representing native or indigenous people as 'indigenous cinema'. Wood believes that one important characteristic of indigenous cinema is the motivation to reinforce native cultures and raise audiences' awareness of their specific issues and

needs (ibid, p. 2, 68). He specifies that "pure" indigenous films are written, directed, acted, and produced by indigenous people and contain local content (ibid, p. 67) that reflects specific local storytelling traditions (ibid, p. 1).

The project, seen in this light, serves to support Tjipta Boedaja artists in the creation of something related to Wood's designation 'indigenous films' in the specific sense that the practical problem that provoked it is that of the traditional artists' marginal position. Until now they have been excluded and unheard by both processes of development and by the profit-oriented media industry. The project's practical goal is to collaborate with traditional performance artists to explore alternative media for their performances and to tell their stories through film. Meanwhile, the research goal is to record, understand, and analyse the collaboration process, in the hope of laying groundwork for further research or for similar work with other communities.

Owing to its rich traditions and local cultures, Indonesia has significant potential for a creative economy—at least, this is the refrain promoted by high ranking bureaucrats and entrepreneurs such as Triawan Munaf, the Head of BEKRAF, the Indonesian Creative Economy Agency (2018, p. 3). In reality, there is a gap between the ideal of promoting and using local cultural traditions and the (lack of) actual efforts to do it. With the exception of textiles and handicrafts, very few programmes provide for greater access to traditional artists or enhance their capacity. This project then tries to fill this gap and the collaboration with its combination of film workshops, discussions, and film productions, aims to give filmmaking experience to traditional artists and enable them to develop film portfolios.

1.3. Research Problems and Questions

Central to the project is the belief that filmmaking collaboration between urban filmmakers and rural/traditional performance artists can help the latter adapt to new media and reach a wider audience. Since the project explores its research questions through collaborative practice, practical activities and goals are very important. The goals of this project's practice side are (1) arriving at a collaboration model that supports traditional artists in the exploration and experiencing of the possibilities of a new medium, (2) creating a portfolio of several short films as part of the film learning process, and (3) producing films that voice the group's cultural

or political vision, to which members of Tjipta Boedaja and residents of Tutup Ngisor can relate. As such, aside from this written report, the project's other output includes several films from different stages of the collaboration process.

Meanwhile, on the research side, the goal of this project is to understand the collaboration process itself and to attempt to grasp and explain the impact of collaboration between urban academics/filmmakers and rural dancers. The central research question is: how does collaboration contribute to and facilitate Tjipta Boedaja's adaptation of its aesthetics and forms of expression to film? To answer that question, we must understand the local collaborators as well as the collaboration process itself. This will give us insight into the point in the process when rural collaborators start taking ownership of film and filmmaking as well as the aesthetics of the resulting films, and the representation of these people through these films' content. The remainder of this chapter reviews the literature on these topics.

Several specific issues derive from the central research question. The first of these is the obligation to understand members of Tjipta Boedaja and the residents of Tutup Ngisor hamlet, whose aesthetics, values, and performative actions are transformed through this collaborative project into films. There is an urgent need to examine such films from the perspective of the social processes of their production. We must attempt to grasp them as cultural products, or, in William Lempert's words, understand them as aspects of "critical identity discourse" (2012, p. 29). For this, we must identify methods which enable us to understand traditional artists as our collaborators and help us to answer questions related to such issues as their identities and contexts, that shine light on their version of Javanese and local culture, as well as grasping the bigger challenges that their arts and rituals face in the changing world. This will be the task of the second chapter which will present a detailed description of the group Tjipta Boedaja and the villagers of Tutup Ngisor.

The second issue to be understood is the collaboration process in general: how collaborators with cultural differences work together to build the project. It is essential in this regard to strike a balance between the practical and the research parts of the project. We also need to find a form of collaboration for film production that can be a model for similar projects elsewhere. In this regard there are many questions to be asked and challenges to be overcome. Trust must be built between the collaborating parties, despite various forms of inequality which exist,

around power, authority and resources, for example. Conflicting ideas need to be managed and gaps between local and foreign procedures need to be bridged while a sense of shared responsibility is maintained. Chapter three will address these issues of collaboration.

The next pressing issue involves the early filmmaking activities and understanding the traditional artists' process of learning and adapting to film. That is to say how they explore film and mould it as a medium to serve their purposes, and how the collaboration shapes this process. Such questions are related to the complications of, as well as opportunities provided by, new technologies and procedures including the language of film itself. How is it that traditional artists adapt to filmmaking, and the roles of urban collaborators in accelerating the learning process? This is the focus of chapter four.

A fourth important issue relates to the evaluation of the aesthetics of film products and the role of collaboration in shaping them. This refers to technical aspects of content presentation—camera arrangement and movement, *mise en scene*, sound, editing, and storytelling—as well as the bargaining process behind them. The thesis therefore explores the role of specific genres and the potential of distinctive film aesthetics as they are engaged with by the traditional performers in the process of collaboration. This process involves negotiating different film aesthetics options and navigating their compatibility with traditional performance techniques. This will be the focus of chapter five.

The thesis concludes by focussing in chapter six on the final two films produced by the collaboration. The analysis considers the content of the films themselves as well as their reception both within the village and beyond, as well as providing pointers to potential future forms of collaboration.

Table 1: Timetable of the Collaboration and Thesis Writing

Year		2008	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
Semester		2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
#	Activities																			
1	Introductory meeting	✓																		
2	First film workshop	✓	✓																	
3	First 5 film productions	✓	✓																	
4	Film workshop and		✓	✓																

	productions for children																			
5	Urban collaborators recorded events, performances, interviews		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
6	Local collaborators involved in recordings			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
7	Local collaborators did recordings by themselves							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Recording special performance by senior members 1								✓											
9	<i>Mother Earth</i> production												✓							
10	<i>Mother Earth</i> post-production												✓	✓						
11	Experiencing film production with other collaborator													✓						
12	<i>Petruk Jadi Raja</i> production														✓					
13	<i>A Short Reunion</i> pre-production and production															✓	✓			
14	<i>Grandpa's Amulet</i> production																		✓	
15	<i>Neighbours</i> production																		✓	✓
16	PhD started											✓								
17	Writing chapter 1, 2											✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Writing chapter 3, 4												✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
19	Writing chapter 5													✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20	Writing chapter 6																✓	✓	✓	✓

1.4. The Need for Ethnography

This section of the thesis singles out ethnography as one of the main research methods used in the project. As a research method it has been central to the exploration of the Tjipta Boedaja artists and the residents of Tutup Ngisor in chapter 2. The project is a mix of arts and social science, or, more precisely, a combination of film production, film studies, social anthropology and media studies. However, ethnography as a method is crucial for understanding Tutup

Ngisor villagers, the Tjipta Boedaja group and the collaboration activities. As such, this written thesis starts with anthropological and social science elements.

Media scholars such as Nick Couldry and Mark Hobart have long discussed the importance of media practice research. Couldry emphasizes the need for "media-related practice", a new paradigm of media studies that "treats media as the open set of practices relating to, or oriented around, media" (2010 [2004], p. 36). He encourages the application of action and practice theories from sociology and anthropology (ibid, p. 38), abandoning functionalism (ibid, pp. 43–45), being more open to a greater variety of media practice (ibid, pp. 45–47) and understanding the hierarchy of different media practices (ibid, pp. 47–50). Meanwhile, Hobart reminds us that practice is not a natural object that can be easily observed, but rather a frame of reference that can be used to understand a complex reality. Some important questions posed by Hobart relate to forms of objectivity traditionally embraced by the social sciences: are researchers ready to position themselves as equal to their subjects, as encouraged by postcolonial traditions? If so, "does the account of practice include the researcher's own practices and *milieux*?" (2010, pp. 56–57). To understand this complicated reality, he emphasizes the use of ethnography (ibid, pp. 58, 61, 63).

Ethnography is "a particular method or set of methods which in its most characteristic form ... involves the ethnographer participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions—in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of research" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 1). Clifford Geertz calls for these reports to be a "thick description" (1973, p. 6) of the stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures experienced by the researcher (ibid, p. 7).

It has not been easy to follow Hobart's recommendation, to tick each of the requirements in Hammersley and Atkinson's list or to fulfil Geertz' requirements in using ethnography as one of the main methods in this research. Ethnography requires a comprehension of intricate relationships, complicated situations, and subtle messages within the collaborative film production. However, ethnographic studies of film activities have been available since the early 1950s, when Hortense Powdermaker began to use the approach to understand the film production practices in Hollywood. She lived for one year in Los Angeles, conducting interviews,

observing shootings, and attending guild meetings and film community parties to collect her data (1950, pp. 3–7). She focussed on such questions as the influence of the Hollywood social system on film products and the relationships between the film industry and the society that consumes its products (ibid, p. 9). A more recent application of ethnography to the practice of filmmaking and, in particular, indigenous filmmaking, is the work of Michael Robert Evans. He used ethnography in his study of Isuma, the Inuit film production group that produced *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001). He believed that this approach helps him understand the Inuit better than other methods (2008, p.8). As such, he spent nine months in Igloolik, observing and interviewing members of the Inuit community, this coincided with the time in which *Atanarjuat* was produced (ibid, pp. 8–9).

As Hobart encourages researchers to free themselves from the objective traditions, media scholar David Morley also highlights the reflexive feature in ethnography that requires researchers to share their accounts with their subjects (2007, p. 80) and later with their readers. Morley reminds us that an ethnographic approach requires every researcher to behave as "a person, at a human level". When staying and living within a community, it is paramount to ensure that subjects trust that the researchers come in good faith and engage in a reciprocal (rather than exploitative) relationship with them (ibid, p. 72). We will discuss ethnography and its collaborative consequences in section 1.5.

Meanwhile, the topic of researchers studying their own practices is central to practice-based research, particularly in contemporary arts, where researchers' processing and evaluation of their own practices in producing artworks is emphasized to see the "interrelationship that exists between theory and practice and the relevance of theoretical and philosophical paradigms" (Barrett, 2007, p. 1). As explained above, this project with Tjipta Boedaja combines a practical project with research as one of its products. As the producer for all of the film productions discussed here, my main role has been both to ensure that this collaboration can finish its films and that members of Tjipta Boedaja can obtain filmmaking experience, have a film portfolio, and produce films that represent them. As a researcher, I need to observe what collaborators are doing so that I can later analyse these practices.

Over the course of this project, I have had plenty of assistance from professional filmmakers as collaborators (see chapter 2). Because I was building a

film school at around the same time I began my interactions with these dancers, I received encouragement to hold film production workshops similar to those usually held on campus. In many of my visits to the village before I started the PhD program, I had been accompanied by a group of my film students, hoping that these urban middle-class future filmmakers, apart from helping me with the current project, would benefit from these trips to rural areas and very different ways of life. The lecturer responsible for the acting and performance classes in the film school, Nosa Nurmanda, assisted me constantly in the first half of this project. After going back and forth for one year between 2009 and 2010, he decided to make this group the subject of his master's thesis in anthropology, focusing on the group's openness and playful attitude regarding outside influences (i.e. the globalization process). I assisted and supported him in the data collection process, and he finished his study in December 2012. In some parts of this thesis, I cite his master's dissertation, mostly for historical and cultural data about this group. In the latter part of the project, more specifically after 2014 when Nurmanda was already occupied with other activities, I had my (by-then graduated) students to assist me. I also received the assistance of filmmakers from Yogyakarta, where the filmmaking scene has flourished over the past few years. Another big contribution came from Saparno, a dancer-collaborator who had started his bachelor's degree in visual communication at the beginning of this project and has since graduated. One of the films we produced over the course of this collaboration was his final project.

Tjipta Boedaja appears to have all the necessary skills required to use film for their aesthetic, cultural, or even political needs. This is an art community which routinely tells stories in performances that can last for five hours or more and are performed in front of community spectators and some keen followers. They have a certain level of authority and reputation within regency-level performance art scenes, and arguably have an international reputation in certain respects, as shown from international academic researchers' interest in their performances. They have deep knowledge and skill in dramaturgy, composition, art, lighting, production management, music, and sound. They know the old traditions of Javanese arts as well as local cultures. They maintain a children's performance group as a regeneration system for their own group, and exhibit the willingness to learn new things and achieve new forms of expression through their art. As such, I was confident the group met all the requirements needed to produce meaningful films.

1.5. Collaborative Projects and Collaborative Research

This section discusses requirements of the collaborative (action) project and collaborative research, which will be elaborated further in chapter 3. In her book *Creative Collaborations*, Vera John-Steiner defines intellectual and artistic collaboration as "the interdependence of thinkers in the co-construction of knowledge" (2000, p. 1). Collaborative research actively involves the research subject in the process of study. As defined by Carolin Fluehr-Lobban:

"[C]ollaborative research... is research that involves research participants/ collaborators as partners in the research process. ... Collaborative research involves the people who are studied in an active way, as individuals or groups having vested interests in the project through their participation in the research design, execution, publication, and outcomes potentially related to community or individual improvement of well-being." (2008, p. 175).

While there are different necessities for collaborative projects and collaborative research, they share some commonalities. Generally, collaboration can be effective when there is a shared vision and goals between partners (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 9). Creative collaboration, moreover, requires discipline changes and paradigm transformations that could only happen from complementarity in participants' perspectives, skills, training, and enthusiasm for each other's contributions (ibid, p. 64). Meanwhile, Fluehr-Lobban reminds us that research collaboration requires "a literate, socially conscious set of partners" who can actively criticize the project progress (2008, p. 175). Collaborative research in social science between academics and their subjects is built around the subjects' agendas (Rappaport, 2008, p. 2), based on the willingness to listen to unheard voices and understand groups with lesser social power than the academics' own (Ortner, 2013, p. 25).

For this particular project, I also believe that practical collaboration with Tjipta Boedaja must be built around its own agendas. Along with David Morley's emphasis noted in the previous section on the need for reflexive research—that is, having qualities of "[s]elf-interrogation and the awareness of the relativity of one's own point of view" (De Groof, 2013, p. 110)—the collaborative filmmaking project with Tjipta Boedaja also requires group members to be active in determining their wants and needs, creating strategies, and deciding on the aesthetics and content of each film. A collaborative project like this requires group members' willingness as well as a perfect understanding about what they will be doing. From the outset, I

have done my best to explain different procedures and their consequences if group members participate in this project. Thus far, the relationship between me and these dancers and villagers (or even with other collaborators from the city, when needed) has been strong over time, and we have tried our best to communicate every risk, concern, and potential problem. The people in the village have invited urban collaborators to eat breakfast, lunch, or dinner at their homes, and after several years we have heard remarks that suggest that I and the other team members from urban areas are already regarded as part of the dance-company or even part of the group's extended family.

Questions of collaboration and the forms that it takes have become increasingly central in discussions of ethnographic practice. As Hammersley and Atkinson have noted, while researchers must take the political implications of their work seriously, the main goal of the research is still to create knowledge (2007, p. 18). Writers such as James L. Peacock, however, have suggested that an increasing number of scholars have positioned collaboration as their central goal. He elaborates, "[a] reason for this shift is a move from research to applied work, with 'applied' being a facet of a larger focus on social issues" (2008, p. 164), and as "the ethnographic aspect has been less, the action aspect is more prominent" (ibid, p. 166). This project leans in this direction, with the focus on collaborating to make film as its backbone matching farmer-dancers with urban filmmakers and academics as participants or collaborators to make films (as practice) and produce films with aesthetic and cultural meanings representing the farmer-dancers (as research).

For Fluehr-Lobban, collaborations are usually the obvious choice when initiated from a common ground- when participation is voluntary, participants are informed, targets are negotiated, methods are open to discussion, progress is reciprocal, and there is a clear set of mutual interests and benefits between collaborators (2008, p. 176). Fluehr-Lobban's discussion of collaborative research helps us to shed light on the procedures necessary for participants to build mutual trust. These include knowing that the project is in all of the collaborators' best interests. This generates a shared responsibility for finishing the project. She also suggests that negotiation in collaboration should include a clear agreement of "mutual interests, rights, responsibilities, and potential joint outcomes" (ibid, p. 179). For this film production project, there has been a need for initial talks and

careful negotiations about common ground of interests and the consequences of each film production, as well as how this project benefits all collaborators as individuals and as a group. In this case, discussion of possible negative side effects for collaborators, for Tjipta Boedaja, or even Tutup Ngisor hamlet as a community, was also necessary.

To avoid conflict between practical and research needs, good rapport must also be established between collaborators while still balancing the researcher's need for information. Constant acrobatic manoeuvres are undertaken by the researcher to be fully committed to the practical project while simultaneously keeping sufficient distance to explain observed phenomena. Meanwhile, local community agendas sometimes require other activities that fit their long-term goals, which may conflict with the specific collaboration project timeline. As such, constant negotiation is required.

Peacock emphasises that the division between doing and reporting in collaborative projects is unclear. However, for him, it is still possible to do everything at once.

"Obviously problems arise, aside from the kinds of conflicts I've noted. A basic one is the clash between reporting and doing or relating. When and how does the ethnographic goal of reporting interfere with relationships and goals of practice, accomplishing things in the world?" (2008, p. 167).

"... but it is logically feasible. A simple model is the clinician in an academic hospital who examines and treats a patient while interns and residents watch, thus combining teaching, research, and service in one act of a certain collaboration. The obvious question for the clinician, as for the fieldworker, is to what extent the act is a true synergy in which the collaborations enhance all elements—teaching, research, and service—and does not diminish any one by including the other. Ethnographers can learn from the analogy of the clinician if they wish to seek situations in which they are "healing" in some sense while learning and teaching. The recent push for a collaborative ethnography should lead us to such situations" (ibid, p. 168).

Rappaport adds that researchers being from the same culture as subjects would make collaboration feasible, since they "feel themselves to be part of the social realities they are studying, leading them to share a sense of citizenship with their subjects" (2008, p. 3).

Being a professional from a cosmopolitan city trying to reconnect with traditional values with help of the locals, Indonesian anthropologist Rhino

Ariefiansyah (2011) calls for moments of meetings and moments of reflection, requiring collaborators to meet repeatedly in order to reach agreements. In my case, even if people might say that I am a Javanese man just like these artists, they are still unique characters with a very different background. I was raised in a metropolitan suburb, hundreds of kilometres from Tutup Ngisor or Yogyakarta, and to some extent I still face a language barrier. My Javanese family background equipped me with values similar to those of the artists, but there are still significant gaps in my local cultural context in particular and the Javanese culture in general. I need to learn many things to be considered a "true Javanese". However, my position might help me better see the bigger picture, and I can say that these gaps have helped my subjects and I constantly exchange new insights.

What, then, is the right model of collaboration in filmmaking? Rhino Ariefiansyah and Hestu Prahara believe that collaborative filmmaking does not follow a fixed model; an ideal format depends on each project's time, space, and agency (2012, p. 22). These scholars have made two collaborative ethnographic films in two areas and with two sets of local partners, focusing on ways that farmers revitalize traditional methods of farming and negotiate with modern agricultural officers. For them, one of the most important features of collaboration is it being part of a long-term affiliation; the end of one project is only a new beginning for another collaboration (ibid, p. 21). Urban collaborators who work with Tjipta Boedaja dancers must ensure that their activities are in line with their identities, traditions, and future aspirations.

1.6. Owning Film and Filmmaking

This section introduces the issues that are further elaborated in Chapter Four: those of the adaptation to film as a new media. Exploration of the new medium brings us to two sets of problems: the first involves Tjipta Boedaja dancers' interest and capacity to produce art and make statements through a new medium, while the second involves the process of Tjipta Boedaja applying film production principles for their own purposes. The film production process and interviews in later stages revealed that, in regard to film, Tjipta Boedaja dancers continued referring to their own dance and stage performances. The problem is that film traditions, which generally have been developed in the West, require strategies that

differ significantly from the ways in which Tjipta Boedaja has conducted their performances in the past.

The project revealed that Tjipta Boedaja dancers saw learning film and filmmaking as just another new challenge, a process of learning and adapting something new—as common in Tjipta Boedaja's history. Matthew Cohen believes that performing arts traditions in Indonesia are products of interactions of local and external factors (2016, p. xx), and he notes that premodern performances in Indonesia indicate elements of foreign culture (ibid, p. 5). It is obvious that Tjipta Boedaja's *wayang wong* tradition uses the European-style Proscenium stage, performs stories from the Indian epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, and sometimes conveys messages from Islamic traditions. The eclectic spirit remains in the film collaboration workshop, and the use of such foreign elements makes the films produced "hybrid works", to borrow the term used by anthropologist Faye Ginsburg to refer to filmic works that combine influences from the filmmakers' own lives and from the outside world (1994, p. 366).

One of the biggest gaps between Western traditions and Tjipta Boedaja traditions was found in management. Film production management applies stricter job descriptions and a more systematic organisation style. Previously, with their stage productions, Tjipta Boedaja dancers have usually employed a Javanese community management style that emphasises togetherness, openness, and familial values, termed *gotong royong* (Dana, Sudewi, and Ratnaningtyas, 2015, p. 65). We can see these differences in their decisions about the division of labour and authority. In film and stage productions, the producer is the one in charge. In the commercial *wayang wong* troupes active in the 1980s, the stage manager was the one who handled everyday arrangements (Susilo, 1984, pp. 119–120). Meanwhile, in Tjipta Boedaja, we did not find any terms for management positions, even though some personnel were responsible for managing the productions. There was also a gap in allocating authority. As the people who manage the productions are usually young, frequently they have no authority over the older dancers. In Javanese *gotong royong*, most decisions are made through group meetings, and older members might make the last decision. Doing film production, we would find several group members seemed involved in many tasks, others seemed to wait for others to do their own tasks, others would think they were in charge, and so on.

Meanwhile, minimal preparations and rehearsals was one of the most persistent problems in this collaboration. The rational Western-style filmmaking process prefers a well-planned production process. Meanwhile, Tjipta Boedaja is used to doing performances without long preparation. When the group prepares for shows that they consider important, they may hold up to five rehearsals before the show, while more casual performances might have no rehearsals at all. Meanwhile, in his study about improvisation in *wayang wong* stage performances, Hardja Susilo argues that commercial *wayang wong* has "... minimal specific preparation made for each of the nightly performances" (1987, p. 1, see also Susilo, 1984, p. 120). Improvisations are possible because dancers have already mastered knowledge about the characters, the stories, the rules of conduct, and the rules of language, including characters' statuses, space and time contexts, drama structures, and musical compositions (ibid, pp. 3–9, see also Susilo, 1984, pp. 121–123). In Tjipta Boedaja, the group cast dancers in *wayang wong* shows based on their familiarity and experiences with the characters intended, ensuring that dancers do not need to prepare from scratch.

In the case of Tjipta Boedaja, they still hold rehearsals. This is probably related to the fact that the group has a tradition of royal palace performances. In another article, Susilo mentions that *wayang wong* performances inside the royal court usually have lengthy preparation, and those performing in the Yogyakarta court may have weekly rehearsals throughout the year (1984, p. 118). While Tjipta Boedaja's *wayang wong* style leans more towards the commercial troupe tradition of Surakarta, the group's founder Yoso Soedarmo learned his *wayang wong* skills and knowledge both in Yogyakarta, which has strong court traditions, and Surakarta, with both court-oriented and commercial traditions (this will be considered further in Chapter Two). Older members of the group testified that Soedarmo was not into full improvisation. He was very strict in conducting practices and rehearsals. Moreover, contemporary theatre practices have also influenced the group, as the dancers nowadays have started to use and write scripts for their performances—including *wayang wong*—thereby bringing Tjipta Boedaja closer to the old royal court *wayang wong* literary traditions. Royal courts and commercial *wayang wong* in the 18th century produced manuscripts of *wayang* plays for various purposes (Cohen 2016, pp. 23, 27–30). Nonetheless, even today, the spirit of improvisation in Tjipta Boedaja is significant, and in rehearsals we

could see dancers kept adding different gestures or blockings before ultimately using even more different movements in the performances. All of these, when practiced in filmmaking, could significantly affect the production process as well as the aesthetics of the films produced.

Dancers' problems with detailed movements and deep acting was felt strongly in film production. When he was active, Soedarmo conducted specific exercises for these aspects, but today such training happened very rarely, and it may be said to no longer be practiced. The absence of such exercises might be attributed to proscenium stage and pavilion hall performances requiring different forms of viewing. Cohen argues that the stage dance tradition in Europe emphasises footwork and the stage floor as the main spectacles, while spectators are put in specific positions and given the opportunity to observe the performance as a whole (2016, pp. 21–22). Meanwhile, court performances in Java emphasise detailed movements, and the seating arrangement in pavilions enable spectators to focus on individual dancers' performances instead of the whole arrangement (Koentjaraningrat, 1985, Hughes-Freeland, 2008). In addition, commercial *wayang wong* shows at the end of 19th century, especially those of travelling troupes, had to simplify the movements to accommodate the show in limited space (Cohen, 2016, p. 57). As mentioned previously, Soedarmo learned to dance in both Yogyakarta, with its court tradition, and Surakarta, with its court and stage/commercial traditions. His exercises for detailed movements and acting could have originated from the royal court tradition. Similarly, the group may no longer use such exercises today because they perform mostly on stage and not in pavilions (*pendhapa*).

Another notable problem was the dancers' logic of presentation that clashed with the later preference of local producers and directors to integrate the cameras in blocking and choreography. Tjipta Boedaja dancers perform either on stage or in front of an outdoor crowd. Their performances are not designed to be viewed from one or two specific perspectives only. Meanwhile, shows on the proscenium stage only have audiences on one side, and this gives dancers an orientation: the performance is for those who watch from the front of the stage. This might ease dancers' understanding of film's 180-degree rule, as works on the proscenium stage use the same general principles: careful blocking arrangements on the left and right, continuous direction in chasing scenes, and so on. However, it was still hard to

make them camera conscious during preparation and shooting, and it was even more difficult to plan camera positions in choreography arrangements. This would require dancers to perform facing a specific direction, and (return to) detailed movements and better acting in close ups. However, as already mentioned above, the group has lost the traditions for exercising these skills.

1.7. The Aesthetics of the Film Products

One main discussion point concerning the aesthetics of the films produced by this collaboration focuses on the dynamics between visual and narrative elements. Interestingly, Tjipta Boedaja dancers could relate these dynamics into the classification of their own performance arts as either the tradition of *folk/field arts* ("*seni kerakyatan / lapangan*") that are usually performed in simple open settings, offering more of a spectacle and very simple storylines. These performances include *jathilan*, *grasak*, *kuda lumping*, *topeng ireng*, and contemporary drama that uses abstract storytelling. Or secondly as the tradition of *stage arts* ("*seni panggung*") that have more sophisticated narratives, and are mainly performed on a proscenium stage (even if these arts can be—and actually have been—performed in big halls or open fields) such as *wayang wong*, *dramatari* (dance drama), *ketoprak*, or shadow puppets. To some extent, the dancers' categories resemble Clara van Groenendael's division of Javanese performance arts: *folk entertainments* and *classical genres*. The former covers performances with low status and high popularity, accessible to most common people in urban and rural areas, while the latter refers to arts more associated with sophisticated court elites. However, van Groenendael acknowledges the problem of her classification, as she emphasises the fact that many of the classical genres can be consumed in the same way as folk entertainment (2008. p. 33).

Almost every film in the collaboration has a dance element or theme. The question of film genres in the collaboration project with Tjipta Boedaja brings us to dance film, a natural genre option for the group. Discussing film theory and dance films usually leads to the topic of screen performance, corporeal or gestural movements, as well as cinematic presence, camera movement, framing and editing, spectatorship, and the historical *avant garde* (Brannigan, 2011, p. 6). The idea of emotion is also important, as Yvonne Reiner, one of the pioneers of dance film, believed that cinema enhances her dance exploration with emotion (Rich, 1989,

p. 3). Laurent Guido argues that the emergence of dance films historically is rooted in the desire to study human bodily movement (2006, p. 139), and is anticipated by the capturing of dancers and athletes in different positions by photography and other pre-film media at the end of the 19th century (ibid, pp. 140–143). Several films showing dance performances without narrative were among the very first films (ibid, pp. 142–143).

As in many places around the world, stage performance also influenced early Indonesian cinema heavily. An opera-like performance called *komedi stamboel* that started to develop in the 1890's could be said to have set the tone for local audiences' expectations of how cinema should be (Cohen, 2006, p. 342). *Komedi stamboel* was a thoroughly visual entertainment; it offered foreign, mystical, or historical tales that were enhanced by "the luxury of colours" (Pane, 1953, p. 9). They also combined spectacular scenic effects (Cohen, 2006, pp. 50, 73) and the show enabled spectators to escape from their daily routines for two or three hours (Biran, 2009, p. 4). In the late 1920's, local film spectators rejected the inclusion of more dialogue in 'talkie' films, preferring instead more music and dance scenes (Hutari, 2011, pp. 126–127). In relation to Tjipta Boedaja, *komedi stamboel* was closely connected to the two stage performances practiced by the group. *Komedi Stamboel* influenced *ketoprak* (Cohen, 2006, pp. 3, 371), and, in particular, it has influenced the presentation of commercial *wayang wong* performances since the 1890s (ibid, pp. 232–233). Filmmaker Garin Nugroho believes that *stamboel* used the same formula as *wayang wong* (Nugroho and Herlina, 2015, p. 26). The earliest feature-length narrative film documented in Indonesia in the colonial period, *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* (1926), was made based on a play made in 1921 (Biran, 1993, p. 63). This play included all of the influences from popular performances at that time, including *wayang wong* (Cohen, 2016, pp. 109–110).

