Department of Media and Information

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Watching Indonesian *Sinetron*: Imagining Communities around the Television

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature: Rachmah Ida

Date: 30 September 2006

Abstract

This thesis is about the everyday cultural practices of communal television viewing by urban *kampung* people. It challenges the institutional frameworks and constructs about the television audience. To achieve this, the thesis looks at the cultural context of the television set and its uses in urban *kampung* households and the neighbourhood system. Studies on urban *kampung* community in Indonesia so far have focused on the socio-economic and cultural practices of the people in relation to state ideological matters (e.g. Guinness, 1989; Sullivan, 1994; Brenner, 1998). This thesis is an attempt to extend the investigation about the cultural practices of the *kampung* community in relation to media use in the era of competitive private television in the early 2000s.

As those *kampung* people have existentially engaged in fashioning their own lives neither as rural subjects nor urban/city subjects, their narratives in responding to televised images and representations (of women in particular) shape the particularity of the cultural scene of these marginalized subjects. Taking up their social economic background and the particularities of socio-cultural circumstances of the *kampung*, this present study takes a close look into the day-to-day communal viewing practice of the *kampung* female viewers of the most-watched local program on Indonesian television, that is *sinetron* (television drama).

Extending the argument of Ien Ang and others into the Indonesian context, the thesis concludes that the national television audience as a unified, atomistic and controllable entity, as is institutionally imagined, does not exist. Rather, watching television, particularly among the urban middle to lower class community, is a discursive practice overwhelmingly showing the diverse, particular, and unpredictable attitudes, which challenge the account of 'the audience' that characterises the industry, the state and, ironically, also the intellectual critical knowledge producers.

Acknowledgements

The acknowledgement page, mostly written at the end of the journey of the writing process, seems to have become an obligatory academic ritual to mention colleagues, institutions, clients, and friends whose support and encouragement made the study possible. However, within the boundaries of the formal academy environment, this page is significant and meaningful in helping us to continue imagining ourselves as a scholarly and independent community. Here, it is important for me to convey how deeply I appreciate those who have so generously supervised, guided, taught, and volunteered to support me during the four years of my doctoral candidature. Their support and encouragement are all very precious for the completion of this thesis.

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Notes on Spelling and Translations

This thesis uses the Indonesian spelling standard (EYD) applied since 1972. This standard is followed for Indonesian words, including personal names and titles of publication, with one exception: personal names throughout the thesis are spelled according to the preferences of the person named, and Indonesian names of authors in non-Indonesian publications are spelled in accordance with the publication.

Indonesian sources in the forms of both interviews and publications are cited in English translation throughout the thesis. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations are mine.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Studying Television and Viewing Practices in Contemporary Indonesia

> *The structures of imperialism and of class domination, when introduced into the study of communications, pose the problem of audience responses to and interpretations of the mass media as a critical area of research* (David Morley, 1983, p. 105).

A Perspective on the Indonesian Television Audiences

In a public hearing between the Indonesian Legislature (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* DPR) and the representatives of the film industry organisation (known as '*masyarakat perfilman*' or 'film community') in February 2002, the main issue to emerge was the criticism by the members of the Legislature of the locally produced *sinetron* (television drama), which were accused of dealing in fantasies and lulling audiences. This criticism was particularly aimed at the major *sinetron* producer, Raam Punjabi, who has been dubbed 'the King of Soap Opera' by the Indonesian press. Accused of being "the producer of fantasy," Punjabi argued that as a fictional product, indeed *sinetron*[1] is a fabricated story that is creatively constructed to entertain an audience; and as an entertainment, it must be above reality ("Debat sinetron," 2002). He also argued that the producer alone cannot be blamed, as he/she is not the only party who plays a key role in determining the features of the national television industry and the audience. Punjabi explained that the producer creates a product on demand from the television station. As well, the television station considers the business aspect, including the advertisers. According to Punjabi, a production will be continued if it gains a good rating. For Punjabi, it is the society (as represented by television audiences), who in the final analysis determines the ratings ("Debat sinetron*,*" 2002).

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[1] *Sinetron*, an Indonesian acronym for '*sinema elektronik*' (*sinema* means cinema/film, *elektronik* means the electronic medium i.e. television) is a popular locally made telecinema program. *Sinetron* varies from serials and series, to single features with one or two episodes.

Punjabi's comments above can be seen as the rationale that governs the producers and the national-private television stations in Indonesia. This illustration demonstrates the significance of the (commercial) institutional setting in shaping the way in which the audience is conceived of and valued, problematised and imagined. Indeed, the audiences (or what this producer calls '*masyarakat,*' or the society) cannot simply be thought of and seen as passive, taking or consuming anything both the producer and the television stations serve. There are ranges of possibilities for understanding how audiences consume and make meaning of television texts. In other words, the audience's experiences of television cannot be seen merely within a framework of the economic determinism of the television industry. The complexity of the multiple practices and experiences that television audiencehood involves should be understood through the audience's socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

This thesis aims to deconstruct the accounts of commercial, institutional or industry insiders, who imagine and define the audience almost entirely numerically and structurally, based on the audience surveys supplied by Nielsen Media Research Indonesia. Moreover, since the state and the critics, who worry so much about the harmful effect of television from an outside perspective, also imagine and define 'the audience' from their own social class and political frameworks, this study tries to bring to light the everyday experiences of television use and the mode of consumption of a group of television viewers in contemporary Indonesia in their own terms. This is achieved by rearticulating institutional discourses on the television audience, then by foregrounding and contextualizing the localness of television viewing experiences in a particular social class culture in Indonesia, that is an urban *kampung* [2] community in East Java. The thesis argues that the institutionally imagined national television audience as a unified, atomistic and a controllable entity does not exist. Rather, watching television, particularly among the urban middle to lower class community, is a discursive practice overwhelmingly showing the diverse, particular, and unpredictable attitudes, which challenge the account of 'the audience'

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[2] According to Sullivan (1992), the Malay word '*kampung*' means 'village', but in Java *kampung* is "…more commonly applied to urban entities, to parts of towns, and cities" (p. 20). *Kampung* is defined generally as "an off-street neighbourhood inhabited by members of the lower class of the town" (Guinness, 1989, p. 55). The majority of Javanese tend to view *kampung* as corresponding to or similar to 'home community', while the affluent and more well-off minority would tend to view the *kampung* as a 'slum' (Sullivan, 1992, p. 20).

that characterises the state and, ironically, the intellectual critical knowledge producers.

Since the first broadcast of Indonesian national television in 1962, television has become a massive cultural institution whose presence can be felt in almost all aspects of social life in the country. With the introduction of satellite, video, and recently video compact disc within the everyday life of the Indonesian people (*rakyat*), the presence of television has become even more ubiquitous and prominent as an object of socio-political and cultural concern. Since the establishment of the private television stations, and now with ten national-private channels and the longstanding state channel, TVRI, plus increasing number of local-private and community channels across the archipelago, the Indonesian television industry has become a booming entertainment business throughout the country (see Faizal, 2002). Moreover, the impact of mass media in Indonesian society is diverse and complex: "the picture is not a totalising one of passive audiences simply soaking up consumerist values and glamorous 'global' imagery" (Hatley, 1999, p. 270). However, in public discourses, popular and academic articles published in newspapers and journals, criticisms of the features of the national television industry mainly focus on the economics of the national-private television, the moral, educational, and ideological apparatus of national television, television as the symbol of cultural decline, or television as a cause of the a-political attitude of the society. In fact, academics, television critics, journalists, parliamentarians, advertisers, and the television producers themselves speak for and about 'the audience' (or 'the society'), but from a position of outsiders. As Ien Ang pointed out in her seminal work on audiences, there is a gap between "everyday practice and official and professional discourse" (Ang, 1991, p. 2). According to Ang, the lack of understanding of the everyday realities of audience occurs because the knowledge about television audiencehood has been colonized by "the institutional point of view" (1991, p. 2). She continues:

> In the everyday realm, living with television involves a heterogeneous range of informal activities, uses, interpretations, pleasures, disappointments, conflicts, struggles, compromises. But in the considerations of the institutions that possess the official power to define, exploit and regulate the space in which television is inserted into the fabric of culture and society, these subjective, complex and dynamic forms of audiencehood are generally

absent; they disappear in favour of a mute and abstract construct of 'television audience' onto which large-scale economic and cultural aspirations and expectations, policies and planning schemes are projected, allowing these institutions to realize their ambitions to govern and control the formal frameworks of television's place in contemporary life (Ang, 1991, p. 2).

Taking my cue from Ang's propositions, this thesis looks at the cultural details of how people (urban *kampung* inhabitants) deal with popular television and other advanced audio-visual technologies such as video compact disc (VCD) in the realm of everyday life of a contemporary marginalised community. If the institutional (private television stations) construction of the (national) audience promotes television as a "home theatre" that promises family togetherness and shelter from the evils of urban life, then the dynamic forms and complexity of neighbourhood communality and consumption seem to be absent from the institutional viewpoint. This thesis, thus, explores the practice of 'communal television viewing,' which characterizes the cultural practice of television consumption in certain Indonesian contexts.

In audience studies, broadly speaking, there has been a shift of theoretical or methodological paradigm from a focus on the importance of media effects on individuals using a linear model, to a focus on the active audience using audience ethnography, drawn from the knowledge tradition of anthropology. Moreover, challenging the approach of social sciences research, particularly in communication and media/cultural studies, (discussed further in the following part of this chapter), this study extends the field of audience ethnography developed in a Western context, particularly studies on television viewing (e.g. Morley, 1980, 1986; Lull, 1986; Ang, 1989, 1991; Press, 1991) into an Indonesian sphere. In addition, with the influence of film studies scholars who use psychoanalytic perspectives to unpack the process of visual pleasure and self-identification of film spectators, developed in studies on female spectatorship and the body image/gaze (e.g. Kaplan, 1988; Byars, 1988), this thesis attempts to foreground and further develop an understanding of television audiences in the Indonesian contexts. The thesis continues to not only deconstruct the beliefs that television has a dangerous impact on the audience's mind, morals and behaviour, but also to deconstruct the academic and intellectual tradition in

communication science in Indonesia which fails to cross disciplines even within the social sciences.

Backdrops

For more than thirty years Indonesian television functioned primarily to reinforce the ideological constructions promoted by the New Order with a view to preserving national identity and unity. TVRI (Television of Republic Indonesia) in particular was utilised by the regime to promote those concepts and ideals necessary for national integrity and political stability. Kitley argues that television in Indonesia is best understood as part of the political "national culture project" (Kitley, 1998, p. 4). He also demonstrates how Indonesian television dramas, particularly, served as the medium to construct the idealised Indonesian subject and reinforce national identity and unity (Kitley, 1998 & 2002). Television programs, like other Indonesian cultural performing arts and media, were also used to promote the local and national processes of citizenship and identity formation (Creese, 2000).

While the level of government interference in the media has declined since the end of Soeharto's New Order era, the influence and power of the capital holders, the so-called media barons, is crucial in the Indonesian television industry. The economic motive is greatly emphasised in national programming policies and patterns. The higher the rating of a program, the more similar programs are produced and screened. National programs, thus, appear uniform and monocultured and thus unable to cater for class tastes and viewing choice.

The industry's socio-economic system and that of overriding profit motive appears to mechanize creativity, resulting in formulaic programs that restrict audience creativity for making their own meanings. This can be seen from the trends of the national-private television stations programming between 2000 and 2004 that are examined in *Chapter Two* of this thesis. The success of locally made television dramas (*sinetron*), celebrity gossip shows, the popularity of programs dealing with mysticism and magical practices and reality TV shows adapted from Western TV productions, all exemplify the "totalitarianism" (Powdermaker, 1950) within the television industry's social structure. As such, the industry's creation of audience appears to negate the

formation of off screen audiences that feature differences in media experiences as examined throughout the audiencehood chapters of this thesis.

Television Viewing and Class Cultures in Indonesia

Television in Indonesia has rapidly developed since the 1980s, both in number of television sets and in the consumption habits of Indonesians (Sen & Hill, 2000). Sen and Hill (2000, p. 114) cite data from BPS (Central Bureau of Statistics) that indicate that in the late 1980s more Indonesians watched television than read printed media and listened to the radio. A television set for many Indonesians is seemingly a mandatory purchase; even the poorest make efforts to afford one. Nilan (2000) observed that television is an important entertainment medium for the people both in urban and rural areas of Indonesia. According to a BPS survey in 2001, in a population of over three hundred million aged ten years and over, 87.97 percent of people watch television, while only 17.47percent read newspapers/magazines and about 43.72 percent listen to radio (BPS, 2002). Moreover, the 1995 data from BPS showed that more women watched television (52,7 percent) than read newspapers (15,7 percent), while about 48,4 percent of women listened to the radio (*Cakram*, April 1996 cited in Abar, 1998, p. 237).

Beyond such numerical concerns, television viewing is importantly a cultural practice. "How we watch television is therefore part of the cultural context in which programs, commercials and other televisual paraphernalia are placed" (Lewis, 1991, p. 49). As such we need to get beyond quantifying or counting the number of people watching the programs and/or surveying the effectiveness of the television contents on viewers and turn to ethnographic accounts of domestic and family contexts of television viewing or the communal use of television programs, particularly by specific groups (housewives, working class women, middle class professionals, and so forth).

Communal viewing in Indonesia is distinctly different from the everyday cultural practice of television consumption in the West. Communal television viewing occurs in a range of public spaces in Indonesia. People watch television in small food stalls or at small stalls selling cigarettes and sweets, and in other public places. In Surabaya, where I live, even in a doctor's surgery a television set is not only placed

in the waiting room for the patients, but another is also placed on the veranda for the patients' chauffeurs, the taxi drivers, *becak* (trishaw) drivers, and the food sellers outside. For instance, in the foyer of the Emergency Unit of the major public hospital, RS *Dr. Soetomo*, in the city, a large television screen is mounted on the wall to indulge not only the patients' families, but also the traders, taxi drivers, and the general public. Such communal media consumption is commonly seen in other major cities. The saying that "we live in a media-saturated world" is now a platitude in the millennium quotidian of Indonesia. Television screens adorn public places everywhere from private-exclusive rooms to the public-outdoors spaces.

Mark Hobart (1999) has acknowledged from his field trip in Bali between 1988 and 1989, when he found that people in Bali preferred to stay at home and watch television rather than visit for a chat as they had in the past (Hobart, 1999, p. 267). In a different place, however, the *kampung* people in Surabaya that I observed call in to neighbour's place for television watching *and* a chat.

Watching television programs together with non-family members is commonly practiced in urban *kampung* areas. It is common for the people to watch television and/or a VCD in their neighbour's home even though they have their own television set at home. *Budaya Nonggo*[3] (the habit of visiting neighbours) is part of daily social life and interaction among people, ranging from those of the dense *kampung* areas to urban communities. Chatting and gossiping are the most common habitual actions in this neighbourly interaction. While watching television programs together, people have conversations not only about what is going on in the television program that they are watching but also about their particular neighbours, friends, or anything else of interest.

In 1999, Pam Nilan, an anthropologist, explored the television viewing practices of Balinese women in her 'micro-practice' study of two Balinese women, the working mother and her maid. Nilan demonstrated how these female viewers, carrying their identities, dealt with the representations of gender shown in television dramas. Nilan (2001) concluded that both the representations of gender and the female viewers engagement with these 'textual representations' were influenced by class and

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[3] '*Nonggo*' (related to Indonesian word '*Tetangga*', neighbour) is a Javanese term meaning the habitual action of socialising, chatting and gossiping with neighbours.

"fractured by religious and political tension"(Nilan, p. 95). While this study is limited in size, it does provide valuable insights and a starting point for further studies along these lines. Nilan's study was carried out in a part of Indonesia where religious practices (Hindu Balinese) are part of the everyday life of the people. In this thesis, I explore how class-culture and religion/beliefs operate as one of the cultural determinants involved in the decoding process for the urban *kampung* female audience, specifically those who live in a particular setting of secular and 'modern' urban life in Surabaya, one of the most crowded Javanese cities.

Morley (1986) and Lull (1988 & 1990) applied an ethnographic method to investigate family television viewing pattern in Western and non-Western countries such as China and India. Both Morley and Lull show how television is used as a social resource for daily conversation among family members. Their studies reflect the way in which television use reproduces gendered relations of power in family life. In the Indonesian context, specifically in *kampung* areas, watching television is not merely the privilege of the family possessing television; instead, the privilege is shared with neighbours. From this point of view then, this thesis focuses on the cultural practice of communal viewing in such *kampung* class housing complex areas, which is uncommon in the Western "neighbourship" (Sullivan, 1994, p. 17) context. The present study is vastly different in scope from Nilan's study and extends the studies on television use and family viewing developed in the Western context by Morley and Lull into a more extended 'community' context.

