



Keep your two cents: Turah (Ubaidillah, right), tired of listening to Jadag's incessant whining, walks away from him.

## 'Turah'

### A closer look at structural violence

A new film by new director Wicaksono Wisnu Legowo brings us an intimate, immersive portrait of the lives of the poor.

Sebastian Partogi  
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Structural violence refers to a form of violence inflicted by social structures or institutions by preventing people from receiving their basic needs.

Because structural violence affects people differently across various social structures, it is very closely linked to social injustice. Structural violence and direct violence are shown to be highly correlated, as the former opens the door to various forms of violence between family members, genders, races or social classes.

One manifestation of structural violence is poverty, in which unequal distribution of capital and assets leads to the accumulation of resources by certain segments of society, denying poor people access to essential resources, such as hygiene, health, nutrition and education.

According to September 2016 data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), 27.76 million Indonesians live below the property line, constituting 10.70 percent of the total population. Central Java ranks second in the list of provinces with the largest underprivileged population, after East Java with 4.49 million people.

A non-mainstream film called *Turah* (2016) by Wicaksono Wisnu Legowo seeks to investigate the issue of poverty in Central Java. The film is set in Tirang village, Tegal, Central Java, with characters speaking in a local dialect of the Javanese language.

The film was launched in November last year at the 11<sup>th</sup> Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival (JAFF), and this April, it is featured Kineforum cinema café for the entire month. Kineforum is located inside the Taman Ismail Marzuki cultural center com-



Listen up: Turah (left) thinks as Jadag (Slamet Ambari) expresses an unfavorable opinion of their cooperative leader, Darso.

pound in Central Jakarta.

The word *turah* itself has a specific meaning in Javanese: the remnants of something that once existed in abundance. The decision to use the word as the film's title seems to encapsulate the whole crux of its story, namely how the poor residents of Tirang village survive hand-to-mouth by living off the leftover crumbs of a landowner named Darso (played by Yono Daryono).

The landowner accumulates his wealth by employing villagers and giving them a meager pay; typical of how capital owners gain big profits by choking the lives out of their laborers. The "gullible" villagers, however, are not aware of how they are exploited because of the highly educated yet devious Pakel (Rudi Iteng), Darso's henchman who tricks workers into believing they are receiving charity from the rich man and should be grateful, when in fact, they are actually receiving their monthly

pay. While most villagers choose to remain passive and accept their so-called destiny, two residents try to change their lives and the lives of those around them.

An angry, raving man called Jadag (Slamet Ambari) embodies the Marxist class consciousness by trying to shake villagers out of their slumber and wake them up to Darso's exploitation of them with provocative speeches. There is also a man named Turah (Ubaidillah) who insists that instead of provoking anger among villagers, they should focus on working hard and changing their lives through more cooperative methods.

Tension and dread permeate through the entire film, particularly because we know that poverty has turned these villagers into vulnerable people who are highly expendable. A close-up

look at how they are exploited by the rich and highly educated bourgeois class while being denied proper access to nutrition, education, healthcare and hygiene is equally disturbing.

The film also presents many layers detailing the consequences of poverty: addiction to alcohol and gambling, domestic violence, infanticide and many more. This is what Johan Galtung talks about when he asserts that structural violence also gives rise to other forms of direct violence.

Director Wicaksono seems presents this complex, tangled web of violence very well through concrete examples that are woven into the story's fabric. One scene is very important as it brings up issues that are timely and socially relevant, yet rarely talked about. It features a quarrel be-

tween Jadag, an elementary school graduate, and Pakel, a university graduate who malevolently uses his intellect to further perpetuate the exploitation of the villagers. In the scene, Pakel humiliates Jadag for being "just" an elementary school graduate while boasting about his own status as a *sarjana* (university graduate). Pakel fights back by saying that although he is just an elementary school graduate, at least he is an honest man who does not earn money in a devious manner by working as a henchman for a "thief" (the white-collar burglar epitomized by Darso).