In the mid-1920s, there was a transition from the *komedi stamboel* to the *toneel*, a Dutch word for drama, when two of the biggest *stamboel* groups in Batavia (Jakarta) decided to modernise their approach by reducing the number of acts, turning to contemporary stories, maximising promotion through press, and exploring more literary realms while still maintaining a commitment to basic entertainment (Cohen, 2006, pp. 13–20). Cohen believes that *toneel* received influences from imported films (2006, p. 338). Writer and cultural critique Armijn

Pane, writing in 1953, argued that the biggest influence of performing arts on early films was the mobilisation of human resources from the stage (op cit., pp. 10, 12). In the mid-1930's, when the emerging film industry became more attractive, almost all of the stage actors and crews in Batavia entered the new film industry and left the dying *toneel* industry (Biran, op cit., p. 25). Many films in the colonial era used a musical and action approach, the main commodities of *toneel*. One of the biggest successes was *Terang Boelan* (1937), which involved filmmaker Albert Balink as director, the Wong brothers on camera, and the journalist and playwright Saeroen as the scriptwriter. To get the perfect stage entertainment formula, the production hired stage actors, dancers, and comedians, including a pair of stage stars, Kartolo and Roekiah, who were also popular as *keroncong* singers (Biran, *ibid*, pp. 168–171). Meanwhile, from time to time, elements of more traditional performance still appeared in local films. One example here is *Tanah Sabrang* (1936), a documentary-instructional film about transmigration, that used the *Punakawan* characters (i.e. king's clowns in *wayang wong* performances) to tell its story (Siagian, 2010, pp. 37–39).

After Indonesia's independence, one film that must be mentioned is *Lahirnja Gatotkatja* (1964), directed by Djadoeg Djajakoesoema (1918–1987), a filmmaker who always attempted to include traditional cultural elements in his films. He had a great interest in performance art, especially *wayang wong*. Djajakoesoema started to be exposed to films in Jakarta during the Japanese occupation, and this made him realise the power of cinema and led him to build a close relationship with Usmar Ismail, one of the most important figures in Indonesian cinema. Djajakoesoema produced most of his films with Ismail's film company, Perfini. Like Ismail, he received the opportunity to study abroad, drama at the University of Washington (1956) and cinematography at the University of Southern California (1957). Sinematek Indonesia notes that Djajakoesoema helped *wayang wong* groups more after this film (1979, p. 123). In *Lahirnja Gatotkatja* (The Birth of Gatotkaca), Djajakoesoema let the actors act as if they were playing *wayang wong* (even though it seems that only a handful of actors could actually do *wayang wong* dance moves). As the film was shot in black and white, audiences could not see colourful costumes, but Djajakoesoema still explored the possibilities of cinematography: different height levels, perspectives, and types of shots,

foregrounds and backgrounds, making it a very different experience for spectators who were used to watching *wayang wong* on proscenium or arena stages.

A later film, *Sri* (1997), from director Marselli Sumarno, also deserves attention because of its strong court dance element and casting of well-known Javanese dancers. *Sri*, a young newlywed woman, devotionally negotiates with Death to spare the life of her old husband. The husband comes from a royal family, and he had taken her from a poor family and made her a court dancer. Sumarno is from Surakarta, a Javanese city with several royal courts, and so he could be assumed to have been exposed to court dances. He took a diploma programme in cinematography at the Jakarta Arts Institute (IKJ), and later finished his baccalaureate at the same place, majoring in scriptwriting. The film was made without support from local film studios, and while this may have enabled a greater degree of aesthetic freedom, the film itself, like many local films, did not get a lot of screen time and was hard to see in commercial cinemas. However, two years after the release of *Sri*, the independent film movement emerged, and film technology became cheaper and more accessible. Under these new conditions films focusing on local performance traditions flourished in different forms and styles: fiction, documentaries, short, long, formulaic, experimental, and so on.

One important figure in this changing landscape is Garin Nugroho, another IKJ graduate who originally came from Yogyakarta. Nugroho is more of an art house filmmaker. He has won many awards and made different films in different places in Indonesia, exposing local as well as cosmopolitan cultures. The one most relevant to this thesis is *Opera Jawa* (2005), one of the most popular films among Tjipta Boedaja members. Telling a love triangle story based on the *Ramayana* within a contemporary Javan context, it presents the contemporary art scene in Yogyakarta. In Nugroho's own words: "In 2005, I decided to create a film on Javanese culture and my childhood in Yogyakarta, which was full of a mixed atmosphere of dance, the Javanese traditional music *gamelan*, and modern fine art and literature" (Nugroho and Herlina, op cit., p. 295). The film is artistically extravagant. Nugroho involved many artists with the highest reputation in their own fields. As Nugroho himself has stated, the film is a mix of various arts. It is easy to see that given the large number of artists involved, it must have been difficult to engage and include all of them in meaningful discussion of the film's central themes and motifs. This was a situation that I was keen to avoid in my collaboration

with Tjipta Boedaja: I wanted the local artists to have a say in all of our aesthetic deliberations.

1.8. The Final Productions and Representations

Felicia Hughes-Freeland, a filmmaker and anthropologist who writes about Javanese dance, emphasizes two aspects of Javanese ritual dances: "as movement that relates to the performance of everyday actions; and as formal choreographic conventions associated with power centres" (2008, p. 1). Apart from real-world authorities, invisible cosmological powers are dominant themes in the Javanese court ritual dances. The ritual dances and ceremonies in Tutup Ngisor have similar functions for Tjipta Boedaja members and for the villagers. Discussion about dance as representation of real life activities is not complete without taking into account the ritual dances that represent Tutup Ngisor residents' identities and beliefs and serve to bind them together. Film scholar Fatimah Tobing Rony reminds social scientists to break from their objective constraints and embrace the people they are studying, to accept their subjectivities, especially when related to their spirituality (2006).

Saparno and I directed one film each as the two last films of this project; different aesthetics and communication strategies taken by these two collaborators with different backgrounds are discussed in chapter six. Saparno graduated from a bachelor's program in visual communication in Yogyakarta in 2017. His *Jimate Simbah* (Grandpa's Amulets) questions dancers' spiritual activities offstage. The film is his personal statement, objecting to the way young dancers around him attempt to find supernatural shortcuts to become good dancers. Many famous dancers are known to have special charms that help them perform, and young dancers will do anything to attain these charms through spiritual efforts. For Saparno, these dancers are wasting time that should be used to practice dance moves. In this film, he chose to talk to the younger generation, positioning child dancers as the main characters. This film plan sounds very objective, as it questions something that appears illogical from a European perspective, and proposes a very logical strategy: practice as much as you can if you want to become a good dancer.

Meanwhile, I came up with the idea for *Tetangga* (Neighbours), based on the distribution of ritual offerings by local children. Several times a year, children deliver these offerings to about thirty places in and around the hamlet. Locals

believe that each spot hosts a spiritual being, and these beings have different forms, characters, and jobs. In this film, some Tjipta Boedaja artists act and dance as creatures that have human shapes, and each character reacts to the offerings brought to them by the children. At the end of the film, we see villagers during their daily routines around these spots. The dancers and I hope that for outsiders, the film can be a counterargument to accusations that the giving of offerings signifies heresy and polytheism, as for these villagers sending offerings to these creatures is parallel to sending food to their neighbours several times a year. This is done in the name of harmony with one's surroundings. Meanwhile, for the villagers, we hope that the film can serve to depict these villagers' beliefs—and these creatures (!)—and thus be some kind of a pedagogical device for younger generations (just like the use of children to deliver offerings).

Although both films have a powerful message, and both discuss supernatural issues in the lives of dancers and villagers, these films have different approaches. Saparno chose a complicated plot that required many characters, a good deal of dialogue, and complex story structures. He gathered some 20–30 crewmembers and 20–30 actors for the production, and his script—written in detail by Saparno himself—included several group dances that required practice. Meanwhile, *Tetangga* has no dialogue, and its script only describes the scenes. It required five dancers to know their characters well—through meditation, remembering, or interviews with persons who know or have seen these creatures—and to explore their moves themselves. In total, the film production required 12 actors and crewmembers. As such, without any initial arrangements, Saparno's ideas are very similar to those in mainstream films, while my ideas seem to draw on the visual, an aesthetic option usually taken by Tjipta Boedaja's senior dancers when they are in charge.

This brings us to questions about authority and artistic autonomy in filmmaking collaborations, and naturally about the roles of outsider collaborators. Rachel Moore is concerned about the presence of researchers or activists who first teach indigenous peoples how to make films (1994, pp. 128–129). Anthropologist Terrence Turner's collaboration with the Kayapo Indians in Brazil to produce films for a local activism campaign, with videos showing 'natives' with traditional—or primitive—looking ornaments participating in modern political campaigns, is one good example for this concern. Jennifer Deger agrees with Moore and other critics

that "global power relations profoundly prefigure Kayapo video production". She believes that the issue of authenticity is still important for producing new understandings about adaptation and strategy processes (2006, p. 42). However, Deger believes that labelling Kayapo films as inauthentic is missing the point, as they had proven that they could effectively use global influences to advocate their identity politics. Deger proposes a need to shift the focus from authenticity and traditionalism, as these categories are no longer fit to frame culture (ibid, pp. 42–43). She emphasizes the importance of commitment to local political causes (ibid, p. 7).

Eric Michaels also highlights the role of political commitment. He demonstrates that the politics of representation remains crucial to understanding natives' strategies in using media technologies. He notes that his involvement in indigenous media productions laid a strong groundwork for further collaborative filmmaking projects between agents from the "modern world" (academics, filmmakers, artists, activists); and their subjects—native and marginal peoples who have limited access to their regions' cultural, financial, and political centres. Michaels points out that media technologies can help Australian Aborigines as long as these people have the chance to optimize their technologies' potential (1994, p. 30).

Deciding the position of urban collaborators is thus crucial. In this project, strategically, urban collaborators' involvement in decision-making positions has its own benefit in terms of audience projection. Audiences outside a particular film's area may have difficulty understanding that film, as they have different access to information about the specific cultural contexts of said film (Wood, 2008, pp. 62, 65). Lempert believes that films made by non-indigenous filmmakers have greater potential to connect with outside audiences:

"Ethnographers' more distanced analyses position their films to investigate cultural dynamics whose purposes and meanings are often less clear to the people who live within them than they are to outsiders" (2012, p. 39).

However, returning to the issue of hybrid life, it would be problematic to consider someone purely an insider or outsider. In his article, Lempert examines two films, one produced by an outsider anthropologist and the other by an indigenous filmmaker. He argues that indigenous filmmakers are in a better position than outside researcher-filmmakers when it comes to representing their own identities

(2012, pp. 23–24). However, the dichotomy of insider and outsider is not always that simple. The "better" indigenous film in Lempert's piece was made by a native filmmaker who had attended film school, experienced life in different societies, and once made a film about his community that had been commissioned by a television network (ibid, p. 27), which the filmmaker felt had pushed him to represent his people according to stereotypes (ibid, p. 28). In Lempert's case, that particular filmmaker, who had extra experiences, occupied a dual position, being simultaneously an insider and outsider (ibid, p. 25). Comparing his film with other films produced by local persons with less experience living outside the community would be interesting.

As such, in the case of films projected for broader audiences, experience may be a strategic requirement that should be considered. It is possible that films can be directed or written by outsider collaborators. To do this, their reflexive attitude towards local aspirations and agendas is the key to a successful production. Matthias De Groof believes that there is an evolution in ethnographic film: "from the style of observation and distance (which as a matter of fact does not exclude staging or intervention) to participatory filmmaking (which is characterized by proximity and interaction)" (2013, p. 109), "... and ultimately to indigenous filmmaking, ... whereas this evolution is in fact driven by reflexivity" (ibid, p. 110).

Table 2: List of Films and the Filmmakers in the Collaboration Project

Film	Year	Director	Producer	Camera
Aku Tidak Ingin Menjadi Manusia.	2009	Septi Arini	Candra Aditya, Tito Imanda	Septi Arini
Doran	2009	Untung Pribadi	Candra Aditya, Tito Imanda	Candra Aditya
Kacang Lupa KulitProds.	2009	Darmawan	Candra Aditya, Tito Imanda.	Saparno
Kisruh	2009	Martejo	Candra Aditya, Tito Imanda	Candra Aditya
Perempuan Tutup Ngisor Tempo Doeloe	2009	Sitras Anjilin	Candra Aditya, Tito Imanda	Sitras Anjilin
Mother Earth (<i>Dewi Sri</i>)	2014	Sitras Anjilin, Nosa Nurmanda	Michael Julius, Tito Imanda	George Timothy (DP)
Petruk Jadi Raja (not finished)	2015	Tito Imanda	Saparno, Widyo Sumpeno, Tito Imanda	Angkasa Ramadhan
A Short Reunion (documentary)	2016	Tito Imanda	Saparno, Widyo Sumpeno, Candra Aditya, Angkasa Ramadhan, Tito Imanda	Saparno, Widyo Sumpeno, Candra Aditya, Angkasa Ramadhan, Nosa Normanda, Michael Julius
Jimate Simbah	2017	Saparno	Saparno, Tito Imanda	Ryan Kresnadi
<u>Neighbours</u> (<i>Tetangga</i>)	2017	Tito Imanda	Saparno, Widyo Sumpeno and Tito Imanda	Saparno (DP), Tito Imanda

Chapter 2. Dancers of Tjipta Boedaja and Villagers of Tutup Ngisor

2.1. Introducing a Dance Company in a Remote Village

The farmer-dancer group Tjipta Boedaja (translated: Creating Culture) is to be found in the small hamlet of Tutup Ngisor, located in Magelang Regency, Central Java province, Indonesia. While this group is an authority in Magelang-style folk dances, their specialty is *wayang wong* (in Javanese) or *wayang orang* (in Indonesian), a traditional opera-like dance drama originally performed inside royal courts. Although this art has been commercially performed in urban areas since the end of the 19th century, the group's *wayang wong* performances are part of their mystical rituals for ensuring the safety of their hamlet and a productive farming cycle. Almost all of the 215 residents of Tutup Ngisor, who are related by lineage or marriage, are members or affiliates of the group; many have danced or helped with the group's performances at one point in their lives. When the group holds a ritual performance, everyone in the hamlet either performs or watches, without any need for tickets or entrance fees.



Figure 2: The Map of Central Java.

The need for safety is important in the village. Tutup Ngisor is located some 9.3 kilometres west of the crater of Mount Merapi, one of the most active volcanoes in the world, erupting on average once every 7.5 years. The volcanic ash from these eruptions supplies the area with natural fertiliser, but the volcano also continuously threatens natural disaster. In the 2010 eruption, all villages located within a radius

of 15 kilometres from the crater were required to evacuate—including Tutup Ngisor. Perhaps because of this enormous power, Mount Merapi is also one of the most sacred mountains in Javanese cosmology. It was once called Mount Candramuka or Candradimuka, the sacred mountain of Javanese myth.

Being located at the foot of a volcano, the hamlet of Tutup Ngisor is quite remote, and this is probably one reason for the group's exotic image. Its remote and exotic location has, in some ways, contributed to the group's reputation as offering "authentic" Javanese performance art. During my time with the group, I sometimes overheard spectators from outside Tutup Ngisor explaining to their fellow travellers that the group had been following the same traditions for hundreds or even thousands of years, even though, in reality, it only began performing in 1937. This "authentic" image brings journalists, university students, and academics from big cities to Tjipta Boedaja performances.

Until the turn of the 21st century, the only way to reach the hamlet was a dirt path. The small asphalt road that goes there was only built in 2004. It connects Tutup Ngisor to the closest market, about three kilometres away, where a slightly wider road connects it to Muntilan, a small town located 10 kilometres west from the village. Muntilan is a market town, and from time to time Tutup Ngisor farmers sell their products there. Meanwhile, Magelang, a larger town with two universities and a national military academy, is located about 10 kilometres north of Muntilan, or about 24 kilometres northwest of Tutup Ngisor. As the regency capital, Magelang has administrative autonomy and is the place where the group can apply for local governmental support. Yogyakarta, the modern capital of Javanese culture, is located 25 kilometres south of Muntilan or 35 kilometres from Tutup Ngisor. A car trip to Yogyakarta from Tutup Ngisor can take 90–120 minutes, depending on traffic. Some of Tjipta Boedaja members, or their extended families, live in Muntilan and Magelang, mostly because of work or marriage. A few of the members live in Yogyakarta or Surakarta, usually because of their studies, but some also because of marriage. Nowadays, Tutup Ngisor residents are more mobile, and there are more marriages between them and people from Yogyakarta or Surakarta. Some close family members of Tutup Ngisor residents live in Jakarta and even outside Java, and their properties in or near the Tutup Ngisor area are managed by their relatives. Many young men from Tutup Ngisor have experience earning a living in Indonesia's major cities. Specifically, Yogyakarta and Surakarta attract

artists because they are both cultural centres. Besides studying at arts vocational schools or at universities, Tjipta Boedaja dancers may go to these cities to perform, to watch specific performances or exhibitions, to become involved in cultural events, or to start cultural projects. We shall return to the subject of Tutup Ngisor residents' globalized characters in a later part of this chapter.

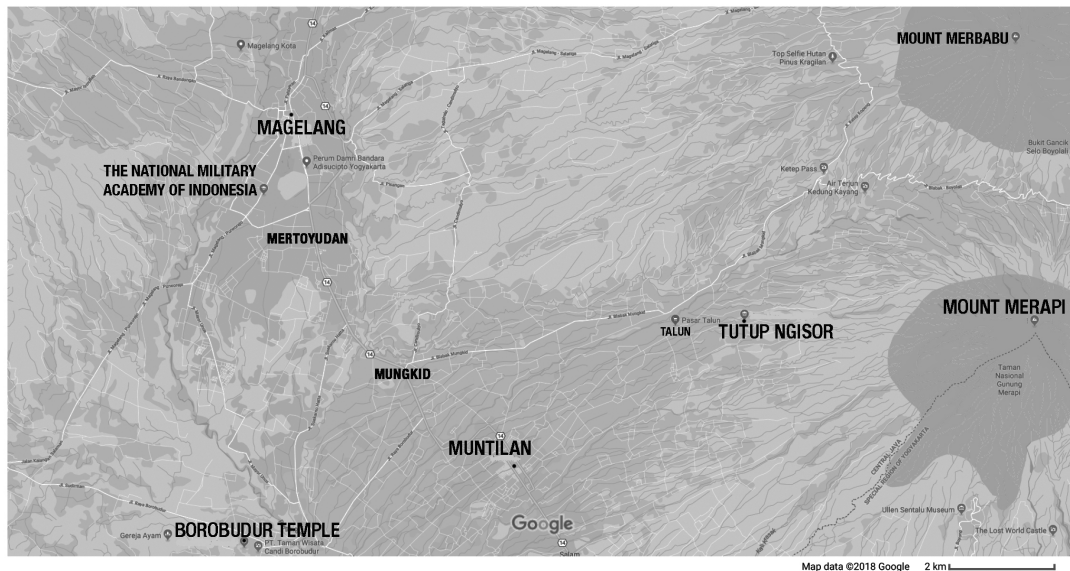


Figure 3: Position of Tutup Ngisor in Magelang Area

For many outsiders, Tjipta Boedaja is also considered exotic because of its traditions. Artists and academics come to study or to work with the group. High school and university students stay there for awhile because their teachers want them to learn from “a different culture”. While villagers list Islam or Catholicism as their religion on their identity cards, they still do practice rites that religious people would consider animist in nature. As such, the peak of ritual activity occurs around the Javanese New Year, though the group has three other intense performance periods: at the end of the Islamic month of Ramadan, during the birthday celebration of Prophet Muhammad, and on Indonesian Independence Day. The villagers have many other rituals, and closely follow a guidebook on mystical affair—a *primbon*—when building a new house, cutting trees, celebrating marriages, holding funerals, and other daily activities. As mentioned before, the group prepares its activities with a familial spirit, and performances mostly lack scripts and have limited written documents. All members of the group are required to continue their work in agriculture, arguably a stipulation designed by the group's founding father to ensure that they maintain their art as a form of aesthetic expression and not as their main source of income. In short, at first glance it

appears that the group stands against urbanisation, industrialisation, modernisation, rationalisation, popular culture, commercialisation and specialisation.

The history of the group itself seems quite mystical. The villagers believe the myth that the guardian spirits around the hamlet are crucial for producing good harvests. Nurmanda (2012) notes that, before 1937, there were only seven households in the settlement, and villagers believed that the spirits had put a curse on them: plague would strike if someone built an eighth house. Yoso Soedarmo, or *Romo* (father) Yoso, the founder of the group, first suggested a sacred *wayang wong* performance to lift this curse, as a means of making peace with the spirits. This performance, held in 1937, used simple costumes and arrangements and was staged by Soedarmo's close family members. During this first performance, Soedarmo created and directed the stage play himself, he and his family were the performers. This performance, aside from enabling residents to expand their hamlet, led to the establishment of the Tjipta Boedaja Company (2012, p. 51). Soedarmo passed away in 1988 but still remains a central figure and the traditions he began remain current in modern day Tutup Ngisor. The specific Javanese spin-off story from the Mahabharata that was staged during that first *wayang wong* performance, is performed every year at the peak of rituals in Tutup Ngisor during the second week of the Javanese/Arabic new year. The performance, *Lumbung Tugu Mas*, tells the story of how the Pandawa warriors sought and received the blessing of a holy man to build a rice barn, symbolizing the farmers' gratitude and their hopes for a good life. This set of rituals is known as *Suran*, which literally means 'new year celebration'. For the villagers of Tutup Ngisor, this is the most important ritual, and they all will have worked together to ensure the rituals are conducted as smoothly as possible, as smoothness in rituals would ease their mind about a good year ahead. This night-time *wayang wong* performance usually runs until two or three in the morning. At six in the morning, performers gather on the field across the hall, with their morning dance costume and make-up ready. The ritual continues with group members walking around the hamlet six times, and is followed by another performance, the *jathilan* (horse dance).

The group remains strict about some basic rules of its performances: To keep the stage sacred, no percussion instruments may be shown on stage. People must play them in the gamelan orchestra pit under the stage. Scenes depicting murder are not allowed, as Soedarmo was unwavering in his insistence that Tjipta

Boedaja members form a peaceful community. The groups follows the tradition of inviting Javanese *wayang* patrons to communities for spiritual reason, such as preventing disasters and bestowing spiritual blessings and prosperity. This contrasts with commercial *wayang* performances in urban areas, which allowed bloodthirsty stories to be shown for entertainment purposes (Cohen, 2016, p. 27). In Tjipta Boedaja, the exception to the rule is that protagonist characters can kill the giant character *Cakil* as a symbol of good will defeating temptation. Meanwhile, during their rituals and offerings for guardian spirits, hamlet residents still follow the very detailed procedures in the *primbon*, which is held and interpreted by elder members. Some of these customs might seem strange today, especially since major world religions have eradicated mystical beliefs in most places in Java. Take, for example, the *jathilan* dance, performed during the *Suran* morning celebration by dancers that spectators believe are possessed or in a trance by the end of the performance. *Jathilan* is performed by about fifty dancers, divided into two "conflicting" parties, each of which includes a prince, a princess, a knight, and a group—around five or six dancers—of soldiers riding rattan horses, two groups of giants, two monkeys, and one dragon (played by two dancers). Performances can last for up to one hour. It is a highly physical dance, with moves that require all characters to be constantly running, hopping, and creating new patterns. The dancers quickly tire, and at the end of the *jathilan* performance, dancers might enter a trance. When this happens, it can be a good sign: supernatural creatures, likely the guardian spirits, enter dancers' bodies and join the celebration. As such, local spectators may expect as many dancers to enter a trance as possible, but also recognise that some dancers act as if in a trance as they also know that dancers would do everything they could in their attempt to enter a trance. For them, these are just part of the ritual. I believe that these people take the entire event, including its offerings for and celebrations of supernatural beings, as seriously and as practically as if they were inviting real life nobles, regents, and kings to visit their village.

Some studies of the group focus on this issue: the purity of the traditions versus the influence of globalisation. A book written by a team from the Indonesian Institute of Arts, Yogyakarta, concludes that Tutup Ngisor residents see art as life itself, and this worldview has helped their art and traditions survive in the changing world (Dana et al., 2015, p. 74). It also argues that Tutup Ngisor traditions have

faced global challenges by developing and maintaining social loyalty and solidarity so that they can fight foreign influences (ibid, p. 63). Another book, written by a team from Universitas Gadjah Mada, concluded that Tjipta Boedaja's moral strength, ethics, and wisdom have been the main factors behind their successful preservation of tradition (Prabowo et al., 2012, p. 139). Meanwhile, Nurmanda's thesis (2012) argues that Tjipta Boedaja dancers play around with influences from outside and use this playful approach as a strength. Discussing these findings with Anjilin, and some younger dancers, I sought their opinions. They felt that Nurmanda's conclusion came closest to describing them. They also thought that most of the researchers who studied them did not stay there long enough and did not know them well enough. To reach a conclusion such as Nurmanda's, researchers must experience Tjipta Boedaja's performances in all their myriad forms: with different languages and types of stages; collaborations with both urban and international artists; versions utilizing giant puppets; Shakespearean adaptations; experiments with new media (i.e. film or internet), and take into account the artists' own reflections on what has changed in their art practices and styles compared to dancers from earlier generations. All the books above, however, despite what the dancers themselves may perceive as their flaws, still provide descriptions of Tjipta Boedaja practices, and serve as useful introductions to all those who want to become better informed about the workings and history of the group.

The dancers themselves believe that change is inevitable. However, the image of the exotic traditional endures, despite many modifications because of changes in governance and economic systems, as well as access to new media technologies, and globalisation. One of the biggest challenges today is the declining access to natural resources owing to population growth, which has affected the group's policies and plans in the past decade. New survival strategies have been implemented in the last few years that would have been unthinkable for older generations. In 2013, the group became a legal body, making it easier to conduct business with the government and seek commercial funding. It is interesting that, in a book released only a year earlier, Anjilin insisted that government funding must not depend on the existence of a sheet of paper certifying the group's legality (Prabowo et al., 2012, p. 49). Its younger dancers have started smaller groups in other hamlets, integrating those into Tjipta Boedaja performances whenever

needed. Many members teach dance or performance art in schools as extracurricular activities, and others have become professional teachers after studying dance at university. Technology also contributes to changes. While Tutup Ngisor only got access to electricity in the late 1980s (Nurmanda, 2012, p. 25), today almost every house has satellite television. Tjipta Boedaja and its members have their own Facebook account, and there is talk of developing a YouTube account. There are more and more orders for performances from various local villages, and many dancers and *gamelan* players earn an income through dance with which they sustain their households. Though members of the group are reluctant to say that they are happy to do commercial dances, dancers' Facebook statuses showed their relief when they received extra income by having more than one performance booked in a month.

Members of Tjipta Boedaja still think it is important to maintain their traditions and have enacted several strategies to do so. The aforementioned requirement to continue farming and thus maintain the spirit of "living for the art, not doing art to make a living" is also very much about preventing commercialism from killing tradition. The company also created a children's group, *wayang bocah* or "child *wayang*", to ease the regeneration process. They hold a weekly *gamelan* orchestra recital to ensure that members continue playing musical instruments.

Tjipta Boedaja appeals to different crowds through two contrasting images: being traditional and being open to change. The story of the group's origin above shows that, from the very beginning of Tjipta Boedaja's existence, Tutup Ngisor was ready for innovation. Yoso Soedarmo was a jack-of-all-trades who taught different elements of performance art to his seven sons, equipped them with different expertise, and encouraged them to explore different experiences (Nurmanda, 2012, pp. 56–57). According to his sons, Yoso Soedarmo claimed to have learned to play music, dance, and other works related to *wayang wong* from a dance group (*sanggar*) in Gamping, Yogyakarta, between 1917 and 1922, under the supervision of *Ndoro* (Sir) Tasman alias *Ndoro* Panji Tukinun (ibid, p. 49). In conversations with me, Sitras Anjilin told me that –from his visits to the area and talks with local residents after Soedarmo's death– he believed that *Ndoro* Tasman probably had connections to the Kraton of Yogyakarta. It is also said that Yoso Soedarmo learned spiritualism when he spent some time as a royal servant at the Mangkunegaran Palace in Surakarta (Solo) (ibid, p. 50), and further studied art

there under *Ndoro Bok* and *Den Harto* (Prabowo, et al., 2012, p. 28). Today, Soedarmo's eldest son, Dartosari, and the second son, Danoeri (or Danuri), have passed away. The remaining five sons are still dancing, although at a different level. For the past fifteen years, the company has been practically under the leadership of Anjilin, who was born in 1959. The group has become known as a general dance company, which focuses not only on *wayang wong* and Magelang-style folk dances, but also on other kinds of performances, ranging from spiritual to contemporary dances (ibid, pp. 57–58).

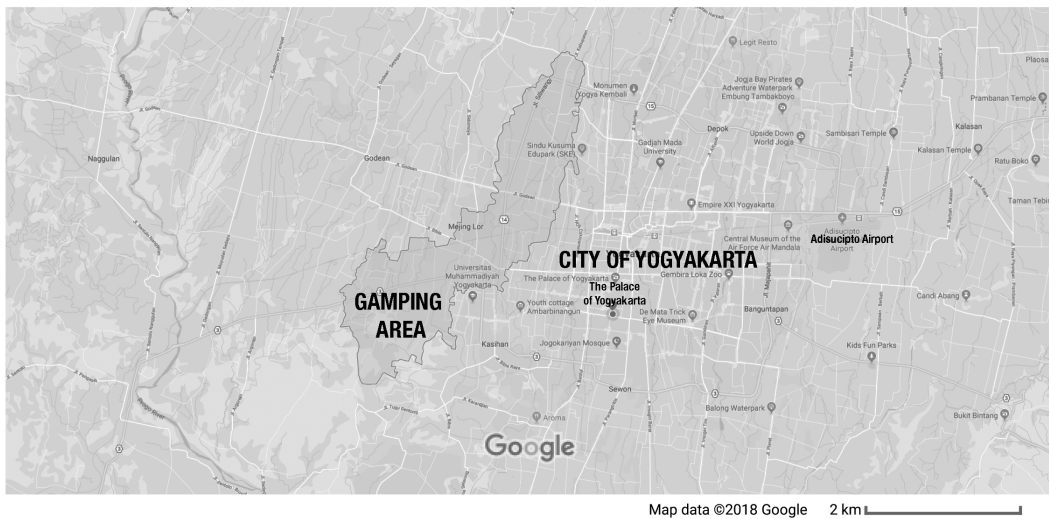


Figure 4: Location of Gamping Area in the City of Yogyakarta

Physically, the hamlet combines a mixture of Javanese rural and urban ambiance. For many first-time visitors, Tutup Ngisor is a little unsettling. It is quite a small settlement, but has two grand gates. A dense and traditional Javanese residential area some 130 metres wide, it features *kampung* houses in close proximity to comparatively boring modern ones. The two gates welcome visitors when they enter by Tutup Ngisor's main footpath, which leads towards Tjipta Boedaja's performance hall. Nurmanda expressed his impression of Tutup Ngisor on his first visit:

The car stopped at a small village where the asphalt road ended, continuing with a road of mixed cement and dirt. First, questions appeared in my head. 'Why does the asphalt road stop here?' 'What is so special that makes this village appear to be the destination of all the cars coming to this place?' On the left side there was a brick gate with text written in the Javanese script as well as the year '1937'. And then I walked through that gate. (my translation, pp. 33–34)

These gates are unusual for rural villages, as they resemble the grand gates of the Javanese royal courts. The first is located in the centre of the hamlet, welcoming visitors at the end of the asphalt road and showing them where they can take a fifty-metre footpath towards the hall's main entrance, where the second gate is located. Both gates were once white and inscribed with "*Tjipta Boedaja*" and "1937" in the Latin script, reminiscent of the gates of royal courts in Solo and Yogyakarta. In 2012, these gates were painted a dark grey and inscribed with the same words, but in the Javanese *hanacaraka* script, thus harkening back to the more ancient Hindu and Buddhist temple gates. The hall has three entranceways, and the one facing the gates has two sculptures of *Kala*, a giant guard who is also common in the houses of the nobility. Many visitors—and probably some residents—assume that this particular entrance is the official one and that people should enter through that door when they come to the village for official affairs or spiritual requests.