The focal point of this thesis then is the relationship between the formations of the television industry, its productions, and its consumption of the urban middle to lower *kampung* community in an era of private television competition in Indonesia. It is concerned with the pursuit of ethnographic knowledge and the entanglements of people and the media technologies in the contemporary *kampung* space and place. The interrogation of the cultural scenes of television viewing and the VCD technology within family and communal neighbourhood life is brought about by participating in the everyday life of the *kampung* people. The urban *kampung* females' readings and constructions of meaning of the television texts, particularly the high rated of television drama '*sinetron*' examined throughout this thesis,

represent the flavour of socio-cultural significances upon the reception processes of the local.

Theoretical Underpinnings and Review of Literatures

Media as Cultural Experience

Media are viewed as a rich site for studying cultural circulation, representations, and practices that take multiple levels of identification from local/national to global/transnational. "Media are firmly anchored into the web of culture, although articulated by individuals in different ways" (Bird, 2003, p. 3). Media studies are concerned with viewing societies and cultures as subjects rather than as the victims of the media, as was the emphasis in media-effect theories. Drawing from quite different points of view between Benedict Anderson (1991) and Habermas (1989), Lughod, Ginsburg, and Larkin (2002, p. 5) recall that communication technologies have been central in mediating "the cultural effects of people flows, ideas, and objects" to conceive the formation of 'collectivities'—as "imagined community" and the idea of "the public sphere." As media cannot be separated from the social life, to study the interconnections between media practices and cultural frames of reference thus becomes challenging.

Media technologies (including television), like the highway and super mall, modify social change and individual transformation into what Raymond Williams (1975) called "mobile privatisation" in the phase of industrial capitalist society. Williams looks at how media technology such as television is used by people to support a variety of agendas. He summarises that the media technologies and their uses continue embedded in people's lives and in fact they are "a social complex of a new and central kind" (p. 31) in the industrial capitalist concerns.

The influential work of Raymond Williams suggests that although the omnipresence of media technologies confirms the conception of "media saturation," it also shows that the uses of media technologies and the experience with media are unpredictable and non-uniform for individuals. The use of media technologies, in fact, is a moment of not only personal, but also diverse cultural experience. Therefore, scholars from British cultural studies and media anthropology have focused their interest on the nature of cultural experience with the media.

British cultural studies scholars (e.g. Stuart Hall, David Morley, John Fiske, Ien Ang, Janice Radway, and others) question and problematise the notion of simple, one-way transmission of media message from producer to consumer. Although power is no longer perceived as monopolised completely and exclusively by media producers, cultural studies scholars' discussion of power remains central in analyses (Hall, 1980, p.118). They attribute power to the acts of viewing and listening, and in the process reconceptualise media audience as active subjects. Hall's remarkable work on 'encoding/decoding' shows multiple interpretations of media texts during the production and reception processes.

Indeed, media reality is a kind of cultural frame that involves audiences. As Hall (1972) theorises, audiences are the active producers of meaning rather than mere consumers (Hall et al., 1980). The audience will respond and behave in unpredictable ways in their particular identities and cultural backgrounds. "The conditions and boundaries of audiencehood are inherently unstable" (Moores, 1993, p. 2). Thus, media consumption and reception provide a media cultural form, which accounts for the potential of everyday cultural practices and the particular kinds of subjects and collectivities.

The discussion of culture and its representation in the media has also been of central interest to anthropologists, who in recent years have turned to media as a way of understanding processes of social transformation and cultural representation as already carried out by the cultural studies scholars. The reason for anthropology to utilise media as the medium to unpack the cultural representation and reception is explained by Ginsburg: "we live in a world in which, increasingly, people learn of their own and other cultures and histories through a range of visual media – film, television, and video – that have emerged as powerful cultural forces in the late twentieth century" (Ginsburg, 1994, p. 5).

The transformational and intercultural spread of the new communication forms has challenged the intellectuals of the field to consider the impacts of the spread on social life. Media are "appropriate objects of ethnographic enquiry and social and cultural analyses" (Ginsburg, 1994, p. 6). Ginsburg also argues that the ethnographic media makes possibility of "more able to 'see' the different ways cultural realities are understood and experienced, producing a salutary (if slightly disorienting)

parallax effect" (p.14). In sum, Ginsburg notes, "[t]he way we look at media to include its relation to other cultural forms, as well as its circulation via production, distribution, and reception both locally and across social boundaries" (1994, p. 6).

The distinction between the anthropological approach and those of cultural studies is explained by Askew (2002). The cultural studies theorists (Hall and his colleagues) restated that the media producers manipulate strategies that incline and lead audiences towards readings favouring power structures. On the other hand, the anthropological approach offers many unexpected readings of media products and shows "how intended meaning often fell to the wayside during the process of reception" (Askew, 2002, p. 5). Thus, the work of ethnography is worth applying in the study of media reception.

Studying Audience and the Encoding/Decoding Process

Television reception is a complex process, one that cannot be simply summarized either by the term 'resistance' or by the terms 'passivity' and 'accommodation' (Press, 1991, p.174). In their classic work on *Dallas*, Liebes and Katz (1990) assert that content analysis, however sophisticated, cannot explain how messages are viewed, interpreted, and discussed by the viewers. Study and analysis of the relationships between the texts and the viewers is vital. They contend that viewing television is not merely a matter of passive activity in which the audience is simply influenced by the effect of television; rather it is the process of an active and involving experience, which varies with the cultural backgrounds that individuals carry to the viewing. In this sense, ideology is not created simply as a process of stimulus-responses; rather it is formed through the process of negotiation between the producers and the viewers. Such study of television viewing is complicated by the fact that the decoding process and consequently effects of television messages will vary within any society which consists of different ethnic and cultural communities (Liebes and Katz, 1990).

As such, the concepts of representation and identity have been developed as a central focus in television studies. Television content is commonly believed to present 'fact' that represents some features of 'reality' through narratives and images. As Pam Nilan puts it: "[w]hile viewing these representations, audiences, at both the collective

and individual levels respond affectively according to their identity, who they take themselves to be. In this way media texts are claimed to either affirm or challenge the identity of viewers" (2000, p. 130).

Hall's theory of encoding/decoding encourages multiple interpretations of media texts during both the process of production and reception. "Meaning can never be finally fixed. If meaning could be fixed by representation, then there would be no change – and so no counter-strategies or interpretations…" (Hall, 1997, p. 270). Three different interpretations are introduced by Hall. First, the 'dominant-hegemonic position' is performed by the viewer who accepts the program completely, taking for granted the dominant ideology of the program without any objections. They also explain their own life, behaviour, and social experiences in terms of this ideology. This viewer is categorised as "operating inside the dominant code" (Hall, 1980, p.136). Second, the 'negotiated code' suggests a viewer who blends his/her interpretations with his/her own particular social experience. The negotiating viewer acts between 'adaptive and oppositional' interpretations of the messages. Third, the 'oppositional code' is when the viewer goes against the preferred reading and decodes the program in a contrary, different way (Hall, p.138). This type is characterised by frustration rather than pleasure. Hall and other scholars from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies set the agenda for an actual and empirical research of media audience which focused on the different social and discursive positioning of various audiences as interpretive community (Tulloch, 2000).

Stuart Hall's model of encoding/decoding has become a framework for empirical studies about the reception of television programs by different audiences (Alasuutari, 1999). Morley's 1980 study of *The Nationwide* audience is one empirical study that tests the application of the three codes developed by Hall. Morley (1980) also criticised the model of audience studies that emphasised the audience as 'an atomised mass of individuals' (p.15). "Of course, there will always be individual, private readings, but we need to investigate the extent to which these individual readings are patterned into cultural differential interpretations…, showing how members of different groups and classes, share different 'cultural codes,'…" (Morley, 1980, p. 14-5).

The contribution of anthropology, with its ethnographic method for studying audience, has enriched the research models for exploring the culture of media use in everyday practices of audience. As stated earlier, Morley (1986) and Lull (1990) used the ethnographic method to investigate family television viewing patterns. Fiske (1987) pointed out that the application of ethnography in studying audiences had shifted the attention from mainly the textual and ideological construction of the subject to 'socially and historically' positioned people. Fiske argues, "The ethnographic method is able to discover the actual people in an actual social life of watching and enjoying the actual television texts" (Fiske, 1987, p. 63).

> To be popular, the television text has to be read and enjoyed by a diversity of social groups, so its meanings must be capable of being inflected in a number of different ways. The television text is therefore more polysemic and more open than earlier theorists allowed for (Fiske, 1987, p. 66).

Some feminist scholars have also used the ethnographic model to analyse the relationships between gender and media consumption. Radway (1984), Ang (1985), Hermes (1995) and Press (1990) are amongst those who explore whether and how gender disrupts the ways women consume media in their everyday life. Ang and Hermes (1996) found that in the study of media audience, ethnography, which gained its "radical contextualism and methodological situationalism" (Ang & Hermes, p. 339), has become particularly significant in analysing and understanding the issue of gender identity and media consumption in actual situations like "which gender positions are taken up by which men and women, with what identificatory investment, and as a result of which specific articulation" (Ang & Hermes, p. 339).

However, Radway (in her later work 1988) and Nightingale (1989) criticised the ethnographic approach, specifically those studies done during the 1980s, as "superficial and limited as ethnography" (Tulloch, 2000, p.7).

> In anthropology, of course, an ethnography is a written account of a lengthy social interaction between a scholar and a distant culture. Although its focus is often narrowed in the process of writing so as to highlight kinship practices, social institutions or cultural rituals, that written account is rooted in an effort to observe and to comprehend the entire tapestry of social life (Radway, 1988, p. 367).

Tulloch (2000) emphasises Radway's point that the effort to engage as a researcher in another culture in order 'to comprehend the entire tapestry of social life' is a regressive task as "we disclose more and more subcultures, each with their own 'determined' validity as accounts of what they see, and each also 'determined' by their interaction with the analyst's own language" (Tulloch, p.9). Ethnography, as Tulloch asserts, "…is not necessarily privileging one account as more "real" than another, rather it is trying to find the "now here"- the local, partial, and fragmentary micro-narrative- and yet to contextualise it also, to interconnect it, to globalise it…" (Tulloch, p. 9).

Ang's later work (1996) has criticised the application of ethnographic methodology in studying audience. In her book *Living Room Wars* (1996), Ang problematises the ethnographer as a storyteller and academic theorist. She is concerned with the validity in ethnography, not with ethnography as a tool to give the 'true description' about everyday realities. Ang (1996) argues that as academics and students, we are part of the universe of power relations. That is why Ang reminds us, as researchers, to be reflexive and aware of the relations of power and position when doing ethnography on other people's cultural practices. She maintains that we should rethink "the significance of ethnography, away from its status as realist knowledge in the direction of its quality as a form of storytelling, as narrative…" (Ang, p. 75). She points out that "… as an inevitable state of affairs which circumscribes the… responsibility of the researcher/writer as producers of descriptions which, as soon as they enter the uneven, power-laden field of social discourse, play their political roles as particular ways of seeing and organising an ever-elusive reality" (Ang, 1996, p. 75-76). For Ang, the 'more or less true' descriptions, 'accurate data gathering' and 'careful inference making' are important in ethnography.

> Once again, this does not mean that people's involvements with media as audience members in everyday situations are not real or non-existent; it only means that our representations of those involvements and their inter-relationships in terms of 'uses', 'gratification', 'decoding', 'readings', 'effects', 'negotiations', 'interpretive communities' or 'symbolic resistance' (to name but some of the most current concepts that have guided audience research) should be seen as ever so many discursive devices to confer a kind of order and coherence onto an otherwise chaotic outlook of the empirical landscape of dispersed and heterogenous audience practices and experiences. The question, then, is what kind of representational order we should establish in our stories about media consumption (Ang, 1996, p. 77).

Ang also rejects the position of researcher as fan; rather she insists that as an audience theorist, "I must know on whose behalf and to what end I write…That is, our stories cannot just tell 'partial truths', they are also, consciously or not, 'positioned truths'" (Ang, p. 78).

Audience Ethnography in Communication and Media Studies

The tradition of audience research had long been primarily one of empirical quantitative survey within communication science. "Communication research is quantitative, rather than speculative," stated Wilbur Schramm (1963, p. 5). The positivist approach tended to treat media audiences as atomised individuals and only look at particular aspects of actions, whilst disregarding significance of the "natural setting context" (Morley, 1992, p. 173) and simultaneous activities while consuming the media. Audience studies within the discipline of American 'Communication Science' (e.g. Berlo, 1960; Schramm, 1963) has long considered the nature of the communication process as "a process in which sources encode messages and then send them through channels to be decoded and acted upon by receivers" (Berger & Chaffee, 1987, p. 15).

This linear conceptualisation of communication failed to recognise that people are considerably more heterogenous and have diverse attitudes. The limitations of that linear theory of communication was then recognised by communication scholars to look at the ways people use the media and how they develop "mutual definitions" of their relationship with others. "Communication is no longer viewed as simply a way to change other's attitudes and actions" (Berger & Chaffee, p. 15).

Since communication science was associated with the use of the statistical quantitative method of the social sciences, the tradition of persuasion effect of interpersonal communication and media information flourished. Berger & Chaffee (1987) asserted that many quantitative researches done in early development of communication science tended to the applied and atheoretical: "not scientific in the sense of testing a theory or building a body of knowledge" (p. 16). Delia (1987) reported that since the media emerged as a commercial enterprise and gained enormous popularity, the growth of media (industry) and the audience have become

considerable research objects, much of which has reflected commercial or regulatory interests. As such, the statistically-based quantitative audience research has been perceived as an instant tool for accounting for and measuring the media consumers. Indeed, statistically based quantitative survey methods using people meters and rating techniques only provide peripheral and very basic descriptive data about the position of audiences and their viewing behaviour, ignoring the complexity of identities and differences in the occurrences of television viewing practice (Ang, 1991; Morley, 1992).

The challenge of the British cultural studies theorists toward the positivist orientation to study audiences has expanded the space for the studies of media. The use of ethnography by those cultural studies scholars claimed it as the overwhelming method "not just as a research method, but as – within the academic field – a discursive practice *par excellence* that foregrounds the diverse, the particular and the unpredictable in everyday life," (Ang, 1991, p. x). Such qualitative methodology offers a wide-ranging analysis to examine the dynamics of actions and socio-cultural practices of individuals and groups of people "who are engaged in the socially situated production and consumption of meaning" (Morley, 1992, p. 183).

The turn toward reception studies has proved "a welcoming re-entry point for anthropological approaches" (Askew, 2002, p. 5). According to Askew, the swing of reception studies from the "hypodermic needle" models of text transmission to the production of meaning has challenged anthropologists to interrogate the audiences "scattered about the globe in wide-ranging locales" (p. 5). This anthropologist acknowledges that 'media anthropology' as "a legitimate subfield within anthropology" has captured the attention of anthropology scholars to deal with "the entanglement of people and media technologies" (Askew, p.1). Hortense Powdermakers's study (1950) *Hollywood The Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers* provides evidence of the early involvement of anthropology in studies of the media industry and its productions (Askew, 2002). In her book, Powdermaker (1950, p. 1) raised the hypothesis that the social system significantly influenced the content and meaning of Hollywood movies. Since then, the emerging field of media anthropology has been examined and mapped both in Western and non-Western contexts, particularly in many works published between

the 1990s and early 2000s (e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1995, 2002; Ginsburg, 1994, 2002; Mankekar, 1999; Askew & Wilk, 2002).

Askew argues that media anthropologists have presented anthropological critiques upon the way media are used to construct and represent cultures both in Western and non-Western contexts. Media ethnographies (e.g. Powdermaker, 1950; Kottak, 1990; Naficy, 1993; Abu-Lughod, 1995; Mankekar, 1999, and more) have explored the occurrences and diversity of media experiences and the interpretation of media experience across geographic region, technological format, and theoretical orientation. "Media anthropology thus comprises ethnographically informed, historically grounded, and context-sensitive analyses of the ways in which people use and make sense of media technologies" (Askew, p. 3).

In sum, the interdisciplinary approach and perspectives to deconstruct text and audience separation have arrived, making possible new modes of investigation of media cultures and the embeddedness of culture in media experience. This interdisciplinary approach, which Alasuutari (1999) calls a "third generation" of reception studies, has extended and established a blended model from one initially grounded by Hall's "encoding/decoding" and other classic qualitative approaches (e.g. Ang, 1985; Morley, 1980, 1986; Radway, 1984; Lull, 1988, 1990 and others), moving in a broader direction of anthropologically-inspired models to an approach that takes account of the significance of ethnicity, race, religion, and class in the reception processes. It has enriched audience studies drawing both from British 'Cultural Studies' and American 'Communication Science'.