In some circles, it is widely believed that many highly educated people exploit their intelligence and authority in order to further exploit and marginalize others while accumulating power solely for members of their inner circle. This scene should serve as a slap across the face of those *sarjanas* who boast about their higher education, and yet in reality are nothing but con men (and women).



TURAH (Fourcolors Films, 2016)  
Director: Wicaksono Wisnu Legowo  
Scriptwriter: Wicaksono Wisnu Legowo  
Cast: Ubaidillah, Slamet Ambari, Yono Daryono, Rudi Iteng



Enough is enough: Jadag openly expresses anger toward the village's cooperative leader, Darso.

— COURTESY OF FOURCOLOURS FILMS

## Wicaksono Wisnu Legowo

### Director Wisnu imparts values through humor in 'Turah'

Clara Anastasia  
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Local directors haven't stopped creating great films despite having significantly contributed to the film industry for years. Wicaksono Wisnu Legowo, better known as Wisnu, is the director of the critically acclaimed *Turah*.

The 83-minute drama is his feature film debut. Produced by filmmaker Ifa Isfansyah, it won two awards at the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival (JAFF) and received a special mention at the 27<sup>th</sup> Singapore International Film Festival.

The movie follows the everyday life of 10 families living in an isolated village, Kampung Tirah, under the leadership of a cooperative leader, Darso, and his assistant, Pakel.

In this movie, Wisnu seems to be promoting his birth place, Tegal, Central Java, as characters speak in the Tegal dialect throughout the entire movie, which was also filmed in the district.

However, what makes the film interesting is how Wisnu underlines the harshness and struggle of the lower class, and how they are being exploited by the upper class. The fear and negativity with which the villagers in the film see life, shape them as submissive individuals, which stirs up conflict between them and Jagad, an alcoholic villager who desires change and bravery

to fight for truth. In addition, *Turah* as the main character captures the reality of seeking hope and a more optimistic view of life.

The villagers' different personalities are strongly depicted through unpretentious dialogues and body language, which come out naturally as they are given by mostly theater actors and actors who are already familiar with Tegal. *Turah* is serious and compelling, yet humorous, and accurately presents the question of moral values to its viewers.

"I tried to avoid putting background music to this film, knowing that it would be the easiest component to stir viewers' hearts," Wicaksono said.

Ifa added: "I never expected Wisnu to make a story as serious as [*Turah*] as I always see him as a funny person in real life."

"After I read the first script, I tried to encourage him to make a funnier and more relaxed movie. We failed three times. But over the next two years I looked through his scripts again, and finally I realized that this is really Wisnu's kind of story," he said.

When asked about his inspiration, Wisnu said his directing style was inspired by Abbas Kiarostami, an Iranian director whose films are blunt and realistic.

"I was quite satisfied with what I have made [with *Turah*]. What I didn't expect was the appreciation toward the film and the [accolades] it re-

ceived," he said with a wry smile.

Before directing *Turah*, Wisnu was involved in several film productions, including *Sang Penari* in 2011 as an assistant director to Ifa. Before that, he had made several short films.

Wisnu said he was pleased with his filmmaking journey so far and didn't regret the time and effort he spent making *Turah* happen.

"I really wanted to be a famous singer, but I backed out because I didn't want to outshine the other singers," joked the Beatle and Oasis fan.

Apart from his busy work schedule, Wisnu doesn't take life too seriously.

"Life should be laid back; it shouldn't be stressful," he said.

Regarding his plans for the future, he said he wanted to make another film about his home district, but "in a simpler way."

Knowing that people expect him to write funny movies, he added that he would continue to inject his witty personality into his scripts.

When asked what he would do if he failed, like with the early scripts of *Turah*, he replied with a laugh: "I'll try again until I succeed!"

The writer is an intern at The Jakarta Post.



Singapore International Film Festival/Bonnie Yap