Inside the hall, there is further excitement because of the large stage located seemingly in the middle of nowhere. Nurmanda, who is a stage actor in Jakarta, expressed his confusion and admiration for *Tjipta Boedaja*'s stage on his first visit:

At the end of the footpath, I was shocked by a big hall with a carved wooden gate, guarded by two sculptures. Large pillars supported a carved wooden roof, and [at the bottom] there was a very wide red floor. In the front, separated by a smaller stage, a *gamelan* set was placed neatly, just like an orchestra pit in a modern opera house. Next to it was a stage, wide and tall. There were other large pillars on both sides of the stage, with [shadow puppet] *wayang* painted on them. The stage itself had four partitions along it with a modern proscenium lighting system—their lighting battens, some colour, and self-made fresnel lights. The wall behind the stage was painted with [an image of] blue sky and white clouds, equipped with backdrop hangers, manually controlled to change the set. That place, a village at the foot of Mount Merapi, had a place for performances that was up to the standard of modern performance halls (my translation, p. 34).

Behind the hall and the stage is Anjilin's house. When we walk to its terrace and proceed to the room where he sits with his guests, we can see plenty of pictures, certificates, a painting of *Romo Yoso*, and some antique spears and umbrellas similar to Javanese royal heirlooms. Indeed, the hamlet and hall are built like a small Javanese kingdom.

However, the daily ambience in Tutup Ngisor is quite egalitarian and filled with creative energy. Anjilin, as the group's leader, does not look or sound like a king. In certain meetings or events, or with certain guests, he can be formal and

reserved, and his presence in the group meetings can be authoritative. However, he has a warm and laid-back personality. Art activities are centred in the *pendopo*, the 10- x 25-metre performance hall with a main stage where the group performs to its audiences. The *pendopo* is also the place for the group's meetings and daily dance/music practice sessions. The group's exercise schedule is busier in the lead-up to a show. During that time, the practicing of dance moves for different scenes may run simultaneously with *gamelan* practice. When the group is not using the hall, members can bring their dance students from elsewhere and use the hall and its equipment. Having students from outside Tutup Ngisor can help the group when they require extra cast members. Today, most characters in scenes with a troop of giants are members of *Bangun Budaya*, a group from a neighbouring village that is owned by Untung Pribadi, Anjilin's nephew and one of the most talented dancers in Tjipta Boedaja. Anjilin also teaches drama in a high school; he cast many of his students as fairies in his *Midsummer Night's Dream* performance in 2013.

2.2. Building Rapport and Getting to Know the Dancers

One morning in 2008, I was reading the cultural section of a Sunday newspaper and was struck by an article that described a rural community at the foot of a mountain that continued performing *wayang wong* for agriculture rituals. The article amazed me, because I understood the complexity of *wayang wong* performance. It is not usually something that one encounters in remote villages. As I read on, I learnt that the group had created a *wayang bocah* (child *wayang*) group to make sure younger generations would continue to be able to perform the ritual. That was the first time I had heard of child *wayang*, and I was truly astounded. A long-time dream of mine to make a *wayang*-based film with children as the main characters suddenly seemed a possibility.

In the months that followed, the story stayed with me, and after discussing it with several people, I asked three filmmakers to go there with me and pay the community a visit. These filmmakers were Rhino Ariefiansyah, an anthropologist and ethnographic filmmaker from Universitas Indonesia; Ryanti Dewi, a television journalist who graduated from the School of Media and Communication, Universitas Padjadjaran in Bandung; and Ari Rusyadi, a documentary filmmaker who had just graduated from the film program at the Jakarta Arts Institute (IKJ). Ariefiansyah had some previous experience doing participatory videos, and after

we introduced ourselves in Tutup Ngisor, we discussed some options for producing collaborative documentaries with the dancers. We went to Tutup Ngisor several times, with whoever could make the trips, to build rapport, record performances, and hold workshops. We brought with us some video cameras with mini digital video (mini DV) technology. Ariefiansyah and Rusyadi offered to teach the dancers how to use the cameras we brought but perhaps the cameras looked too professional and intimidating as nobody from Tutup Ngisor touched them. We only went to the village as a full team probably three times. For most of my trips I went only with Ariefiansyah, because Dewi and Rusyadi were occupied with other projects. Ariefiansyah also became busy with other projects, and was rarely able to go to Tutup Ngisor after 2009. Ariefiansyah kept active as a practitioner-academic. In 2014 he got a master's degree in *Programme d'expérimentation en arts et politique* from Sciences Po University, Paris; he is currently teaching at the Department of Anthropology, Universitas Indonesia. Dewi is still working with television stations to produce documentaries, while Rusyadi frequently travels to different regions, working on various film productions.

Fortunately, I found other reinforcements. At one point in 2009, Nosa Nurmanda, then a stage actor and high school teacher, joined the team that travelled to Tutup Ngisor. At that time, he had recently graduated from the English Department, Universitas Indonesia, with an undergraduate thesis focusing on film studies. He also joined the film school I opened in 2010, teaching acting and performance classes. Later on, he entered the master's programme in anthropology at the Universitas Indonesia, and focused on Tjipta Boedaja's attitude towards globalisation for his master's thesis. In Tutup Ngisor he started learning filmmaking from Ariefiansyah, Dewi, and Rusyadi, and his lessons continued as he sat in on different classes at the film school. Nowadays, he is working in Jakarta as a news producer and editor for an American online news service, responsible for the Southeast Asian region. Another notable urban collaborator who became involved in 2009 is Candra Aditya, who was a film student candidate from Malang, East Java. His youth and easy-going personality allowed him to connect with the dancers with ease. He also supervised his classmates who were involved in this project. Aditya ultimately worked on every big Tjipta Boedaja production until 2016. Nowadays, Aditya is a scriptwriter and filmmaker with a very strong portfolio, ready for his own breakthrough.

The warmth and informality of Tjipta Boedaja's dancers' made it easy for us to make connections, and even to arrange shooting permits. As previously noted, political reform made getting filmmaking permits a lot easier. There is no mention of special permission for filmmaking activities in the 2009 film law, as filmmaking is now seen as just another activity, similar to playing football or performing *wayang wong*. Working together with Tjipta Boedaja, an art group that involves many dancers in each of its performances and rehearsals, made everything even easier. However, shooting in public spaces and on private property requires neighbourhood and owner consent. For this, I needed to work closely with Martedjo, one of the dancers and the head of the hamlet (*bayan*). As with most of our communications with the inhabitants of Tutup Ngisor, my communications with Martedjo were always informal, especially since we are about the same age. He brought me to meet the head of the village (*lurah*) to tell him more about my filming activities; this also happened in an informal manner. There may have been several reasons for such a casual approach. After all, the filming activities never brought more than ten people from outside the village, and it is normal for Tjipta Boedaja to have various activities that involve many more people both as performers and spectators.

The start of my formal university studies at the end of 2013 kept me away from Tutup Ngisor for awhile. I returned to Indonesia and began my intensive fieldwork in 2014. As an ethnographer is expected to participate in the local people's daily lives for an extended period of time (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 1), I decided to move with my family to Yogyakarta, and I spent as much time as possible at Tutup Ngisor to build connections with the artists and villagers. Though some locals were shy or wary of speaking to me, in general it was easy to talk to people in the village. Today, Tjipta Boedaja has about 30 young active dancers, 20 of whom are male and 10 of whom are female. The balance between male and female dancers changes from time to time; during my fieldwork, it happened that male dancers were more numerous and had greater influence when it came to the group's decision-making.

I became more involved, directly and indirectly, in Tjipta Boedaja's activities. To ensure I positioned myself as equal to my subjects I followed Hobart's advice (2010, pp. 56–57) as well as Morley's exhortation to be reflexive (2007, p. 80) and endeavoured to engage in a reciprocal relationship. Moreover, I sought to

be useful to them. Making audio-visual records of the group's performances was the first step. In general, I think people from outside the group regarded me as the group's "official documentation guy". Later, however, I could not be in Tutup Ngisor all the time, especially during my spell in London. As such, I had to continuously ask who was holding the camera equipment when I was not around. A volunteer for this task from the group, Saparno, became one of the most important collaborators in this project. The group also listened to my suggestions, and I became their consultant for a film produced in collaboration with a local museum management. The group asked me to help respond to a book about them, released by an institution nearby that spent only a couple of days doing fieldwork. Significantly, they followed my suggestion to create a special show involving exclusively older group members, intended to document their dance moves and show the younger generation the difference in their styles. As of writing, such senior dance performances have taken place on two occasions.

Romo Yoso Soedarmo or Romo Yoso, the founder of the group had seven sons. Each of the seven siblings has his own expertise and interest in dancing, and each inherited some special skills from his father. The oldest brother, Dartosari, served mostly as a spiritual guru before his death in early 2014; I saw that many followers from various places were waiting for a chance to meet him. During the time when I was still teaching in Jakarta, I usually spent the first two days of each visit to Tutup Ngisor meeting and talking with him and the other older siblings. During those times, communication with Dartosari—who was in his late 80s and early 90s—was minimal owing to his poor health and hearing problems. Danoeri, the second son, who passed away in 2016, was the *dhalang* when Anjilin was young. Damirih, the third son, is a master of female dance, and he continues to supervise female dancers' practice sessions.

Most of the senior dancers are still able to dance, but have had to give up their places to younger dancers. Those older dancers still involved in daily activities include Cipto Miharso, the fourth son, who is in his late seventies, and Dharyono, Dartosari's first son, who is in his early seventies. Cipto Miharso has the ability to heal people with traditional reflexology massages. Sarwoto, the fifth son, is skilled at woodcarving, and is responsible for the masks and stage properties used in Tjipta Boedaja's productions. The sixth son, Bambang Trisantoso, is in charge of music and costumes. Everyone can play different gamelan instruments and perform

various dances. In *wayang wong*, each dancer specialises in certain characters, according to each dancer's own character.

Sitras Anjilin, the youngest of Yoso Soedarmo seven sons and one of the most important subjects and collaborators in this thesis, has lived all of his life at the house that used to belong to his father. This house is adjacent to the group's main stage, and is connected to both the stage's front door and the backstage area. This house has four rooms that visitors can use when they are spending the night. Like many visits to villages in Java, a trip to Tutup Ngisor means a culinary tour. Locals ask strangers to stop by, and when the timing is right the guests cannot escape breakfast, lunch, or dinner invitations. Anjilin and his wife are no exception, and as their house functions as the group's official lobby, Anjilin's wife must always be ready to cook extra food and prepare rooms for guests. The door of the reception room is never locked, and as this house is always open the tables usually have plenty of snacks. Anjilin is easy to speak to, and since my first visit I frequently engaged with him in discussions of art in general, tradition, history, politics, and performances—for instance, the different visual references in the group's performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—as well as other issues, be it before breakfast, lunch, late afternoon, or late at night.

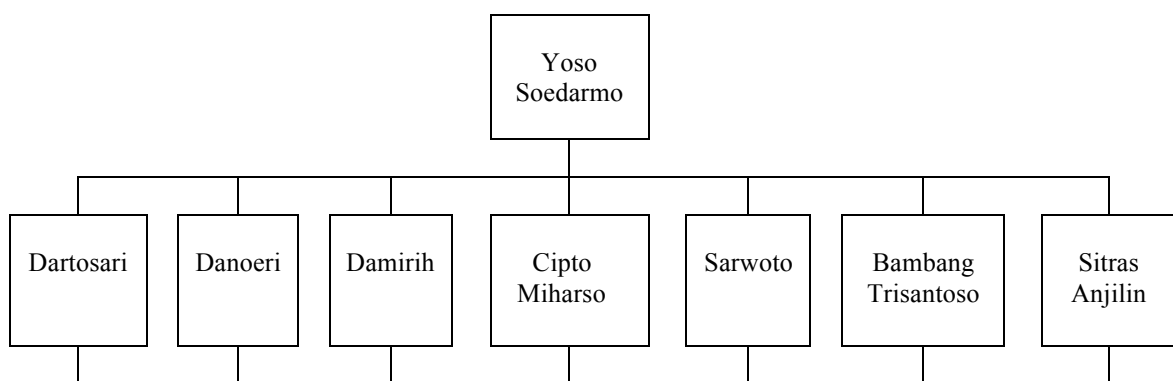


Table 3: Kinship diagram of the Soedarmo family

Under Anjilin, members of the group have not had to worry that external influences would eradicate its traditions. Anjilin has had plenty of experience performing in front of different kinds of audiences, and he realises that contemporary spectators now have different expectations and that younger generations are more familiar with gadgets and other electronic media. In response to these societal changes, the group decided to abbreviate shows and/or adopt electronic equipment into performances. They may, for example, use a digital

projector to create dynamic backdrops. The group are also alert to the dangers posed by the lack of adequate documentation of their performances. They have begun to notice differences in the dance movement styles of younger and older dancers, for example. Anjilin, meanwhile, has himself branched out and begun to write plays, especially contemporary dramas.

Without a doubt, the group's dance has evolved greatly since 1937. Until twenty years ago, its dance movements and arts methods were relatively unchanged from those that Yoso Soedarmo had taught them. However, access to the outside world increased the younger generations' exposure to wider influences. Twelve younger dancers—only two of them living in Tutup Ngisor—have completed or are in the process of completing their studies in dance schools, dance education programmes, or other art related programmes at the university level; more are expected to enrol. The group's styles and art methods have thus become increasingly mixed with outside styles and methods. Anjilin, who only attended school until the third grade, explained that his interactions with outsiders actually made his art more cosmopolitan. One of the best examples of this is in Tjipta Boedaja's March 2013 performance of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream* (given the Indonesian title "Mimpi Malam di Merapi" meaning a "Night Dream in Merapi"), which embraced a traditional Javanese look and sensibility. In this project, Anjilin collaborated with a French anthropologist-performer Catherine (Kati) Basset. This performance attracted foreign students who were studying in Yogyakarta. Anjilin and the younger dancers have been happy with these experiments with outside elements. They have tried to hold *wayang wong* performances using the Indonesian or English languages, with digital projectors for backdrop, ultraviolet lighting, different kinds of modern music, combining leather puppet *wayang*, and so on.

Anjilin is the most cosmopolitan of Yoso Soedarmo's sons. He was introduced to reading and books from a young age by his father, who intended to make him the *dhalang*, the narrator and director of *wayang* performances (Nurmanda, pp. 59–60). The many people that Anjilin has met have widened his worldview. One person who has had a strong influence on him is the meditative dance guru Suprpto Suryodharmo, the creator of the school "*Lemah Putih*" (See <http://www.lemahputih.com/AMERTA-MOVEMENT/amerta-01b.html>). Suryodharmo popularised a "free movement dance" based on the Javanese Buddhist

meditation methods *Sumarah* and *Vipasana*. He has frequently gone abroad, teaching in Europe, Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, and he has many students around the world. One day, Anjilin brought me, Nurmanda, and the other younger members of Tjipta Boedaja to *Lemah Putih*. It was essentially a spacious garden, and though it had some roofed structures for practicing dance, most of the students were doing their movements outdoors. All of the students I met that day were from Australia or Europe; some were academics or completing their postgraduate studies.

Another very important figure for Anjilin has been Sutanto '*Mendut*', an academic, art collector, musician, and patron. Anjilin has known Sutanto since the early 1990s, and Sutanto has connected Anjilin to different journalists, artists, sponsors, politicians, and governors. This helped Anjilin develop his group's physical presence and reputation (Nurmanda, 2012, pp. 65–67). Sutanto is also behind the "Komunitas Lima Gunung" (Five Mountain Arts Community), a network of art communities in Magelang regency that gathers and performs every year in an appointed village. Tjipta Boedaja usually features as the main performance of the day. Sutanto repeatedly said that Tjipta Boedaja, with its high art traditions, is their most valuable asset. Most of the performance art members of Komunitas Lima Gunung practice folk dances. Some were eager to practice old and famous performance traditions such as *reog*, a tradition from the Ponorogo Regency, 160 kilometres east of Muntilan, or even Balinese dances. In this particular show, which featured Balinese dances with recorded music, the choreographer was invited to the stage and asked where he had learned to create such performances. His answer was simple: "I watched YouTube".

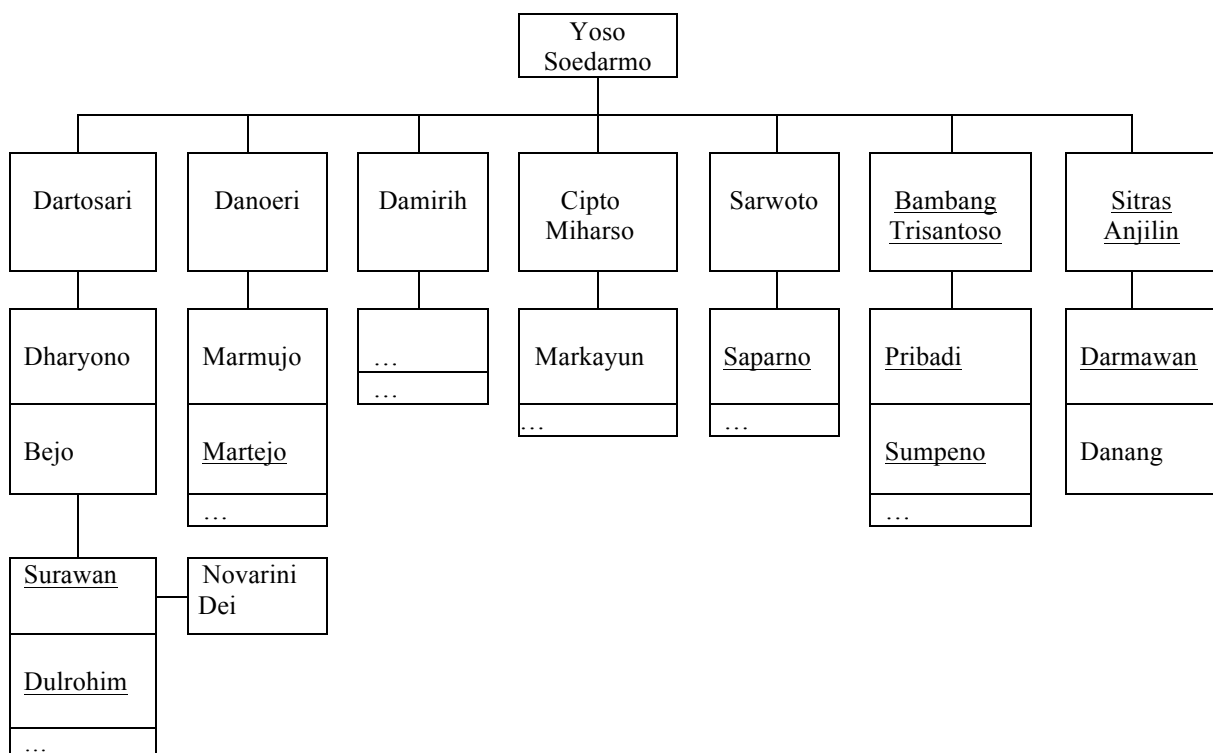
Some young Tjipta Boedaja dancers hope that collaboration will not be limited to sharing stages, and that performance groups can learn from each other and create ensemble performances. When I asked Anjilin his opinion about Tjipta Boedaja's involvement in Komunitas Lima Gunung, he responded with a smile, saying that he is happy because he has more friends when he travels around the Magelang area. When I asked again whether further workshops or collaborations between Tjipta Boedaja and other groups in Lima Gunung were possible, he answered that it would be difficult, because they do not share the same perspective regarding performance art and its practice.

Beyond Lima Gunung Network and the Lemah Putih Movement, Anjilin considers his biggest outside influence to be "Anita" or Annette Kübler, a German academic and activist who taught him about contemporary arts, globalisation, and activism. According to Anjilin, she was the one who taught him to use his art to communicate his concerns and articulate social and political views (ibid, p. 68). During my stay in Tutup Ngisor, I met her twice and I could see how passionate she was as an NGO worker. Anjilin hung an upside-down world map that he got from her, in his kitchen, near the dining room. The map showed countries in the southern hemisphere as more dominant than those in the northern hemisphere, and Anjilin was more than happy to explain what the map meant to anyone who asked questions during lunch or dinner.

All seven sons of the Tjipa Boedaja's founder were important sources and authorities for this project. However, naturally I spent more time and could speak more easily with the younger dancers, the third and fourth generation of Tjipta Boedaja. I tried to build small projects and connections with younger dancers to generate rapport, or simply because I became friends with them. I encouraged Suwonto (45), the youngest son of Dartosari, to send his first daughter to an art institute in Yogyakarta to study dance. I discussed fine art with Marmudjo (44), the son of Danoeri, a sculptor who operates a small gallery in front of the stage hall. I often meet Martedjo (40), Marmudjo's brother and the hamlet chief, at his house to discuss administrative requirements and to order Javanese traditional clothes from his wife, who is a tailor. My wife became a fan of Markayun (39), the son of Cipto Miharso, who is one of the best dancers and specialises in *Cakil*, the character with the most difficult dance moves and the only character who may be killed on Tjipta Boedaja's stage.

I allowed Saparno (35), Sarwoto's only son, to spend the nights at my house in between days when he attended visual communication classes at an art college in Yogyakarta. The people of Tutup Ngisor soon called him my foster child, and he became my closest source for confirming data during writing. Meanwhile, I followed Untung Pribadi (35), the son of Bambang Trisantoso, who formed a smaller art group, Bangun Budaya, in the neighbouring hamlet. This group has built its own network and often hosts young artists from Yogyakarta and Solo. I encouraged Widyo Sumpeno (33), Pribadi's youngest brother and one of the main production managers in Tjipto Boedajo, to follow Saparno to college. I asked

Darmawan (28), Anjilin's oldest son, to make a short film with his *reog* dance group, which is located in another neighbouring hamlet. I successfully convinced Danang (22), Anjilin's youngest son, to continue to study dance at the Indonesian Art Institute (ISI) in Solo. He is married to an ISI dance graduate, and this might have encouraged him to study dance there. I also encouraged several dancers who held bachelor degrees to complete a master's programme in dance. Surawan (28), Dartosari's grandson, and Novarini Dei (24), his wife, were the first members of *Romo Yoso's* family to earn a bachelor degree in dance. Meanwhile Mintas Dulrohim (26), Surawan's brother, decided to earn a bachelor's degree in art management at ISI Yogyakarta.



Kinship Table 2: Kinship diagram of Soedarmo family members mentioned in this thesis (underlining indicates those involved heavily in film planning and filmmaking)

I relied on various forms of popular culture to provoke discussions with these dancers. I screened different films for the whole hamlet in the hall or more privately in a house. In early 2015, I bought and distributed fifteen copies of *Tirai Menurun* (The Curtain Drops), a novel written by Nh. Dini based on a 1950s study of Ngesti Pandawa, a *wayang wong* group from Semarang, the capital of Central Java province. I gave each household a copy so its members could share, though this gift was targeted predominantly at younger dancers in the hopes that they

would discuss the history of commercial *wayang wong* in major cities. The random discussions that occurred were interesting. For instance, some younger members questioned my motivation for circulating a depressing story of *wayang wong* survival. A considerable surprise was when Sarwoto, who was not my main target with the book, asked me to come to his house to discuss the border between fiction and fact within the book, as he thought he personally knew the real life inspirations for its different characters.

In mid-2016, I established an institution, the *Ben Pinter Tenan* (my translation from Javanese: To Be Really Smart) Foundation, to ensure easier access to film funding. Securing film grants or investment is a long and difficult process, and the foundation was helpful when potential funders could only work with formal institutions. I am on the governing board with Saparno and Martejo, while Anjilin and his siblings Trisantoso, Sarwoto and Cipto Miharso are members of the supervisory board. The institution has partnered with Tjipta Boedaja to start negotiations for a more accessible performance hall in Muntilan, and is also in talks with different parties for other potential projects, such as opening a school.

2.3. Peasants Who Farm, Farmers Who Dance, Peasant Dancers Who Have to Farm

There are different ways to categorise the identities of rural Javanese, but these identities are fluid and often overlap with each other. Clifford Geertz' classic book *The Religion of Java* (1960) is one way to look at the broad picture here. Geertz believes that traditional Javanese culture is a syncretism of three groups: the *abangan*, following animist beliefs of Javanese/Malay Polynesian origin; *priyayi*, who embrace Hindu teachings that came to Java around 400 AD and can still be found among the higher class nobles and government officials, who usually still maintain a connection to the lineage of kingdoms in Java; and *santri*, Islamic traditions that came later in the 14th century (1960, pp. 4–7). Geertz argues that the strength of these three groups' influence differs from place to place. He warns that, as Javanese culture is very dynamic and complicated, such a division should only be used to see the broader picture (ibid, p. 7). Identifying the people of Tjipta Boedaja or villagers of Tutup Ngisor as *abangan* is a simplification, as many would reject the category for various reasons.

The villages around Mount Merapi have numerous traditions. Peasants routinely perform different protective and agriculture rituals. Although animistic

beliefs are commonly found in traditional societies around the world, in the context of Tutup Ngisor, the number of rituals intensifies their old beliefs. Many other villages around Mount Merapi have already abandoned traditional cultural practices; as such, after volcanic eruptions, residents of Tutup Ngisor often relate the severity of damage in different areas with the willingness of said areas' inhabitants to maintain these traditions. Such discussions are then used to remind the local residents to be more faithful to the old traditions.

The anthropologist Lucas Triyoga has argued that the communities around Merapi are mostly *abangan*, using animist knowledge to personify the harsh daily demands and challenges of the volcano. Residents of the area around Merapi believe that the volcano is a royal palace for spirits (2010, p. 147), and that they must respect this kingdom, as it offers security, prosperity, and fertility (ibid, p. 148). The balance of nature is personified through different supernatural and mystical figures that are believed to be responsible for different natural elements, similar to the responsibilities of ministers in government cabinets: *Kiyai Sapujagad* is the overall regulator; *Antiboga* regulates the weight and material of ejectus from Merapi; *Sapuangin* is responsible for determining the direction and speed of the wind and thus the spread of ash during eruptions; *Megantara* governs rain, climate, and the air temperature; *Nyai Gadungmelati* regulates the mountainside plants; *Kartadimeja* regulates forest animals; and so on. There are also a number of guardians and ancestral spirits believed to have control over different areas (ibid, pp. 148–149). Tutup Ngisor residents are familiar with these names, but these figures become more significant as one goes uphill.

Most spiritual beings in Tutup Ngisor area are identified as *danyang* or guardian spirits that live in special places, never harming people but protecting them. These spirits are considered actual deceased historic figures (Geertz, op cit, p. 26). The most notable is Den Bagus Pitono, located in the big rock across from the hall. His role is to take care of the hamlet in general. Some people say that he is the grandson of Kyai Tutup, the founder of the settlement who often sunbathed on the big rock, while some others believe that Den Bagus Pitono is Kyai Tutup himself. Den Bagus Pitono walks around Tutup Ngisor with his two female attendants. The other spirit is Kyai Jafar of the lava dam just North of Tutup Ngisor, a religious creature who often reminds farmers to go home during prayer time. Kyai Jafar walks around the dam area with his rooster, and from time to time he performs

adzan, calling the faithful to prayers at his big mosque above the dam. Another supernatural creature is Satariah, a fairy who guards the springs under the bridge next to the dam. Lately, Satariyah has often possessed people from neighbouring hamlets, protesting the sand mining around the river and the destruction of her springs. Other creatures around Tutup Ngisor are believed to mostly take animal form, though some used to be human and have names, like Kyai Bulus (turtle) who used to work with Kyai Tutup. Other spiritual animals' names are not known to most Tutup Ngisor residents. These spirits mostly guard specific locations or spots in the settlement.

During the Suran festival, the villagers put offerings in about thirty or forty spots around the village for these spirits, while other creatures—humanoid and not—receive routine offerings. Still, people give individual or incidental offerings to certain spirits for specific purposes. Farmers may give offerings to creatures who live on his land, or someone who goes fishing may give offerings to the spirit who takes care of the fish. There are also more familiar species of creatures mentioned in Geertz' book, such as *genderuwo*, *kuntilanak*, or *tuyul* (1960, p. 16-25), who are mostly notorious troublemakers when they interact with humans. These creatures live a little further from the settlements. Unlike the respectable *danyangs*, the villagers do not want to connect with these creatures, let alone give offerings to them.