Media/Cultural Studies and Ethnography Tradition in the Contemporary Indonesian Context

Media and cultural studies are relatively new in Indonesia, in the sense that there are few studies which address the socio-cultural significance of television, film, radio, and the internet as part of everyday life. The term 'media studies' has not been so popular compared to the term 'mass communication' or 'communication science' both for scholars in the field and others, especially before the mid 1990s. The influence of the positivist (American) approach to the study of media is significant in Indonesia. Studies of 'the powerful effect' of the media are still the concern and interest of many 'communications' scholars and students in the country.

Theorizing media in Indonesia appears to revolve around the figures of culture and the nation. The national media and communication policies continue advancing the cause of "national development," and at the same time, (national) media proposes the promise of preserving national identity and tradition, and serves as a line of resistance against foreign cultures. The culture of media, thus, becomes a key site for discerning signs of the national character. This political/power cooptation upon media and culture in Indonesia triggers scholars and students of 'Communication Science' and 'Literature' (*sastra*) to deconstruct the media/cultural texts as forms of construction of particular political/power interests.

Challenged by this situation and to contribute to the 'newly' emerging textual (semiotics and discourse) and media studies in Indonesia, I try to ground the local practices in the recognition of the media (television) industrial development and the socio-political changes in the post-authoritarian era of Indonesia. The need to theorize media reception becomes significant in advancing questions of whether the construction of media theory in the West has established a cultural grid for media theory which in applicable in the Indonesian context. Thus, in this thesis, I attempt to move forward 'Media-Cultural studies'—as a 'new' terrain in Indonesia—into the environment of 'Communication Science' in Indonesia by foregrounding the work of media ethnography, which is sourced from the tradition in anthropology, to examine the diverse media practices of the local community.

Therefore, it becomes significant here to examine the history of the studies of communication and mass media in Indonesia in order to bring about and to encourage further development of the blend between media/cultural studies and media anthropology tradition coming to the fore in contemporary social sciences. The persistence of the Western tradition in this field, and in particular American positivism and 'European' cultural interpretation have never been contested and challenged by communication scholars in Indonesia. The focus of this part is, thus, more on the academic discourses in the studies of mass media and communication – as part of social sciences – in the Indonesian contexts and on the topic of the ethnography of media reception.

Social Sciences and Communications Science as Indonesian Practices

Social sciences in Indonesia have been crucial as a site of knowledge and intellectual discipline throughout the development of the nation. According to Hadiz and Dhakidae (2005), social sciences in Indonesia have long been a site of power. Social science disciplines have been linked to developmental reference issues, which predominantly emphasised "growth, stability, and the non-disruption of social order" (Hadiz & Dhakidae, p. 2). They show how the Indonesian social scientists, particularly the Indonesian Association of Economists (ISEI), have had links to political power during the New Order government as "the provider of all the major reference points or signs of 'development'." Hadiz and Dhakidae argue that for better or worse the embedding of social scientists in bureaucracy certainly caused "bureaucratisation of social science practices and orientations" in Indonesia (p.7). These two prominent Indonesian scholars, thus, maintain:

> Indonesian social science issues – what is researched and what is not; which frameworks achieve paradigmatic status within particular disciplines and which are consigned to obscurity or marginalized; which disciplines achieve dominance and which ones wither away; and what type of social scientist becomes either "influential" or "ignored" – are all basically a matter of power (Hadiz & Dhakidae, 2005, p. 2).

A similar view on this issue is held by Ariel Heryanto (2005) who argues that social sciences in Indonesia have long been utilised to serve "whatever government was in power" (p. 58). Heryanto views that the change in political regimes has never brought a radical change either in character or orientation of the government's interests, nor in the policies stated to endorse the development of social sciences in the country (2005, p. 58). Indeed, for him, the bias of New Order developmentalism, which he describes as "technocratism with a Javanese militaristic accent," has strongly influenced the orientations and approaches of the social sciences in Indonesia. Heryanto continues:

> Developmentalism, as a version of technocratism, states that nature is provided as a blessing for humankind; there it exists for humankind to exploit and use for its benefit. The highest form of this exploitation requires the services of experts, science and technology, all working in a secular way, based on universal laws and principles, and neutral in and of themselves (Heryanto, 2005, p. 66).

Heryanto also maintains that during its application in the New Order period, developmentalism (technocratism) has been implemented selectively and contradictorily to the state's other ideology orientations.

The strong link of social sciences to political power, together with the flourish of "developmentalism/technocratism" applications of the social sciences, in particular during Soeharto's New Order Indonesia, the character and orientation of "sub-science" under the banner of social sciences such as communications science or mass communication, have also been directed largely to the issue of development (i.e. developmental communication). Throughout the development of the study of communications in Indonesia, Developmental Communication (*Komunikasi Pembangunan*) was explicated into Informational Communication (*Komunikasi Penerangan/Penyuluhan*) – mainly expounding the techniques for agricultural extension and government programs (e.g. family planning and developmental journalism) (see Susanto, 1986 and Effendy, 1986). Communication and developmentalism theories (e.g. Everett M. Rogers of "diffusion innovation", Walt Whitman Rostow of "stages of growth," and Paul Lazarsfeld "two step flow") have deeply influenced Indonesian communication students, researchers, and intellectuals, even the discourse of the New Order's Department of Information, to test and adopt the linear model of communications from the 1970s to the 1990s. National seminars and conferences conducted by the Indonesian Communications Scholars Association (*Ikatan Sarjana Komunikasi Indonesia*, ISKI) and journal articles written in *Jurnal Komunikasi ISKI* mainly discussed topics on developmentalism and top-down political communications.

Later, in the early 1990s, some student activists of communications study started to incorporate Marxist notions of class and Althusser's hegemony theory to challenge the New Order's model of development of top-down diffusion to bottom-up orientation. I was involved in the first national meeting of Indonesian communications students in the Savoy Homann Hotel of Bandung in 1990. Students from universities throughout Indonesia were invited to attend the meeting to listen to prominent Indonesian communication science scholars such as Alwi Dahlan, Astrid Susanto, Sasa Djuarsa, Marwah Daud Ibrahim, many of whom were close to or

involved with the New Order's bureaucracy and its political party 'Golkar', talk about their insights on the development of communication studies in the 1990s in Indonesia. Students then discussed several themes, which mainly corresponded to developmental communication and political communication in Indonesia. On the last day of the meeting, the New Order's Minister of Information, Harmoko, addressed the meeting on the topic of developmental communication. Students then took the initiative to make statement to encourage the government to change its political communication policies from a top-down model to a bottom-up model. The statement was delivered directly on the stage after the Minister's speech, but the Minister's expression was sour. The subsequent press discourses suggested that the Indonesian students had been influenced by the idea of Marxist communism.

Haryanto (2001) mentioned that historically in Indonesia, Communications Science (*Ilmu Komunikasi*) was called *Publisistik* (public communications). Several state universities such as University of Indonesia (UI-Jakarta), Padjajaran University (UNPAD-Bandung), and Gadjah Mada University (UGM-Yogyakarta) then followed with department of Journalism and Public Communication (known as *jurusan Jurnalistik dan Publisistik* in the 1960s to late 1970s), which later became departments of Communications Science [4] (*jurusan Ilmu Komunikasi*) since the 1980s[5].

With her background as a German graduate and strongly German (not Frankfurt school) influenced, Astrid Susanto (1986) defines communications science or journalism in regard to its function to inform (*penerangan*) society.

> *Sebagai suatu ilmu sosial Ilmu Komunikasi/Publisitik mencoba untuk mengerti seluk beluk persoalan masyarakat. Di samping memberi penilaian, maka permulaan system kerjanya adalah mengerti sangkut-paut masyarakat dan pendapat serta persoalannya. Ilmu Komunikasi/Publisistik mencari Sinneszusammenghang atau kesatuan hubungan makna untuk berdasarkan*

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[4] Since the mid 1970s, and because of the development of communications theories and models from prominently Wilbur Schramm, Harold Lasswell, and Raymond Bauer which were introduced in early 1970s, the school of Mass Communication (*Publisistik*) was changed to the school of Communication Science (*Ilmu Komunikasi*) as a "scientific consequence" of itself and the demand of society toward this "new" science. (Susanto, 1986, p. 111)

[5] Under the presidential decree (*Keputusan Presiden* or *Keppres*) number 107/1982, all schools of Journalism and Public Communications (*jurusan Jurnalistik & Publisistik*) were changed into schools of Communications, and consequently, this decree has become the uniformisation of schools of Communications in Indonesia (Mariani, 1990).

hasil penyelidikannya memberi penerangan sebaik-baiknya kepada media massa dan masyarakat luas.

As a social science, communications science/mass communication tries to understand details of problems of the society. Instead of giving a judgement, therefore, the beginning of its working system understands the relation between society and the people's opinion and their problems. Communications science/mass communication search for *Sinneszusammenghang* or the unity of meaning-relation, for its research gives the best information to the mass media and society at large.

Sebagai ilmu pengetahuan Ilmu Komunikasi/Publisistik bertujuan bahwa hasil penyelidikannya akan dipergunakan dan dapat merupakan suatu bantuan untuk praktek juga dalam media massa. Bantuan ini tidak bertujuan mengkritik saja tetapi mengajukan pendapat untuk menolong masyarakat mencari jalan keluar dari persoalan serta memberi jawaban terhadapnya

As a science, communications science/mass communication aims to provide useful research results and also be of assistance for practice in mass media. This assistance not only aims to criticise, but also to raise opinion to assist society to find ways out from difficulties and to provide answers (Susanto, 1986, p. 46).

Susanto states that the first objective of communications science/mass communication professionals is to guard and hold the quality of the profession by being scientifically objective and holding to *Pancasila* (state ideology), free from private or group interests, and to serve society based on their own specialisation (1986, p. 46). Moreover, she sees the role of communications science/mass communication study as making people aware of the effects of mental changes that can disrupt the development and social order of society, and also disturb the harmony of life (Susanto, 1986, p. 63). The character and orientation of communications science/mass communication study in Indonesia is, thus, mainly designed to support the ideology of the state and its policies of political stabilisation and serve the propaganda of social harmony of its people or, as stated by Hadiz and Dhakidae, the social science disciplines in Indonesia "were pressed to adhere to the developmental reference points provided, which mainly stressed growth, stability and the non-disruption of the social order"(Hadiz & Dhakidae, 2005, p. 2).

The first national seminar to discuss the objectives of communications study, which was held at TUGU-Jakarta in 1971, concluded that the curriculum should be designed and specialised according to the capability and condition of the university

framework and circumstances in each region (Susanto, 1986). For instance, specialisation in Public Affairs Communication (K*omunikasi Masalah Negara*) was suggested better to be conducted in Jakarta's universities. While Intercultural Communication and Development Support Communication were advised for Yogyakarta's (Central Java), Bandung's (West Java), and Makassar's (South Sulawesi) universities; Agrarian Communication was considered best taught in Bogor as the centre of agrarian development in West Java; last, Industrial Communication was recommended for universities situated in the developing industrial regions such as Surabaya (East Java) (Susanto, 1986, p. 55). In fact, none of the universities that teach communications science have taken those "specialisations" as the compulsory curriculum; instead, the universities use the so-called 'national curriculum' designed and enforced by the Directorate of Higher Education (DIKTI) of the department of national education for schools or departments of Communications Science.

As mentioned above, for many years communications study/mass communication in Indonesia served national development and information dissemination and adhered to government policies. As part of social science disciplines, communication science is attached to the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) in almost all state and private universities in Indonesia, except in Padjajaran University of Bandung which is the only (state) university that has established the Faculty of Communications Science (FIKOM). As elsewhere in Indonesian educational institutions, the (national) curriculum[6] of schools or departments of Communications Science is designed or created by the national consortium of curriculum of the department of national education. As an ex-student of Communication Science of Airlangga University and teaching in this institution since 1993, I had experienced and realised that for this discipline, the curriculum tends to be oriented to the format of communications/mass

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[6] During the New Order era, all the curricula of higher education (university) in Indonesia were designed by the national education consortium under the control of Directorate of Higher Education of the Ministry of National Education. The new regulation of national education system namely *UU Sisdiknas No. 20/2003* still assigns national subjects (as stated in chapter 37:2) such as national language, religion, civics (*pendidikan kewarganegaraan*) to soften the subject of national ideology (*pendidikan Pancasila*), as compulsory subjects in any higher education curriculum. However, according to their own websites, several universities still maintain the national curriculum as compulsory for students studying Communications Science both in state and private universities.

communication studies in America[7]. This is logical as those so-called "founding fathers" of communication science in Indonesia (e.g. Alwi Dahlan, Onong Uchjana Effendi, Amri Jahi, and Sasa Djuarsa Sendjaja) all graduated from American institutions. As a matter of this fact, Haryanto (2001) argues that the development of communications science in Indonesia, predominantly in major universities, tends to be directed to the so-called 'single paradigm' (Haryanto called it '*paradigma tunggal*'), which tends to be pragmatic, positivistic, indifferent to the contexts where the knowledge developed, and less critical (Haryanto, 2001, p. 2).

In addition to that, when I was an undergraduate student of Communication Science at Airlangga University in Surabaya (1988-1992), subjects on journalism, human communications, information (*penerangan)* and communications to support development had become dominant in the school curriculum. These subjects were apparently designed to fit into the socio-political orientation of the New Order regime, which focused much on (agrarian) development.

In contrast, when I graduated in 1992 and, since 1993, I have become a lecturer at the department, the curriculum of communications science have been changed much to accommodate the so-called "market/industrial orientation." In my department, for instance, many unrelated subjects on traditional communication (and art), information communication (*komunikasi penyuluhan*), and communication system to support development were wiped out and have been replaced with "industrial/business" subjects such as Business Communications, Applied Public Relations, Broadcasting Creative Productions, Advertising Management, and Media Planning. As a result, the study orientations – and the graduates – have also had to become focused more on the applied methods, skills, and practices to meet the demand of the so-called market (of the communications industry). Research on media and cultural issues tends to be designed to meet the business enterprises' interests and market orientation surveys.

The national standard of curriculum assigned to any level of education in Indonesia is to fulfil the "ten commandments" of the national education system. As stated in chapter 36 point 3 of the National Education System Act 2003, any level of

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[7] Similarly, Ignatius Haryanto (2001) has written an unpublished paper on the history of Communication Science in Indonesia and I found that many of his arguments are similar to my own knowledge and experience since I have been involved in this discipline for more than 15 years.

educational institutions in the Indonesian nation should pay attention to: (1) raising faith and piety; (2) raising good morals; (3) raising potency, intellectuality, and interest of students; (4) diversity of local potency and environment; (5) the demands of regional and national development; (6) the demands of the occupational world; (7) the development of science, technology, and arts; (8) religion; (9) the dynamic of global development; and (10) national unity and nationalist values. As a consequence, in any disciplines of study in Indonesian universities, including communications study the curriculum should fulfil those requirements. Compulsory subject matters such as religion, *Pancasila* (state ideology), and Indonesian language still exist.

Even for graduate studies level, the strong influence of developmentalism theories are still maintained in the curriculum. For instance, in Master and Doctoral programs offered in University of Indonesia (UI-Jakarta), postgraduate students have compulsory course work for one and a half years, before proceeding to Master or Doctoral thesis writing. Those compulsory subjects studied are classic social theories, communications theories, social statistics, social change and development, interpersonal communication theories, organizational communication, methods of social research, mass communication theories, and reading courses (sourced from Graduate Studies Program of Communications Science University of Indonesia, http://www.pps.ui.ac.id/ps23.htm).

The term 'media studies', therefore, has received little attention from scholars and academicians in Indonesia. As can be seen from the illustration above, there has been no single school or department or faculty established under the name of Media Studies department. Many departments (known as *Jurusan*) and schools (known as *Program Studi*) in the state and private universities have preferred to use Communications Science (*Ilmu Komunikasi*) instead of Media Studies. The belief still circulates among the communication scholars that the term 'communications' includes media/cultural studies. In fact, the proportion of media subjects is less than the proportion of the human communication subjects such as Interpersonal Communications, Organizational Communications, Communication Support Development, and a growing number of Marketing Communication, Public Relations and Advertisings subjects.

