the key ingredients of a typically Holly- or Bollywood happily ever after: marriage (or at least a proposal). Having made a show of checking this box, Maman and his cronies can safely steer their jeep into the distance, where the sun is setting. While the resulting shot now does evoke a classical ending, the film isn't finished yet. It adds a further reverse angle that I argue undermines the formulaic sense of closure that Maman has worked so hard to ensure: as Ginah and her father stand and wave in an extreme long shot, the image around them is still filled with machine-gun toting soldiers who, unlike Maman, don't seem to be going anywhere soon. It almost looks as if they're "guarding" the film's optimistic conclusion.

The implication returns the film to what it *really* needed to remember before concluding matters onscreen: its engagement with the idea of the nation. The aggressive-looking, uniformed gunmen surrounding the better half of the film's now indefinitely deferred happy couple raise the question of whether the "West," or in this case the rural East, can in fact be won. If peace in Indonesia's dynamic, yet far from idyllic, villages cannot be sustained without the continual threat or active presence of centralized force, what of the even more complex and fragmented newly minted country around it? In this case the "bad guys," Mat Codet and his gang, have also been identified as former revolutionary fighters in the war to end Dutch colonialism a decade prior. Their guns, taken as spoils from that conflict, are further reminders of the pitfalls, paradoxes, and internal factions that emerged during nationalist struggle, however good or necessary the fight. Not coincidentally, 1957, the year of *Tiga Buronan*'s release, was also when Soekarno, Indonesia's first president, briefly declared martial law in order to institute his infamous "guided democracy" policy. The policy was a decidedly authoritarian response to Indonesia's extreme political fragmentation, and it effectively ended elections only two years after the first-ever opportunity for citizens to vote in 1955. As this and other Indonesian films at the time suggest, the problems of revolution embed themselves in the nation that follows, visibly cracking its grand hermetic facade of unity in diversity until it resembles an "archipelagic" region of disparate interests, factions, and locales.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN CINEMAS AND REVOLUTION

This context-based refusal of closure—one that could be termed "realist" but not naturalist or classical in a Hollywood sense—arguably puts popular Southeast Asian films on a formal/structural footing that is closer to independent or "parallel" offerings in South Asia (although, in fact, the more self-consciously experimental, radically fragmented Indian films like those of Mrinal Sen, Basu Chatterjee, or Ritwik Ghatak were made later, in the 1960s and 1970s). Among other factors, such as market conditions and audience taste, the anticlosure attitude of a film like *Tiga Buronan* also appears intimately tied to the experiences associated with the recent armed revolution against Indonesia's colonizers and with its complicated aftermath

in the early years of nationhood. What, then, of the films of other Southeast Asian countries, not all of which had violent, anticolonial revolutions that their cinemas could reflect on? Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines, for example, negotiated independence deals with their colonizers (Britain and the U.S. respectively at the time of independence, although the Philippines had experienced an American-assisted revolution against Spanish colonizers half a century earlier), while Thailand was never officially colonized. Yet what these countries shared with their revolutionary neighbors was an almost unbelievably rapid transition to modern nationhood that I argue left deep impressions on regional cinemas, along with most other areas of life.

Things began in earnest over the fifty years preceding 1940, as the still-colonized region was put through an "extraordinary burst of state-making" (Reid 2015:251) at the hands of British, Dutch, French, and American authorities seeking to modernize their colonial possessions. Only Siam's monarchy was officially free—yet not from the constant need to negotiate with Western interests. From the mid-nineteenth century, it, too, was ensnared in a series of European treaties that helped move it rapidly toward a bloodless revolution and the shift to constitutional monarchy (and the name Thailand) in 1932. As Anthony Reid (2015) argues, this period of imposing modern state structures across the region laid the basic framework for the far more rapid and "astonishing time of crisis and transformation" (306) that followed. During the brief, disruptive window of World War II and its immediate aftermath, these artificial colonial states suddenly disintegrated and were conjured—now with massive doses of nationalist political "alchemy"—as independent nations.