Supernatural issues did not reveal themselves to me during my stay at Tutup Ngisor, apart from the production and distribution of offerings, some oral prayer in Javanese, and the possession of the dancers. I had to ask specific questions to specific figures. Ultimately, I determined that the best method would be to bring cameras and record young dancers (aged about thirty years old) asking questions in Javanese to the older members. The interviews showed that, like me, these young dancers still had many things to learn, and that we all had false assumptions. For example, during my time in Suran ceremonies, I assumed that the *danyangs* were the ones who possessed the *jathilan* dancers, because I had seen dance performance where a Javanese village 'provided' one or more dancer as a medium for their *danyangs* to dance. However, according to Miharso, the *danyangs* from Tutup Ngisor usually just watch, together with the human spectators around the dance ground. Those who possess the dancers—when such things actually happen—are invitees from faraway places. During these ceremonies, the supernatural beings

come not only from Merapi, Yogyakarta or the Southern Sea—(these locations constituting the most familiar cosmological map of the Javanese kingdom)—but also from around the world: Turkey, Mongolia, the Middle East, and so on. It is an international festival, after all, and the Tutup Ngisor residents may have felt the effects of globalisation earlier, before physical access to the village became open and they received human tourists, academics, and artists from around the world.

Sometimes, peculiar incidents can be witnessed. The most interesting case for me, and one of the inspirations for the 2017 film *Tetangga*, happened during two *suran* rituals in 2011 and 2012. I observed serious incidents among the dancers, as their trances did not follow the expected patterns. In 2011, during the parade (before the field dance began), both princes and one of the knights were already in trance. The knight and one of the princes were arguing in strange voices; another prince was crying loudly. Other parade participants, as well as group elders, tried hard to keep the two quarrelling characters from physically fighting, while others tried to cheer the sobbing prince. The incident continued for almost half an hour, and the remaining dancers could not begin the dance because their ranks were incomplete. Ultimately, the dance began very late and lasted only a short while.

Many different explanations later emerged concerning the incident, but at that time, most of the elders looked shocked and worried. When I asked one afterwards, he said that the most "logical" explanation was that the ritual organisers, who were mostly younger members, had forgotten or left out some vital ingredients required for the offering. The following year, in 2012, a similar incident occurred again, affecting another dancer, cast as a knight. This time, he did not recover from the incident and the dance was ultimately performed without him. Again, the dance did not last as long as usual. However, after the show, the same elder I spoke to the year before was less concerned by the incident. He convinced me that on this occasion that it was probably not because of an incomplete offering, suggesting now there are many detailed requirements for offerings in the *primbon* making it hugely difficult for the organiser to follow them precisely. Now he felt that something else was amiss, but it was yet to be identified. Another explanation suggested by Saparno is that these kinds of incidents happened to those who had problematic attitudes while preparing for the Suran festival. In 2011, the three possessed dancers had fallen out with each other regarding the organising plans,

while in 2012 the dancer in question were not really involved in preparation. Saparno welcomed psychological explanations, such as guilt, for this phenomenon.

Members of Tjipta Boedaja mostly have practical and logical explanations for these animistic traditions. For instance, whenever someone leaves Tutup Ngisor for the town of Muntilan (or even further), he or she is obliged to go to the tomb of the village elders to say farewell and pray for a safe journey. When I asked younger dancers how strictly they obeyed this obligation, they responded that they did not believe that failure to go to the tomb would cause trouble, but they needed to go there to feel comfortable about their trips. Meanwhile, most members called their weekly gamelan playing, held every Thursday night, a "ritual", while I would sometimes hear others call it "practicing".

Residents and local dancers rarely discussed supernatural topics, either with me and with others. When we gathered, most discussions were about dance and art performances. Indeed, Tjipta Boedaja maintains a strong identity as a *wayang wong* group. Today, however, the popularity of *wayang wong* in the cities has slowly decreased and Tjipta Boedaja is one of few surviving active groups. Yet, the group enjoys a high status and a good reputation among art communities in Magelang that lends authority to its views and activities. Typically, Tjipta Boedaja uses its art to make pronouncements about the world and about its own particular identity as a group made of farmers. The farming area around the village is an agricultural heaven: volcanic eruptions have brought natural fertilisers to the soil; many rivers and streams pass through the village, and the terrain is more flat than sloping, making it ideal for agriculture. There is, however, a recurrent problem after each eruption: the lava streams change the contours of every river, thereby impacting riverside farming lands and blocking existing irrigation channels. There is also a severe administrative problem. Although it considers itself a large agricultural country, Indonesia offers minimum subsidies and back-up policies for small farmers, leaving them to deal with uncertainty in the face of potentially unsupportive markets. Robert W. Hefner (1990) believes that the Soeharto regime's policy aimed at promoting food self-sustainability only benefited farmers in lowland areas. Highland villages only received attention in later stages. Today, most farmers prefer to plant vegetables rather than rice, as they have a better market price and less impact on the fertility of the soil.

Once, Nurmanda was involved in a Tjipta Boedaja performance that focused on local agricultural policies. The group had received funding from the local branch of the Ministry of Agriculture in order to perform a ceremonial "thanksgiving gesture" for the Ministry's assistance. With only three days to prepare, Anjilin and his dancers discussed what they wanted to do. Instead of giving the officials what they expected, the group took the decision to use the occasion to make a protest, denouncing Ministry policies in the performance. In the past, the ministry had given the farmers rice seeds that enabled them to have five harvests in a year, rather than the two harvests they had with the ordinary rice. The farmers followed the ministry's instructions, and indeed they had had five harvests. However, owing to the increased supply, the local market price for rice plummeted drastically, and the farmers did not see any profit. Moreover, having five harvests a year reduced the soil's fertility. In the performance, actors portrayed an agriculture official and a rice trader who had just planted his rice seeds. The earth became angry and ate them, as well as the farmer, forming a small mountain. At the top of the mountain, a single paddy grew (Nurmanda. 2012, pp. 69–70).

Another problem is population growth and limited natural carrying capacity. Geertz (1963) compares the amount of agricultural land in Java with the island's population growth, finding what he calls an *agriculture involution*. Since Yoso Soedarmo lifted the curse in 1937 and the villagers became comfortable having more than seven households, the population has not ceased to grow. While all members of the community are expected to farm, not everyone can hold land. This problem became evident with the second generation of Tjipta Boedaja. Yoso Soedarmo's land could only be divided among his first five sons, leaving his sixth and the seventh sons, Bambang Trisantoso and Anjilin, without any land inheritance. For the third generation, the issue was even more problematic, since the first five sons had five to seven children each (Nurmanda, p.56). Many group members, thus, have had to buy their farming land. One member of the group, Trisantoso, even went so far as to tell me that most of the time farming is a burden on his art.

Many group members use a broader definition of "farming", understanding it as living from nature. Some dancers work as labourers when their neighbours have a harvest. Some buy young calves, feed them, and then sell them to the market or slaughterhouses when the cattle get bigger. Some farmers own water buffaloes

and rent them to help work the soil. Many keep other kinds of animals: goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, birds, swans, fishes, hamsters, and rabbits. Others gather firewood. Many gather volcanic ash, sand, and rocks and sell them to traders. Some households cook traditional foods and sell them in urban areas. More creative and skilful members sculpt wood and stone to produce statues, masks, or house ornaments. The abundance of rock and the existence of Hindu-Buddhist temples in the area have led them to consider making stone sculpting a local tradition. Many residents combine the above activities. Skill with wood and stone are basic for most male villagers, who frequently build their own houses from available stones. Many also work in the service sector. When they go to urban areas for jobs, many of them work in construction. Some of the dancers who are also skilled labourers now live in surrounding areas and the closest towns, where they work as drivers or traders.

2.4. *Wayang Wong*, Dance Performances, and Cultural Statements

This section discusses how *wayang wong* and other performance traditions can be highly political. That this is the case should not be a surprise. Felicia Hughes-Freeland, for example, has noted the elements of political symbolism contained in Javanese court dance (2008, p.1). As previously elaborated, Tjipta Boedaja perform other traditional forms, *ketoprak*, fragment dances, *topeng* dances, *shadow puppets*, and *soreng* as part of their higher or “stage” arts, as well as various region's “field” or “folk” dances such as *jathilan*, *reog*, *topeng ireng*, and so on (Prabowo et al., 2012, p. 31, see also Groenendael, 2008, p. 33).

Wayang wong is central to this discussion both because it is the group's strength and because it is quite a rare skill today. Contemporary Indonesians use the word *wayang* to refer to many things: the puppet itself, the show in the shadow puppet (*wayang kulit*) tradition, or even traditional dance drama performances (*wayang orang* in Indonesian or *wayang wong* in Javanese, both of which can be translated literally as 'human *wayang*'). A full *wayang wong* show, modelled after a shadow puppet performance (Hughes-Freeland, 2008, p. 32), can last for more than four hours, and involve artists dancing, performing dialogue, acting on stage, and singing. Hughes-Freeland describes the art as ‘dance theater’ (ibid, p. 15).

While there are other *wayang* performances based on different stories and sources, *wayang* as popularly understood today refers to stories from the Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Many scholars believe that *wayang wong* in its

present form was started in the late of eighteenth century (Susilo, 1984, p. 117, see also Cohen, 2016, p. 30). Susilo believes that *wayang wong* reached its full development as a combination of storytelling and warrior dance performance, during the reign of Mangkunegara V of Mangkunegaran Palace (r. 1881-1896), Surakarta (1984, p. 117). His father, Mangkunegaran IV (r. 1854-1881) was the one who invented the shadow puppet look in *wayang wong* costume (ibid). However, Royal Courts from both cities Yogyakarta and Surakarta had contributed to this development. Yogyakarta retain *wayang wong* as royal heirloom (Cohen, 2016, p. 56). There, the art was performed by nobles actor-dancers (ibid, p. 31). Hamengkubuwana V of Yogyakarta (r. 1823–1855) ordered to write down *wayang wong* dialogues and narration to be guidance for dancers (ibid, p. 23). Mangkunegaran Court's *wayang wong* revival in 1880's were modelled after *wayang wong* of Yogyakarta, made possible by sending a dancer-choreographer Tondhakusuma to practice in Yogyakarta court as well as having dance instructors from Yogyakarta to train dancers in Mangkunegaran Court (ibid, p. 30). With Tondhakusuma at helm, Mangkunegaran *wayang wong* came up with new costume designs and dance movements (ibid, pp. 30-31, 259).

Wayang wong in both Yogyakarta and Mangkunegara kingdoms was performed for state rituals (Susilo, 1984, p. 118). There are theories about the deeper histories of *wayang wong* (see Soedarsono, 1984, p. 11) but Hughes-Freeland reminds us that particular court elements are always given deeper historical roots to further legitimise the regimes (2008, p. 32). For the Javanese monarchs, *wayang* shows represented not only an idealised state life, but also policies and practices. Soedarsono argues that early *wayang wong* performances in the Yogyakarta court were political statements about its conflict with the kingdom of Surakarta (1984, pp. 14-15); Hughes-Freeland, meanwhile, elaborates on how different performances in the Yogyakarta court symbolise the poetics of power (op cit., pp. 111-162).

When economic crisis hit Mangkunegaran royal court in 1887, it was forced to relieved and gave permission to *wayang wong* dancers to transmit *wayang wong* and other courtly arts outside the court's wall (Cogen, 2016, p. 56). In 1888 *wayang wong* companies were operated in Tasikmalaya, Garut, Bandung and Sukabumi, West Java. Their popularity encouraged others to create more companies, combined the art with the popular stage elements. As soon as in 1890, Batavia, the biggest

city in the Dutch Indies colonial era, already had *wayang wong* craze (ibid). Not until 1894 Surakarta finally had its own commercial *wayang wong* company when Gan Kam, a Chinese stage producer started his own troupe *Langen Ngesthi Suka* that later became a legendary group (ibid, pp. 55-56, see also Hatley, 2008, p. 20). The commercial aspect has given the art a stigma that stayed until 1940's (ibid, p. 58). After the Indonesian independence, *wayang wong* reputation was restored because of innovation of Semarang based *wayang wong* troupe, Ngesthi Panhawa (ibid, p. 263). Nowadays, when people discuss about Surakarta style *wayang wong*, they referred to this commercial and proscenium stage based *wayang wong*.

Anjilin and his siblings explained that Tjipta Boedaja performs the Surakarta style of *wayang wong*, as most evident in their default proscenium stage, their costume conventions, and the styles of gamelan music they play. We suspect, however, that they have also been influenced by the Yogyakarta style. Hughes-Freeland notes that *wayang wong* development inside the court was highest during the reign of Hamengkubuwana VIII (r. 1921–1939), when performances lasted for three days. During the reign of Hamengkubuwana IX (r. 1940-1988), however, performance duration was reduced to less than four hour (ibid, p. 36). It was Hamengkubuwana VIII who promoted the study of court dance outside the court by funding Kridha Beksa Wirama, a dance school focusing on court performances, in 1918 as part of the nationalist movement (ibid, pp. 45-46). This happened to coincide with the time when Yoso Soedarmo studied dance in Gamping Yogyakarta. When Soedarmo moved to Surakarta, it may have been easier for him to gain access to and study court dances.

For both leaders and the common people, *wayang* also represented the ideal ruler–subject relationship. The common people are mainly represented in *wayang* performances in four *punakawan* characters: they are royal servants who are not from the Bharatayuda and Ramayana epics and whose functions are to make jokes and running commentaries on stage. The importance of *punakawans* is highlighted even more since Semar, father of Gareng, Petruk and Bagong, is a demi-god and his presence and commentary represents the Javanese version of *vox populi, vox dei*, the voice of the people is the voice of God. Through these characters' dialogues and actions, *dalangs*, or puppetmasters, can present their interpretations of Javanese ideals and aspirations, although this might depend on the time and spatial context of each performance. The play *Petruk Dadi Ratu* (Petruk becomes King) is one of best

examples of this. The story is about Petruk, who obtains a most powerful amulet and takes power from the corrupted nobles and kings, creating a good government before ultimately stepping down –thereby restoring “order”– after Semar reminds him of his place as a peasant. Contemporary political campaigns contested by elite and proletarian candidates, thus, have seen both using the same play to promote their candidacies. The challenger would emphasise that the corrupt system needs to be reformed by a “fresh” leader, while the incumbent would highlight the fact that peasants and nobles both have their own places and functions (see also the discussion of *Petruk Dadi Ratu* in Anderson, 1990, p. 170).

Tjipta Boedaja and other *wayang* performance groups outside the court might not face the political opponents of Javanese sultans, but they face certain conditions on which they feel they must comment. For instance, they can make statements relating to the damage done to rivers by sand-mining activities or choose a *wayang* story about greed, and create dialogue with or between *punakawans* about that topic. Financial sponsors, or whoever orders a performance, usually have substantial influence in choosing the stories- which sub-plots and spin-offs from *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, for example- that they want performed during their events. Meanwhile, the group can also negotiate if it thinks that a particular story is not suitable: some stories are too violent to be performed on Tjipta Boedaya's stage, while other stories might not be appropriate to the general tenor of the times (e.g. staging stories that emphasise hedonism during an economic crisis), or simply outstrip the group's resources (e.g. stories that require a substantial number of female dancers when the group lacks such dancers).

Choosing a story might be tricky. In the time of Yoso Soedarmo and his spiritual leadership, he would meditate before selecting a story, as it had to fit with both the contemporary reality and the cosmological situation. Decisions were made weeks or months before the performance, to enable the group to practice. However, on several occasions Soedarmo changed the story shortly before its performance, wasting weeks or months of rehearsing, because he felt that the story no longer suited the current situation. In the modern-day context of Tjipta Boedaja as an egalitarian group, selecting a story remains a difficult decision. Usually a smaller team around Anjilin intensively discusses story selection, before presenting it in the first production meeting, where it is further discussed.

Making a political statement in *wayang wong* performance usually relies on dialogue (see Anderson, 1990, pp. 167-168). When the group receives an invitation for "a long duration performance" in a neighbouring village, this performance is distinguished from shorter ones by its *punakawan* scenes. Here, *punakawan* characters can discuss different topics unrelated to the plot. Several times I watched the group performing such scenes outside their own village, including at 2 o'clock in the morning when only a handful of spectators were left, discussing Tutup Ngisor's specific problems or telling private jokes about a certain dancer's laziness, for example—problems with which the local audience would have been unfamiliar.

Meanwhile, folk dances that are usually performed in the open air, tend to have no dialogue. This makes them less amenable to being hijacked for political purposes or for even carrying some educational message (see Clara van Groenendael's elaboration of messages in *jaranan* performances, 2008, p. 95). What many folk dances in Magelang do demonstrate is great physical strength. Indeed, they were probably intended to show potential enemies the strength and endurance of soldiers. *Jathilan*, *topeng ireng* or *reog* troupes, for instance, must be able to jump around constantly for about twenty to thirty minutes.

To conclude this chapter, what we call contemporary dances in a Javanese context can be confusing for someone from Jakarta like me. When I hear the word contemporary, I would imagine something completely new or related to the current global situation. In the art scenes in Yogyakarta, Surakarta, or Surabaya, most contemporary dances are new dance creations or choreographies based on traditional dance movements, positions, costumes or philosophies. This genre seldom has dialogue and relies more on plotline and visual appearance to make statements about the world. Most Tjipta Boedaja creations that have this aspiration fall under this heading.

While contemporary dance is relatively new for the group, power and authority is still largely in the hands of the older generation. However, aside from Anjilin and Trisantoso, no dancers above the age of fifty are involved, as these senior dancers are not used to performing contemporary dances. Tjipta Boedaja dancers must, therefore, brainstorm more intensely to come up with ideas for content and plots for contemporary dances. Usually, the process starts when they receive an invitation or request to perform at a specific event or festival. They gather to discuss the impression they want to create and how they should perform.

Surawan, who has graduated from dance school usually acts as choreographer, and although other dancers can contribute in the end it is still Anjilin who makes the final decisions- seniority still plays a very important role in Tjipta Boedaja's creative process.

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that contemporary dance and the challenge of aesthetic development, and/or access to information are not the only changes that dancers have had to face. The economic pressures and national/global political changes loom in the background of their creativity and performance. How does this affect collaboration and filmmaking activities with people from different cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds? In the next chapter, I will discuss the process through which filmmaking collaboration was initiated with these people.

Chapter 3. Building Collaboration: Our Project or Mine?

3.1. Building Common Ground: Film Workshops and Documentation Activities

This chapter focuses on the process of initiating and maintaining a filmmaking collaboration between Tjipta Boedaja artists, myself, and the urban filmmakers I brought to the village. The process began when I conducted a film workshop for adult members of the dance group in September and October 2008. As I mentioned before, this workshop was intended to provide participants with technical filmmaking skills, thereby enabling them to record their own events and performances and to build their own audio-visual documentation. The workshop was a starting point for the collaborators having what John-Steiner calls shared visions and goals, which eases effective collaboration (2000, p. 9), and—using Fluehr Lobban's term—informs participants and builds a common ground for collaboration (2008, p. 176).

The workshops were held over several visits to Tutup Ngisor. In the beginning, I always came with urban filmmakers and Candra Aditya from Malang, East Java. At that stage, he was still applying for a scholarship at the film school I was about to open. In the first workshop, the instructors talked about technical aspects of filmmaking: different camera angles, camera movements, types of shots, sound recording techniques, camera lighting, and some basic editing ideas. The workshop team then returned to Jakarta, leaving the local collaborators to prepare a story pitch. The following workshop discussed directing and acting in films. The one after that dealt with film producing, and the final workshop focused on storytelling. The dancers came up with five stories for short films, and as these were still in the form of a basic premise we used the storytelling workshop to develop those ideas. When we finished, the workshop mentors from Jakarta prepared to go home, planning to come back and produce the films later. However, the local artists were eager to make their films, and at the last minute it was decided to leave Aditya and some equipment to help them shoot their films.

If the teaching part of the workshop was meant to develop shared visions and goals among collaborators, the decision to let the dancers make the films themselves was made to ensure that the dancers maintained their enthusiasm. Moreover, letting the dancers make films without supervision was considered a good way to evaluate their understanding and abilities up to that point, and would

be useful in planning the next step of the collaboration. At the time, Candra Aditya was twenty years old. He was relatively familiar with the basic equipment, but at the same time lacked film production experience. Nurmanda and I stressed to him the importance of serving only as a facilitator for this community and reminded him not to interfere too much. He lived for several weeks in the village, and soon he developed a special rapport with the young members of the group. With his help, five short films were produced in the next five weeks, these will be discussed in the next chapter.

Rapport between urban and rural collaborators grew closer through a film workshop for children in June and July 2010, enabling local dancers to speak freely, criticise when needed, and develop social literacy and consciousness, aspects that Flueher-Lobban thinks important for collaboration (2008, p. 175). This workshop focused on familiarising children with film crews and camera acting. The relaxed situation, which was filled with laughter and involved children, served as an effective icebreaker. This time, Nurmanda stayed longer in Tutup Ngisor, and Aditya was happy to return again, resulting in five short, basic films. This time, adult dancers and villagers contributed to the preparation of productions. The workshop process was playful, the children were excited, and, when some of the films could not be finished, it broke their heart.

The local dancers also learned by observing the way urban collaborators recorded the group's performances and the village's activities. For John-Steiner, this enthusiasm is an important trait in building the discipline changes and paradigm transformations required for creative collaboration (2000, p. 64). After the first workshop finished in 2008, I travelled back and forth between Jakarta and Tutup Ngisor to record different events, performances, and ceremonies. When the group or the hamlet had events, performances, or other important occasions, someone from the group would call or text me about it. Whenever possible, I made travel plans and went there. While I was recording events with my camera, the artists watched my activities closely. They then learned how their activities were perceived by an urban outsider. While watching the resulting videos, Anjilin, Trisantoso, Saparno, Sumpeno, and other group members kept asking questions. They wanted to understand the reason for different decisions in capturing their activities. Saparno was particularly interested in camera operation.

The recording of village activities built collaborators' mutual trust, another requirement for healthy collaboration (Fluehr-Lobban, 2008, p. 176). I started to get the locals involved in this documentation process by making them my fixers, and soon after that I could trust them with operating the recording devices themselves. In the early years of my visits to Tutup Ngisor, I tried to have three cameras recording each stage performance: one master, one on the right, and another on the left. When I came by myself or with limited crew, I would ask some locals to operate the camera, as each camera required an operator to ensure it captured and followed one dancer's movement. When we discussed the results, it was probably the first time the local dancers were able to compare their performance over the years based on visual documentation. We kept talking about the importance of documentation for their own benefits, such as the regeneration process. Through this, I hoped to build common ground, increase local collaborators' interest, and raise their responsibility, all crucial ingredients for successful collaborations (ibid, pp. 176, 179). When Saparno noted the need for cameras with greater storage or power capacities, or when Ajilin decided to buy his own laptop computer to edit videos, I thought that they clearly saw the benefits of such activities.

Over the following years, I became more and more comfortable asking the dancers to help me with my shooting. When I could stay longer, I did my best to conduct interviews about group members' lives as dancers and farmers in Tutup Ngisor. Priority was given to senior members and the seven siblings, so that each senior member was documented, but for certain issues I turned to the young dancers. I also needed the young dancers to interpret interviews, especially when I spoke with older dancers who were more comfortable telling their stories in Javanese. More and more, these young dancers became increasingly comfortable in front of and behind the cameras. Later on, in 2014, Saparno mentioned his plan to produce a set of interviews about his late grandfather, Yoso Soedarmo.

I began to leave more valuable cameras and sound recorders at Tutup Ngisor to show my trust in the local dancers and the importance of their agenda. In 2011, I left one digital video (mini DV) camera with a dancer. Later on, in 2013, I left my DSLR camera, its lens, and an audio recorder with Saparno, and the following year I also left him a 4K action camera. His house is very close to the stage hall, and he was one of the people who most frequently assisted me with the

cameras. As such, I could trust him to record more performances when I was not around.

Different events enabled an exploration of the local dancers' own agendas, which is an important requirement for Joan Rappaport (2008, p. 2). Close observation at such moments allowing unheard voices to emerge, an important consideration for Sherry Ortner (2013, p. 25). In late 2011 and early 2012, I started thinking about using interview footage to make a documentary. I talked to Anjilin about one of the topics that came up often during interviews: the gap in dance moves between older dancers who learned their art entirely in the village and the younger generation who were more subject to urban influence and that of the art schools. I proposed having a special performance for senior dancers to ensure that the younger generation could watch and that we had documentation of the old ways of dancing in the group. At that meeting, I could not tell if Anjilin's response was positive, but later he called me to tell me that the group were ready to perform a senior dancers' show. We ended up having such performances twice, as it turned out that everyone in Tjipta Boedaja considered this to be an important process.

Local collaborators increasingly resembled what Fluehr-Lobban refers to as "active partners" (2008, p. 175) and what began to develop was what Vera John-Steiner calls an "interdependence of thinkers" (2000, p. 1). The second time Tjipta Boedaja held a performance for older dancers was in 2015. I secured about £3000 funding from the Ministry of Education for a short documentary. The funds were enough to produce a *wayang wong* performance (£500), pay crew fees (£1600), rent equipment (£250), and handle post-production (£300) and logistics and transport for my two former student crews. Saparno and Sumpeno were involved in the aesthetic arrangements from the beginning. Anjilin lent administrative support and introduced the plan at the group's formal production meeting. For administrative reasons, the terms of the grant required us to finish the film in six weeks. As I had to travel to London in connection with my studies just as the old dancers began their exercises, Saparno and Sumpeno had to shoot all of the exercises without me. While the time constraint was tight, the funding institution was happy with the result. We wanted our production to be around twenty-five minutes in length, but the institution wanted all of the films produced to be aired on national television, and therefore asked us to make it fifteen minutes long.

Saparno, Sumpeno and Anjilin were involved in screenings of films produced by Tjipta Boedaja films around Yogyakarta and Jakarta. This made clear their status as authors of this work, or in John-Steiner's words, "...thinkers in the construction of knowledge" (2000, p. 1). This also emphasised their participation in publication, something that is important for Fluehr-Lobban (2008, p. 175). Earlier, I had entered the film into a documentary festival in Yogyakarta, which accepted the submission. After discussion, the committee preferred to have it in the short documentary category. We still had several weeks before we submitted the film, and we managed to finish a film of twenty-five minutes duration. This festival also gave us more time on stage, holding a Q and A (question and answer) session about the film with the festival crowd. In addition to this festival, we also screened the film in a visual anthropology session at an anthropology symposium in Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, in July 2016, together with a short work we produced in 2015. I went to both events with Anjilin, Saparno, and Sumpeno.

One particular situation increased Saparno's personal involvement in the process. During the editing, I showed him footage of an interview with Dartosari, Yoso Soedarmo's first son and Saparno's oldest uncle. Watching his uncle talking to the camera touched his emotions, because there was almost no other video documentation of Dartosari, who passed away in early 2014. I had managed to interview him in 2012, when he was already very old and weak. Afterwards, Saparno was inspired to finish his planned interviews about Yoso Soedarmo. In early 2016, the second son of Yoso Soedarmo, Danoeri passed away. During the funeral ceremony, Saparno told me that he was relieved that he had already interviewed Danoeri the previous year. From this experience, we can see how film's function to store memory very powerfully invokes local artists' emotions.

3.2. Challenge in Building Common Ground 1: The Cultural Gap

In order to appreciate the conflicts between the needs of the project and the local people, or between practical needs and research needs, this section compares the group dynamics during preparation for film production with those of the stage productions. A stage performance is usually initiated by a group meeting, mostly after eight o'clock in the evening when everyone who wants to perform night prayers has finished. Ten to twenty available members sit together on a plastic mat on the stage or hall floor, where spectators usually sit during shows. These

meetings typically start with Anjilin or another of the "administrative staff" opening the meeting by explaining the motivation, type of performance, proposed story, style, and cast. The discussion then shifts to more technical matters: the persons in charge of different production tasks, style of choreography, costumes, makeup, decoration and lighting, production plan, transportation (if the show is outside of the village), and (if applicable) show fees. In a culture with seniority-oriented values like Java, members under the age of thirty are usually quiet. These meetings last for hours, but when time is running out the group can schedule another night for further discussion. No one takes notes during discussions, except for the list of cast and crew. Smaller meetings follow, usually involving the director and different key production crew-members. Most of the time, Anjilin directs the shows, but he also often performs, as do most of the production team.

There are several reasons for performances: scheduled annual shows at Tutup Ngisor, local events around the village, performances with fees, and invitations from government agencies or individuals/families. The meetings are usually quite formal when they begin, but become more relaxed toward the end. As *wayang* characters are predominantly male and Tjipta Boedaja today rarely has dancers playing characters of the opposite sex, participants in the meetings are mostly men. Almost everyone smokes clove cigarettes, while older members smoke hand-rolled cigarettes. Laughter and jokes fill most production meetings. The ambience is more serious when discussing invitations with which the dancers are not comfortable. For instance, for one invitation from a local agriculture office in 2010, a show with a strong message concerning the difficult conditions faced by local farmers was performed, while an invitation from an annual village festival was considered problematic as group members considered the festival to have become too commercially oriented.

After the meeting, the group prepares the rehearsals. Some shows need more rehearsals than others. In 2015, Tjipta Boedaja came up with the ideas of playing basic *wayang* plots without preparation. Watching such performances feels like watching jazz musicians during jam session, as the dancers change their usual roles and experiment with new parts. Most dancers stick to playing the same characters all their lives. Children of Tutup Ngisor grow up mimicking adults' dancing. After they begin to practice together, they try out different characters, and

trainers and elders can see which characters' best suit their postures and personalities.

Rehearsals, however, remain important, especially when something new is being proposed. The number of rehearsals reflects the perceived importance of the performance, but any rehearsal may be impacted by the dancers' prior commitments. During important rehearsals, the hall is filled with dancers and musicians. Different scenes are rehearsed in different parts of the hall. The choreographer—when he or she is not exercising—moves around these different groups, consulting through gestures with whoever is in charge of each group. The costume manager circulates with a pile of clothing, and some dancers will take a look at them and try on a few items. The music director consults with the drummer. The *dalang*, the narrator and puppet master, practices his narration. The director sits and watches everything, making sure that it all runs to plan. When production crews are already involved in dance practice, whoever needs to consult with them must interrupt their sessions. This does not really matter, as the rehearsal atmosphere is very fluid and intimate.