Media/Cultural Studies and Media Anthropology: New Terrain in Indonesian Context

Cultural studies (known as *Kajian Budaya*) in Indonesia were initiated in several Indonesian universities in the late 1990s. In 1998, for instance, the Faculty of English Literature (*Sastra Inggris*) of University of Indonesia in Jakarta created the subject of '*Kajian Budaya Inggris*' (it refers to British Cultural Studies) ("Kajian Budaya," 2002). In fact, previous public debates and discussion both in the newspapers and journal articles have questioned and problematised culture as socially and politically constructed. For instance, the debates around contextual literatures in the mid 1980s which started to see the connection between literature 'taste' and class can also account for the initiative of the emergence of "local" cultural studies in Indonesia ("Kajian Budaya," 2002). A public speech by poet and essayist Nirwan Dewanto in 1991 at the National Cultural Congress (*Kongres Kebudayaan Nasional*), which talked about cultural pluralism; and the speech of DR. Melani Budianta in 1995, which introduced cultural studies, are also recognised as the signs of the emergence of cultural studies interest in the country.

In addition, the emergence of *Kalam* (1994), a journal of cultural studies, showed the new spirit for the encouragement to study culture in a different way. "*Kalam* indicates that culture can be studied with different methods from those of *Prisma*[8] – the journal of social, economic, and political sciences that greatly influenced Indonesian intellectuals between the 1970s and 1980s" (Juliastuti & Antariksa, 2002, p. 2). Culture was seen by the journal *Kalam* as a social phenomenon that could be defined and measured precisely using quantitative methods.

In fact, according to Juliastuti and Antariksa (2002), criticisms on the conceptions of cultures in Indonesia had long been expressed in the early development of the New Order period. They found that *Horison* (1966) magazine was the main journal that discussed and published analysis and criticism on culture, its artefacts, and local performances, and was marked as the medium for scholars concerned with studies of local culture. Although *Horison* could be seen as part of the New Order's apparatus

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[8] Journal *Prisma* was published by the Institute for Social and Economic Research, Education and Information (*Lembaga Penelitian Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial*, LP3ES) which was sponsored by the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (FNS) of Germany in 1971. This prestigious social scientific journal has not been published since 1999.

(see David Hill, 1993), this now-defunct journal published essays and articles on culture and art practices during that authoritarian period.

Nuraini Juliatuti and Antariksa, two young scholars in Yogyakarta, then helped to establish the cultural studies centre, KUNCI. Other young Indonesian scholars (e.g. young academicians of Institute of Art Jakarta (IKJ), philosophy scholars such as Ahmad Sahal, Agus Dermawan, an art critics and prominent curator, Jim Supangkat, and others), who mostly graduated from local/Indonesian universities and have close relations with some Australian scholars and scholars from Holland, have introduced and started to focus more on post-modern media studies and cultural studies. The Birmingham school of thought, Glasgow school of thought, Frankfurt school of thought, and postmodernist and feminist theories, have come to the fore, so that 'deconstruction' has become the "new" tool of analysis both in the national dailies and academic journals and books. It becomes common to find articles published in newspapers attempting to deconstruct the productions of popular cultures, media texts and technologies, which have been culturally, economically, and ideologically manipulated. Studies on representations, meaning and language (semiotics), feminist media studies, and media discourse analysis have become prominent. As a result, local academic journals and other research publications (e.g. *Jurnal Perempuan*, *Majalah Kerja Budaya*, the now defunct *Jurnal Pantau of ISAI*, *Jurnal Seni Pertunjukan* and many more) have given more space to issues of media and cultural studies. The works of Stuart Hall, Gadamer, and other British cultural studies scholars appear to have attracted students' and intellectuals' interests, and qualitative (interpretive) methodology has also become highly studied. Even the major national newspaper, *Kompas*, has provided particular spaces, called *Bentara* (Herald) and *Jendela* (Window), for articles written by scholars and critics about culture and arts using post-modern perspectives, cultural studies approaches, post-colonial ideas, and other philosophical arguments.

Nevertheless, the arrival of cultural studies within the Indonesian academic and scientific sphere is seen by Sahal (2000) in his article titled "*'Cultural Studies' dan Tersingkirnya Estetika*" ('Cultural Studies' and the Marginalisation of Aesthetics), as only an ephemeral aspect of social sciences, humanities, and art and literary studies

in Indonesia. This transience, however, might diminish the aesthetic-idealism in analyses of cultural artefacts, creative arts and its performances (Sahal, 2000).

Yet, studies on media/culture consumption using an ethnographic approach still receive little interest[9]. Media Anthropology, which "comprises ethnographically informed, historically grounded, and context-sensitive analyses of the ways in which people use and make sense of media technologies" (Askew, 2002, p. 3), is still little studied and reviewed in most academic journals in Indonesia. Although in a recent edition of *Jurnal Anthropology Indonesia* (issue no. 73/2004) issues related to Internet ethnography (*cyberethnography*) were explored, there has been little consideration of ethnography of media reception.

Indonesian anthropologists themselves have criticised the superficial approach taken to the ethnographic method in Indonesia. In the discussion forum on the development of Indonesian anthropology in University of Indonesia, Jakarta, the major issue raised was that Indonesian anthropologists have not taken the opportunity to popularise anthropology as a field of research in the *reformasi* era ("Karya etnografi", 2000, p. 9). According to one of the discussants, Dr. Bambang Setiawan, there has been lack of strength among the Indonesian anthropologists to write about ethnography from their own heart and soul. He mentioned that many ethnographic works have been written to order (*pesanan*) with a set research framework, so the anthropologists involved are only the collectors of data, not writers of ethnography. Dr. Setiawan says, "An anthropologist will be honoured from [his/her] ethnographic piece of work. Unfortunately, there are still few ethnographic works about Indonesia done by Indonesian anthropologists. When a social problem emerges, they then just

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[9] Dedy Nur Hidayat (1999), a senior lecturer of the Communications Department of University of Indonesia, suggests that in the 1990s the research paradigms in Indonesian universities, including his institution, were dominated by the classic/positivism paradigm. The pattern still remains in the present times (Hidayat, 1999, p. 37). Hidayat maintains that the content of Research Method subject taught in the university is mainly focused on one paradigm and less introduced to other research paradigms. This condition has been worsened by the lack of knowledge of the university lecturers, particularly the thesis supervisors and the examiners, on other research paradigms than the classical one. Although there have been breakthroughs from the Undergraduates' and Postgraduates' thesis (known as '*skripsi*') both in the research topics and methods to use more on critical and cultural studies paradigm, still the numbers are few. Hidayat continues that researchers and scholars of Communications in Indonesia also tend to view that the classic/positivism paradigm, which relies much on statistical objectivity and validity, as the most sell-well ('*laku di pasar*') in the industries of communications, media and information (see more details Hidayat's article on '*Paradigma Perkembangan Penelitian Komunikasi*' published in *Jurnal Komunikasi* (April 1999) with other articles on the shifting of research paradigm in communications science in Indonesia).

realise the importance of ethnography" (cited in *Karya Etnografi*, 2000, p. 9). In addition, Parsudi Suparlan, a prominent Indonesian anthropologists suggests that "traditional" Indonesian ethnographic research, which is characterised as *"butterfly collecting"* [sic] (Suparlan, 2002, p. 4) is dominantly applied by students and teachers of anthropology, should be rethought and modified into the characteristic which allows the researcher to analyse the transformations in contemporary multicultural society. Suparlan also suggests that ethnographic research styled like journalism should also be kept away from the anthropological tradition. As well, studies that use questionnaires to gain responses from the respondents should be minimised for analyses of the multicultural society in Indonesia (Suparlan, p. 4).

Since media as a socio-cultural and politico-cultural site of the "multicultural society" mentioned by Suparlan above have been little explored, my study will be significant as it contributes to the ethnographic work, which allows us to understand the dynamics of audiences and how they make media meaningful. In addition, as the topic crosses disciplines, my study, thus, takes advantage of and pushes forward the theoretical insights and methodologies of my own discipline, Media Studies, as well as neighbouring fields of anthropology and cultural studies with which I engage. Further, in this study, the attempt to synergise mass media, which is associated with Western modernity to anthropology, which is "a field identified with tradition, the non-Western, and the vitality of the local" (Ginsburg et.al, 2002, p. 3), aims to open up a future for the more common intellectual and methodological space in the Indonesian contexts.

The Choice of the *Kampung* as a Site of Fieldwork

Urban Kampung Community and the Everyday Life of the Marginal

As an "indigenous concept of housing and community" (Silas, 1993 as cited in Siahaan & Purnomo, 1996), *kampung* caters for mostly low and middle to lower income families. According to Sullivan (1994), the *kampung* people tend to view themselves as 'not-rich' people, but 'not exactly poor', as the word poor has an unpleasant connotation in the *kampung*. *Kampung* people are identified as *wong cilik* (little people) or *wong kampung* (*kampung* people), which refers to their lower class position (Sullivan, 1994; Guinness, 1989). The opposite of 'little people' is either

wong gede (big people) that refers to better-off classes living outside the *kampung* or *wong gedongan*[10] (often translated as the 'streetsiders' or literally 'big-building people') living along a street as opposed to those living within the *kampung* where there is only footpath access. However, the class division between *wong kampung* and *wong gedongan* does not fully define the distinction between the *kampung* community (known as *kampungan*) and non-*kampung* community (known as *gedongan*). The term "*kampungan-gedongan*" (Sullivan, 1992, p. 117) refers to the difference between communal (*kampung*) insiders and non-communal outsiders. "It marks a distinction between communal and non-communal elements which does not align at all cleanly with class division" (Sullivan, 1992, p. 117). In fact, *gedongan* does not merely cover those 'streetsider' upper classes, many of whom are not more affluent than the *kampung* members and do not belong to local upper classes. "…[T]he *kampungan* category excludes many underclass elements, while the *gedongan* category includes underclass elements. The figure does not mirror the *wong cilik-wong gede* distinction" (Sullivan, p. 117).

Kampung communities tend to emphasise their lives more in terms of 'neighbourship' rather than kinship (Geertz, 1961; Koentjaraningrat, 1985). Studies on urban Javanese *kampung* communities, mostly those in Central Java (Yogyakarta) and West Java (Bandung and Jakarta), so far have focused on everyday socio-economic, cultural practices, and the ideology of 'social harmony' (*rukun*) of the *kampung* people in relation to state's ideology (Geertz, 1961; Koentjaraningrat, 1985; Guinness, 1986; Murray, 1991; Sullivan, 1991, 1992; Sullivan, 1994; Brenner, 1998). By researching the phenomenon of everyday television consumption and the socio-cultural practices of the Javanese in Surabaya, this thesis intends to see the variety of cultural practices of the Javanese communities outside the 'central' Javanese culture, which had frequently been seen as the dominant culture in New Order Indonesia.

Urban *kampung* communities live in converged socio-cultural circumstances. As mostly the occupants are rural migrants, they still maintain their own traditional (rural) manners and customs, while at the same time they adapt to a 'modern' city

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[10] *Gedongan*, from the Javanese word *gedong* means "substantial brick or stone buildings" (Sullivan, 1992, p. 110). For more discussion on *kampung* class and hierarchy see Sullivan (1992) and Guinness (1986).

lifestyle. That is why *kampung* culture gains a character of "lacking in refinement and manners" (Guinness, 1989, p.56), and the notion *kampungan* is used by the educated and urban elite culture to indicate behaviour that is rude or unsophisticated. Based on this assumption, I argue that while urban *kampung* negotiate their own identities (class, gender, age, and religion) within their lived experience, they also need to negotiate with the representations shown on television that they consume everyday. These televisual representations are simultaneously part of their everyday practices while also contradicting their everyday lives.

Studies from Sullivan (1992) and Guinness (1986) have indicated that "the *kampung* is not a community of equals" (Sullivan, p. 72). In other words, there is class distinction within the *kampung*. While most *kampung* people are lower class and most of them are engaged in low-status work, the communities variously consist of middle-class figures as well as white-collar workers, traders, and professionals. "In the kampung milieu as elsewhere in Java, a long, closely-calibrated scale of status differentials is built up around a maze of variables, including age, gender, marital status, occupation, education, income, and property holdings" (Sullivan, 1992, p. 72). Therefore, in this thesis, I have also attempted to assess the significance of class as a basis of different meaning systems in the decoding process of the *kampung* people, particularly the *kampung* females. This is essential as there is a class difference between the realities portrayed in television texts and those of the viewers.

The selection of urban *kampung* milieu and the *kampung* female viewers as the subject of this research is based on the consideration that there has been very little research on media reception in relation to 'identity politics' of the *kampung* communities in the Indonesian context. As indicated earlier, studies on urban *kampung* people so far have focused on the socio-economic and cultural practices of the people in relation to state ideologies (e.g., Guinness, 1989; Sullivan, 1992; Sullivan, 1994; Brenner, 1998). The only extended study (Nilan, 1999) of television consumption of urban Indonesian women was carried out in Bali; that is, in a social context where traditionalism and religiosity are deeply practiced and emphasized in everyday life. In contrast, the present study takes subjects who are living in such secular and cosmopolitan social circumstances that they have to be constantly

negotiating traditionality and modernity in ways very different form the Balinese subjects of previous work.

Studies of Surabaya and Its Kampung

Surabaya is the second largest city in Indonesia. Dick (2000, p. ix-xx) states that both Surabaya and Jakarta are actually bases for modern development and the essential gateways to and from the rising global economy. Unlike the city of Jakarta, which tends to develop quickly, the development of physical structures of Surabaya is gradual. As the port city, the features of Surabaya still show a blend between the Dutch colonial architectural landscapes and the modern Jakarta-centric reference. These features reflect the complexity of the inhabitants between those who live in "vertical settlements" and "horizontal settlements" (Siahaan & Purnomo, 1996, p. 512). "Vertical settlements," according to Siahaan & Purnomo (1996), refer to those settlements that have existed since pre-war Indonesia and have been inhabited up to three continuing generations. "Horizontal settlement" refers to those areas that have existed for a long time, but the inhabitants stay no longer than three years and their mobility is high. Those "vertical settlements" have resisted periodical attempts by the government to evict residents (*penggusuran*). The geographical landscape of water tunnels and railways has provided space for the development of "marginal" *kampung* settlements in Surabaya.

Surabaya is also a city which successfully redeveloped the *kampung* slum settlements in a project called Kampung Improvement Program (KIP) funded by the World Bank between the 1980s and the 1990s. Some *kampung* settlements in Surabaya even received the Aga-Khan Award, an International resettlement award. Since then, the settlement model in this city has been used as a model for urban resettlement for other urban areas in Indonesia. However the problem of infrastructure development in Surabaya still lags behind that of the metropolitan city of Jakarta. In his speech on bringing Surabaya into the metropolitan mode in October 1990, the former East Java Governor, Soelarso, claimed that Surabaya had not yet become metropolitan; Surabaya was still 'local.' For him, Surabaya will become a metropolitan city when the inhabitants are happy, or as he put it when small people can smile (w*ong cilik gemuyu*, a Javanese notion meaning small people happy/smile) (cited in Siahaan & Purnomo, 1996, p. 390). Surabaya was still parochial in 1990, as the city did not

have an International airport and telephone lines were still few, and the public transport was still the old *bemo* (small van).

Most who have studied Surabaya reflect on its self-proclaimed distinction from other parts of Java, especially Central Java. The culture of people in Surabaya is a mix of coastal culture (*budaya pesisir*) and Madurese culture (*budaya Madura*), which is open, straightforward and vulgar, though religiosity (*santri*[11] culture*)* is still strong. Hence, Surabaya culture is called '*gaya Suroboyoan*' (Surabaya style) in which people are open and straightforward, rude (Javanese termed as *gradakan*), use an egalitarian language (*bahasa merakyat*) rather than the highly formal and hierarchic version of Javanese spoken in Central Java, and act promptly rather than after long discussion (Siahaan & Purnomo, p. 286)[12]. Such attitudes allow space for younger people to be accepted into governmental positions and socio-economic activities in Surabaya. As told in the legendary book of '*Babad Suroboyo*' (Chronicle of Surabaya), Surabaya gave enough space for young people to play and take an active part during the war period and the post-war development period (Siahaan & Purnomo, p. 288). Indeed, the Surabaya mayor, the bureaucrats, and the regional legislative members (DPRD) are mainly those young activists aged between 30 and 40. Interestingly, the rural migrants who come from areas outside Surabaya where refined central Javanese culture (*budaya halus*) is practised, are practising 'in-between culture'; they are negotiating openness, but remain refined, convoluted and secular or hold their own traditional Javanese beliefs known as '*kejawen*'.