This double transformation, experienced in such tight historical synchronicity, not only produced nations very quickly but also worked to reembed a sense of regional identity in the diverse set of new, geographically proximate countries that resulted. As Reid shows, the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia during the war was among the most important factors driving this collective shift. Over a brief, three-month period between 1941 and 1942, the Nippon army destroyed all the colonial empires built by Europeans and Americans across Southeast Asia during the previous few centuries. Japanese forces then began training local recruits to better organize and fight to protect the "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" that was envisioned as an extension of Imperial Japan. In a veritable flash, "the status of European government, law, and manners was abruptly punctured by European failure on the battlefield" (Reid 2015:312), replaced by an East Asian vision of modernity. At the same time, large numbers of native Southeast Asians were placed in urban offices in governing roles (and were also trained as directors, cameramen, and other high-level film crew), although still under tight Japanese control. Only three years later, in 1945, Japan would surrender to the Allied forces, leaving a region devastated by the former's brutality but also better trained and ideologically prepared to fend off the attempted returns of European imperialists.

For Reid, this unforeseeable series of events opened the door for an especially turbulent, at times almost ad hoc, transition to independent nationhood that set Southeast Asia's experience apart from that of other colonized areas, including in East and South Asia. This was particularly the case for those, like Indonesia, who would enter into bloody, yearslong conflicts with returning colonizers, while working to radically sweep away the subjugated ways of the recent past. In terms of economic infrastructures and foreign investment, the fates of Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines were much better than their revolutionary neighbors in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Burma. But, Reid argues, those who fought to end colonialism succeeded in creating "the most well-defined national moral communities" (332). Despite their relative prosperity, those who negotiated freedom politically, like Malaysia, lacked a harrowing-yet-potentially unifying struggle and thus "failed to produce a single idea of the nation" (333). But the divisions and associated problems were often less clear than Reid suggests. As Nicholas Tarling argues, those who fought for independence used tactics that drew on their experiences under Japanese occupation, hurriedly cobbling together and expanding armies with little time for training, while also engaging guerilla tactics and forces, as well as "forming youth movements [and] employing bully-boys"—effective strategies that also "deferred or worsened the problems [a national revolution] would face when it succeeded" (2004:143).

These are precisely the kind of complications reflected in *Tiga Buronan* (as well as in *Lewat Djam Malam* and many other contemporary films), around which it refuses to offer viewers a stable sense of closure in its final moments. As Reid also contends, the more cohesive ideas developed in nationalist struggle too easily became a false chimera around which internal struggles continued for decades, ensuring that "military rule, corruption, and arbitrary dictatorship became common in the post-revolutionary countries" (2015:332). Complicating matters further, hanging over many of the region's well-deserved triumphs was the fact that, owing to the very brief window of time for reconstruction offered by World War II, the borders of so many proud new countries were "created out of imperial convenience" (Tarling 2004:142)—inherited with little modification from the boundaries set by colonizers.

As I have begun to show, although political will and centralized controls might strive to create smooth and forward-looking, modernist "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983), matters on popular screens, as in life, would be otherwise. In both the region's revolutionary-ideological successes and its economically advantageous, politically negotiated "failures," nations would mainly be visualized in terms of the paradoxes that defined them, not in the globalized conventions of nationalism or of a "Hollywood ending" to colonialism. For example, in the mystical horror genre, one of the most popular in Malaysian cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, divisive racial splits between politically dominant Malays and local Chinese and Indians (a big part of the national failure Reid identifies) were obsessively

addressed but left open and unsolved. As Rosalind Galt argues, the disruptive presence of female monsters like the *pontianak* in such movies (see chapter 4) "preempts the status of the patriotic [Malay] hero in favor of a figuration of Malayness that is both monstrous and ambiguous" (2021:128). The result was numerous hit films in which, in the earliest years of the nation, key national-ideological precepts were challenged or made to appear unreliable, unmodern, or even duplicitous.