Approaching performance day, everyone in the group becomes busier. All Tutup Ngisor residents are involved in preparation for ritual performances. The elderly take care of ritual organisation, the children prepare offerings and decorations, housewives prepare food, and small children put offerings in specific spots; everyone must be involved. Meanwhile, during non-ritual performances, the number of people involved may be much smaller, even though late night performances like *wayang wong* still require women residents to cook for all spectators. Two dinner meals are distributed among spectators during the show. For spectators from big cities or invited by the group, Anjilin asks them to eat dinner at his house before the show starts.

When the group must perform outside the village, someone must provide transportation for the dancers and *gamelan* orchestra instruments. Dancers, meanwhile, may travel by motorcycle, bus, or (frequently) in the back of small pick-up trucks, depending on the distance and financial arrangements (here is where the older dancers cut in and say, "in the old days, we'd travel on foot everywhere, up and down the hills. Male dancers had to bring one musical instrument with them."). The *gamelan* set is usually brought by one medium-sized truck. The musical instruments must be delivered early so that a team can arrange them before

the first show begins. This team must also stand by at the location to ensure that the décor for the *wayang wong* performance is ready, even if they only begin to set it up shortly after the previous show concludes. Wherever they perform, the dancers begin to put on their costumes and make-up approximately one hour before the show begins.

Film production meetings started in the same manner, or perhaps even more informally because the urban team preferred to get rid of formalities as soon as possible. While as visitors, the film production crew were polite and did not want to disturb the order, especially related to seniority, they tried to throw in jokes from time to time. Mostly, these jokes were well targeted and the production meetings were filled with laughter. On one occasion, the fun stopped when an urban cinematographer explained his vision—"we need to find a footpath in the middle of wet, unplanted rice fields, with Mount Merapi in the background, facing east, so we can capture sunrise"—and all the dancers seemed to think very hard whether such a place really exists. In a subsequent meeting, the fun and fluid atmosphere that had only been established five minutes into the meeting disappeared after these film crews asked the dancers to do the impossible—"we must have the source of electricity up there, on location"—where said location was in the middle of nowhere, far from any source of electricity and difficult to access with fossil fuel generators. At other times, requests such as "we need snacks to be available for the entire crew and cast in that specific rice field before dawn" and "everyone must stand by with their costumes and makeup by five in the morning" meant asking food providers to cook and actors to begin dressing in the middle of the night. Even the most basic thing, "everyone must follow the shooting schedule made by the production manager," could be difficult when that manager held a low rank in local society and therefore lacked the power to command others, especially senior dancers.

The situation was also awkward when elderly group members had to brainstorm with young film crewmembers, strangers only half their age. It could not have been easy for local seniors when these strangers could talk back. Meanwhile, the line producer from the city sometimes asked everyone in charge to take notes of the smallest things, not wanting to miss anything, despite this not usually being done in the group. Trouble seemed to happen constantly during pre-production and production, as problems kept coming and the process ran with minimum stability.

The team from the city also brought subversive ideas that turned the *wayang* universe and village cosmology upside down. It was really hard for the polite dancers to explain that a royal servant character, however good his heart and intentions, had no power over the knights, however corrupt they were. It is difficult to make the urban filmmakers understand that Hanuman the King of Apes had to walk using certain dance moves (it happened that all local dancers learned dancing from childhood when they performed as ape troopers). Since Tutup Ngisor is very communal and has strong family bonds, it was very difficult to explain to young film school graduates from an individual/professional oriented society like Jakarta that helping a brother-in-law build his house in a neighbouring village is more important than an afternoon dance rehearsal. It was more complicated, as these college graduates thought they knew everything.

Another challenge was to enlighten city visitors and show that their working methods were not always applicable with traditional art performers, or that the open and free atmosphere in such a rural area did not necessarily mean that they could do everything they wanted. Older dancers were used to re-enacting *wayang* stories on stage by improvising, so expecting them to memorise every word from a script, as usually expected in film, is useless. The “recce process” (location scouting) required to work out an area's suitability for shooting, is difficult enough in an urban setting, with its clear property law and regulations, let alone in an area where open access scenery does not mean that film crews have permission to shoot everywhere. Putting cameras and measuring the light in someone's rice field without permission can cause complicated problems, especially when the field belongs to someone from another village who lacks prior knowledge of film equipment. When I brought new people to the village to be part of the collaboration, these people had less opportunity to have Ariefiansyah's moments of meeting and moments of reflection to which I alluded previously.

3.3. Challenge in Building Common Ground 2: Time Management and Priorities

Good rapport and an enthusiasm for filmmaking do not necessarily mean a production will become a reality. This section focuses on problems in communication and commitment at the beginning of the film production collaboration process. For these artists, the challenge of making a film together may have seemed exciting at first, but the reality of film production and its

consequences were completely different from what they had imagined. Sometimes, frightening questions entered my mind: Who really needed this project to happen? What if the members of this group did not really want to make films?

The film produced in 2014, *Mother Earth*, was intended to involve some thirty people from Tutup Ngisor and Jakarta. Compared to the first five films of the workshop in 2009, which were intended to involve five to ten people each, it was a completely different endeavour. The members of Tjipta Boedaja were always excited at the possibility of becoming involved in something creative, social, and challenging, and thus it was quite easy to ask them to become involved in a project such as this. As such, though they agreed instantly to become involved in this production, they had plenty of other activities scheduled, and their schedules did not easily fit into the schedule I had previously planned with the urban crew in Jakarta.

The pre-production of *Mother Earth* began in July of 2014. The production was planned to mix Tjipta Boedaja dancers with the professional and/or semi-professional film crew from Jakarta. Coming from London, I did not go to Tutup Ngisor directly and spent some time in Jakarta, calling several people who had previously joined me in Tutup Ngisor. Nurmanda was available. Chandra Aditya was not available because he was too busy with his classes, but another ex-student team member—Aditya's classmate Michael Julius—was available. We decided to recruit another former student from his class, George Timothy, as cinematographer. We also hired three more people, a popular young lighting man from Jakarta, a production manager, and a runner. The rest of the crew would be from Tjipta Boedaja.

Since I wanted the dancers of Tjipta Boedaja to experience the organisation and job distribution in filmmaking, I preferred that the group from Jakarta be able to control the artistic decisions for this shooting. I imagined my role as a producer, enabling me to support them and observe their decision-making and production processes, so we decided to make Nurmanda the director of this project. We chose to make a dance film, using a specific performance with which he was familiar, a dance that he had observed and become involved with when staying with them during the making of his master thesis. I then went to Tutup Ngisor to make sure that the group agreed with the plan. The dancers were busy with some performances and preparations for an Independence Day carnival in the nearby

town Muntilan, but their reaction was supportive. I brought with me many dance films to introduce the dancers to the genre. It turned out that they were already familiar with one film, *Opera Jawa* (2006), a film by an Indonesian filmmaker from Yogyakarta, Garin Nugroho, that utilises contemporary-traditional dance and fine arts. We were happy and optimistic with this plan, and set production completion for the end of August 2014.

I went to Tutup Ngisor with Nurmanda a week before production began. Timothy came two days later, and the remaining team and the equipment arrived two days before the shooting. When we arrived, we could not immediately prepare and have discussions with the dancers, as their schedules were still full. We spent the first two days joining the dancers in their preparations for and performances of dances in a nearby village, as well as their preparations for the carnival. Sometime we tried to talk about the film plan, but nobody we talked to was able to discuss the film intensively. When we discussed this project one morning with Anjilin, he could not give any precise answers to our questions. Whenever we talked to Saparno or other dancers, they seemed unsure about the specific dance we mentioned to them. We understood the reason they had forgotten the specific performance to which we referred. As they performed intensively, up to five times a month, no one remembered the dance. When Timothy arrived, Nurmanda brought him around, started the recce process, and attempted to get a perfect outdoor spot for shooting. That night, we helped the dancers build a miniature house decorated with flowers for the carnival, and the next day we joined them in Muntilan, where the carnival took place. The following day, Nurmanda and Timothy walked around again, trying to finalise their choices for the set. That afternoon was our first production meeting with the group.

When we were finally able to sit together, several days before shooting, the discussion suddenly returned to negotiating the basic content and production of the film. When we finally reminded them about the specific performance that involved Nurmanda, the dancers instead suggested a similar dance with a different storyline. The urban collaborators were fine with the new story, as it still had political implications, just as emphasised by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 18). We changed eighty per cent of the story and made significant modifications to the production process. We wanted the dancers to feel comfortable when they danced, so we continued to talk about the production team. Saparno surprised us greatly

with his suggestion, "What if *Pak Sitras* (Anjilin) were also the director?" Anjilin, who was sitting with us, did not react. Quickly, both Nurmanda and I nodded our heads. I had not considered this possibility before, but it would not obstruct my plan. It would be perfectly fine if group members felt themselves ready to become involved in artistic and technical decisions. Moreover, agreeing to the changes showed the urban collaborators' trust in the dancers and the understanding that the project was for all collaborators' best interest, an aspect of good collaboration emphasised by Fluehr-Lobban (2008, p. 179).

If, as Fluehr-Lobban argues, collaboration should be initiated from a common ground, with participants informed, targets negotiated, methods open to discussion, and progress reciprocal (2008, p. 176), the whole process requires sufficient time for all collaborators to talk and discuss issues. As such, while I also had to juggle my time between my thesis writing and family, it was a real challenge to work with Tjipta Boedaja dancers as a group if we did not plan the project in advance. In the end, I was happy that these changes occurred, but as with any producer I would have preferred such major decisions to be made earlier. I thus learned that, for the next production, we would need a period of intense discussion ahead of time. After shooting, which had minimal preparation time, the members of the group were the ones who asked for more preparation time.

3.4. Challenge in Building Common Ground 3: Finance

Another matter that required careful planning was finance. During the production of *Mother Earth*, when I brought a film crew from Jakarta, they rented the equipment in Jakarta and stayed throughout the preparation, production, and music recording processes, because the equipment came with the travelling crew. This led to a change in policy for the following project. We increasingly preferred to use film crew and equipment rental companies from the Yogyakarta area. Meanwhile, although I had allocated a budget for these crews, I did not consider the local crew and actors/dancers. Before 2014, I had always thought that the nature of collaboration in such a production required investment from both parties and that because this project was in the interest of the group members themselves, they also needed to invest something. Another reason was that, at the time, I thought that paying local crews and dancers was essentially paying my research subjects, something not very common when doing research in the social field.

However, I soon realised that, as the only one who would certainly benefit from this project was me (through it, I would finish my PhD programme), it was necessary to pay local crews and dancers. I could not guarantee that, after we had finished all of the films, the members of Tjipta Boedaja would see any benefit. Fluehr-Lobban's argument that projects like this are able to be "... potentially related to community or individual improvement of well-being" (2008, p. 175) was, at this point, still mainly theoretical, and as such I felt compelled to give them fair compensation for every production activity they contributed to the project. Another argument in support of such fair compensation was that this collaboration was part film workshop and part film practice, and as such I had to conduct the practice aspect of the project in a fashion that was as close as possible to professional filmmaking. On this basis, I realised that I needed sufficient finances to cover all costs, following industry standards as closely as possible.

Of course, I still had to take care with some issues. I had to emphasise the collaborative nature of this project and my requirement for local participants to be engaged in using film as an alternative to the stage. Letting them consider film productions as just "another gig" and a source of income would damage their participation and commitment, and thus ultimately be detrimental to the fundamental purposes of this project. Another complication was different economic standards I calculated between the United Kingdom and Indonesia. If buying a plate of fried rice at a casual Chinese restaurant in London costs about £5, in Jakarta it costs about £2, in Yogyakarta it costs about £1, and in Muntilan it costs about 50 pence. A 330 millilitre can of Coca-Cola in London costs 70p, while in Indonesia it generally costs Rp. 5,800 or about 25p. The average monthly expenses for a family with two children in Tutup Ngisor is 'only' about £40, and as such the dancers were more than happy to receive a daily rate of £10. Fresh graduate cinematographers from Jakarta, meanwhile, would and did ask for more than that. As such, the issue of fee imbalances became quite sensitive.

Above all of these problems, there was an incident that might have affected—positively or negatively—group members' decision to become involved in film production. In mid-February 2015, a team that worked for the management of a local museum asked Tjipta Boedaja to collaborate with them by making a dance film to be screened at their lobby. The group agreed, but it turned out the museum team had less experience in film production than Tjipta Boedaja. The

production was a terrible experience for all of the dancers involved. The fees paid were very low (even compared to those for my project); dancers were forced to wait for a long time without proper shooting plans; there was a lack of authority; and there were no clear artistic directions. This upset everyone in the group (we will talk more about this production in Chapter 4). While they were waiting for shooting to begin, I screened the final cut of our film, *Mother Earth*. The discussion afterwards connected their disappointment with the artistic results of *Mother Earth* and the particularly negative experience with film production they had had that day. They concluded that they needed to make a film using a proper production process.

Meanwhile, earlier, during negotiations of dancers' fees with the film's production team, Bambang Trisantoso compared the budget for the museum project with that of *Mother Earth*. He said to the museum film producer: "... you want us to work for your purpose with this (minimum) budget, while *Mas* (brother) Tito prepared three times your budget for *our own* (Tjipta Boedaja's) purposes!" Trisantoso sounded proud at that moment, and he repeated the same argument several times when the dancers were grumbling about that production. Their belief that the project was for their purposes was very encouraging for me. This was also reflected in how Anjilin's explained his support for the project to group members during the first meeting between the team from Jakarta and the members of Tjipta Boedaja in late 2008: "... films about us are good. They will spread our name more to the world, to those who do not know us."

In the next production, in 2015, we had another financial problem. This film was a production of *Petruk Jadi Raja* (Petruk Becomes King). I was driving with Saparno when he told me that Tjipta Boedaja needed 5 million rupiah (about £ 270) in funding to perform at a festival to celebrate Indonesian Independence Day. Knowing that I had always wanted to do *Petruk Jadi Raja*, he offered me the possibility of shooting the story for that amount of money. I rechecked with Saparno, to see if he realised that I desired a long feature film and that Independence Day was only a month away, and he confirmed. At the time, it appeared to be the chance of a lifetime. After two weeks of preproduction, we ended up shooting *Petruk Jadi Raja* in five days. We were happy with the resulting film; the story, choreography, and production were all great, and we had avoided the mistakes we made in *Mother Earth*. It showed that we could finish a potentially

great film with very limited resources, and as such we decided to reshoot when we had better funding.

3.5. Challenge in Building Common Ground 4: Initiative

Another issue was one of initiative. To make sure the collaboration is in line with the group's agenda, as required by Rappaport (2008, p. 2), I also needed them to offer ideas for films. In a conversation with Anjilin in late February 2015, I expressed the need for the group to come up with ideas for films early on, so that I could prepare all of the resources necessary for production. His response was problematic; he emphasised that inspiration for a story is spiritual, and thus not something that could be done casually. He used a performance from *Romo Yoso's* time as an example: although the group had been preparing for the performance for three months, *Romo Yoso* decided to change the story just a week before the show because he suddenly had a revelation that the previous story was no longer relevant. Today, an idea for a story must at least go through a members' meeting.

During the last evaluation of *Mother Earth* on the set of the film production made by the local museum in mid-February 2015, Anjilin emphasised the need to make more films with better preparation. When I asked him whether he already had an idea for the next production, he answered swiftly, "Of course I do...", but when I asked him what it was, he did not answer. He appeared to be admonishing himself for saying something before the time was right. In mid-April 2015, I asked the same question, both to him and to Trisantoso: did anyone in the group have any specific ideas in mind about the next production? This time, Anjilin only smiled. Trisantoso, meanwhile, answered, "Yes, I have an idea...", then stopped and smiled.

Before mid-2015, when I finally shot *Petruk Jadi Raja*, I tried to propose two *wayang* stories for film projects, receiving different reactions from leaders and members of Tjipta Boedaja. These two stories were spin-offs of the Javanese version of *Mahabharata*: *Petruk Jadi Raja* and *Dewaruci*. *Petruk Jadi Raja* (Petruk Becomes King, famous in Javanese as *Petruk Dhadi Ratu*) is a story about Petruk, the son of Semar, a loyal Pandawa servant and demi-god. One day, Petruk decides to take control of the government and rid it of corruption; though he is successful, it is proven later that he is not fit to be a king. The other story is *Dewaruci* (or *Bimaruci*), about Bima, one of the five Pandawa knights. Bima is sent by his evil cousins to the bottom of the ocean to seek the water of wisdom. They hope he will

be killed in the process. In the ocean, he finds God instead, and learns about life and faith. Two young dancers were very enthusiastic about the *Dewaruci* idea. One was Surawan, the group's main choreographer, who felt challenged to adapt the story's dances for film. The other was Saparno, who often plays Bima. Anjilin made no specific comments regarding the *Dewaruci* idea, but, despite him not giving any reasons, he seemed to object to the *Petruk* idea. I later realised that *Petruk Jadi Raja* is full of sensitive political sentiments and thus, depending on the group's emphasis, performing this story could suggest that Tjipta Boedaja believes that a certain political regime is corrupt or that a leader is not fit for his or her position. Later, Saparno confirmed in a personal conversation that *Petruk Jadi Raja* is a politically and traditionally risky option. However, in the end, we postponed any idea to produce *Dewaruci*.

The reluctance to directly reject ideas may be traced back to the Javanese concepts of politeness and confrontation avoidance; in other words, the dancers' reserve may have stemmed from these factors. It is something that collaborators from Jakarta—who are used to saying things directly—had to learn and become used to.

3.6. Collaboration Success Stories

Although there were some occasional disagreements, after five years in of collaboration, both parties had found what Fluehr-Lobban calls a common ground (2008, p.176). Urban filmmakers and local dancers knew each other personally, and each party knew what to expect from the other. The concluding phases of the *Mother Earth* demonstrate the collaboration process at its most effective.

After the frustrating pre-production of *Mother Earth*, we understood that the two directors had to work together well. Naturally, Anjilin began to assume charge of the performance, and left Nurmanda with directing tasks that dealt more with cinematography and other film technicalities. Another significant change from the original plan was the number of dancers involved. After planning for ten dancers, we started to talk about fifteen dancers. Our first decision was appointing Surawan, a local resident who had graduated from a dance academy, as choreographer. We then appointed Saparno to assist me as line producer and Sumpeno as production manager. We talked about the requirements and persons in charge of wardrobe,

make-up, music, and dance rehearsals, and we reminded ourselves that we only had two days before shooting began.

After the meeting, everyone started to work fast: Surawan, the choreographer, started to work with the dancers. The assistant producer and person in charge of wardrobe went to the town to purchase makeup and fabric for costumes. The production manager began to assign more people to help him, selecting a talent coordinator and person in charge for catering, property, and set-dressing. Meanwhile, as we planned to have night shootings, the line producer dealt with the operator of the group's electric generators and coordinated with the owner of the land to determine the amount of rent money I had to pay. This was when I realised that I had to pay everyone involved, as I explained earlier.

Over the next two days, the preproduction process ran smoothly. The dancers finished the choreography process and began rehearsals. One day before production started, every supporting element—wardrobe, properties, set, makeup, electricity, etc.—was ready. Anjilin watched the exercises closely, and from time to time Surawan the choreographer came and consulted with him. The night before shooting, we held the last production meeting and decided to have the crew call at 4 a.m. and the talent call at 5 a.m.

Everyone was on set and ready on time, except for a young female dancer who was supposed to play a bird. Nobody was upset; we had another dancer to play the bird, and one was enough. Breakfast was served on set. Dancers began to practice again. The technical crew prepared everything so that we could start shooting before sunrise. When the time came, we caught the sun for a while before clouds covered it for the remainder of the day. We planned to shoot all seven scenes in one day, and although we had allowed for a second day if necessary, scenes were shot one by one just as scheduled. While Anjilin was strict in directing the dance and performance, Nurmanda proved himself prepared for technical questions: discussing and deciding camera angles and movements, and playing with the tempo. Between shootings, Anjilin called the choreographer for discussions. Nurmanda also went to Anjilin when he needed to make a crucial decision. Nurmanda improvised the shooting schedule somewhat, so we could capture the dusk and add options for sunrise, and to shoot a new scene that was edited later to run backwards. We further improvised by reusing a floral structure that had been used for the carnival several days previously and added torches to the village party

scene. The dancers were ready for a strict schedule, as well as sudden improvisation. The shooting went well, and everyone was happy.

We conducted the gamelan recording in the stage hall and needed to stop every time a motorcycle went by. The process started with the musicians composing each song and then the recording followed. The group soundman borrowed a good mixer from a neighbouring village, and Nurmanda—who is also an indie band player with two albums—taught the soundman his formula for making a proper recording. We finished all the recordings before midnight. The production was wrapped up and Nurmanda offered to edit the film himself, and I agreed with him.

For the production of *Petruk Jadi Raja* in 2015, we sat together longer for pre-production meetings. No one had any problem with my proposal to make a dance film that focused on *wayang wong*, as it utilised the strengths of the group. Where the pre-production meetings for *Mother Earth* were not very good, everyone had learned from their previous experiences, and the meeting went well. For this film every aspect of the production was discussed in detail, prior to finalising the production team and cast.

At one of these meetings, I proposed myself officially as director, with dancers filling other remaining roles. They did not have a problem with this. Surawan was appointed as choreographer. Widyono Sumpeno became producer. Saparno, considered the group's best Petruk, was chosen to play the character and also assist Sumpeno as producer. Anjilin wanted to be involved in creative aspects and observe the production from the outside, taking a role similar to that of executive producer. However, as one dancer could not commit, Anjilin had to take on a performing role before the production which made him the oldest dancer involved in the production. Nurmanda was abroad and unavailable for the production. My plan was to ask Candra Aditya and Angkasa Ramadan, two of my students who had helped in many past events at Tutup Ngisor, and make them cinematographer and assistant director positions. Two other people from Yogyakarta were tasked with wardrobe and make-up duties.

The dancers wanted to avoid the limited preparations that we had had for *Mother Earth*, and took the choreography process more seriously as a result. Dance rehearsals lasted for more than a week. Still, it was a little bit too complicated to gather *gamelan* music players for these exercises (even later on for shooting)

because many were not from Tutup Ngisor, and almost every *gamelan* player who lived in Tutup Ngisor was already involved as a dancer. In the wardrobe department, we decided to give two people different responsibilities. The first, Trisantoso, would be responsible for the king and noble characters, who would basically wear stage costumes that had less shiny ornaments. The second was a fashion designer from Yogyakarta, who was in charge of the Punakawans (Semar, Petruk, and his brothers), who would wear a fusion of traditional/stage clothing and contemporary Javanese attire. Still, there was a problem; the fashion designer from Yogyakarta could not begin work right away, owing to an unfinished earlier project. Meanwhile, for the extraordinary proportions of Petruk and his brother Gareng's noses, the special effects make-up artist had to commute between Yogyakarta and Tutup Ngisor to make a mould based on the dancers' faces. After fitting dancers for their costumes and prosthetic noses, the two professionals prepared everything in Yogyakarta. We gathered together several days before the shooting began to ensure everything was ready.

We allocated five days for shooting. Ramadan and Aditya arrived ahead of time, and we were able to have several production meetings. They appeared happy when they read the script. We talked about how we wanted to organise this shooting. Since all of the dancers were available for the first three days of shooting, we were tempted to start filming with scenes that required many characters. Several scenes had around fifteen characters together on set, so they were the most difficult to do. However, instead of struggling with difficult scenes, Ramadan suggested starting with easier ones, to be continued with the difficult ones once the production team had found the right rhythm. The dancers were happy with his reasoning, and we decided to start shooting the easy scenes first. The blue screen background was purchased in Jakarta and came with Ramadan. We gathered our equipment from rental facilities in Yogyakarta.

There were many new problems with this production. Although we had much more preparation than when shooting *Mother Earth*, the film was much bigger, and thus preparation and pre-production arrangements still caused many problems. The first one was scheduling. The scenes with more actors were more complicated, as these scenes required many people at the same time. Sumpeno hung the schedule on the stage hall wall so that dancers knew when to be ready for shooting, and he also posted the schedule in our discussion group on our cellular

phones. Still, with such rushed preparation, some dancers could not escape previous obligations. Martejo, the hamlet head of Tutup Ngisor, had to go to the local administrative office to discuss some governmental matters. Some could not avoid important family affairs. Others had committed to training dancers at another village and could not reschedule because that was the last rehearsal before performance. Sumpeno had a difficult time coordinating so many conflicting needs. In the end, using a stand-in was inevitable, because the initial dancer could not rearrange a commitment. However, in general, shooting went well and no major problems affected the mood of the dancers or the crew. Even if everyone agreed to reshoot the film with better resources, the production process would be our future model.

3.7. Emerging Young Collaborators

As previously noted, it is very rare for a film collaboration project to spring from the dancers' own initiatives. This was especially true for the younger ones. The Javanese tendency towards self-restraint (towards elders, guests, and partners) usually kept dancers' mouths shut when I asked them for ideas for new films. It required a degree of intimacy to create informal relationships through which polite Javanese like the Tjipta Boedaja dancers would express themselves freely. However, informality is one thing; the urgency required by a complicated process such as film production is something else. A fun, noisy, and jokular gathering could suddenly turn quiet when I asked a question that required deep thought.

One young dancer, Saparno, overcame this problem and became one of the most active local collaborators. At that point, he had almost completed his undergraduate studies in visual communication at a campus in Yogyakarta, and as such he was actively looking for film ideas for his final project. He started thinking of an animated project, but changed his mind and determined that it was best for him to make a documentary. Before opting for this plan he had changed his mind several times. At first, he was thinking about making a cinematic reconstruction of his grandfather *Romo* Yoso's life story. After recognising that this idea would require significant resources, he changed his mind and thought about producing a documentary about the different shapes of shadow puppets from Solo and Yogyakarta. After I had hinted that the idea was not very original, he decided to focus on Tutup Ngisor's style of mask-making, believing that it this was a local

tradition that needed documentation. Out of the blue, during my last stay in London in early November 2016, he texted me saying that he had decided to make a fiction film as his final project. We talked about it more when we met in Yogyakarta, and he pitched me the story. It followed an old *dalang* who frequently receives requests for amulets from young dancers, to give them confidence when they performed on stage (we will discuss this film more in Chapter 6).

Saparno was encouraged by Anjilin to major in visual communication because he is Tjipta Boedaja's stage and production designer. He is also the main camera operator when recording important performances. In his four years of college, he built up new networks among young artists, academics, and activists in Yogyakarta. He became familiar with the Yogyakarta art scene and developed new skills. He also slowly nurtured the habit of reading books. As someone who lives in a rural village, he had been behind in digital literacy, but in college he became familiar with computer programmes. When someone told him that she needed a new business card, he asked for the company's logo, worked on his laptop, and went out; when he came back, having spent about an hour on the process, he had a new set of business cards. He has expressed interest in obtaining a master's degree in cultural studies, film, or Javanese literature. Saparno was also the first dancer to feel comfortable enough to ask me questions about the research part of the project. As he started doing his own final college project, he became increasingly curious about the research side of the project. Indeed, he was eventually able to explain this side of the project to newcomers, such as dancers hired from outside the group.

In short, Saparno started to become what Lempert calls a collaborator with a dual position, someone who is from inside the local community and can see the detailed conditions within the group, but has enough outside experience and ability to look at his/her own community from an outsider's perspective (2012, p. 25). Saparno created a common ground for collaboration participants, as required by Fluehr-Lobban (2008, p. 176), to reach a clear agreement of interests, rights, responsibilities, and outcomes (ibid, p. 179). Several Tjipta Boedaja dancers have similar dual backgrounds. One specific person from Tjipta Boedaja with experiences similar to Saparno—albeit from an older generation—is Sitras Anjilin himself.

Initiative from local dancers made my task easier. Saparno approached Anjilin and Trisantoso and told them what he had in mind. They responded well,

and asked if there were any specific things that the group could do to support him. Saparno only asked for specific time to involve dancers, when the group's schedule was not busy. In comparison with the previous film production I initiated, which required me to do a presentation in front of all local collaborators, the fact that Saparno is a group member and "able to talk the same language" as them made trust building and coordination much easier. He then asked me to involve several filmmakers from Yogyakarta, with whom he wanted to work. We met these people, and everyone agreed to collaborate (although time constraints ultimately allowed only one of them to become involved).

Saparno's enthusiasm soon became contagious. He gathered dancers of his own age, those he was most comfortable working with: Sumpeno, his cousin and best friend with whom he had worked throughout his life; Untung Pribadi, Sumpeno's elder brother and the head of the Bangun Budaya group in the neighbouring village; and Yoko Masturrait, a dancer with Bangun Budaya, all worked hard in in the last two films. Saparno sought out any dancers he considered appropriate for certain characters, even when he needed the help of people from distant villages or even Yogyakarta. Everyone contributed to our brainstorming sessions. Perhaps because these young artists could relate more to Saparno personally—in comparison with Anjilin or myself with whom they felt a greater sense of formality—the atmosphere of the last productions was more enjoyable. At this point, the collaboration moved towards the point where collaborators shared a vision, goals, and enthusiasm, as stipulated by John-Steiner (2000, pp. 9, 64). These young artists started to pitch more film ideas to me and looked forward to a lengthier collaboration, just as Ariefiansyah described his own film collaboration experience (2012, p. 21).

Chapter 4. Owning Film and Filmmaking

4.1. Questioning Tutup Ngisor Residents' Readiness for Film, Part One

This chapter focuses on the Tjipta Boedaja dancers' adaptation to filmmaking and how the collaboration contributed to it. Beside new knowledge about film and new filmmaking methods brought by urban collaborators, the dancers work with film using their own dance and stage performances as references. This chapter focuses on the dynamics of these sources of guidance for the dancers to make and to plan their films.

One of the first questions about this process was the dancers' readiness to adapt to the new medium. There is a body of literature which treats the confrontation between so-called 'traditional' societies and forms of media which are new to them. Some scholars, such as anthropologist Edmund Carpenter, are very pessimistic about the outcomes of such meetings of 'old' and 'new' (Carpenter, 1972) and suggest that living local cultures can potentially be overwhelmed in their encounter with modern mediascapes. This position owes something to the general theoretical position of Carpenter's friend and colleague, the media theorist, Marshall McLuhan, and his theories concerning the evolution of cultures and media technology. McLuhan argued that the way humans use communication technology influences their culture and its content. His belief that literacy prepares people for visual and electronic media, is the real source of Carpenter's pessimism (1995, pp. 131–133). This rigid divide, however, between literate and non-literate, is an artificial one and owes a great deal to the theoretical tendency- rightly given critical attention in the work of Johannes Fabian (1983)- to deny the 'contemporaneity' of the 'other' and conveniently locate him/her in a time frame somehow existing outside the 'modern' or 'contemporary'. We must be wary to avoid this tendency in our framing of the Tjipta Boedaja dancers and Tutup Ngisor residents, which we explore further in this chapter.