For all these reasons, it is challenging to study the *kampung* and its people in Surabaya. Since there is a lack of study of the Surabaya *kampung* and its culture, this thesis intends to fill this gap by providing a detailed account of one of Surabaya's *kampung* settlements, the people, and their cultural practices in the closing years of twentieth century quotidian, as cultural representation of the local. These local features are also expected to distinguish the unique cultural practices and to demonstrate the strength and resilience of non-Western cultural experience with the

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[11] *Santri* is a student of *Pesantren*, a traditional Islamic education institution. Many *Pesantren* can be found in Java. It is a place to nurture religious (Islam) students and leaders under the supervision of *Kyai*. *Santri*'s culture, thus, refers to the religious style of life.

[12] In some ways, the cultural description of any singular city is incomplete. However, the notion of 'Surabaya culture' is widely held and, therefore, it is useful for starting this thesis.

media forms and texts as a valuable complement to Western-based media consumption studies.

Method, Position, and Limitation

Stating my position in this research, I came as a temporary boarding person to *kampung* Gubeng with my identity as a lecturer at a university situated near the *kampung*. The *kampung* settlements in Gubeng area are large, so I chose one *kampung* lane situated 500 meters from the railway, with which I was familiar, as a friend of mine was boarding in one of the *kampung* houses. During the fieldwork, I boarded and shared a bedroom with my friend, who had been boarding at one house for more than five years. I presented myself as presently conducting some research on television drama (*sinetron*). When I said that I was conducting research on *sinetron*, some housewives laughed and one of them said, "Hey! [This is] appropriate, the TV is now only *sinetron*! Many *kampung* people like it, especially *Tersanjung* [top-rated *sinetron* title]." I took this as a form of enthusiasm of the *kampung* housewives to talk about *sinetron*, and certainly, they were eager to supply me with fascinating information about their experiences with *sinetron*. Every time I joined the housewives' groups, they started to talk to me about the *sinetron* that they had watched the night before, plus the *kampung* gossip.

I used my ability to speak in the local (Surabaya) dialect and accent as well as three basic Javanese dialects i.e. familiar (*ngoko*), semi-formal (*madya*), and formal (*krama*) for everyday conversation in relation to particular types of interaction with particular persons in the *kampung*. In Javanese etiquette, it is required to use 'a proper style of speech' (Koentjaraningrat, 1985, p.18) when interacting, depending on the status of the other person taking part in the interaction. Familiarity with the socio-cultural aura of *kampung* and the capability to speak in the people's language with their accent are my significant 'assets' to enter the *kampung* Gubeng community, and quickly adapt to the *kampung*'s life and its people. However, as I have never lived within a *kampung,* my status as an urban middle-class woman, 'streetsider' (Guinness, 1986), and academician, no doubt disrupted some of my interaction with the *kampung* people as well as my interpretation and understanding about the *kampung* cultures. I then attempted to locate myself both as a participant observer intending to analyse what is going on around me in the *kampung*, as well as

a participant in neighbourhood affairs, and so eliminate such 'research barriers' as possible. Later, I learned in some depth the neighbourship pattern and what is common to all neighbourhoods within the *kampung* and what is distinctive to each. Hence, my specific analysis reflects Ang's (1991) point about the importance of "positioned truth" with the objects of study and knowing on whose behalf and to what end the researcher writes.

All these features have provided a space for me to play out my choice of methodological approaches in producing ethnographic understanding of media reception. Besides acting as a participant observer, I gathered information from informal talks and chats, and face-to-face in-depth conversations with several women whom I visited and watched television with, and participated in women's group viewings. Also, I attempted to organise a small, closed "forum" – just like the focus group discussion forum – in very informal settings, which took advantage of the regular social gathering among *kampung* housewives called '*arisan*' (take turns). For this "forum," I prepared a set of questions and encouraged every participant to speak for herself and/or counter or support other participants' opinions about the features of Indonesian television, the particular *sinetron* texts, their experiences with the visual representations and identities, and their daily experience with television and the VCD within the family and neighbourhood relations. This method provided some detail on the focus and complexity of women's attitudes, engagement, and responses to television and its productions. Remembering Bird's injunction that "We need to consider all our qualitative methodologies as different types of ethnographic encounter that will necessarily produce different kinds of discourse depending on the context" (Bird, 2003, p. 10), I took this approach in order to supplement the face-to-face interviews and daily informal talks with a valuable exploration of the women's self-reflexivity within their communal groups and to interrogate the sense of the localness, class-based, and communal-culture experience.

Meanwhile, to supplement the ethnography stage and to explore the particulars of the Indonesian television industry post-authoritarian New Order era, I spent two months in Jakarta interviewing key people involved around the private television businesses. I interviewed the president directors, programming and acquisition managers, and public relations managers of private TV stations, the executive directors of

production houses, film and *sinetron* directors and writers, television critics, and cultural observers. My field trip in Jakarta also enabled me to gather secondary data and information from the national film archive (*sinematek* Jakarta), the Department of Information, Indonesian film censor body (LSF), and several TV and entertainment tabloids.

I was fortunate to have friends and acquaintances amongst film directors, cultural observers, television critics, and senior industry figures and staffs at the major private TV stations such as *Trans TV*, *RCTI*, *SCTV*, *IVM*, and *ANTV* and a state TV station, TVRI central Jakarta and regional Surabaya. They were very helpful and talked about the conditions of the television industry and provided me with the bulk of statistical data. Through them as well, I was introduced to the *sinetron* producers, directors, writers, and the actors. All these interviews are employed throughout the earliest chapters of this thesis. Unfortunately, I had no opportunity to interview the giant *sinetron* producer of PT. Multivision Plus production house, Raam Punjabi, as he was always busy and was reluctant to receive a researcher. The only person I could reach at the office was the promotion manager of this production house. However, I was able to gain only a little information, as the officer (a female) was reluctant to answer and provide data about the productions. In my second effort, the officer was welcoming and invited me to come to the office on a certain day and promised will introduce me to Mrs. Punjabi. I was pleased and thought I would have a good chance to interview the wife of Mr. Punjabi, who is also a producer. However, to my surprise, when I arrived there it was the birthday party of Mrs. Rakhee Punjabi. The party was simple, but hundreds of guests were invited: mostly Indonesian popular celebrities, and the television owners and executives. I was then the spectator of the celebrities' party and was unable to reach Mrs. Punjabi. Hence, the information about Multivision Plus's productions and Raam Punjabi's statements cited in this thesis are all accessed from the printed media.

A Map of the Thesis

This thesis has nine chapters, with part one consisting of three chapters dealing with the formations of the television industry in post-authoritarian Indonesia between 2000 and 2004. *Chapter Two* discusses the development of the Indonesian television industry in the 2000s. It includes economic trends, trends in ownership, and

appraisals of top-rated programs, which have dominated the programming on national private TV stations. In this chapter, I also examine the rise of local and community channels in the country. The discussion then narrows to look at the popularity of locally-produced *sinetron* on national private television. *Chapter Three* then provides a historical overview of the trends and public discourses surrounding the industry particularly between 2000-2004 of the private television era. These two chapters together look at the television industry in the 2000s in order to understand the culture and the politics of television, which in turn reflects the construction of television audiencehood within the competitive era of national private television.

The relationship between the national television industry and the audience is a crucial articulation that generally perceives the audience as merely the passive marketing target of the mass productions. *Chapter Four* looks at the institutional (television stations and the production houses) construction of 'the national audience' and explores how 'the audiences' are placed – in the mode of 'consumers-producers relation' – and are imbricated in the local/national discursive context, political situation, economic circumstance, national setting, historical moment, and transnational flows in the post-authoritarian era of Indonesia.

Part two consists of five chapters and examines how television is being taken up and made sense of in a particular *kampung* community. Those chapters are intended to interrogate how the "Western" theories work for the uniqueness of a local community in Indonesia, and to see whether these produce "new" local knowledges or build localised analytical concepts. Part two of this thesis starts with *Chapter Five* that situates the context of the *kampung* Gubeng in Surabaya, the rituals, and the dynamic lifestyle of the people. The focus then moves to the cultures of the *kampung* people with the television set in their home. *Chapter Six* then examines the socio-economic meaning of the television set, the considerations of the TV placement/arrangement in the so-called "living room" of the *kampung* house, and everyday experience in front of the set.

Chapter Seven continues to present and discuss the cultural experiences of the *kampung* female viewers toward the representational urban cultures and the identities portrayed in three top-rated television dramas that they favour. This chapter focuses on the negotiation process between those *kampung* females' identities (which include

their class, gender, religion, and age) and the representational images about the city, class and culture on the screen.

Chapter Eight more specifically analyse the significance of gender, class and cultural locality of the *kampung* women viewers in ways of assessing and responding to the constructions of women characters in their favourite *sinetron* shows. This chapter is an attempt to highlight issues of self-mirroring and pleasure of female spectatorship in the context of television/*sinetron* viewing among these *kampung* women. The experience of visual pleasure continues when the *kampung* housewives consume pornographic materials. This trend has emerged as a consequence of the arrival of advanced audio-visual technology, that is video compact disc (VCD), within the middle to lower class *kampung* life in Indonesia. The abundance and easy access to pirated copies has opened up the possibility for the lower class people to consume visual entertainments that have never been offered by the private television stations. In addition, the atmosphere of "free" access to pornographic items has challenged the *kampung* housewives. Their consumption of pleasure and female bodies has become a critical issue has never been brought to the fore by scholars in this field.

To show my respect to those married *kampung* women, I consistently use the word '*ibu*' or the short '*bu*' (literary means 'mother') before their name as a way to address them throughout my narratives in this thesis. The same pattern I use for the married males with the word '*bapak*' or '*pak*' (literary means 'father').

To sum up, this thesis intends to combine approaches from the works of cultural studies' ethnography (those by Hall, Morley, Lull and Spigel) and the ethnographic work of anthropologists (e.g. Abu-Lughod, Ginsburg, Mankekar, and Rajagopal), and demonstrate how these works might lay the groundwork for advancing studies of media and/or communications, particularly reception studies, in the contemporary Indonesian context.

Chapter Two

Television Broadcasting in the Post-Authoritarian Indonesia (2000-2004)

> *The public's choice in modern society is between big government and big business. Leaving aside the collapsed character of such a 'choice', putting big business and big government as paired equivalents is in itself an ideological construct that privileges big business* (Schiller, 1989, p. 19).

This chapter is a background piece to outline the main features of the television industry post-New Order. It looks at the ownership patterns, the economic aspect of the national television business, and the programming trends. I also examine the recent phenomenon of communal censorships and current issues surrounding the status of government enterprise television, *TVRI*, as well as the growing local private and community television since the Broadcasting Bill (*UU Penyiaran no. 32/2002*) has been in effect.

This chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part looks at the national private television industry in the country between 2000 and 2004. It mainly examines the huge expansion of the industry post-New Order and the significant trends at play. The second part focuses on the recent issues of *TVRI* and the attempts that have been initiated to reform this state-owned channel in the changing political and economic landscape of the Indonesian media system and the industry, which to a certain extent has affected the organisational restructure and the role of *TVRI* in the 2000s. In the third part, this chapter discusses the emergence of local level TV stations and the growing numbers of local-private and provincial-government own stations. Sourced from interviews and secondary archives and documentations, this chapter suggests that the main feature of the television industry in the early 21st century of Indonesia are firstly, a huge expansion of the industry and secondly, the contradictory direction of large private networks, on one hand, and relatively small but successful local level television stations, on the other. At the same time, the state-owned station *TVRI*

remains problematic in its institutional status, its administrative structure and its role in the society. In a general sense, the Indonesian television industry is undergoing profound changes initiated by 'marketisation' and the audience continues to be placed as object of the productions and reproductions of information, images, and ideas of the capitalist television industry.

Business and politics are the two terms that cannot be separated when understanding the political culture of the media especially the television industry in Indonesia. Large corporations, particularly those old players of major business corporations who gained privilege from the New Order regime, still dominate the national private television business. They continue to control the ownership of private national TV broadcasting services and are also about to start to expand their business core in the media industry. Large private networks continue competing for nationwide advertising and audience shares and are invading the "playground" space of the local/regional TV stations.

The emergence of local and community television in Indonesia nowadays is a result of the reform of broadcasting law and system. The 1997 Broadcasting Bill defined television broadcasting as national broadcasting and required all broadcasters to operate centrally from Jakarta. In terms of their status and role in television broadcasting, the regional provinces, thus, were emasculated and local television institutions, consequently, had never existed. During the Soeharto era, TVRI, established regionally in several provinces, served as the only 'local television network' for the regional audiences. After the issuing of the 2002 Broadcasting Bill, local (mainly private) and community television stations were developed. There are now more than 60 local (private) and community television stations broadcasting throughout the archipelago and a further 53 companies have lodged their applications for broadcasting permits to the Ministry of Communication and Information (Ritongan, 2005). Although these figures and the success of several small local private television stations such as *Bali TV* in Bali, *JTV* in Surabaya, *Riau TV* in Sumatera, and *Pacific TV* in Manado, might suggest an expanding local television industry, in fact ownership is concentrated in the hands of a few and is all about creating the so-called 'little Kings' (*raja-raja kecil*) of regional ownership as

exemplified by Satria Naradha, owner of *Bali TV*, and Jawa Pos Group, owner of *JTV* and *Riau TV* as discussed in the last section of this chapter.

National Private Television

The Creation of '*Televisi Supermarket*' (warehouse television)

"If you want to sell well, be a *televisi gado-gado,*" so said a public relations manager of *Indosiar Visual Mandiri (*hereafter*, IVM) TV* in a personal interview (January 2003). '*Gado-gado*' is a popular local meal containing a random mix of vegetables (like tossed salad) and peanut sauce. This term is used by the *IVM* manager to refer to the national private television characteristics, which tend to offer various programs for what the television institutions see as diverse or heterogeneous audiences. Being a '*televisi gado-gado*' means that a TV station not only offers various programs, but it also presents a programming pattern that is considered to sell well and be watched by significant numbers of viewers. The *IVM* PR manager Gufron Sakaril says:

> I*ndosiar* only wants to reach as large an audience as possible. Audiences are also diverse, so a TV station just like a supermarket provides what is likely to be liked by the audience at different levels. That is why *Indosiar*'s programs are various, as they reflect the heterogeneity of the society (Personal interview, January 2003).

Competition does increase the number of television stations and the number of programs from which the audience can choose. However, to claim that the various programs reflect audience heterogeneity, in the competition between private TV stations in this context, is not borne out by my data on programming.

More TV stations In Indonesia, I argue, do not lead to more diversity in terms of programming patterns. As a public relations manager of *RCTI*, the first private station in Indonesia, said a TV station could not ignore trends of audiences' preferences for particular kinds of programming, so the station has to monitor "sell well" programs from other TV stations, then follow the pattern. According to *RCTI*'s manager, since audiences numbers watching any particular show are counted for rating measurement, television stations need to take note, otherwise the "neighbour" will attract the audiences and, of course, the great advertising revenues, the cake that has always been vied for. "Previously we truly believed that media were able to

shape the society. However, now the competition is becoming hard. Like it or not we must follow the trend," explained Teguh Juwarno, a PR manager of *RCTI* (Personal interview, January 2003). National television, thus, is ultimately geared up to compete for, over and about the audience.

Further, the economic figures for the television industry in the post-*reformasi* period between 2000 and 2004 in the following section give a clear picture of development stages, especially the economic trends, of the television industry during these years and the narratives of national private television stations in seeking their own survival and continuity in a complex highly competitive social environment for marketisation. Since television still attracts large audiences in Indonesia[1], the television business is seen as a challenging money-machine and destined to 'serve' those capitalist producers' interests.

The Economic Trends of Indonesian Television 2000-2004

Since the end of the 1990s, Indonesia has been experiencing a perilous period of what has been dubbed: "the years of living dangerously" in a gesture that recognises parallels with the mid-1960s[2]. The country is facing economic crisis with the drastic drop of the Rupiah against the US dollar and other foreign currencies, and simultaneously experiencing national political chaos including separatism and ethnic clashes in several provinces. Surprisingly, the media industry does not reflect this political and economic downturn. The explosion of print media, radio stations, private television stations, and local and community television channels, since the fall of Soeharto, indicates the optimism of media businesses in Indonesia.

According to Nielsen Media Research (hereafter, NMR), the advertising expenditure of media in Indonesia increased dramatically from 7.89 trillion rupiah in 2000 to 9.72 trillion rupiah in 2001 (Nurwandini, 2002a). The figure increased slightly to 9.91 trillion rupiah during January-October 2002 (Nurwandini, 2002b). Private television stations contributed up to 80.3 percent in 2002, and they were declared as the highest contributor compared to other types of media. On the average, private 'nationwide'

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[1] Data from *Cakram* magazine May 2004 edition confirms that 87 percent of people in ten major cities watch TV.