When comparing these patterns to other filmmaking traditions, it is important to keep in mind that Southeast Asia's individual film industries are much smaller than India's, America's, or other global centers of production. While regional producers have large potential audiences at home, the far lower number of screens has often limited profitability. As I mentioned above, Southeast Asian films are also relatively unknown outside the region, so there is both less at stake financially and less political impetus for governments to control national representation to the point of enforcing something as specific as closed endings, although concerted attempts have at times been made. One can also identify differences in patterns of showing physical or military contestation (including from traumatized or criminal former freedom fighters) between postrevolutionary Indonesia, for example, and Malaysia or Thailand. But I argue that the common and exceptionally quick transition to modern nationhood across the region was engaged by filmmakers using similar approaches to representation. These approaches generally deemphasized formal and generic consistency and continuity, visual naturalism, or necessary narrative closure.

The reasons for this are of course also more complex than just a shared, quick, and fraught transition to independence. As I take up in more detail in the next chapter, during the key processes of state- and nation-building from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth, aesthetic ideas and conventions were undergoing their own, equally rapid and radical, process of movement from traditional and ritual-based arts to emergent commercial performance styles, from whence they embedded themselves in local cinemas. Not unlike their Indian counterparts, regional filmmakers riding these waves of change faced the thorny but generative problem of being caught between the heady ideals produced by elite education and the meaner social and aesthetic realities grounding and economically sustaining their work. While many Southeast Asian cineastes held key positions in emergent national processes, their work was consumed almost exclusively by lower-class audiences with particular expectations—aesthetic principles that often contradicted elitist tastes and political ideals. Yet the region's national cinemas did not generally become a source of trauma or disillusionment in the ways that Shohat and Stam see throughout much of the Global South. Despite numerous limitations and drawbacks, I contend that regional viewers were more often able to see "themselves" onscreen, however split, distorted, or intentionally mocked by the aesthetic conventions they preferred.

Despite, and often precisely because of, this situation, filmmakers saw themselves as engaged in politically important processes of nation building but also of

actively reflecting the gaps and lacks that both plagued and enriched national life. Inexorable paradoxes, including the fact that the work of filmmakers was almost uniformly met with the upturned noses of their own intellectual peers, were frequently incorporated as gestures of self-reflexivity or self-deprecating humor. In this context, it is the canny incorporation of disorderly or "primitive" formal flourishes and other ostensible shortcomings that I position as defining features of an emergent archipelagic "classicism" across Southeast Asia. As we move our focus beyond postrevolutionary Indonesia and into the uncolonized, but still rapidly shifting, sphere of Thailand, the difference from typical Third Worldist (and scholarly) ideals of either Hollywoodization or its direct opposition only becomes more apparent.

CLASSICAL, NATIONAL, REGIONAL, GLOBAL, AND VERSIONS THEREOF

Among the most generative regional examples of the debate over "proper" modes of national representation and its aesthetic effects is the Thai practice of live film dubbing, or "versioning." As May Ingawanij (2012, 2018), Mary Ainslie (2014, 2018), and others have shown, voice-over artists, or what local English-language media called versionists, dominated popular cinema in Thailand from the 1930s to the 1970s. Their particular modes of exhibition profoundly shaped not only the consumption but the production of cinema and the critical and popular discourses surrounding it. In full view of delighted audiences, versionists created or replaced films' entire soundtracks live (including dialogue, music, and sound effects), improvising with the assistance of basic scripts and a variety of technical tools including microphones, mixers, and record players. Locally produced films as well as foreign ones (especially from India and China), were exhibited in this way, the latter with their soundtracks muted and replaced by patchworks of voices and music that responded to, but were flagrantly out of synch with, the films' imagery.

Like elsewhere in the region, then, Thai exhibitor-practitioners reacted to the arrival of new technologies of representation, and the circulation of local and global genres and styles, by making countless local "versions" thereof. All of these contained recognizable similarities to their Thai and foreign sources, but none could be said to be a precise copy. This is because each time a particular film was exhibited, its dialogue and soundtrack would be altered spontaneously (or simply added spontaneously), often in ways that addressed the specific linguistic, geographic, or social contexts of audiences in diverse Thai locales. Versioning was in high demand in centers of modern urbanity and distant points of rural or island exhibition alike. As Ingawanij stresses, the distinction from the conventional Western/classical setup of a hushed, darkened movie theater with the projector hidden behind viewers in an enclosed room is stark. In the machinery, processes, and ideas underlying Thai versioning, which she also terms "makeshift cinema,"