It would be fair to suggest that the residents of Tutup Ngisor still depend heavily on verbal communication. They do not read books or newspapers habitually. Indeed, they emphasise face-to-face communications and human contact in building connections. However, my everyday interactions with the Tutup Ngisor residents showed their ability to understand perfectly the films they watched. Indeed, they love to watch films, and are fully aware that film itself can be a tool

for enriching their own art forms. As part of the project the urban collaborators screened a variety of films in their performance hall- both independent and mainstream productions as well as more specialist dance films. In 2010, for example, I screened an internet-based feature animation called *Sita Sings the Blues* (dir: Nina Paley, 2009), a film that takes Sita's role in the *Ramayana* and places it in parallel to the director's own personal experience. This film made a huge impression and the dancers and I continued to discuss it months after the original screening. Moreover, as we could see from their first films in 2009, they understood readily how to communicate through film and other visual media.

While a filmmaker like David MacDougall has rightly taken issue with the universal applicability of Western-style film narrative (1998, pp. 141–142), it is no exaggeration to observe that people in Tutup Ngisor hamlet have been exposed to processes of globalisation for many decades. While Tutup Ngisor may only have had an asphalt road and access to electricity as recently as the 1990s, its people, as with most villagers in Java, have been exposed to cosmopolitan influences for a much greater time through contact with the market, other artists, government, academics, and journalists. Stories about the hamlet's founders and the groups' leaders are replete with individuals who espouse cosmopolitan ideas (Nurmanda, 2012, p. 59, 130). Indeed, among the most important things brought to Tutup Ngisor were the proscenium stage and *wayang wong* itself. While it uncommon for villages in rural Magelang to have proscenium stages, the one in Tutup Ngisor has a similar layout to modern theatres in large cities: actors can only enter from left and right sides of the stage, the *gamelan* orchestra is in front of the stage, spectators watch only from one side, and the performance is very much a sequential visual presentation, just like film. However, this proscenium stage might indicate that Tjipta Boedaja's art already has shared traits with Western theatrical traditions, traditions that have influenced film as it is today.

In fact, the everyday living conditions of Tutup Ngisor residents differ little from those of people living in urban areas: they face rising and falling commodity prices and feel the hand of government on a day-to-day basis. They are exposed to local and national politics—in mid-September 2017, for example, the Indonesian president himself, came to officiate at the opening of a new bridge just north of Tutup Ngisor. They have access to electronic media just like people living in Jakarta. They still watch *wayang* performances or other traditional arts on television

but today such broadcasts are not as frequent as they have been in the past. In the meantime, residents are exposed to everything else, and this naturally impacts on their own vision of what media forms might be. In this regard, anthropologist of the media, Faye Ginsburg, emphasises a politics of representation amongst indigenous groups that exposes “the inconsistencies and contradictions of contemporary life” (2002a [1995], p. 217). Films produced by such groups, she suggests, emerge as hybrid works, often combining traditional content with MTV visual styles (1994, p. 366). There is doubtless a certain hybridity at play in Tutup Ngisor, because, as we have seen, Tjipta Boedaja dancers already have their favourite films, including dance films such as *Opera Jawa* (dir. Garin Nugroho, 2006), Indian films or television series based on the *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana*, or Hollywood films such as *Avatar* (dir: James Cameron, 2009). In short, outside influence and hybridisation are already unavoidable in the globalised space of Tutup Ngisor. With these facts in mind, I believe that the long process of collaborative film production activities stretching from 2008 to 2017 has attempted to find a balance between Western-originated film aesthetics and narrative traditions on the one hand; and local knowledge, ways of communication and performance norms on the other. The following sections explore this point further.

4.2. Introductory Film Workshop, 2008–2009

This section focuses on the film workshops held between 2008 and 2009, as well as the films resulting from these workshops. Dancers explored film in various ways, and each film combined elements from the new medium and from stage performance, trying to communicate dancers' views. Local participants were quite new to some technical aspects of filmmaking, especially in the camera and editing departments. However, their performing experience had made them more familiar with some film arrangements, especially the logic of sound, lighting, acting, and some rules of visual communication. For instance, when a character chases another character on stage and exits from the right side, the two dancers must run behind the stage and reappear on the left side, in order to continue the chase towards the right side. This shows that they understand the 180 degree rule on stage and they understand the consequences of breaking it.

During the first day of the workshop, collaborators discussed technical aspects such as camera angles and movements, sound recording, lighting, and

editing. One of the first important discussions was about access to the film equipment. The dancers quickly learned that digital filmmaking tools are much more accessible these days. However, they also realised that the cost of purchasing or renting such equipment were still beyond what they could afford. To illustrate this point, as Tjipta Boedaja uses its own stage, costumes, and properties, a stage production budget can be as low as £250. In Yogyakarta, this budget is only enough to rent a standard DSLR camera and accessories for one day. In conclusion, the group still needed assistance to access proper equipment if they wanted to make films over several days of shooting.

The second day of the workshop focused more on the differences between film and stage directing and acting. Here, the adaptation from stage to screen did not take long. The group's stage performers could follow directly—at least in theory—the different characteristic of the stage and camera, and the consequences of these differences for expressions, gestures, vocal volume, blocking, and the choice of acting styles. The third day of the workshop focused on producing, with discussion about differences between producing works for the stage and film. There were also no significant problems in this area, because, apart from set and location issues, they did not see stage and film management as very different. They were already familiar with the logic of property lists, costume and make-up preparations, set and decoration building, and so on. On the following day, we focused on storytelling. Even though at that point we wanted to train these artists to make their own documentaries, it emerged from discussion that it was more exciting for everybody to attempt to make fiction films. We discussed different storytelling styles and how to relate them to different kinds of preparation and research, as well as the typical differences in story structures between *wayang* and film.

Five short films came out of this series of workshops. One of the films entirely uses subjective shots, shifting from the objective audience tradition of *wayang wong*. This film, *Aku Tidak Ingin Menjadi Manusia* (I Don't Want to be Human), was made by a female dancer named Septi, who was nineteen at that time. It employs continuous camera movement, with low angles and long takes, and audiences must watch random situations, illustrating three social situations that all end up badly: harassment, betrayal, and violence. The camera continues moving towards the barn and we can hear the bleating of a goat. Suddenly there are subtitles-which it is apparent are translations of these bleats: "human are evil!", "I

don't want to be human!", and similar expressions describing humans as bad, rough, dishonest, arrogant, and suggesting that goats have more dignity. The duration of this film is eight minutes. Septi was helped by four other people, who worked as actors and crew.

By making the audience realise at the end of the film that the camera represents the subjective view of the goat and comparing human behaviour to that of innocent animals, Septi projected her own anxieties and concerns about the complications of adult life, morals, and responsibility. She is now almost twenty-eight and has had her first baby. She told me recently that she feels embarrassed when she watches her film. She hopes to have more opportunities to make films, to give expression to the new experiences she has had growing up and her changed outlook on the world.

Other short films too represented the filmmaker's thoughts and concerns. These included a film made by Darmawan, Anjilin's son, and Surawan, currently the group's main choreographer. Both artists were twenty-seven years old at that time. The plot concerns a young man, who is a habitual drunk and constantly disturbs the people in his village and bullies members of a traditional dance group when they are trying to practice. One night, he is stuck by a motorcycle and the people he had been harassing help him. The young man then tries to join a dance group and later on finds his true passion in the art. He becomes a loyal member of a group. The film is called *Kacang Lupa Kulit* (Peanut Forgetting its Skin; a Javanese expression referring someone who forgets his/her origin), representing someone from a Javanese village cultural background who acts against traditions and local practices. The film involved more than ten dancers, as it needed plenty of extras for two scenes: one for the group's practice and another for a group of thugs getting drunk in the streets of the village. The film's duration is twenty-one minutes. The camera is static during most of the film, and the takes are long. Each scene is made by planning a continuous performance, in a similar fashion to planning different scenes in a stage performance. The filmmakers made the most of their experience in *wayang orang* and other traditional performances, putting the camera in the audience's position.

However, the film adapted something from audio-visual media that was familiar to its makers. The motive of the plot, 'a bad person goes through a life-changing experience and atones for his/her past deeds', is typical of Indonesian

television dramas. Before political reform, and especially before the era of private television in the mid-1990s, this was practically the only plot available in dramas on the propagandist government-owned television station. The filmmakers explained that they used this plot to talk about how some people do not value their Javanese traditions. While the film also highlights Tjipta Boedaja and *wayang wong* as the village's way of life, and uses a footage of real life dance practice in the hall, the story is fictional. The two filmmakers made it clear that no one has ever harassed or insulted the group members for their art activities in real life. However, the film clearly pinpoints problems inherent in succession over the generations. Not everyone raised in the village became a dancer, and some dancers realise their 'talents' later in life. In this film, Darmawan plays the thug-cum-dancer, and Surawan plays one of the thugs.

The next film, *Kisruh* (Chaos), is a six-minute in length and describes an irrigation dispute between two farmers. Shot with only four people, it was directed and produced by Martejo, an actor-dancer in the group who is now the hamlet head, with Aditya mainly holding the camera. Martejo played one of the farmer characters himself. The story goes like this:

A farmer (played by Martejo) and a little boy are looking at the rice field he is working; what is supposed to be muddy soil looks dry. The farmer asks the boy to walk with him to higher ground. They follow the dry irrigation channel. At one point they stop, seeing a pile of soil redirect the water to another field. The farmer unblocks it and goes back, leaving the boy to guard the spot. Another farmer comes, looks at the stream, and re-blocks the gutter. The boy runs back to report to the first farmer, and together they walk back to the other field. The first farmer comes from behind. He pulls the second farmer to the muddy floor and wrestles with him, with the boy cheering on. The fight goes on until both farmers realise that this ground has also dried out. This time the three of them walk together, hand in hand, following the irrigation channel to higher ground.

While the film still uses long takes that place the camera statically as if it were an audience watching the actors' performances, it also contains a number of shorter shots of different details. The filmmaker, Martejo, planned the storyline and composed every scene so that there were shorter shots between the long takes, thus trying to communicate different information that would enable viewers to understand the plot. Of the five films, this used the most cut-to-cut editing.

The film conveys a powerful message about limited resources in agriculture, a common problem for farmers in Indonesia. Martejo explained that the irrigation

system that was built in the Dutch colonial era could not sustain additional rice fields, so tensions between farmers arise frequently. Around Mount Merapi, this situation becomes worse with each eruption, as streams of cold lava, mud, and rocks are very destructive to irrigation systems. The film demonstrates these artists' concerns about their lives as farmers struggling to make a living.

Doran (Hoe-Handle) also illustrates the filmmaker's personal position as a farmer and dancer, depicting the acculturation problems of younger group members being expected to continue farming and art traditions. In this film, a young man is seen sitting idly. An older man, obviously upset, approaches and throws the young man a hoe with no handle. The young man gets to his feet and tries to use a bamboo stick as a handle. He then goes to the rice paddy and after limbering up he sets to work with his new hoe. However, after a few blows, the bamboo handle breaks loose. He goes back to the house, looking despondent, and tries another sort of handle. Happy with his efforts, he returns to the field. After a meditation dance he tries the hoe again but once more after a few strikes it flies loose. The next day he seeks out advice from a farmer. Armed with the correct information, he makes his way to the market and finds a farming shop. There he buys himself the correct sort of handle for his hoe. Everything now works well and he is able to work properly.

The filmmaker Untung Pribadi—at that time thirty years old—played the confused young character himself, and his real-life father Trisantoso, played the main character's father. This story is based on a real life event, and it is one of the most obvious in conveying the problems of traditional learning and acculturation. The film also involved four crew members, who also took roles as actors. The camera was held by Aditya, but only Pribadi gave all the instructions. Pribadi seemed to enjoy making the film. The scene in which the young man dances lasts several minutes, and viewers who are not used to long takes or such dancing might become bored at that moment. The film's total running time is twenty-five minutes.

The last of the five films is *Perempuan Tutup Ngisor Tempo Dulu* (The Tutup Ngisor Girls in the Past). For this a fourteen minute film. Anjilin, the head of the group, asked children to re-enact activities from days of yore. He carefully selected locations that had a vintage look. This is the only re-enactment film and the only one of the five that has no specific plot. While using a different style and storytelling strategy, the film offers similar concerns: questions about tradition and the changing nature of the village and the world surrounding it. Anjilin was also the

only director to plan the photography of his shots to look more outmoded and have contain more natural vistas.

Four of the five films produced had clear plots, telling stories with basic three-act structures: introducing characters and their problems and needs, showing the escalation of their conflicts or problems, and concluding with a resolution. One of the five, made by Anjilin, used a different approach, giving different situations and emphasising their ambience to develop the feelings of the audience. These dancers familiarity with the three-act structure might be a result of their long involvement with *wayang* and Javanese folktales that also involve similar kinds of plots.

Each film was directed by a different dancer, who casted actors and told the cameraperson what to do. Some films required more than five actors; two films only needed three actors. Three films treated everything in front of the camera like a stage: the directors used long takes that required the camera to stay in one position, with actors using the space, resulting in minimum editing. Two others used cut-to-cut editing, making each scene consist of different shots with different camera angles.

These films were screened twice in and around the village, not very long after production. The first screening was at home, on Tjipta Boedaja's performance stage, with the main audience being from Tutup Ngisor. The second screening was at one of the closest neighbouring villages. In these two screenings, the audience reacted more to faces and places that were familiar to them. However, when these people watched the films personally on smaller screens, they were perfectly able to follow the storylines and pose questions about the content.

The film workshop for children, aimed to give them the opportunity to act for camera, followed. The films focused on everyday situations that these children were familiar with: school, the doctor's waiting room, and fairy tales. One of the most significant distinctions between films made by these children and the adults is their use of verbal language. If films by adults used minimal dialogue because of their awareness of proper sound recording equipment and their expertise in gesture and dance, the children insisted on using plenty of dialogue. Furthermore, these children were reluctant to use Javanese, the local language, and preferred to use Indonesian, the formal national language. One factor for this was the popularity of *Laskar Pelangi* (Rainbow Troops), a hugely popular children's film. The workshop

instructors and the local group committee had shown the film on a large screen on the main stage, and it became an attraction for villagers. The children were amazed by the Malay-Indonesian dialect used in the film. Soon after the screening, they recited the dialogue, trying to copy the unfamiliar dialect. Later on, the stories that the children developed became closer and closer to the genres popular in movie theatres: adventure and horror. In the case of these children's films, it is clear that they (and the younger generation in general) had more exposure to Jakarta popular culture and preferred to make films in such a fashion, demonstrating that exposure to popular culture is most marked among the younger generation.

4.3. Documenting Tjipta Boedaja's Activities and Non-Fiction Filmmaking

With the workshops, the process of documentation really began. The urban filmmakers recorded different performances and rituals. Over the years though, local artists were increasingly asked to operate the cameras and sound recording equipment. This made them feel increasingly accustomed to documenting their activities themselves. In 2015, Saparno explained his method for covering rehearsals. Basically, he shot one person repeating the same gesture over and over again using different shots, starting with the widest angle followed by increasingly detailed takes. The dancers became more familiar with the camera's presence, and some also with camera operation and digital data processing. As a result of this increasing familiarity with the actual mechanics of recording, the group was able to produce, as we have already noted, a documentary about senior dancers holding performances, *Sebuah Reuni Singkat* (a Short Reunion) (link: <https://youtu.be/wb-vbIu1X0s>).

Later on, after we submitted some of the films to different festivals, film screenings, or conferences in Yogyakarta and elsewhere, I started to ask some of the dancers to accompany me to festival and conference venues. This was done largely to enable them to experience the reactions of strangers to their work and to soak in the atmosphere of such occasions. Our presence was generally well received, and plaudits were frequent. Watching the other films exhibited on such occasions gave the dancers a greater exposure to alternative forms of documentary narration. One of the styles that we discussed most was observational documentary and they were excited at the prospect of working in a similar spirit. The dancers were well aware that different stylistic conventions fitted different contexts and

that, for example, observational documentaries eschewed interviews. That did not necessarily, however, prevent them occasionally expressing the wish to have the two together.

4.4. Learning Technical Arrangements: The Making of *Mother Earth*

Mother Earth was the first film collaboration in Tutup Ngisor after I returned to university. As noted in the previous chapter, the first production had many problems in terms of collaboration. In an interview after we wrapped the production, Saparno, who worked as line producer and actor, felt overwhelmed by the detail that this form of management work required. Tjipta Boedaja did not usually require such administrative exactitude.

There were also complications in adapting to the language of film. Saparno also mentioned how exhausting the production was for him. He admitted that, as an actor, he was struggling with the multiple takes. Furthermore, he had to repeat his gestures in exactly the same way each time, as improvisation could be problematic in the editing room. He also emphasised the complications caused by weather conditions. Several scenes were shot outdoors in the cold and damp and some of the dancers fell ill as a consequence. Saparno's remarks made me reflect more on dancers' involvement with the production process. I realised that some of the better dancers has prioritised their production work and allocated themselves smaller dancing parts than would normally have been the case.

In another interview, Trisantoso, Anjilin's brother, music director, and one of the executive producers, expressed that time management, discipline, and planning are more demanding in film than in stage production, and as such this experience offered valuable lessons for the younger members of the group. He also highlighted the fact that acting for the camera required more realism than stage acting. Meanwhile, for Anjilin, there were different working norms in film that could be implemented in the group's stage productions: detail in planning, discipline in preparation, and more democratic job descriptions and responsibilities. Reflecting on the process, he contrasted his total authority with the more egalitarian process of film production where authority is diffused across several different roles. Anjilin also emphasised the camera's ability to capture detailed movement and how it should push young dancers to focus on their smallest gestures. At one point, the dancers realised that they now had lower standards than in past performances. The

group's founder, Yoso Soedarmo, was very strict in training the older generation of dancers and pushed them hard to pay attention to the smallest detail of their movements. This kind of training was no longer offered to the younger dancers, who they were thus not under such pressure. This was all noted by Anjilin, but in the end he was happy and emphasised that this filmmaking experience was important for group members.

However, this positive tone changed after the first screening of the rough cut. We held this screening in mid-January 2015, after finding a time when I was back in Indonesia and Nurmanda was available. The rough-cut edit was sixteen minute long. Realising that there were differences between what he thought had been done and what appeared on screen, Anjilin was upset by the quality of the dance he saw. He believed that it lacked feeling, and on reflection felt that he had failed to build a good rapport with the choreographer. His brother, Trisantoso, was forced to remind him that the time constraints did not allow many choices. Nonetheless he was very disappointed and bemoaned the lack of resources and preparation time. Anjilin also observed that it has been disastrous to cast inexperienced dancers and musicians from a neighbouring village simply because they were available. The filmmaking process has exposed their lack of class. Saparno, for his part, tried to emphasise that one lesson was that in film everyone must perform perfectly. Here, Anjilin chipped in that because of the short preparation time even the good dancers were not performing at their best. In some respects I was gratified that the conversation was taking place. It helped to emphasise the vital importance of better discipline and more preparation. While I recognised that the quality of the rough cut was poor its length meant that we had some leeway in relation to quality if we reduced it from sixteen minutes to the ten I had originally hoped for. Nurmanda proposed that much of the obviously poor material could be edited out and in this way something could be salvaged from the whole process.

The discussion then went on to identify the problems that could hopefully be avoided in future productions. Nurmanda offered the issue of scheduling: rehearsals were important not only for the dancers, choreographer, and director, but also for the cinematographer. It was important for him to prepare the storyboard, or at least to comprehend the performance ahead of time. He also questioned the fact that we recorded music after the performance. Every dancer in the room agreed that

live music was the best option, and that dancing with music was better. Trisantoso reminded us that there was not enough time for this particular production to prepare its music first, but he agreed that ideally the music must be recorded before the performance.

The main reason behind the decision to record music after shooting was that we lacked time before the shooting, and nobody previously thought about the disadvantages of this process. No one in the crew—both local and from Jakarta—had any previous experience with this. I knew many films had done things this way, but I did not think much about the consequences of following the same process in a dance film. I had been surprised that all of the dancers could synchronise their movements without music, as everyone counted their steps in their minds, but realised it was harder for the musicians to follow the dance steps than the other way around. Moreover, while sometimes these dancers danced with recorded music, it would be best way to have both at the same time, and it would be better for the musicians and dancers to know and understand each other's tempo and thereby accentuate each other. However, in later productions we continued recording the dance before the music because it was easiest.

The next evaluation came in late January, when Nurmanda and I tried to get approval for the final cut. It was late at night, during a break in Tjipta Boedaja's film project with the people from the local museum. This time, *Mother Earth* was eleven minutes in duration, and after watching it closely, everyone looked happy. In the discussion afterwards, Anjilin was keen to make more films. Saparno contrasted Timothy's work with camera with that of the museum production. He stressed that the cameraman they had had for this shooting was very bad, because he did not know exactly what he wanted and asked the dancers to adopt different poses or movements just to record everything. He concluded that Timothy had done a great job in the production of *Mother Earth*. I tried to suggest that Timothy's work was probably better because he had had a chance to see the rehearsal, but the dancers argued that the museum production's cameraman had also watched the rehearsal but lacked any plan for shooting the picture. Nurmanda then told them that he had spent time alone with Timothy to make a simple storyboard the night before the shooting. I asked Anjilin whether he had requested a longer production time from the museum film producer because he had learned from his experience with *Mother Earth*. He responded that he knew that it would be a bad production, but he did not

say anything. The group had plenty of experience preparing performances in a hurry and seeing bad results, so he had expected the results of such limited preparation to be below par.

The production of *Mother Earth* was intended to give the dancers a more comprehensive picture of the challenges they faced when producing a good film. I hoped that, after this project, they would be better equipped to adapt their stage productions to film productions and get more used to working together with film people, even with those who already work in the industry.

4.5. Learning About Resources: The Making of *Petruk Becomes King*

Petruk Becomes King was another film, produced one year after *Mother Earth*. This time although we again had a limited budget we were intending to make a longer film. Most of the preparation meetings were filled with intensive discussion of the aesthetics and message of the film. An important move was the decision to make the film look like a shadow puppet *wayang* show: the background is continuously blank white. We would shoot with a blue screen or green screen background and later manipulate it at the postproduction stage. This way, not only could we explore different visual ideas, but the method was also relatively cheaper than shooting with sets or on location. We thus decided to complete shooting in the group stage hall. As everything was situated in a shadow puppet universe, the lighting was supposed to be static and persistent.

The film, with an intended duration of sixty to seventy minutes, was an adaptation of a *wayang* performance that could last two to five hours. This meant that production work would be roughly six to seven times that for *Mother Earth*. Arranging a time plan was really tricky, because we only had one month to finish production and post-production, and we still needed to develop the choreography and exercises and to prepare the technical resources for shooting. As always, the dancers already had other commitments. For this, Anjilin, acting as the head of the group, stressed the importance of dancers' commitment to the group, and that this film was something it needed badly. From there, we started the preparation process. We gathered everything we needed, and we contacted everyone we wanted.

The preparation went well, but had complications. We decided to use the Indonesian language instead of Javanese, to ensure that the film could reach a wider audience. I finished the first draft of the film script in three days, and we developed

it together from there. As discussed earlier, the story is very political, and different regimes/common people perform this story to make specific political points. Depending on what plot elements are emphasised, a performance can be used to support or to criticise a ruling leader. In our case, this led to a lengthy discussion. After a while, we finalised the storyline: Petruk feels uncomfortable with how kings from different kingdoms always drag the common people into war and misery, and with the ultimate amulet *Kalimasada*, which happens to be in his hand, he is confident enough to go to the local king and protest against the situation. When everyone in the court tries to silence him, he ends up conquering them, takes over the kingdom, and makes the old king his prime minister. Petruk changes his name to King Tongtongsot Bergeduwelbleh (the sound of babbling). He is still a commoner at heart, and when the prime minister offers his beautiful wives to him, Petruk chooses their maid instead. The good-hearted Petruk conquers the entire country and creates a strong administration. He then decides to convince other neighbouring countries to treat their people better, but again ends up conquering all of these kingdoms, including those of the Pandawas (who do not recognise him as Petruk). After these kings become prisoner, Petruk assigns them different daily tasks—for example, the warrior Bima becomes a security guard—but these kings are still invited to court parties. At the end of the story, one of the Pandawa brothers calls Petruk an inept king because he parties every day. Petruk answers that there is nothing else to do when everyone is happy. At the end, when he meets his father Semar and his brothers, who come to the palace because they can smell Petruk's scent, he suddenly feels homesick. He asks his new wife to live in the village and gives back his throne to his prime minister, who has become sad because he will lose a great mentor.

Entering the production, the budget was sufficient to rent two cameras, buy a blue screen to cover the background and stage floor, and to borrow a set of stage lighting from another performance group to add to what was available already. Given the choice of story and the decision to shoot on stage, the production was supposed to be closer to the *wayang wong* performances with which dancers were already familiar. However, as they had realised from the production of *Mother Earth*, film requires more natural acting than the dancers practiced on stage, and in film production the dancers had to perform repeatedly in multiple takes. To get more natural acting and a simpler process, we decided to use direct sound

recording. Unlike *Mother Earth*, which did not require us to record dialogue, the Petruk story depended on dialogue. Anjilin, who still felt responsible for the quality of this film, stressed the importance of all dancers memorising their lines before they started to explore their acting. Saparno was a natural as Petruk. Anjilin, who played a grumpy king, also acted superbly. All actors improvised some dialogue to make them act naturally. However, in between takes I could not escape the thought that if we did the dialogue in Javanese it would help the dancers act even more naturally.

The stage was not the best place for shooting. About eight meters wide, the space was problematic for the cameraperson to explore. With only two cameras, the basic thing we could do for each dialogue scene was having one take for a master shot (a frontal shot that included every character in frame), one take for an over shoulder shot, or have the two cameras come from two sides to focus on actors' expressions when they interacted face to face, then taking close-up shots whenever necessary. The problem was that, given the significant number of dialogue scenes in which many characters appeared on set, we always ended up with stage blocking. My vision of using staging arrangements that mimicked shadow puppet staging might have contributed to this, but during this time I could not help thinking that we lacked enough time and space to explore other possibilities. For dancing scenes, the lack of camera movement was felt even more profoundly. The blue screen was also problematic. To be easily manipulated in the post-production stage, these screens are supposed to be static at all times; it was not so easy to keep them so. Dancers' movements, especially when they danced in groups, often touched the screens, thereby affecting their position or un-stretching them and creating folding lines. Meanwhile, the stage was simply too small for the war preparation scenes, such as when the troops marched, the prime minister rode a horse, or when Petruk went to battle riding a farmer's tractor. For these scenes, we decided to do some shooting outdoors. However, we simply did not have enough time to explore methods to keep the blue screens static even as the wind blew. Furthermore, the stage hall is an open building, and—as with outdoor scenes—the daylight affected the lighting, which was also supposed to be static.

We recorded the music after the shooting. We could not afford to have a whole gamelan orchestra play during this long shooting process, but the dancers were familiar with these characters and everyone on the set could see that they

performed the same steps and moves in each take. Of course, doing it this way we lacked the ability to improvise of a live performance, but the more I experienced the process, the more I believed that non-documentary films could still capture the excitement of live performances, provided extra arrangements and resources were available to do so.

We wrapped production and edited the results. We screened our rough-cut version in the art festival, just as we planned. However, as the time for post-production was too tight, we did not manage to synchronise the sound to the picture (the screened version used sound from the camera), to include music, to create the white background we wanted, and to correct the film's colour. This version was watchable, and many viewers stayed to watch the entire film. What they watched, however, was a film with dancers doing performance, in front of a blue screen background, without gamelan music, and with unstable sound. The dancers were not disappointed with this version, as they knew that time constraints had made it impossible to finish everything. They gave input about one or two minor mistakes in this cut, but maintained an optimistic attitude toward it. I had bigger problems watching this version, because I believed it could be a bigger film—to best meet the film's potential, we needed to have more preparation, use a bigger studio, have the musicians standing by during shooting, compose longer dances, explore camera movements and compositions, and so on and so on. In different discussions with the dancers, we talked about having a reshoot, and most of them reacted positively. They saw the results we already had as a point to develop from, like an early choreography workshop.

4.6. Questioning Tutup Ngisor Residents' Readiness for Film, Part Two

Cinema might be able to enrich Tjipta Boedaja's artistic culture. Moreover, film might provide it with new methods and channels of expression with which to portray the dancers' complicated lives. There is though still a lot to be learnt. These early collaborations that I have described have enabled the group to develop a degree of awareness about how the production processes of film and stage, while sharing some similarities, entail different disciplines and regimes of comportment. In some cases this has meant revisiting certain traditions that had been lost. The group has faced up to the recognition that film requires levels of detailed technique which necessitates an intensity of practice that once pertained but which need to be

rediscovered and reinstated. As the collaboration has progressed through its various stages, dancers have acquired new technical skills and an increased awareness of what the film medium can offer. They have also become aware of how it impacts on the level of production detail and the organisation of authority.

Aside from managerial and administrative differences, there were also differences in stage production methods to be taken into account. For instance, acting or dancing over repeated takes that required continuation of position, gestures, and emotions, as well as coordination with so many crew members with different tasks. All this is unthinkable from a stage production perspective, thereby presenting dancers with completely different challenges in time management, discipline levels, planning, casting, and crew selection. Film's ability to magnify detail was something that they had to anticipate seriously, especially for detailed dance gestures and acting. For the camera department, visual planning was crucial, and this issue became even more important after the dancers were involved in another film production with an external film crew with less filmmaking experience than themselves. They also learned that they needed to overcome new problems of engaging music—especially, in this context, a gamelan orchestra—during rehearsals and shooting. While recording the music after shooting is the easiest way to make dance films, it is not the best option because chemistry between dancers and musicians is only created with live music. Meanwhile, the ability of editing to create a new time and space in the film universe offered something exciting. The successful elimination of many of the mistakes from *Mother Earth's* final cut, as well as several basic editing classes in school, made Saparno keep asking for an editing position in the latest film projects.