[2] The word "the years of living dangerously" was first found in Soekarno's comment and then it was also used as a title of film set in 1965 to refer to the economic collapse of 1965-1966 in Indonesia

television stations broadcast between eighteen and twenty hours per day. It has been calculated that the revenue of television stations, particularly those top-rated channels such as *RCTI*, *SCTV*, and *IVM*, for eighteen hours broadcast, reaches up to 1.5 trillion rupiahs per day ("Stasiun TV baru," 2004, p. 7). Ishadi S.K., the president director of *Trans TV* commented, "Nowadays, television broadcasting business is tempting and challenging, but very competitive. There is no idealism behind this business, only how to be profitable" (personal interview in January 2003).

In 2003, as reported by NMR, the advertising revenue of television increased by 36 percent or is about 11,504 trillion rupiahs ("Stasiun TV baru," 2004, p. 7). While it has been expected that the percentage will increase by about 30 percent in 2005, as already in 2004, the total revenues of television has reached 20 trillion rupiahs ("Televisi serap," 2005). This is a tremendous amount compared to other media such as newspapers (4,243 trillion rupiahs) and magazines/tabloids (899 billion rupiahs).

Table 2.1
TV Revenue Share by TV Channel (2001/2002)

	Rp. Million	% Share
Total Channels	6,042.09	100.00
Indosiar (IVM)	1,607.42	26.60
SCTV	1,499.46	24.82
RCTI	1,417.89	23.47
TPI	901,71	14.92
ANTV	329,49	5.45
TV 7	22,16	0.37

Source: AC-Nielsen Media Research Indonesia, *Media Scene*, 2002/2003, p. 34

Television broadcasting business has shown massive development within the first five years of 2000s in Indonesia. The industry has begun to face a more versatile and competitive market. *RCTI*, *IVM*, and *SCTV* are still the leading channels and have the dominant share of income from advertising and audience shares. In year 2000 *IVM* had slightly more income than the other four stations; its total billing was about 908.4 billion rupiah. This amount was only one percent higher than its major competitor *RCTI*, which gained 869.3 billion rupiah. This can be seen from the following table of the share of revenue by TV station based on Nielsen's media report in 2001. *IVM* station increased its revenues to 1,607.42 billion rupiahs thus

taking about 26.60 percent share of total revenues of private television. *SCTV* got the better of *RCTI*, thus automatically placing *SCTV* in the second rank position.

The economic performance of *IVM* is remarkable. From its inception, this station set up a joint operation with television broadcasting TVB Hong Kong. TVB is a master in broadcast television and produces more than 4000 hours of programs like teledrama series a year. The management of *IVM* not only sent its employees to learn about television production in TVB Hong Kong, but some of TVB's technical staff came to *IVM* to assist the employees and to be involved in operating this station.

Table 2.2
Television Audience Share by TV Channel
(The Figure is based on all people 15+, 1-31 January 2002)

Channel	Jakarta	Bandung	Semarang	Surabaya	Medan
IVM	25.8	27.1	37.8	32.0	31.0
RCTI	28.0	19.8	19.3	19.9	23.0
SCTV	20.8	23.1	16.2	16.8	20.5
TPI	12.4	13.6	12.9	14.7	14.6
Trans TV	3.6	7.2	5.5	6.6	6.1
ANTV	2.3	4.6	4.1	4.2	4.4
Metro TV	2.3	0.0	0.5	0.8	0.4
Lativi	0.2	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TV 7	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Global TV	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TVRI	2.4	3.6	3.6	4.4	0.0
TVRI 2 *	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0
JTV (Sub)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0

* *TVRI 2* is a subsidiary of *TVRI* national or *TVRI* (local) Jakarta, which broadcasts specific local (Jakarta) events and programs, but it can be accessed by the audience outside Jakarta, mainly in Java municipalities.

Source: AC-Nielsen Media Research Indonesia, *Media Scene*, 2002/2003, p. 34

In terms of audience share, *IVM* led for four years, 1999 to 2003. Interestingly, this station is more popular for audiences residing outside Jakarta. It can be seen from *Table 1. 2*, the station's audience share in Jakarta in January 2002 was about 25.8 percent less than *RCTI*'s audience share, which was about 28 percent in the same city. For cities outside Jakarta such as Bandung (West Java), Semarang (Central Java), Surabaya (East Java), and Medan (North Sumatera), *IVM* has received audience shares far more than *RCTI*. In Semarang, for instance, the station gained

37.8 percent audience share, meaning the station was watched by more than thirty million people, whilst *RCTI* only received 19.3 percent share or it was watched by less than twenty million people. The commitment of *IVM* to broadcast traditional performance forms such as *Srimulat* (East Javanese comedy play), *Wayang Kulit* (shadow puppet), *Wayang Wong* (Central Javanese play), *dangdut* music, and other traditional performances called '*Kesenian Tradisional*' program every Friday night, seems to place this TV station as the leading private national station for regional viewers.

Figure 2.1
TV Audience Share 1-31 March 2003
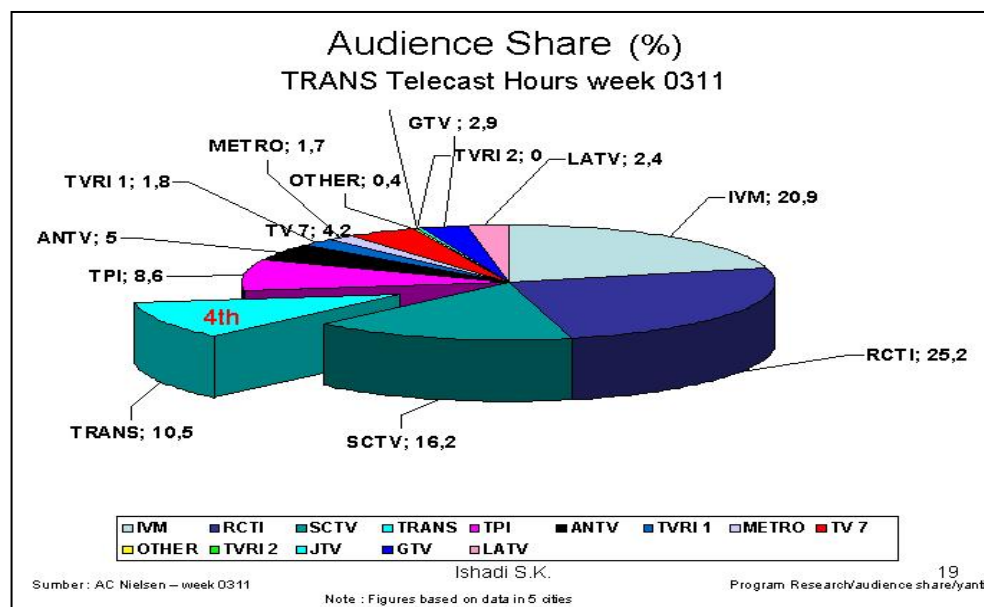
Source: Courtesy of Ishadi S.K., the president director of *Trans TV* (March 2003)

RCTI, which was first launched for only Jakarta audiences in 1989 and nationwide since 1991, has positioned itself as the station for the upper middle class, and is Jakarta oriented in its general programming content and style. Most morning and late night leisure programs of *RCTI* such as *Selamat Datang Pagi* (Morning Welcome) just like *Sunrise* on *Channel 7* Australia, *Intips* (an acronym of information and tips) fashion and life style for women every Saturday morning and *Angin Malam* (Night Wind) a live talk show about life, health, and sexuality, depict and discuss the problems of urbanites of Jakarta rather than people outside this metropolitan city. In

addition, *RCTI*'s news program, *Seputar Indonesia* (Around Indonesia), mainly reports on and about Jakarta.

Surprisingly, the newcomer of private television stations, *Trans TV*, which just started to broadcast in 2001, has gained the fourth rank in its programming rating against its contenders, the older private stations such as *SCTV*, *RCTI* and *IVM* (see chart below). Similar to the audience pattern of *IVM*, the major audiences of *Trans TV* are mainly from outside Jakarta areas.

Figure 2.2
Annual Rating

January-September 2003-2004
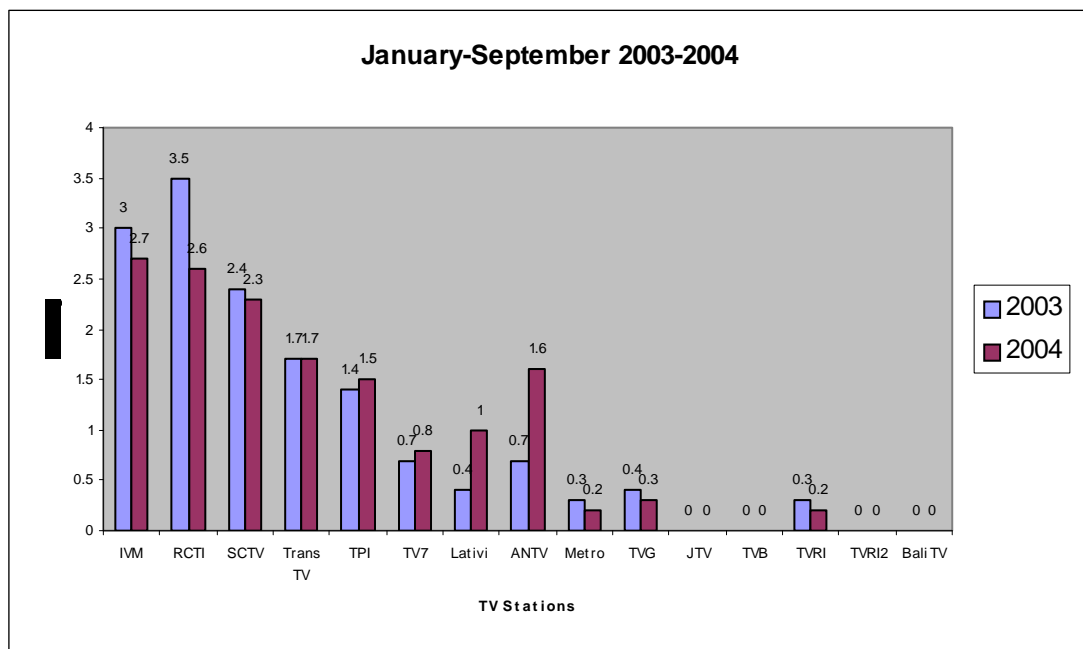
Source: Nielsen Media Research in *Cakram*, November-December 2004, p. 7

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, in my personal interviews in 2003 with the three private television managers Teguh Juwarno from *RCTI*, Haryanto from *SCTV*, and Gufron Sakaril from *IVM*, they all expressed that private television channels are now like a supermarket store, and tend to provide "*gado-gado*" programming to audiences. These managers also acknowledge that private television programming patterns are similar to each other. They admitted that indeed, the look of all nationwide private television stations is the same and can be differentiated one from another only when the station's logo appears on the screen. Yet, these TV managers

argued that it is impossible to segment a channel for a specific market audience in the competitive market. In particular, Juwarno from *RCTI* and Sakaril from *IVM* pointed out that TV a station like *Metro TV* lacks both audience share and advertising revenues because this TV station is segmented in terms of its presentation, that is, news only and its target is only the upper middle classes. The following graph of television rating confirms that *Metro TV's* rating tended to reduce from 0.3 percent in 2003 to 0.2 percent of in 2004; in other words, this channel was watched by less than three million people.

Although the growth of the television industry in Indonesia might be expected to provide more options of information and entertainment channels for the audiences, the present programming of all national private channels is quite uniform, and so audiences definitely do not have wide choices for information and entertainment materials from television. Almost all channels have *sinetron*, celebrity gossip shows (commonly known as 'infotainment' programs), games and variety shows, similar reality TV shows, Latin *Telenovelas*, Indian Bollywood dramas, American sitcoms, and music shows. Currently, the most popular Indonesian television shows are *sinetron*, infotainment programs, reality- mystery or horror shows, and reality-cop/crime shows. Both the contents and the formats of such "tabloid television" (Glynn, 2000) shows are similar across stations. With regard to this similarity the television stations argue that they do not want to take the risk of losing their audiences, by not following the trend of television programming.

Since each television station has fight to win the audience share from its contenders, Teguh Juwarno from *RCTI* said, "Before we had five new TV stations, *RCTI* was always the trendsetter of television programming in Indonesia. But with ten commercial television [stations] as these days, we have to look at which programs are popular and what is the mainstream trend" (Personal interview in January 2003). He continued that since the arrival of the five new television stations, the programming policy of *RCTI* has significantly changed. For instance, as the target audiences of *RCTI* are those from affluent and middle classes (AB categories[3]) in

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[3] Refer to AC-Nielsen's categorizations of Social Economic Status of Indonesians which are as follows: For 2001-2002: A1 Rp. 2,000,000 & over; A2 Rp. 1,500,000 –2,000,000; B Rp. 1,000,000 – 1,500,000; C1 Rp. 700,000 – 1,000,000; C2 Rp.500,000 – 700,000; D Rp. 300,000- 500,000; E Rp. 300,000 & below (*Media Scene* 2002/2003, p. 19).

urban areas, *RCTI* had never screened *dangdut[4]* musical performances, as *dangdut* music is perceived as music for the lower classes. However, since almost all private stations have *dangdut* music programs which are very popular, *RCTI* has also started producing an in-house *dangdut* music program called *Joget Dangdut* (Dancing *Dangdut*) once a week in evening prime time at 7.30 pm.

Ishadi S.K. of *Trans TV*, one of the new players in the broadcasting television business, declared that his channel follows the format trend of the five older stations *RCTI*, *SCTV*, *TPI*, *ANTV*, and *IVM*, because these stations have already set up the mainstream market and the programming formats of Indonesian television. "*Trans TV* itself is still following the existing mainstream, because our market has already been designed by three prior private stations *RCTI*, *SCTV*, and *IVM*" (personal interview in January 2003). New private television stations that come later to the competition seem unable to challenge the existing stations that have constructed the market of television.

The tremendous economic figures (i.e. advertising revenues) of the national television industry have attracted investors. Moreover, the enthusiasm for media reform in the wake of Indonesian's economic crisis in 1997 contributed to the air of change in the national media landscape. As such, the large media corporations start to emerge and to stretch their control over print and broadcast media. The following section, thus, maps the present ownership pattern of private television stations. It aims at updating [5] information on the positions of the private corporations in Indonesia, and on who are the present significant media barons of Indonesia.

The Private Television Ownerships: New Jacket, Old Body

In the New Order era, Soeharto's family and his cronies dominated the ownership of private television stations. All major stations, *RCTI*, *SCTV*, and *TPI* were previously under control of Soeharto's children and his cousin, Sudwikatmono. While Liem

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[4] *Dangdut* is popular music with a strong beat reminiscent of Hindi and Arabic music and is close to Malay music. The term *dangdut* is resonated from the sound of a small drum when it is hit with the hands '*dang*' and '*dut*'. For more detail about the political and cultural issues of this music see Sen & Hill (2000 and 2003).

[5] The explanation of ownership system of media/television companies in Indonesia during the New Order government and *reformasi* (1997-1999) is examined in the work of Sen and Hill (2000). So, in this thesis, I trace and collect only the more recent information about the private television ownerships (to June 2005).

Sioe Liong (known also by his Indonesian name as Sudono Salim), a Chinese business-man and Soeharto's close friend, controlled *Indosiar Visual Mandiri* (*IVM*) station. Another private station, *ANTV*, was owned and shared between Aburizal Bakrie and Agung Laksono, both activists of *Golkar* party, a political machine of the New Order. After the resignation of Soeharto, there has been little significant change among the players in the television business. On the face of things, people like Sudwikatmono, Bambang Trihatmojo and Sudono Salim are no longer the major capital holders of private television channels in Indonesia, but they have managed to maintain control through various means. For instance, Bambang Trihatmojo, through his company PT. Ariland holds a 22 percent stake of PT. Bimantara Citra. Significant shareholders of Bimantara include his long-term friends and business colleagues, Bambang Hary Iswanto Tanoesoedibyo, Surya Paloh and Edwin Kawilarang (Tanjung & Suryalibrata, 2002, p. 53).

Bambang Hary Iswanto Tanoesoedibyo, better known as Hary Tanoe, the chairman of PT. Bhakti Investama previously an investment company and a player on the Wall Street stock exchange, New York, has become an important figure in the private television business world. Since 2002, Hary Tanoe has held a major share of PT. Bimantara Citra and placed himself as the CEO of this company. PT. Bimantara holds the major share of one hundred percent of PT. Media Nusantara Citra (MNC), a holding company of *RCTI* private station.