Meanwhile, the production of *Petruk Jadi Raja* was able to overcome the different problems faced in the production of *Mother Earth*: dancers explored dance movements and had enough rehearsal time, production teams met different requirements, and the camera department prepared visual plans better. We hired another dance group for a specific dance, we borrowed a tractor for Petruk's war vehicle, and we even secured a white horse for one of the king's mounts. What we did not have, and what made us learn the hard way, was resources. Funding, time, and manpower were all limited. A film with a higher difficulty level requires more resources, and although we filmed good material, it did not necessarily make for a good movie. However, I can say emphatically that I really enjoyed working with

them. The group experience of working together and the close connections between dancers made the work feel fun and enjoyable. After all, they are a real family working together. If film production managerial arrangements can be developed, I am sure there could be a bright future for Tjipta Boedaja in films, just as there is on stage.

Chapter 5. The Aesthetics of the Film Products

5.1. Visual versus Narrative

This chapter discusses the film aesthetics of Tjipta Boedaja, with the notion that the film results represent the aesthetics of two categories of performance arts traditions in Tjipta Boedaja: folk/field arts that emphasize spectacle and stage arts that emphasize narrative. Filmmaking collaboration with Tutup Ngisor has offered films that depend on visual appeal, as shown in Anjilin's film *Perempuan Tutup Ngisor Tempo Doeloe*. This film does not employ a specific narrative; Anjilin directed actors to reconstruct different situations that he experienced when he was a child. Each scene shows different activities and games that are no longer common. This film was designed to recreate nostalgic images of the past.



Fig. 1-4: Stills from *Perempuan Tutup Ngisor Tempo Doeloe*

Meanwhile, the film *Mother Earth*, which Anjilin co-directed with Nurmanda, offers a narrative—albeit very simple—by putting together a series of six recorded dance performances: some animals live freely, farmers come and work in the animals' habitat, farmers exterminate the animals, the earth is upset and punishes the farmers, Dewi Sri resolves the problem, and everyone live happily ever after. As each scene shows a linear plot development, the film flows slowly, especially for those who are used to faster-paced films. However, based on the collaborators' discussions, this film is clearly intended to be a dance film, and the dancers were more concerned about issues of dance aesthetics than narratives or

film statements. Visual aspects, thus, were very important. The use of special effects emphasises this; computer generated dust/smoke is used for scenes where farmers work in the field to emphasise the power of their work. Additional colour and light was added around Dewi Sri's face to create a halo effect. The scene where the earthmen clean and purify the farmers by cleaning mud from them actually used reverse motion; to film the scene, the directors told the earthmen to wrap the farmers in mud. These effects, however, only served to strengthen the visuals.



Fig. 5-10. Stills from *Mother Earth*

On the other hand, younger dancers preferred making films that told stories in detail, just like stories in the *wayang wong* and *ketoprak* traditions. From the beginning, the young dancers of Tjipta Boedaja made films that carefully explored ways of telling coherent and legible stories by following actors' actions using different camera movements or angles. Films such as *Doran* and *Kisruh* are good examples of this. Both films use linear narratives that develop more detailed plots,

characters, and dramatic moments. In *Doran*, the filmmaker utilised a hand held camera with continuous long takes, allowing the frame to move around and follow the actions from different perspectives. Meanwhile, in *Kisruh*, the filmmakers used a similar approach, but designed the scenes with shorter shots. Owing to these shorter takes, plus some inserts for specific information, the final film feels closer to cut-to-cut editing, consisting of various camera shots that convey different information to viewers.

Characters in films like *Kisruh* and *Doran* also represent individuals, and these characters have—or might have—individual names, something very crucial in plot development. Contrast this with the characters in Anjilin's film's *Perempuan Tutup Ngisor Tempo Doeloe* and *Mother Earth*, who do not have names (barring Dewi Sri, the goddess of fertility, in the latter), and do not represent individuals; they only represent members of specific groups. *Kisruh* and *Doran* explore and develop their characters more thoroughly, while neither of Anjilin's films required their characters to develop, as the plots were too simple. However, we can see that the characters in *Mother Earth* have clear motivations; the film shows the farmers exterminating animals to open the land, the the earthmen bury the farmers to punish them, and Dewi Sri must become involved to restore the natural balance. The meeting of the animals and farmers that ends with the farmers killing the animals, and later draws the anger of the earthmen also show that this simple plot already exhibits causal relations.

Up to this point, it is interesting to note that dancers from different generations used different approaches to storytelling in their first films. However, I do not think this generational preference means that older dancers lack interest in complicated narratives, or vice versa. They are all familiar with various performances, ranging from those with complicated narratives such as *wayang wong* to those lacking complicated narratives, such as folk dances. Indeed, stage performances like *wayang wong*, *wayang kulit*, or *ketoprak* differ significantly from folk dances such as *jathilan*, *topeng ireng*, *reog* or *kuda lumping*. Fragments and spinoffs of the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* serve as the sources of *wayang* stories, and legends, historical events, and myths (the sources of *ketoprak* stories) offer plot elements and details to explore. These arts already have various elements of modern drama, providing performances with individual characters with clear motivations and causal storylines. Meanwhile, performances such as *jathilan* or

reog rely more on spectacle and have no narrative. If the *jathilan* show consists of two armies fighting each other, spectators do not know who these armies are or what problem caused their conflict. They lack expectations for the resolution of conflict, and indeed the performance does not resolve the conflict. Having these two kinds of performance traditions, thus, provided Tjipta Boedaja dancers with the basis for applying the above-mentioned approaches to storytelling in film.

Most of the time, dancers developed dance (and film) narratives in their production meetings, or someone proposed a narrative in the production meeting and everyone else contributed. Familiar stories received approval more quickly. Moreover, when developing storylines for sound films, Tjipta Boedaja dancers depended heavily on dialogue and narration, just as characters' dialogues and *dalang*'s narration drive the storylines in *wayang wong* performance. In the pre-production of *Petruk Jadi Raja* and one of the later films, *Jimate Simbah*, the dancers spent time thinking about dialogue. In *Petruk Jadi Raja*, after collaborators watched the rough cut and decided to reshoot the film, we talked about how some stage approaches were inappropriate for film. In the case of *Jimate Simbah*, Saparno acted as scriptwriter, director, and producer. During editing, he felt that some parts of the dialogue only provided information that was already stated in the plot, and thus he decided to reduce it. We will talk a lot more about this in the next chapter, which focuses on the two final films.

To close this part with a note, Anjilin once mentioned his position regarding stories: if he has the option to tell a story like it is, but the story does not engage or challenge the audience to think about problems facing humanity, he prefers to change the story. This shows that, for Anjilin—and probably for some other dancers in Tjipta Boedaja—the message of the story is more important than how closely the story follows its original source.

5.2. Stage, Décor, Wardrobe and Make-Up

All of the films in the collaboration were shot outdoors and used rural residential as well as natural/agricultural settings typical in Javanese villages, arguably because the local collaborators understood that telling stories in this setting was most accessible for them; after all, they interacted with urban collaborators who did not hide their excitement in capturing "the exotic look" of Tutup Ngisor's old wood and bamboo houses, stone pavement, vintage walls,

traditional ornaments, and natural beauty. For these films, stage, décor, and lighting strategies were definitely closer to providing a visual spectacle, exhibiting what was available around Tutup Ngisor. Portable film equipment allowed Tjipta Boedaja dancers to capture the available natural décor. Still, film production with more resource provided specific sets, while these sets were arguably relatively easy to make and from the surrounding area. In the village dance party scene in *Mother Earth*, extra sets were used: a mini structure of a house, made from bamboo, was reused from an earlier carnival set, and several torches were used to add a more natural nuance to the lighting.

However, one film was shot on the group's stage, the unfinished *Petruk Jadi Raja*. The stage had a bluescreen backdrop to enable background manipulation during post-production. Here, all collaborators learnt the lesson the hard way after they realised that putting too many characters on stage made the blocking look unnatural, and they thus decided to reshoot the film using a bigger space. The initiative for the decision to shoot on stage came from me and other urban collaborators, who hoped to minimise the gap between film shooting and *wayang wong* performance. In theory, preparation for the film should not have been much different from preparation for a *wayang wong* stage performance of *Petruk Jadi Raja*.

Petruk Jadi Raja is a popular *wayang* story. The collaborators wanted the visuals on screen to resemble a *wayang kulit* show, with colourful characters on a plain white screen. The problem is that the big Tjipta Boedaja stage suddenly appeared very small on screen. It worked perfectly well in scenes with few characters, but when more than five characters appeared on stage, the screen appeared crowded. During dance and fighting scenes, characters moved beyond the frame.

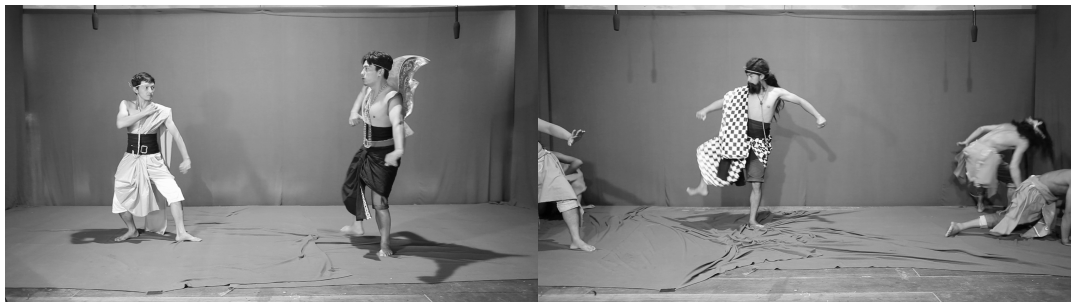


Fig 11-12. This scene with two characters looks fine, but in fighting scenes characters move beyond the frame



Fig 13. In the Petruk royal party scene, the stage holds only half of Petruk's entourage

Collaborators decided to try and obtain the necessary resources to reshoot the film, with the obvious new requirement of having more space. As we can see in Figure 13, the rectangle trapezium stage became a trapezoid, with limited space for characters who should be in a scene. Reshooting the film in a bigger space would allow for a better blocking arrangement during scenes that require plenty of characters.

In the productions of the collaboration's last two films, we found the need for more realistic settings and the effort to look for inspiration from outside film and performance arts. Tjipta Boedaja film directors and producers raised their quality standards when they tried to recreate a spring that no longer exists, and spent more days discussing with those tasked with art, cinematography, wardrobe, and make-up when making decisions on the film's colour themes, assisted by the numerous colour palettes available on the internet. The seriousness of their visual planning can be seen from a debate between a camera crew and a location manager, when a well-planned scene for which they extensively studied the location for available lighting and shading from trees ended up having very different results because the location manager moved the shooting schedule forward by one hour. We will discuss this film further in the next chapter.

Next is discussion of Tjipta Boedaja's exploration of wardrobe and make-up effects. We can also compare *Mother Earth* and *Petruk Jadi Raja* to examine how these aesthetic elements were organised in the collaboration until 2016. In *Mother Earth*, every dancer wore minimal clothing: the male dancers only wore fabric on their waist, while female dancers wore the same fabric to cover them from their torsos down to their legs. Later on, Anjilin explained that this simple costume design was intended to make the audience focus on the dance, not the costumes.

With the same consideration, the make-up was supposed to be very light. However, not everyone involved in the make-up department understood this, and there was some confusion when they put stage-style make-up on female dancers.

Meanwhile, *Petruk Jadi Raja* modified *wayang wong* stage costumes, on the understanding that these costumes could not be as flashy. Collaborators realised from the beginning that flashy stage costumes are made to be seen from a distance, while the camera and big screen would direct audience attention to the details. Several times, Anjilin expressed the view that *wayang* films cannot use stage *wayang* costumes as such costumes would be too distracting. On the other hand, the caricature nature of the story gave collaborators the idea of mixing the story's *wayang* universe with our actual universe, thereby allowing characters to sometimes wear everyday clothing. As such, Semar, Petruk's father, a demi-god servant of the king who also headed the village Karang Tumaritis, wore the actual uniform used in Indonesia for village chiefs; Petruk, during the war scene, wore a camouflage jacket and held binoculars; and so on. For the production of *Petruk Jadi Raja*, a professional costume designer was hired to work together with Trisantoso, and a special effects make-up artist from Yogyakarta designed the prosthetic noses used by Petruk and Gareng.

To conclude this part, I would like to recall a conversation with Anjilin about his artistic preferences for film that illustrates his preferences for his stage shows. He preferred more natural sets, natural lighting, natural make-up, and natural wardrobes. Surely *wayang wong* stage wardrobe were designed to be extravagant (see Cohen, 2016, p. 30), but Anjilin could not imagine a real-life figure such as Bima looking anything like Bima on stage. To get such a natural and realist look, he preferred hiring actors/dancers who resembled his own image of the character: "When I need a pretty woman I need to find a real life pretty woman. When I need an ugly man, I hire a real ugly man. No need for make-up."

5.3. Performances

For Tjipta Boedaja's performers, the acting element has probably been the most problematic. Let me begin with one specific situation: After watching some raw dance footage from the production of *Mother Earth*, as the camera captured the dancers' expressions as they struggled to synchronise their movements, the group elders admitted that current dancers have problems in this area. However, no matter

whether such problems really exist when the performers dance or whether they are caused by dancers' limited preparation time for performances or films, I believe the majority of Tjipta Boedaja's main dancers have the ability to act well for film. The problem here, I believe, is choosing a standard of good acting.

In terms of dance films, we saw in previous chapters that Tjipta Boedaja dancers realised that the camera required them to take care when making gestures and during dancing. The five short films produced between 2008 and 2009, as well as *Mother Earth*, did not really work with close-ups and lacked the dialogue that helps us to identify emotional acting. Meanwhile, *Petruk Jadi Raja* was recorded on stage as a stage performance. The dancers acted with big gestures, and while detailed acting was used occasionally, most of the dialogue was declaimed loudly, in a stage acting style. As such, I needed another standard for evaluating good performances. As such, I looked into the requirements for dance film.

One of the main challenges in dance film is developing a cine-choreographic model that is able to capture the elusive and corporeal quality of dance on the screen (Brannigan, 2011, pp. 8–9). Discussing dance film usually brings us to different topics: screen performance, gestures and cinematic presence, camera movement, composition and editing, audience and *avant garde* film history (ibid, p. 6). Almost all of the short films we produced in 2009 had dancing elements, but not all could be categorised as dance films. However, the films produced after 2014 all made serious attempts to integrate dances into the filmic works.

This brings us back to the situation when Tjipta Boedaja elders, in this case Anjilin and Trisantoso, did not like what they saw in the rough cut of *Mother Earth*. Their problem was mainly related to the quality of the dance. Anjilin believed that the dancers were not ready, not only because they lacked sufficient preparation but also because some cast members were inexperienced dancers. One dancer—who played a bird—was just thirteen. In a discussion about editing, Anjilin specifically asked to reduce several things: the duration of the bird dance and the dances of the animal characters in general. He thought that the choreography for the animal dance still needed reworking.

However, Anjilin also had complaints about the supposedly good dancers: for him, they performed without trying to act naturally as their characters. They did not look like farmers when they swung their hoes, he felt. The scene where they

killed the animals did not look like a dance depicting a killing, but like some thugs killing the animals. This situation specifically provoked questions about reactivating the old tradition of intense acting exercises, one that has been lost today. Moreover, his general comment was that the film followed the standards of 'gambyong' dance, a basic dance that is taught in elementary schools and that most people in Java are able to do. Trisantoso agreed, and he commented that movements that were supposed to be synchronised were very obviously unsynchronised. On a different occasion, Saparno told me that synchronised movements were never the group's greatest strength. The irony is that, while they usually avoid doing this, the film choreography required the dance in the scene introducing the farmers to consist largely of synchronised movements. All of these concerns were gone after they saw the final cut, when Nurmanda cleaned up many of the bad dance moments.

During *Petruk Jadi Raja*, these weaknesses were addressed. *Petruk Jadi Raja* was based on a *wayang wong* performance, and as such the dances were similar to *wayang wong* dances. The dancers were more prepared, and the quality of the dance was better. However, as the main visual idea for the film was to copy the screen used in shadow puppetry, there were almost no camera movements that followed the dance closely. In general, dances were shown in long shots and medium-long shots (see Fig. 13–16), and as such dancers did not need to worry about detailed movements. The dancers appeared relaxed, as well they should because they had performed *wayang wong* and played these characters for almost their entire lives. However, until this point, there had been no exploration of the various cinematic approaches to dance film.

The way the film was shot, the dancers were still dancing as they always did on the proscenium stage; they were presenting the dance as if to spectators present on one side of the stage. I personally liked the decision to keep the camera distanced from the dance, and I wanted to argue to do the same when we are able to reshoot the film, because I think it is still important to share the experience of live *wayang wong* performances through cinema. Moreover, experimentation is probably better for short film projects, rather than long feature films such as this.



Fig. 14-17. Stills from *Petruk Jadi Raja*. Dance scenes used long shots and long-medium shots; cameras were static, and in general there were no close-up shots during the dance.

There was no opportunity for further exploration of cameras techniques in relation to choreography until August 2017, when we produced our last film, *Tetangga*. Here the explorations were protracted. In this film, we had Saparno as cameramen, who worked closely with choreographer Surawan and various dancers to explore different approaches to filming the dancers' movement. We could use different takes from each movement, but we could not yet plan a storyboard for the dance. We realised, on the basis of this experience, that to do so would require days of detailed analysis for each dance. More description of this last film can be found in Chapter 6.

5.4. Cinematography

This section discusses the issue cinematography in more detail. Contemporary camera technology is more accessible to everyone, but it still requires a period of time to master. On the one hand, local collaborators were still excited by the camera's basic ability to record, and on the other hand, there was also keen to exploring its other capacities. Meanwhile, urban cinematographers had their own difficulties as they needed to adapt to local production conditions.



Fig. 18–21. Closer shots from *Petruk Jadi Raja*.

For *Mother Earth*, professional cinematographer George Timothy put the cameras in a fixed positions to record the six dances. This was the surest way given that he could not study these dances ahead of time. The cameras did not move a lot, the lens did not change focus very often, and there were only a few close-ups. However, as he shot with two cameras and covered several angles for each take, he enabled Nurmanda to edit dynamically. With Nurmanda, he also prepared a good storyboard and shooting plan, as discussed previously. The cinematography of

Petruk Jadi Raja was similar: cameras covered the choreography using wide angles and did not follow dancers' gestures closely. However, there was clearly exploration of other shots, as more dramatic scenes in the film utilised closer shot types (see Fig. 18–21).

Discussion of Tjipta Boedaja dancers' cinematographic experiments should include *A Short Reunion*, the documentary that significantly engaged Saparno and Sumpeno in its camera work. Both dancers, who were also producers of this film, made arrangements for the two cameras available: Saparno worked with a DSLR camera while Sumpeno dealt with an action camera. As such, there were more dynamic handheld shots. The results were unexpected. They considered foreground and background. They played with zoom and focus. They discovered the best methods to capture rehearsals: starting with wide shots, then following with closer shots.



Fig. 22. Cameraperson put the foreground in frame.



Fig. 23–24. Cameraperson put the background in frame and played with focus.



Fig. 25. This medium shot was taken after Saparno took a wider shot.

Tjipta Boedaja's approach to film lighting is another important area to consider. Despite the group's experience exploring different stage lighting crafts and styles, films made by Tjipta Boedaja had limitations in relation to their use of artificial lighting. Collaborators tended to keep their budget very low and use available natural light. Although some of their early films were shot at night with limited lighting, most were made during the day with natural light. One consequence of this is that collaborators had to pay detailed attention to the best time for shooting, so that the sun would be in the optimal position for different scenes. *Mother Earth* is notable for optimising natural light by utilising dawn and dusk.

Until 2016, only two films showed notable use of artificial lighting. *Petruk Jadi Raja* used mainly stage lighting, distancing itself from verisimilitude lighting but resulting in unwanted shadows, which were undesirable in manipulating the blue screen backdrop (see Fig. 11–13). Meanwhile, for the production of *Mother Earth*, film lighting equipment was brought from Jakarta. It was a serious lighting effort, and while admittedly the Tjipta Boedaja dancers (including Anjilin) did not become involved in lighting-related decisions, we can see the use of lighting in *Mother Earth* as the urban collaborators' contribution to introducing the dancers to film lighting aesthetics. They were soon able to appreciate the aesthetic considerations in the use of artificial lighting—for special effects, for better verisimilitude, for mood formation, and for emphasising character expressions. Indeed, we can find them in the lighting used for *Mother Earth*. Artificial lighting was used as a special effect (see Fig. 9 and 10), for copying torch light (see Fig.

26), for a gloomier mood when the earthmen attacked the farmers (see Fig. 27), and for emphasising characters' expressions (see Fig. 28).



Fig. 26. Lighting in *Mother Earth*, copying verisimilitude

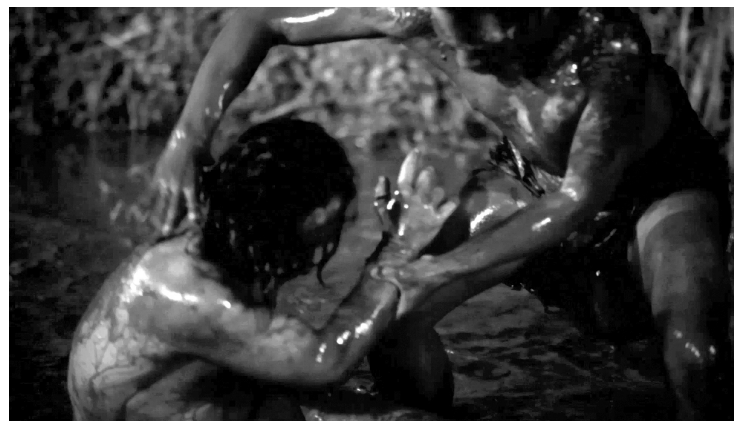


Fig. 27. Lighting in *Mother Earth*, setting up mood

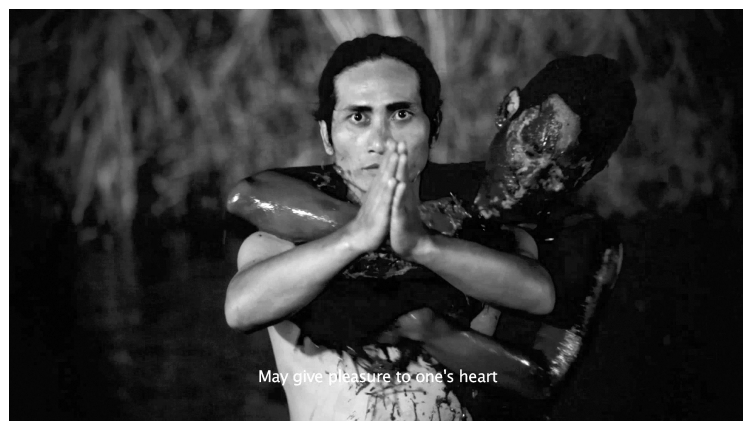


Fig. 28. Lighting in *Mother Earth*, adding expression

Meanwhile, one film from the early workshop deserves mention here: *Aku Tidak Mau Menjadi Manusia (I Don't Want to be Human)* by Septi. This specific film consistently used subjective shots of a goat for the whole film, letting the camera play around while just showing grass and other small plants on the ground. While most of her audience did not understand the film's intended message until the

very last part of the film, I have to admit that I was taken aback by her surprising narrative and visual ideas.



Fig. 29-32. Grass and other small plants in Septi's film

5.5. Editing, Music, and Special Effects

In the rough cut of *Mother Earth*, I did not expect Nurmanda as editor (especially since he was also the co-director of the film) to include so many dance move mistakes. It turned out that he was not sure that the local dancers would allow him to abbreviate their dances. After he was assured that the dancers did not mind, shortening the dances actually saved the film. I am wondering if the same principal can also raise the quality of dance film by, for example, repeating successful moves (especially if footage from different angles is available). While this would add to film duration, it would also improve the quality of the movie.

Nurmanda explained that time constraints and the additional need to produce the music led to a very basic first rough cut which was produced very quickly. He mentions, jokingly, from the time perspective, that the first cut was produced just like doing editing for an Indonesian television drama: the shooting finished in the afternoon and the result must be on air in the evening. The television

reference also came up during the shot selection: the shooting of *Mother Earth* used the studio or stage *multicam* recording principle with two cameras from different perspectives rolling non-stop during the takes. To make it even harder, he –as director– did not have a storyboard because the dance performed was different from what he had had in mind before we started the production. He thus had to repeat the takes several times and put the cameras in different positions, to give him more shot alternatives. The abundance of footage made it like live television studio editing, choosing the best image from different cameras second by second. However, unlike television studio work or live production, we did not have a switcher or multi monitors in order to choose the images. Nurmanda had to do everything with a thirteen inch laptop, by putting all the footage files from the same scene in parallel timelines in the editing software.

This version of the rough cut was used for creating the music. After the music recording finished, he went home to Jakarta and there Nurmanda continued to work on the rough edit. During the next visit to Tutup Ngisor he was able to screen an edit and get some feedback and suggestions from the local collaborators. These he took on board when he went back to Jakarta again and worked on the final cut. This time he added colour grading, sound effects, and mixing (uniting music composition, balancing instruments and sound effects) and mastering the sound (the final process of sound output mixing that unites all audio files as a master file) . At this stage he was able to offer two final-cut alternatives, one about ten minutes in length and the other sixteen minutes long. After screening the alternatives and the local collaborators had discussed the preferred options, he went back to Jakarta again and put the final polish to the film and made a trailer.

In dance films, of course, duration issues are closely related to the music that plays for the dance. As noted previously, having live music during shooting would be the best option for making a Javanese dance film. However, this does not necessarily mean that music cannot be manipulated during post-production. At the end of the rough cut screening of *Mother Earth*, Trisantoso was dissatisfied with his own music, and asked Nurmanda to add atmospheric tones to make it smoother. He encouraged Nurmanda not to be afraid of using a keyboard for this. Saparno specifically asked Nurmanda to add dramatic music to the scene before the earthmen pulled the farmers to the ground. At this stage, everyone was concerned that film audiences would not understand who these creatures were.

Anjilin too was exercised by the problems that the musical arrangements posed for the dancers themselves. There was an air of recognition that more resources could have been deployed in the music department and, indeed, that the music as a whole should have been treated more seriously. During the rough-cut evaluation, Sumpeno suggested cutting one song in its entirety to make the film shorter. We agreed to do so. Although the lyrics of this specific song are seemingly neutral, almost every Javanese person knows that the song is supposed to have a religious meaning and this fact may well have misled audiences as to the actual message of the film itself.

There was also considerable discussion about special effects. Saparno was worried that computer generated effects would make their dance moves seem inauthentic. Meanwhile, Trisantoso did not have any problems with special effects, as long as these effects looked real. Some effects in the rough cut version still seemed fake, however, and he asked Nurmanda to reduce the number of effects, especially those that made the film look unnaturalistic. Besides the amount of dust smoke in the scene with the farmers, Trisantoso also objected to the halo around Dewi Sri's head.

Widyo Sumpeno had his own complaints about colour, especially how the colour changed during the course of the film. Nurmanda explained that the changing position of the sun had caused these differences in colour, and said that he would try to make everything look consistent. Here, Anjilin stressed that he preferred the unnatural colour. This surprised me, because I knew that he likes natural colour for stage performances. However, there was a distortion effect in the scene when the earthmen appeared, and as a result these creatures did not look proportional. Anjilin preferred there to be no distortion effect. Trisantoso also asked if the editing process could slow the speed of the bird and Dewi Sri dance movements. At the end, there were questions about the selection of images in between scenes showing the killing of the animals and the village dance party: "Why did Nurmanda choose specific footage to bridge the two scenes? Did he want to show that nature was broken? If that is why he did that, we need more footage of natural devastation". Nurmanda agreed to do what he could to satisfy some of the feedback. In the end he was able to add more colour, light, and sound effects during the scene featuring the emergence of the earthmen. During the screening of the film

in the village, children under the age of five were crying in fear in the middle of the scene; some of them even ran home.

The local collaborators began to get fully involved in editing when Saparno started his studies as a visual communication student. He edited his own film, which was made in mid-2017. We will discuss that film in the next chapter.

5.6. Aesthetics, Statements, and Public Acceptance

There was an interesting conversation after we watched the rough cut of *Mother Earth*. It involved myself, Nurmanda, Anjilin, Trisantoso, Saparno, and Sumpeno. After everyone had expressed their opinions, they started to speculate as to the possible audience reactions. Saparno was relaxed; he was sure that, as it was a dance film with no dialogue, people would not be overly concerned with meaning per se. He was worried, though, that if the film did not raise tough questions, that that would make it a bad dance film. Here I expressed my disagreement with him. There are many kinds of dance film, I suggested, and the audience's appreciation of any message in the film must depend on the filmmaker's original intention. If so, what was our intention? Anjilin's response was both pragmatic and a little cynical. The film may be regarded as a good example of a film about peasants dancing rather than a dance film proper, he supposed. Trisantoso continued his train of thought, "... or maybe about farmers dancing."

"What if the film wins an award because it is considered a very good peasants' or farmers' dance film?", I suggested provocatively. Would any Tjipta Boedaja dancers be happy and feel proud for their work to be considered as such? The consensus was that they would not. Mistakes are made but the goal is always to improve and perfect their performances. Trisantoso connected this with a story he had heard from Nurmanda who had talked about Alfred Hitchcock saying that his best film had not yet been made. "Of course nobody would be happy with what they had made." Trisanto said, "Even when we make a good film or a put on a good show, we will never be happy. That is why we perform art."

Anjilin continued, saying that, even in stage dancing, there are dances that have easy storylines. For this kind of dance, the quality of the dance would still help tell the story. Dance dramas like *wayang wong* might be the easiest ones. He was sure that making a dance drama film would be as easy as recording a stage performance of a dance. I considered this a clue to his resistance to *wayang wong*

stories; maybe he would considered such films less challenging. But he continued, explaining that the emotions of spectators of stage and film performances would be different. Something that is interesting on stage is not necessarily be interesting on screen. Maybe the next film, he thought, required choreography designed for the camera instead of for stage spectators. The film that tried to realise such choreography is *Tetangga*, which we will discuss in the next chapter.

6. The Final Productions, Representations, and Film as Expression

6. 1. Understanding Tjipta Boedaja, Exploring Film Expression

This chapter focuses on the last film projects and the forms of practice stimulated by the accumulated knowledge of previous collaborations. We noted in Chapter 2 that Tjipta Boedaja's adaptation to certain new forms of aesthetic practice requires not only that the local artists study and practice film and filmmaking, but also that the urban collaborators themselves are willing to learn about the group and their culture and that of the village. Collaboration must be an exchange. The story of the two last films demonstrates this and illustrates the process whereby both local and urban collaborators can initiate ideas from their respective viewpoints and work together to realise them.

The final films in this project showcase Tjipta Boedaja's critical spirit and underline the intention behind the group's art to stimulate audiences to think differently about the world. Despite their rural location, this spirit is born of the dancers' own interactions with a wide range of people, and stems also from Javanese court dance traditions which themselves form a source of commentary on the world. While their dance has long been a medium to convey their critical messages, film opens up a new range of possibilities. As a mass medium, it gives them more power to communicate, not only with the spectators present during their performances, but also with those in faraway places and even with those who will watch the films in the future. While Tutup Ngisor residents remained the primary target for these films, the artists understood perfectly well that film gives them the power to talk to broader audiences.

Part of my own inspiration during the collaboration process has been the work of cinema theorist Rachel Moore. Her subtle analysis of the historical role of film and cinema in society, derived from a close reading of theorists such as Siegfried Kracauer and early filmmakers such as Jean Epstein, has helped to enrich my own understanding of film and cinema's capacity to be both liberatory but also, potentially, to act as a form of social control. She characterises cinema as a form of 'modern magic' (Moore, 2000). Tjipta Boedaja artists understand such matters. Their art is a powerful tool to confront problems in the world. Films such as *Mother Earth*, *Petruk Jadi Raja*, *A Short Reunion*, and even short films like *Kisruh* and *Perempuan Tutup Ngisor Tempo Dulu* were similarly vehicles for making

statements about greed, ideal leaders, lifestyles, or scarce resources. For the two final films, Saparno and I both came up with ideas which continued to probe these themes.

One of the significant triggers for Saparno's film *Jimate Simbah* (Grandpa's Amulets) was pragmatic. He needed to complete a final project to earn his bachelor's degree in visual communication. However, his concerns, which became a very strong driving force for the film, are based on real dilemmas faced by Tjipta Boedaja dancers in the contemporary period. On the one hand, these artists are the inheritors of a proud tradition that sometimes comes with certain supernatural burdens, while on the other hand they are also rational, albeit visionary artists. The film's story is based on Saparno's own experience witnessing his fellow local dancers seeking out magical charms to improve their dancing. Such behaviour is shared by dancers of all ages in Tutup Ngisor, as well as other professions, both inside and outside the village. Usually, to obtain these powerful amulets, would-be owners must meditate or fast, to be in a condition of *liminality* which will enable them to connect with supernatural creatures who can ultimately help them through the medium of items such as amulets. Saparno saw that getting hold of amulets was understood to be a shortcut to an easy life. Meanwhile, to exacerbate matters, he felt that television programmes and popular culture more generally also often presented such a supernatural orientation as a shortcut to an easier life. The whole situation encouraged a society that emphasized instant gratification. Saparno was disturbed by this. What dancers needed in order to become good performers, in his view, was more hours of practice.

Meanwhile, the initial inspiration for my film *Tetangga* (Neighbor) came from academic reading, in this case Fatimah Tobing Rony's defence of indigenous spirituality, which she regards as often having been ignored or obscured by the rationality of western scientists (2006). I developed the idea for the film based on my observation and documentation of the children of Tutup Ngisor distributing offerings to about thirty spots in and around the hamlet during *Suran* ceremonies. The locals believe that these thirty spots—a big rock in the middle of the settlement, trees, sculptures, springs, dam structures, and so on—accommodate spiritual beings, who have different characters and functions. By giving the tasks to children, it means that the villagers want to keep this tradition alive in the future, as

currently only a few people know the details and values of this tradition and of these creatures' presence.

Both films are deeply indebted to Tjipta Boedaja's mystical traditions. As we learned from Chapter 2, the dancers of Tjipta Boedaja share spiritual life and mystical histories. While it was very rare for them to discuss mystical beliefs with me or when I was around, and while at the same time they were very rational and cosmopolitan, the dancers and the villagers were proud of their Javanese traditions, a syncretic amalgam of animism, Hinduism and Islam. One of the important features is that villagers believe mystical creatures live around us, and they expect to be able to live in harmony with these creatures. These creatures are not necessarily frightening ghosts, as urban popular culture might portray them, and they can even contribute to everyday human life. This is common among communities around Merapi, as pointed out by the anthropologist Lucas Triyoga (2010), and in Tutup Ngisor this belief is celebrated through a set of ceremonies during the festival. There are practical guide books that help the Javanese who hold these beliefs, and several people, usually the older members of the group, are responsible for interpreting the books according to their experiences. Films like *Kisruh*, *Doran* and *Mother Earth* made strong appeal to Tutup Ngisor residents' identity as farmers. In the case of *Mother Earth*, the film also depicts Tutup Ngisor residents' identity as peasants living in harmony with spiritual forces. The two last films, despite their original inspirations coming from different sources, both also focused on the issue of how the villagers should treat the supernatural in their daily life.

In preproduction discussions, Saparno and other local collaborators linked the difficult choice, between the hard work of proper dancing and the taking of easy shortcuts, to the virtues of Yoso Soedarmo, Saparno's grandfather and the founder of Tjipta Boedaja. On the one hand, Yoso Soedarmo was a spiritual and mystical guru who attracted followers from many places, but on the other hand, according to the tales told by older residents, Soedarmo kept making the group members work hard during exercises and rehearsals, and insisted that they learn about so many aspects related to their arts. For Saparno, it was clear that supernatural elements are present, and that they probably have practical uses, but he believed that people still needed to work hard and not take shortcuts in realising the life they desired.

For the film, Saparno chose settings familiar for local audiences, including the hall or riverbanks, to add elements to which these audiences could relate. Meanwhile, he hoped that a comedic approach might make it attractive for general audiences who could also connect to his general critique of the social and cultural situation in Indonesia. While Saparno thought that dancers with the problematic attitudes he sought to highlight are those who are in their twenties and thirties, the main characters in this story are children. He wanted the film to speak to younger dancers and serve as a lesson to prevent them from making the same mistakes.

The film follows three children: Lanang, Restu, and Arya. They want to dance well, but are too lazy to practice. They search for an amulet that once belonged to Lanang's grandfather. What sort of meditation do they need engage in in order to get their hands on the amulet, they want to know. Lanang's father, when he hears of their plans, instructs them to meditate by practicing their dance on the riverbank. At the end of the film, after much 'meditation', the dancing of the children has greatly improved and we can see that this was just the father's ruse to get the children to practice more and build their confidence. For Saparno, the elements of this story were personal and the film is a very personal one.

In the case of *Tetangga*, after discussing my film idea with the Tjipta Boedaja artists, everyone agreed on the importance of transmitting the values and knowledge associated with the distribution of offerings, especially for the younger generations. It was widely understood that in some quarters there were allegations that the making of such offerings was heresy and something that represented polytheism and undermined monotheistic religious values. Those involved in making the film wanted it to counter such claims by emphasising the function of the offerings in promoting harmony with one's surroundings. For them it was just the same as sending food to one's neighbours. To ensure the film could achieve its objectives, the real challenge was that of depicting these creatures visually in such a way that local spectators could relate to them. At the same time, the audience outside Tutup Ngisor also had to understand the message. The participants in the production wanted the film to show the harmony between humans and their surroundings as the outcome of these activities. The film begins with children distributing offerings, followed by these creatures emerging to consume the offerings and dance, expressing their excitement at receipt of these gifts. There is little narrative in the film, as it maximises the visual to communicate its message.

As with *Jimate Simbah*, the pre-production of *Tetangga* began with research: questioning the older Tjipta Boedaja performers and people who had seen, heard, or felt the spirits; enquiring as to the designated spots; seeking information about the supernatural figures who live in them and their appearance. The whole project thus involved more people and a new form of collaboration, which we will explore more in the following section.

6.2. Collaboration in the Later Stages

Another area which requires further probing is the nature of the collaboration itself. In Chapter 3, we studied the process whereby collaborators build chemistry, trust, and reflexivity. In order to do this they had to be open about motivations, goals, and the risks that are present. This section focuses on how collaborators, who had learned through previous productions and collaborations, worked together to finish the final projects. What we can observe in this regard is a breakthrough in building trust and distributing authority, as well as a stepchange in managing the flow of ideas and the division of responsibilities for these two last projects. The biggest achievement at this stage is almost certainly the fact that the Tjipta Boedaja artists were confident enough now to work on these two projects with minimal support from urban collaborators. They thought their previous filmmaking experiences were sufficient for them to start making their own films. I worked as director and producer of *Tetangga*, but I was practically the only urban collaborator on that production. Meanwhile, for *Jimate Simbah*, Saparno—as director and co-producer—expected me to let him make all the important decisions. I let him have his way. He appointed his classmate from Yogyakarta to operate the camera, and this person was the only other urban collaborator in the production. During the process of production I kept my thoughts largely to myself so as not to affect progress. I only commented afterwards.

Saparno worked quickly to meet older community members and talk about his plan, especially the story. He talked to his father about the plot and the motivations behind it, then he discussed it with his uncles. Soon he had full backing from the community elders, many of whom shared his concerns. Trisantoso was the most excited of them. He commented to me about how promising he felt this planned film was. I introduced Saparno to a scriptwriter in Yogyakarta, but he insisted in the end on writing the script himself. Saparno, as co-producer, had

Sumpeno as his line producer. He garnered more help from Pribadi, who served as choreographer, and asked dancers from Pribadi's group, *Sanggar Bangun Budaya* (located in Sumber, one of the closest hamlets to Tutup Ngisor), to help him as production crew. Three important adult characters are played by actors from Bangun Budaya, but the actor who played the role of the old hermit is from Tjipta Boedaja. Pribadi played Lanang's father, a head of an art group who has small children. As such, in this film he practically played himself. Later on, Saparno also had Tjipta Boedaja's regular musicians provide the music for the film.

The biggest challenge posed by the script was that the film focused around the life of three children, all under the age of ten. He also needed about ten more child dancers-actors from the same age group to play supporting roles, as well as another ten as extras in a demanding opening scene. For this Saparno had created a *jathilan*-like scene full of child dancers. At that moment, Tjipta Boedaja had less than ten well-trained child dancers below the age of ten, so Saparno had to look for dancers in other villages. He knew from the beginning that working with children was one of the most difficult things in filmmaking (indeed, avoiding working with children is sometimes said to be one of the golden rules of filmmaking). As if working with twenty children in the opening scene was not challenging enough, Saparno decided to shoot this scene up in the forest, on the slopes of Merapi. As such, he had to coordinate everyone and transport every child, crew member and piece of equipment to a spot far from residential areas, water sources, and electricity. It was as if he was attempting to break all the rules at once and I felt impending disaster looming. The crew, however, despite their inexperience, worked with great dedication and despite the obstacles Saparno had posed for the production, everything went well.

Pribadi also took the film personally. His group, *Bangun Budaya*, was very much involved in the production, and as a subsidiary group of *Tjipta Boedaja*, it seemed as though he was prepared to put all his resources and reputation at stake for the film. *Bangun Budaya* became an important hub for this production, as it became a centre for producing provisions and gathering costumes, props, and equipment. Frequently Pribadi took the initiative in gathering the children at his group hall for dancing and acting training, and soon adult members of *Bangun Budaya* also became involved in the training. One of the most important crew members from *Bangun Budaya* was Setiyoko, who had been involved in some

earlier film productions as a dancer. In this production, he was credited as one of the actors, but he did much more. He also took care of props and reconnaissance, coordinated with child actors and dealt with sundry other tasks when they arose. Like *Tjipta Boedaja*, *Bangun Budaya* had built a culture where everyone who could help would step forward and contribute, but, in comparison with *Tjipta Boedaja*, *Bangun Budaya* had more young dancers. I personally think that Saparno clearly realised the importance of the resources offered by *Bangun Budaya* and maximised their use in this production, a decision that I would probably not myself have made if I had been the only producer since I would not have known it could be drawn upon. Since I kept a little distance from the production and focused on providing other support, Saparno became the veritable boss. He led the team very well and finished the production according to his schedule.

Shooting went well, but working with many newcomers, Saparno sometimes missed technical details, which could have caused problems. In the opening scene, working both as producer and director with so many children, he had some difficulty coordinating camera and sound. He missed moments when actors had already started acting while the cameraperson was still arranging his camera. Saparno also wanted to be editor. Later in the editing process, the hard drive that contained the recorded dialogue was damaged. While the hard drive was fixable, he did not have any backup and he lost the file. As such, for editing, he had to depend on sound from the camera.

In a conversation with Saparno and Setiyoko at the end of September 2017, Saparno defended his decision to have so many child characters. He felt that he did not have enough time to prepare, especially since for him films required more detailed preparation than stage performances. When I argued that stage performances, too, needed thorough preparation, he responded that performances on the Tutup Ngisor stage were always run with limited preparations. Setiyoko jumped into the discussion, stating that one of the best things that had come from these film productions was that young dancers such as Saparno take the initiative. For Setiyoko, film offered a breakthrough for *Tjipta Boedaja*.

The production of *Tetangga* was smaller in scale than that of *Jimate Simbah*. I imagined most of the shots being captured by a crew of five, and as the story only had a few characters and had no spoken dialogue, it was not expected to be very challenging to produce. When I first told Saparno about my idea for

Tetangga, he instantly asked to be responsible for the camerawork. I also asked him and Sumpeno to be the producers for this film. Saparno suggested that we involve Setiyoko as props manager. We also asked Trisantoso to be our wardrobe consultant. Saparno insisted that we have a choreographer, and we chose Surawan to do this. In the end, though, Surawan was only responsible for one character that was played by a dancer from Yogyakarta. The other characters were choreographed by the dancers who played them.

As a next step, we agreed to conduct detailed research about these creatures. For this we met Cipto Miharso, one of the oldest remaining Soedarmo siblings and one of the main *primbon* interpreters in Tutup Ngisor. We also invited an illustrator from Yogyakarta to our interviews, in order to draw the characters which Miharso described. We held three interviews in total. Miharso provided us with the details of several creatures in human form and we ended up with about ten sketches. On the basis of the interviews we selected three locations used for offerings in the *Suran* ceremony and chose five creatures to depict.

We then nominated actors and dancers to play these characters. While the sketches were surprisingly reminiscent of several available dancers, we decided to cast based on our vision of the kinds of dances these creatures would perform. We quickly agreed that Markayun would portray Kiyai Jafar, a Muslim jinn who lived at the lava dam on the river behind Tutup Ngisor. The people of Tutup Ngisor believe that Kiyai Jafar has a big mosque above the dam and lives there with his pet rooster. He often shouts at farmers who do not go home at prayer time. Sometimes people hear a call to prayer in the vicinity of the dam and say it was Kiyai Jafar who was responsible. We cast Pribadi as Den Bagus Pitono, a figure in charge of supernatural arrangements in the village. We had problems, however, finding the perfect dancers to play his two female companions. We encountered the same issue when casting Satariah, a grumpy but pretty fairy, who guards the spring near the river. The female characters were problematic because of their specific traits. None of the female dancers of Tutup Ngisor were a good match. Den Bagus Pitono's female companions are twins, while the movements of Satariah were described as "closer to ballet". Right from the beginning, Saparno asked for female dancers from outside Tutup Ngisor, while I thought casting outsiders would decrease the ritual value of the film. In the end, we really could not find any local dancers and chose two female dancers from *Bangun Budaya* to play the twins and Luvita Sari, an art

school graduate from Yogyakarta, to play Satariah. A new problem then emerged. I imagined that the local dancers could explore the dance movements on location during their spare time. With dancers from outside Tutup Ngisor, however, these explorations could only happen immediately before shooting or—if possible for these dancers—several days before shooting began.

Saparno was director of photography. We shot the film with two DSLR cameras, so both Saparno and I acted as cameramen. During pre-production, I explained what I wanted as a director, and later during the shooting he became my boss and gave me technical instructions. We frequently gathered at Trisantoso's house, where another of his sons had a small coffee shop. Saparno and I also had long discussions about colour palettes during pre-production, using different choices of picture examples and colour combinations that we had downloaded from the internet. One day before shooting, we tried to shoot and compare the colour composition, and we were happy with the results. On shooting day, Sumpeno moved the schedule one hour earlier to make sure that we had enough time to prepare for a dusk-time scene. The result was shocking, as the light was very different from what we had had the day before. We could not do anything, however, and continued to work with a new colour composition.

While Markayun and Pribadi explored the dance movements in their designated spots, Surawan had to work with Luvita Sari to establish her dance moves. As I had predicted, the time available was insufficient, and even as we began the first takes, we could see that she was still exploring the right moves. Things improved as more takes were shot. However, her movements still lacked the same flow, and this later gave us problems in editing. Meanwhile, Trisantoso suddenly asked for an extra scene for Satariah at the new suspension bridge behind his house, near the river, at dusk. Since Trisantoso is a senior dancer in Tjipta Boedaja and one of the executive producers of the film, no one objected to this request, and everyone understood and accepted the reason for it. Soon after the production day finished, Trisantoso said that he saw Satariyah happily dancing on the new bridge, at dusk.

Saparno asked to do the editing for both films and I left him to it. He used a laptop to edit his film, *Jimate Simbah*. As the film followed a script, the amount of alternative footage for each shot was relatively small. Thus, placing it in the editing software timeline was quite easy, until he realized that certain shots were missing,

owing to the complexities of the script which had distracted him from some of the necessary technical direction during the filming. It was thus difficult to make a smooth edit. Another challenge was the broken hard drive and the resultant lost audio track. Saparno decided to improvise with the script and made some scenes silent which meant that the audience had to rely upon visual clues to understand the narrative. This strategy, in my opinion, was not entirely satisfactory.

In the editing of *Tetangga*, the editing set-up was similar to the editing of *Mother Earth*. We had two cameras rolling at all times. Saparno needed to put the footage in the timelines. This was facilitated by the fact that the dances were relatively short and there were no big group dances. All the dancers already had specific moves in mind, so in theory there was less improvisation. However, the dancer who played Satariyah needed time to explore her role and respond to the surroundings. In the end, the scenes with Kiyai Jafar were also improvised to some degree because the dance was performed in such a big open space and moving the cameras from one angle to another took time. These factors resulted in a number of retakes, and the light intensity changed over the time. Saparno as editor had to coordinate with me to in order to choose the appropriate light levels and discard the footage that did not fit our requirements. This meant extra attention had to be given to actual flow of the dance in the film. We watched the rough cut together and revised it further. Then Saparno worked with the music director and asked for the sound design to be tweaked to fit the new rhythm of the dance.

With hindsight everyone admitted that the simple production arrangement of *Tetangga* had made production much easier than for *Jimate Simbah*. However, there were still problems: a lack of choreography and the fact that Satariyah and Kiyai Jafar's dances were fully improvised made it difficult for the editor and music director. On the bright side, however, both Saparno and Setiyoko felt that we had found a better rhythm for future films.

6.3. The Aesthetics of the Two Last Films

This section outlines the aesthetics of the last films. It is clear that the two films used very different strategies. *Tetangga* maximised visual impact, while *Jimate Simbah* explored a more detailed narrative. *Tetangga* has no dialogue or specific narrative aside from the causality between the child characters who bring the offerings and the spirits who consume the offerings and dance. To make the

film resonate with a ritual sense among the local audience, the film relied on images to connect to the emotions of Tutup Ngisor's residents. As such, I and the other collaborators believe these images are close enough to how the villagers imagine these supernatural creatures.

However, most villagers were not able to provide the level of detail about the spirits that Miharso had been able to give us in his interview. As a result the film needed to provide clues that enabled the villagers to identify what was taking place. The film has four main scenes which take place in different locations that are supposed to be the abodes of the spirits. While the locations themselves are authentic, camera angles or artistic arrangements may have made some of them unfamiliar to the villagers. As such, how the film depicted the supernatural beings was equally important. The way these spirits dressed, moved, behaved, and danced had to be strong signifiers for the Tutup Ngisor residents and the design had to conjure up the spirits in their imaginations. It was envisaged that the opening shots of the children delivering the offerings to different locations would be sufficient to set up the theme of the film and require no further explanation.



Fig 33. A child delivering an offering is a familiar image for Tutup Ngisor residents.



Fig. 34. The spring location can help villagers to identify the fairy.



Fig. 35. The way the fairy consumes the offering informs her personality.



Fig. 36. The image of the dam helps villagers to locate the position of the next spirit.



Fig. 37. The Jinn above the dam consumes the offering.



Fig. 38. The jinn and his rooster pet.



Fig. 39. The offering as the villagers know it.



Fig. 40. The three spirits of the big rock in the center of the hamlet.



Fig. 41. These two spirits are less popular and needed reintroduction.



Fig. 42. Introduction of the new playground for the fairy: the new suspension bridge.



Fig. 43. The fairy shows gratitude for the offering, emphasizing the coexistence of the human and the spiritual world

In the case of *Jimate Simbah* the script initially conveyed a great deal of information. During the edit, however, Saparno was forced to omit a significant portion of the dialogue owing to the loss of sound files. In fact this might have been a blessing in disguise because it had a positive impact on the pacing of the final film. While some of the dialogue remained crucial for an understanding of the film, the visual elements came to do more of this work. In reality, Saparno wanted his movie to be closer to mainstream commercial cinema, which uses camera movement and location to convey information. His efforts to achieve such a feel, however, did not always work as he planned. The complex requirements of camera placement sometimes overstretched the capacity of our limited production set-up and the result was that characters' positions sometimes jump and upset the film's continuity.

Both films were shot largely outdoors. However, *Jimate Simbah* had several interior scenes. Interestingly, we can see that, while most of scenes with children were outdoors, all the scenes showing adults planning their tricks were shot indoors. Such strategising became a domestic thing, to control children's attitudes out in the wild. The opening scene, which was supposed to feature as many as thirty children playing and being naughty, was shot on the slopes of Merapi, away from Tutup Ngisor. Meanwhile, all of the outdoor scenes in *Tetangga* were shot on location for the obvious reason of showing the actual territories of the spirits.



Fig. 44-46. Challenging choreography and cinematography in the opening and closing scenes of *Jimate Simbah*



Fig. 47-50. The scenes where grown ups control the children are done in interior sets.

The visual elements of both films were planned carefully. The opening scene in *Jimate Simah* foregrounds some large pine trees which tells audiences from Tutup Ngisor immediately that these children are playing far from home. The

scene where the three children meet the hermit uses a riverbank setting, with streams and large boulders providing the perfect setting for characters to stalk one another or play hide and seek. In the "graduation dance" segment an actual market is used and the shopkeepers and customers themselves become spectators to the performance itself. Meanwhile, some of the settings in *Tetangga* are similar to those in *Jimate Simbah* (such as the riverbank and lava dam) but are intended to look more mystical. As previously noted, shooting outside did cause some issues with light levels and required a certain amount of improvisation to obtain desired effects, for example, when we wanted to give a shot a more mystical feel it was possible to simulate twilight by capturing sunlight through the shade of the trees.

The characters in both films mostly used natural make-up. However, in the wardrobe department, the two films used different approaches. The everyday setting of *Jimate Simbah* made the wardrobe department's work much easier: their major concern was with the clothing of their child actors was continuity. As long as the child actors wore the same outfits during scenes set on the same day, they could wear what they liked. Adult characters required more attention, especially those with specific roles such as the hermit and the television reporter. The characters' costumes in *Tetangga* closely followed Miharso's descriptions, but there was a great deal of discussion of fabrics, batik patterns and colours. All of these elements had to conform to the colour pallet decisions already taken in earlier planning sessions. As such, the wardrobe in *Tetangga* was more colour coordinated.

The children's performances in *Jimate Simbah* highlighted the acting problems of Tjipta Boedaja. Child actors from neighboring villages, who had had less stage time than those from Tutup Ngisor, could act more naturally. When we came to discuss this it was linked to the burden that Tjipta Boedaja's traditions placed on child *wayang* dancers. The children of the hamlet understood perfectly that performing is a serious business and requires discipline. Knowing this they masked the very child-like qualities of rebelliousness and fun that on this occasion they were being asked to exhibit. The children from elsewhere regarded the occasion as an opportunity to have some fun and play the rascal. Their performances came much closer to the forms of natural performance that Saparno had envisaged at the outset. The adult actors in *Jimate Simbah* still struggled to make the successful transition from stage acting to screen and the lack of previous film experience in several cases did not help the situation.

Tetangga had different kinds of problem at the level of performance. These all related to the old problem of inadequate preparation time when it came to the rigours of screen choreography. As this film was supposed to be a *bone fide* dance film, without dialogue and with a minimum of natural acting, the performances, it was intended, were almost entirely to be materialised in dance form. The collaboration got many things right on this score: we made dancers explore the movements on site, we assigned special choreographers to actors from outside Tutup Ngisor. For the benefit of these outsiders we explained the spirits and the context of the Tutup Ngisor community and the Tjipta Boedaja group at length. The problem boiled down to the choice of what form the dances should actually take. They were to represent everyday activities but these were supernatural beings performing these activities. The performers were trying out new ideas right up until the moment of filming and with each take the dancers varied their movements. At the editing stage all this made Saparno's job very difficult. The process highlighted the truth behind Setiyoko's earlier calls for detailed camera and choreography arrangements to be made well in advance of shooting.

Despite all the problems, it was evident that the collaboration had made significant progress since the filming of *Mother Earth* and *Petruk Jadi Raja*. *Jimate Simbah* had acting that was more suitable for the screen, with detailed gestures and more natural dialogue. Saparno still insisted on including "unnatural" scenes that would make regular filmgoers scratch their heads. One example of this would be the scene in which Lanang's father negotiates with the hermit Mbah Rejo by mobile phone, asking him to convince the children to practice their dancing every day by singing a very slow traditional Javanese song, or *tembang*. While confusing for most viewers, this might also be regarded as a strength, especially for those looking to explore the possibilities of a specifically Javanese style of musical film.

Saparno's design for the cinematography for the dance performances in *Tetangga* was far better planned than in any of the previous films. The two cameras, exploring the details of gestures and landscape by utilising different types of shot and camera movement, provided rich footage for the edit. However, with dancers still trying out different routines right up until the moment of shooting we did not have a storyboard. As of the completion of this thesis, the collaboration is yet to produce a dance film that begins with a detailed plan for all the visual elements. There is still some way to go then before we can be entirely satisfied that we have

captured what Erin Brannigan termed the "elusive and corporeal quality of dance" (2011, pp. 8--9) and transferred it successfully onto the screen.

6.4. The Dancers' Adaptation to Film at the End of the Project

The thesis project thus ends with the dancers still exploring and adapting to film. At this stage in an ongoing process, what would I say about our collaboration? The dancers of Tjipta Boedaja –probably instinctively– always relate their filmmaking to their stage production. The filmmaking process however has drawn attention to changes in their approach to stage performance. The significance of detailed practice routines has been given new urgency. Film production techniques have also served to reemphasise the collective nature of their artistic practice and underline once again the need for collective responsibility and a holistic vision. While they still need to broaden their horizons further to fully appreciate the potentialities of film, these dancers already clearly live what anthropologist Faye Ginsburg called a "hybrid life". While their encounter with filmmaking has revealed a certain generational difference, with older dancers such as Anjilin, preferring films with a greater emphasis on purely visual elements while the younger generation, exemplified in the person of Saparno, prefer the narrative driven style of contemporary commercial cinema, they have all embraced the process with enthusiasm. They have begun to engage with the communicative aspect of film and this in turn has led them to think deeply about their potential audiences and how best to reach out to them and get their message across. For the likes of Saparno, artfully conceived and carefully choreographed dance films might represent the future strength of Tjipta Boedaja. Certainly this collaborative project is only the beginning of a long engagement with film for the group. There is, of course, no way to know at this point if they will continue to make films and, if they do, there is no way to know whether or not they will want an outsider like myself to interfere in the process.

Up to this point, external collaborators have been a significant factor in creating the Tjipta Boedaja film portfolio. In the course of the long project a good rapport has been established, enabled by mutual trust, understanding and a generous measure of good humour. I have been the prime recipient of much of the group's generosity. Slowly and naturally, we have developed a working relationship that

has been open and reflexive. We have been able to argue and disagree in the confidence that our collaboration was always done in the the spirit of achieving the best outcome possible. What has been learnt? For me, speaking from the urban-academic collaborator perspective, a thorough understanding of local context and power relations in the group is very important. Also vital is constant contact and communication with both formal authorities and the group leaders. Only this way can unnecessary misunderstandings be avoided. Local customs, histories and politics need to be factored into the collaboration. Individual personalities involved, with their unique needs and preferences, must also be taken into account because each of them can potentially affect every decision taken. Working dynamics between young and old also necessitate a careful and delicate negotiation of sensitive relations of power. Despite this immense social complexity and the myriad potential pitfalls faced on this journey which we have navigated together, I am optimistic that the local dancers now have the confidence and ability to make their own films independently. I would like to think that our successful experience of working together would mean that they might ask me to join them and that we can continue to collaborate. I still have several ideas for films that I would like to make with them (reshooting *Petruk Jadi Raja*, for one) and this would be a good reason for the collaboration to continue. Of course, it may be the case that the dancers will simply return to their own tried and tested routines and film production will be forgotten. Personally, however, I think that Tjipta Boedaja will continue to make films and that they will find new ways of doing so which at present I can only guess at.

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