In 2002, PT. Bimantara Citra established *Global TV* (or *TVG*) with its subsidiary company PT. Global Informasi Bermutu. *TVG* was formerly formed as a music television channel and was known as 'MTV Indonesia'. *TVG* acquired MTV Asia from *ANTV*, which faced financial problems. *TVG* is still receiving assistance from *RCTI* for its infrastructures. Nasir Tamara, from PT. Bimantara, is the president director of *Global TV*. Tamara was a member of a campaign team (known as '*tim sukses*'), which supported the strong, influential General Wiranto, who had been a Military Commander and Minister of National Security and one of Soeharto's loyal supporters, for the 2004 presidential election. As *TVG,* originally positioned for the youth market, had difficulty in competing for advertising revenues it was forced to position itself for a wider audience base. Therefore, since 15 January 2004, *TVG* has

aired 12 hours MTV music and the remaining 12 hours are dedicated to general shows.

Since March 2005, Hary Tanoe through PT. Bimantara Citra, has expanded his control over PT. Cipta TPI, a company of *Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia* (*TPI*) channel, which was formerly owned by Soeharto's eldest daughter, Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana (or known as Tutut Soeharto) ("Bimantara Citra resmi," 2005). Hary Tanoe then set up PT. Media Nusantara Citra (MNC) as the holding company of the three private television stations: *RCTI*, *TVG* and *TPI*. Hary Tanoe has entered into the Soeharto's family business circle since his initial business collaboration with Soeharto's second daughter, Titiek Prabowo, began in 1998. He has established his investment company PT. Bhakti Investama in cooperation with Titiek (Tanjung & Suryalibrata, 2002, p. 53). It is also rumoured that Hary Tanoe has helped the Salim Group of Sudono Salim, which faced financial difficulties, by rescuing Salim's shares in the stock exchange. As all the Salim Group's assets have been taken over by the Indonesian government through the Ministry of State Enterprises (BUMN), PT Bhakti Investama was reported to be utilised by Salim Group to buy and take back all the assets (Tanjung & Suryalibrata, 2002, p. 53).

Hary Tanoe with his company PT. Bhakti Investama is not a new player in the private television business. In 1998, he controlled 33 percent of *SCTV*, the major competitor of *RCTI*, and 25 percent of the news TV broadcaster, *Metro TV* ("Jangan Coba-coba," 2004). He was frustrated by Henry Pribadi, a timber tycoon and chairman of Napan group, who also held shares and initiated to take over Hary Tanoe's position in *SCTV* at that time. Hary Tanoe then released all his shares in *SCTV* in 2002. Henry Pribadi, consequently, continues to hold significant shares in *SCTV* with his business partner Sudwikatmono, Soeharto's cousin. Until 2003, Henry Pribadi was the CEO of PT. Surya Citra Media (SCM), which operates *SCTV* station. However, since 2004, Fofo and Eddy K. Sariaadmadjaja, two brothers of Sariaadmadjaja, the owner of PT. Abhimata Mediatama (was the joint company of Bambang Trihatmojo Soeharto in Bimantara) have taken over PT. Bhakti Investama's shares in SCM and PT. Datakom Asia, a giant media and publishing group set up by Peter Gontha, Bambang Trihatmojo and Anthony Salim from Bimantara. Fofo Sariaadmadjaja has been assigned as the CEO of SCM since

December 2004, replacing Henry Pribadi. SCM used to have business cooperation with John Singleton from STW Communications Group, Australia. However, since May 2004, STW Group, which held 20.6 percent of SCM shares, has pulled out of SCM. Since then, *SCTV* is managed by PT. Abhimata Mediatama which controls a 39.42 percent stake in SCM, PT. Citrabumi Sacna holds 25 percent, PT. Indika Multimedia Sudwikatmono's eldest daughter's company holds 14.42 percent, and the remaining 20.84 percent shares are public (Iswara & Wijaya, 2004). *SCTV*'s audience share rank is third and it sometimes competes for second position with *RCTI* and the new private television channel *Trans TV*. *SCTV* has been leading in news broadcasting, with its program called *Liputan 6*, since 1998. SCTV was also ranked in the top ten companies in Indonesia for the last two years (2000-2001) by the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

Further, Hary Tanoe has used his other company, PT. Centralindo Pancasakti Cellular (CPSP) to hold the stake on *Metro TV*. In 2003, the stake of PT. Bimantara Citra (25 percent) on *Metro TV* was sold to PT CPSP, a mobile phone service provider, one of the subsidiary companies of PT. Bhakti Investama Group ("Telkom sells," 2003). So, by using his other company, Harry Tanoe becomes strong in possessing those major TV broadcasting stations in Indonesia. *Metro TV* a nationwide channel is positioned as the first news TV broadcaster in Indonesia. The major shareholder of *Metro TV* remains Surya Paloh, a publisher of the daily newspaper, *Media Indonesia*. Paloh the media magnate affiliates himself with *Golkar* party. He was promoting himself for the position of the Indonesian president in 2004, flying in his own jet, BAE 146 that used to be utilised by Queen Elizabeth II, to several provinces in Indonesia to campaign for the last presidential election. Several management staff of *Metro TV*, such as the vice president, Jeannette Sujunadi, the executive producer, Marcella, and even the executive editor of *Media Indonesia* daily, Elman Saragih, were also involved as a political campaign team of Surya Paloh.

Paloh is the strongest person in *Metro TV*. He uses his own media to support his political interests. For instance, when the Tsunami struck Aceh in December 2004, I was updating my fieldwork in Indonesia and observed how Paloh frequently spoke publicly on his channel and made statements to urge and mobilise all national

components to rescue Aceh. He appeared to be mourning and declared himself ready to directly lead the rescue efforts in Aceh. The case was controversial and Paloh was criticised by some people for his self-promotion.

Surya Paloh's colleague in *Golkar* party, Aburizal Bakrie, one of the cabinet Ministers of president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, continues to dominate shares in *Andalas TV* (*ANTV*) station. Recently, PT. Cakrawala Andalas Televisi has repositioned its station after being required by its creditors to roll over its US$157 million debt ("PT. Cakrawala," 2003). PT. Cakrawala Andalas, one of the subsidiary companies of PT. Bakrie Investindo, is now managed by Aburizal's eldest son, Anindya N. Bakrie. This TV station was relaunched in April 2003 when it changed its positioning from youth television to become family television. The president director of Bakrie Group, Aburizal Bakrie, was also promoting himself as a *Golkar* nominee for the presidential election in 2004. Bakrie had appointed the news and sports director of *ANTV*, Azkarmin Zaini and Lalumara Satria Wangsa, on his campaign team at that time. Since September 2005, *Star TV Asia* owned by Rupert Murdoch has participated in join investment with ANTV for an ownership of twenty percent share of PT Cakrawala Andalas Televisi.

Another new private television station, which is growing fast, is PT. Transformasi Televisi Indonesia, generally referred to as *Trans TV*. It is owned by Chairul Tanjung, a businessperson from Kalimantan, who was previously a timber trader and holds a major interest in Para Group, whose major business, *Mega Bank*, is in the banking sector. He has also just built a new giant shopping mall in Bandung, Bandung Super Mall. Ishadi S.K. who used to be the director of the state-owned television station *TVRI*, is the president director of *Trans TV*. Only a year since its launch, *Trans TV* shows outstanding performance both in its program rating and its audience share in competing with the "big three" TV channels: *RCTI*, *IVM*, and *SCTV*. In February 2003, Ishadi lost Alex Kumara, his partner and his vice president and operational director, who was headhunted by Henry Pribadi from *SCTV* to take a similar position. However, since February 2004, Alex Kumara has been assigned as the program director of the state-owned station, *TVRI*.

Trans TV has to compete not only with those big three channels (*RCTI, SCTV, IVM*), but also with its other competitors such as *TV 7* of Kompas-Gramedia Goup, and

Lativi, which is owned by A Latief Corporation of the former Soeharto Minister of Man Power and a major retailer in Jakarta, Abdul Latief. In 2005, A Latief Corporation has faced financial difficulties and was prosecuted for its failure to service debt to *Bank Mandiri*, the state-enterprise banking corporation. *Trans TV* then considered acquiring *Lativi*, but the decision was cancelled. Recently, a major television company *TV 3* Malaysia still appears interested in the possibility of investing in *Lativi*.

Another new player of the private television business in Indonesia is PT. Duta Visual Nusantara, the managing company of *TV 7*. PT. Duta Visual Nusantara is a subsidiary company of Kompas Gramedia Group (or *Kelompok Kompas Gramedia*, KKG) controlled by Jacob Oetama, another media mogul whose daily paper, *Kompas*, is reputable and has been the market leader in print media (see David T. Hill, 1994). *TV 7* has signed a business deal with Warner Bros Australia to supply Hollywood blockbuster movies for this station. Kompas-Gramedia has also controlled the reputable *Sonora FM* radio in Jakarta. This cross-media ownership facilitates promotion across the media forms. Almost all *TV 7* programming advertisements are placed in publications under Kompas-Gramedia Groups such as *Kompas* daily, *Nova* a women's tabloid, *Citra* an entertainment tabloid, and even *Bola* a sports tabloid of this media company. Moreover, the advertisements for these print press publications appear frequently on *TV 7*. For instance, *Kompas* newspaper quite frequently carries promotion of *sinetron* programs and movies that will be aired on *TV 7,* placed in the middle of the advertisements column, much is the most expensive advertising section in a newspaper in the Indonesian print medium.

The expansion of large media corporations, which was a hot political issue in the closing years of the New Order, appears, however, to be undebated in present-day Indonesia. The major media business players are about to start stretching their tentacles to establish their network stations in several local/provincial areas in the country. The initiative has been set up in which PT. Bimantara Citra is about to establish its network *Cakra TV* in Sumatra province and *SCTV* has established its relay stations in collaboration with the two regional governments of Kutai in Kalimantan and Kebumen in Central Java ("Persaingan bisnis," 2004). Like the other three television stations (*RCTI*, *Metro TV*, and *Indosiar*) that have expanded

their business into print media and radio broadcasting, PT. Surya Citra Media (SCM), which operates *SCTV*, also plans to expand its businesses in radio and print journalism and to acquire existing television stations to follow in the steps of PT Media Nusantara Citra (MNC) of Bimantara (Witular, 2004).

Big media corporations are also about expanding their core business. For instance, PT Media Nusantara Citra (MNC), which operates *RCTI*, has acquired the business magazine, *Trust*, and a TV entertainment tabloid, *Genie*, and also plans to publish a newspaper, *Seputar Indonesia*, using the station's popular evening news program of the same name ("Bisnis media," 2005). *Indosiar* station, which just changed its holding company name from PT. Indosiar Visual Mandiri (IVM) to become PT. Indosiar Karya Media (IKM), also plans to expand its business not merely in TV broadcasting, but also in print publication. Under the new broadcasting regulation, IVM is not allowed to expand its business core, that is its private TV broadcasting service. The continuing *Indosiar* shareholders, PT TDM Aset Manajemen that holds 29.14 percent of shares and PT. Prima Visualindo that holds 27.74 percent, then established a holding company, i.e. IKM, as had been done by *RCTI* and *SCTV*. IKM has acquired the women's tabloid, *Jelita*, and the youth entertainment tabloid, *Gaul*, and will soon publish its first news tabloid, *Opini* ("Bisnis media," 2005).

The pattern of media ownership in Indonesia certainly remains unchanged by the fact that particular Chinese-Indonesian capitalists[6] (e.g. Henry Pribadi, Sudono Salim, Hary Tanoe) are essential for capital accumulation in the industry and remain politically secured by the *pribumi* (indigenous) patrons within the bureaucracy. In addition to that, as Robison (1986) points out, the Chinese investors have become an important element for the general economic process in Indonesia and for the larger indigenous capitalists by offering both "revenue and corporate and commercial infrastructure" (Robison, 1986, p. 317). This situation exactly parallels that of the private television business as well. The economic/political alliance between the Chinese capital owners and the larger indigenous capital owners in the television business seems to remain as a vital component in determining the pattern of ownership. National television business seems to be seen as challenging and

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[6] Chinese capitalists have long played a significant role and have been essential to the general process of capital accumulation and economic growth in Indonesia. See more details in Richard Robison (1986 & 2004).

extending further their power through the nationwide distributions of information, images, and ideas. This is, perhaps, the option for those powerful indigenous capital owners who attempt to expand their core business from, for instance, the finance sector (as the case of Chairul Tanjung), finance investment (as PT. Bhakti Investama of Hary Tanoe) infrastructure (Bakrie's Group), and retails business (A Latief Corporation), to the television sector.

All the illustrations in this section suggest when government interference in the private television business lessened and the regulations eased, major business players have utilised the opportunity to create a free market media environment. The broadcasting bill No. 32/2002, article 18 does regulate the system of ownership and limit the concentration of media ownership to one person or legal entity; yet both the government and the broadcasting commission (KPI) who determine the control of broadcasting seem to turn a blind eye, for instance, to the case of Hary Tanoe and PT. Bimantara Citra. Since many people tend to be worried about the powerful effects of media content (like sex, pornography, and violence), the menace of media concentration and its political consequences appear to be overlooked. The danger of media monopoly seems only to be the concern of those who are aware of the extent to which such a monopoly can influence media output.

Indeed, the wider effects of large media corporation is not easy to demonstrate overtly or to examine empirically, as the evidence is quite often circumstantial since both the creation of the programming formats and the messages carried in the content implicitly fit the interests of those who hold the control. The case of *Metro TV* mentioned previously is one example of this. Another example is when the repositioning of *TVG* was introduced to the public. The celebration of the launch was broadcast on three private TV stations under PT. Bimantara Citra, *RCTI*, *TPI*, and *TVG*, at the same time. I observed this event, when on the 26th of January 2005, a music entertainment program, namely *Sejuta Satu Malam* (One Million and One Nights), was aired in the same time slot on those three channels (known as 'blocking time') and so this consequently did not provide alternative programming for the audience. More cases were pervasive during the political and presidential campaign in the 2004 general election. *Metro TV* was again criticised for having covered more of Surya Paloh's campaign than of other candidates.

Studies on the political economy of media in the west have offered pictures of how the huge media corporations increasingly control the media, and are seen to weaken the role and rights of the society in their political participation (Schiller, 1989). Many studies in the West have also demonstrated the significant influences of the large media corporations to set the political agenda of a nation. McChesney (1999) shows that the increasing media concentration in the hands of a few large corporations in America has become a crucial problem for the western capitalist free media's role in production and reproduction of democratic processes in the country (McChesney, 1999, p. 3).

Looking at the pattern and activities of a few powerful Indonesian media magnates, some of whom are also influential supporters, even the main actors, of a major political party I believe that a similar situation has occurred in Indonesia. Those larger indigenous capitalists (e.g. Paloh, Bakrie, and Latief, all are the loyal supporters of *Golkar* party, which is still a strong party in the government) continue playing the role not only as owners of the capital, but also as, to borrow Robison's terms, "dealers in political concessions" (Robison, 1986, p. 363). So, when the media ownership remains in the hands of the dominant political and economy players, with the dominant ideology of media marketisation, which acts as a barrier to the development of alternative broadcasting services, the media democracy in the country then is still vague. The space for democratising media practices is reduced when the channels for public discourses necessary to media reform are controlled by those for whom such practices would be a threat.

Programming and Audience for Sale

All national private channels strongly believe in and rely much on the technology of the people meter, which measures the number of people watching television programs in one minute duration (or minimally 17 seconds) without considering preference of the people, whether the programs are liked or disliked, and whether the programs are good or bad ("Bagaimana mengukur," 2004, p. 17). The people meter technique is not a qualitative survey, which is able to explain in detail why the audience watch a program and like it, and what the audience actually wants (see more details Balnaves, 2002). However, for the television stations and the advertising agencies, the people meter is the quickest technique to measure numbers

of audience watching the program, and so the television rating (TVR) can be monitored immediately ("Stasiun TV," 2004, 9). The power of the people meter, the audience measurement technology served by Nielsen Media Research, is strong in determining the programming patterns of the national television. As a result, when a program gains top rating on one TV station, other stations then tend to copy or repeat the same sorts of program. Juwarno from *RCTI* explains:

> Well, I am aware that nowadays it is difficult to indicate which channel our audiences watch. All stations look similar [in programming formats]. This is the competition. In competition we should frequently steal a glance at our competitors, so we do. If the program rating is high, it means that program is what the audience wants (Personal interview, January 2003).

Private TV stations provide programs as consumer products in a supermarket, by trial and error, and then expect the audience to pick up one or several programs that will enable the institutions to attract more advertisements, regardless of the content of the program. It will then be declared by a television institution as a 'sell well' program, which in turn, other stations start to reproduce the pattern for their own institutions. However, when criticisms highlight the television institutions as providing 'rubbish' programs, the institutions will blame the audience, just as was stated by Juwarno, the manager of *RCTI*, in a personal interview:

> Don't blame the television [stations], ask the audiences why they like to consume rubbish? So, analogous to a supermarket, if audiences want it, then the stations buy it; if not they just leave it and the TV station will tell the producer or the production houses to cease producing the unwanted programs (Personal interview, January 2003).

This suggests that an active audience's selective consumption alone stimulates production. There has never been a recognition under which condition television programs are produced or created, except for ratings. Sakaril from *IVM* station also explained that no single person who establishes a television station would intend or even state that his/her TV station aims to develop the intellectual capacity of the nation (*mencerdaskan bangsa*), unless profits are also available in that process. He maintained that the reason *Indosiar* still broadcasts the traditional performances such as *Wayang Kulit* (shadow puppet show), *Wayang Orang*, *Ketoprak*, and *Srimulat* (a

traditional East Javanese comedy theatre) are actually not profit, but only to establish the image of *IVM* to its audiences (personal interview January 2003). I consider such a statement does not recognise the fact that these traditional performing arts, which are mainly broadcast after 11 pm, still attract advertising materials, and so the station still gains profits from them, though not as much as from many other popular programs.

Smythe (1977) introduces the notion of audience as a commodity in terms of media commodification in the political economy of communication context. Smythe argues that the audience is primarily a commodity of the media. Media programming, thus, is used to attract audiences; therefore, "audience labor or its labor power is the chief product of the mass media" (cited in Moscow, 1996, p. 148). For Smythe, the triad link of media, audiences and advertisers can be seen as "a set of binding reciprocal relationships: mass media programming is used to construct audience; advertisers pay media companies for access to these audiences; audiences are thereby delivered to advertisers" (Moscow, p. 148). The process of commodification, in turn, integrates comprehensively the media industries into the capitalist economy not only by producing ideologically saturated products, but also by producing audiences en masse and in particular, demographically pleasing forms for advertisers. The television institutions tend to place viewers not into active relations as "trading partners"; rather the television institutions tend to produce their audience as objects for their own purposes.

Ratings, for television, are believed to reflect the appeal of the television programs, which can be used to attract advertisers. According to Andersen (1995), television programming is affected when television stations view audiences as products needing to be sold to the advertisers; they are no longer conceptualised as "people wanting to be entertained" (Andersen, p. 9). "Designed to prime viewers and viewed primarily as a landscape for product promotion, TV shows have taken on the specific characteristics of 'commercialtainment'," (Andersen, 1995, p. 9). Moscow (1996) discusses 'commercialisation' as a process that particularly demonstrates the creation of the relationship between an audience and an advertiser, "the growth of broadcast advertising and the development of programming to deliver audiences to advertisers" (Moscow, p. 144). This is the notion of 'commodification' that can be applied here.

"Commodification describes the way capitalism carries out its objective of accumulating capital or realizing values through the transformation of use values into exchange values" (Moscow, 1996, p. 140). In this case, contemporary Indonesian television, programming has been dragged from its use values as information, education and entertainment to become exchange values, that is programming is used to attract audiences, and audiences, in turn, are delivered to advertisers.

Actually, Nielsen counts only those who stay at home watching their own television sets; many people in the hospitals' waiting rooms, in the *warung* (street stalls), in the *kampung* or village community (small) halls (*balai kampung/balai desa*), and elsewhere outside the home also watch television and they are audiences. According to Bordieu (1986), taste functions as a marker of class. Bordieu makes clear that classes or occupational segments have distinct tastes, which depend on the volume and the composition of (economic and cultural) capital that groups posses. Every different group such as a "high volume of economic capital (industrialist, commercial employers)", a "high volume of cultural capital (teachers, artistic producers)", and these "low both in economic and cultural capital (semi skilled, skilled, unskilled workers)" (Bordieu, p.128-9), have different tastes and their own lifestyle. Therefore, the Indonesian television producers and institutions seem too generic in universalising the tastes of the Indonesian television consumers who in fact come from non-homogeneous cultural backgrounds.

Certainly, for the program producers of TV stations, the rating chart is used to monitor which programs have been *oversupplied* and which programs are still *undersupplied* ("Bagaimana mengukur," 2004, p. 17). *Oversupplied* means the percentage of the program or its broadcast duration is greater than the percentage of the program consumed by the audience. For instance, entertainment and news programs for the first semester of 2004 have been oversupplied broadcast. The percentage of broadcast time of these two program types has reached 23.5 percent (for entertainment) and 18 percent (for news), while the percentage of time spent watching these two programs is 20.8 percent (for entertainment) and 11.7 percent (for news). For details, see figure 3 below. Undersupply is indicated when the percentage of hours spent by the audience to watch the program has been greater than the percentage of broadcast duration of the program. Program genres such as

children's programs, series, and movies are categorised in this chart as *undersupplied*.

Figure 2.3
Program Supplied and Program Consumed

8 Cities, All TV stations, between January and June 2004

Category	%Broadcast time	%Time spent watching
Children	6.70%	7.40%
Entertainment	23.50%	20.80%
Filler	3.00%	1.50%
Information	16.10%	9.70%
Movie	14.30%	17.50%
Religious	2.40%	1.10%
Series	12.20%	24.80%
Special	0.30%	0.70%
Sport	5.40%	4.80%
News	18.00%	11.70%
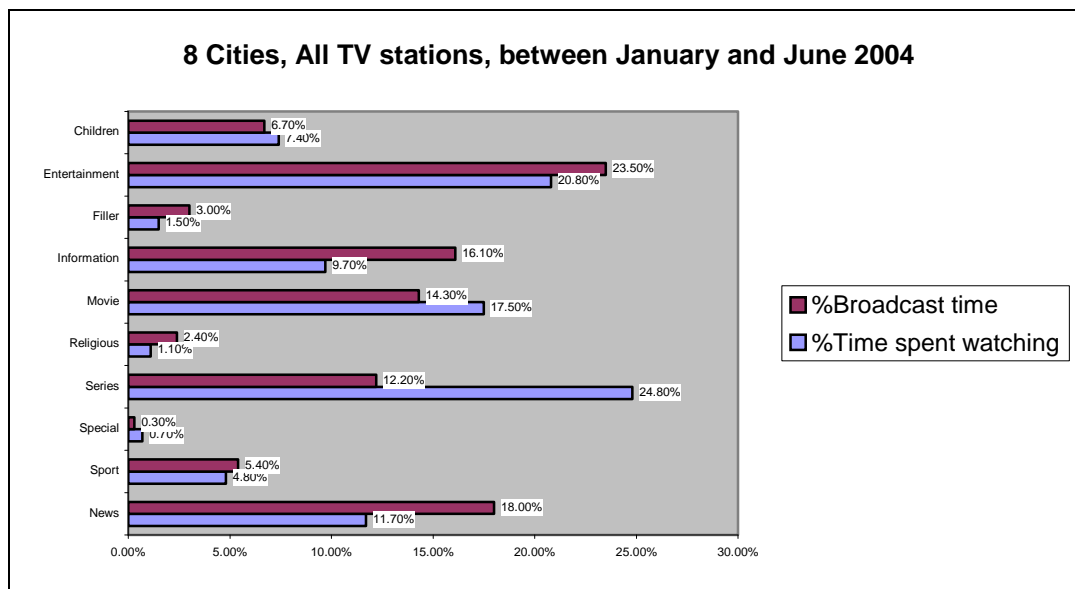
Source: Nielsen People meter Telescope in *Cakram*, 2004, p. 17

The graph above shows how ratings are manipulated by the television institutions for their programming constructions. Programs that are categorised as *oversupplied* do not automatically mean they are less watched or have lower ratings. Instead, the more available the program supplied, consequently, the greater numbers of audience that consume the shows. For instance, when all ten private TV stations in Indonesia show a news program, the spectator who wants to watch the news can switch to any TV channel that offers news program. However, when only eight channels offer *sinetron*, the number of people watching *sinetron* then might be accumulated only to those particular channels. Consequently, the percentage of time spent watching *sinetron* is high. This is why genre programs such as 'series' (*sinetron*) and 'movie' (usually it refers to Western 'Hollywood' productions), mostly gain high ratings as the percentage of TV stations' supply for the audience is limited (see appendix); whereas, the percentage of time people actually spend watching the shows is high. When the supply of program is low (*undersupplied*), and the number of the people who consume the program is high, of course, ratings of the program will be elevated. If we look in more detail the trend of rating charts (see appendices) shows that

oversupplied programs such as 'infotainment' (celebrity gossip shows), which is categorised as 'information' genre, and mystery/ghost show, which is categorised as 'entertainment' genre, have never been high-rated programs, but the TV stations continue to produce them. This is because the degree of competition is high for such genre. When all TV players produce similar genre programs, consequently, high competition occurs.

As private television stations do not know their 'actual' viewers, they then try to minimise their economic risk by stabilising not demand but supply of programs. For instance, the increasing number of mystery/ghost *sinetron* and reality shows together with TV criminal tabloid news in 2002-2004 was not so much a result of audience demand, but rather of an initiative of private stations and the producers (i.e. production houses) alone. Neither the TV stations nor programming producers or production houses know who they are "talking to" and "what the public is;" even worse, they do not know what will 'sell well' in the market. As a consequence, to minimise their risk and uncertainties with the circumstances of the actual audiences, private TV stations tend to play safe by repeating programs or copying other stations' productions rather than having the courage to introduce alternative or new programming models.

The following part examines three program genres that highlight the patterns that have been dominated the private TV programming during 2000 and 2004.

Trends of National Programming

Today's competitive atmosphere among the private television stations in Indonesia has pressured the television producers to sell sensational issues. The national television market has been spellbound with cheaply produced gossip programs—known as 'infotainment'. A second kind of popular program depicting superstition or supernatural creatures or happenings has also become a new trend of national television shows. These are popularly known as *Tayangan Misteri* (Mystery/ghost shows). They are fantasy-based 'reality' programs that have been perceived by the TV producers as an instant way to generate income with cheap production cost. These programs quite frequently present scenes of sadism, violence, and bloodshed

seemingly with no hint of censorship, as if, the more the blood, the more popular the show; and the more scary the face of the beast, the more popular the drama.

Celebrity Gossip

Celebrity stories dominate the entertainment mass-market tabloids and the television industry in Indonesia today. They represent a significant proportion of the national television programming content. Weekly, there are about forty celebrity gossip shows (see the appendices) broadcast on all private channels. These programs have commercialised the Indonesian celebrities private lives and gossip, mostly their love affairs, marriages, separations or divorces, and pre-marital pregnancies. Turner, Bonner, and Marshall put it (in a different context), "the promotion of celebrity has been widely represented – even within the media which depends upon it – as the epitome of the trivialisation of the media, of the duping of contemporary consumers into pathetic relationships with fantasy figures peddled to them through the tabloid press" (Turner, Bonner, & Marshal, 2000, p. 5).

Sinetron story lines, the characters, and gossip about the stars have been used as resources by the Indonesian media every day. A myriad of press publications, particularly entertainment tabloids and magazines, have found a rich source of gossip from the rising *sinetron* stars, and have used this gossip as a commodity, thus creating a new celebrity world. Although the commercialisation of celebrity private stories has raised concern among the celebrities themselves, the flood of such television shows has also encouraged the growth of media chain businesses, like TV tabloids, women's magazines, and celebrities' web sites.

These celebrity gossip shows have become more popular since 1997 and they have grown rapidly through the new millennium (see appendix 1). It was *RCTI* which introduced the first such program called *Buletin Sinetron* produced by PT. Bintang Advistama Media (hereafter, BAM) in 1994. PT. BAM, which formerly concentrated its business on press publication, has produced a similar gossip show, namely *Cek & Ricek* (Check and recheck) since 1997. Tempted by the popularity of these two shows, Ilham Bintang, an entertainment producer, has also produced a similar program, namely *Halo Selebriti* (Hello Celebrity) broadcast on *SCTV* and *Kroscek* (Cross check) broadcast on *Trans TV*. According to Bintang, *Cek & Ricek* is

produced in order to improve the image of celebrities. Bintang has profited much from his infotainment programs. One episode of *Cek & Ricek*, for example, sells to *RCTI* for about 35 million rupiah, a profit of about 20 per cent for his production house from only one episode of one infotainment show. *Cek & Ricek* is broadcast three times a week on *RCTI*. With his several infotainment publications, Ilham Bintang has become a new media tycoon benefiting from the growing *sinetron* and entertainment industry in the new era of Indonesia.

Ghost Shows

Aside from the abundance of celebrity gossip programs (see appendix 2), the national private channels have also taken advantage of the popularity of mystery and horror *sinetron* by producing the so-called 'mystery/ghost reality shows'. This new trend in national TV programming exploits belief in the existence of ghosts and the supernatural spirits to entertain national audiences in the form of both *sinetron* drama mini-series and reality TV shows featuring those who claim to have seen ghosts. Particular places such as bridges, small mosques, old buildings, hospitals, and even sites of bus and car crashes, which are still believed to be haunted by such supernatural creatures, have become the locales for these shows. For instance, the bridge at Ancol, a popular beach in north Jakarta, is believed to be haunted by a girl who was raped and murdered there. It is believed that she walks on the bridge in the night wearing a white dress.

The economics of these 'mystery' programs are almost as incredible as their content. For instance, the advertising price particularly for these reality TV shows, which are mostly broadcast between 9.00 pm and 11 pm, was about six to ten million rupiahs (or equal to AU$1,200 to $2,000 with exchange rate AU$1 equal to Rp. 5,000) between 2002 and 2003. It was reported that there were on average about 37 advertising spots during the broadcast in the first six months in 2003, and the profit gained was about 259 million rupiahs (or equal to AU$ 50,000) per episode broadcast for the show run between 30 minutes to one hour (Mohammad, Mala, Bakri & Haryadi, 2003).

One of the programs, titled *Dunia Lain* (Other World), broadcast on *Trans TV* every Tuesday and Thursday nights, has become the most popular show among other

similar programs. *Dunia Lain* claims to exploit this "other world" of non-physical entities that can be found in many places in Indonesia from the haunted houses to the crashed buses that resulted in fatalities. In the last segment, it always an *ulama* (Muslim leader) explaining how Islam views ghosts and/or supernatural objects by citing verses of the Koran. The Muslim leader also tries to convince Muslims put their trust in God almighty rather than in such mystical spirits.

Another model of 'mystery show' is a tabloid TV-news format. Programs like *Kismis* (an acronym for '*Kisah Misteri*' or Mystery Stories) is designed like an 'infotainment' program. The show covers eyewitnesses, celebrities or common people, who claim to have seen ghosts or experienced some aspect of the supernatural world. There is also a format adapted from the Hollywood movie *Ghost Buster*. The program, called *Ekspedisi Hantu* (Ghost Expedition) on *TV 7*, shows four Muslim religious teachers exploring the supernatural spirits haunting a private house or office. These four teachers are seen communicating with the spirit using a volunteer as a medium. After these *kyais* recite the Koranic verses, the spirit enters the volunteer's body. The *kyais* then speak to the spirit who has been "transformed" into the human body. He or she is asked to move away from the house or the office and not to frighten human beings.

The popularity of these programs might be embedded in traditional mystical and mythical beliefs that still circulate in the society since some people still take pleasure in their belief in mystical speculation in which rationality is combined with intuition. The involvement of the *kyais* in every show seems to legitimise that superstition and the creature of "the other world" do exist.

Sinetron: The Most-watched show of Indonesian Television

Three major *sinetron* genres are dominant on national private channels; they are *sinetron* drama, drama-comedy (always with a particular ethnic content), and legend colossal based on epic stories from mythology. *Sinetron* drama is always created in the urban-based settings of upper class communities with glossy and glamorous presentations. In contrast, *sinetron* comedy is typically produced by utilising the 'uniqueness' or the apparently bizarre characteristics of particular ethnic communities living in the marginal areas of metropolitan Jakarta. S*inetron* legend

colossal is quite distinct from these two urban-based *sinetron* as it use pre-modern historical periods of Indonesia as indicated by the costumes, the landscapes, and style of life.

The influences of Western soap operas and Latin telenovelas in the creation of Indonesian *sinetron*, especially melodramatic genre, have also added to the diverse cultural landscape of the national *sinetron* in Indonesian television. The melodramatic drama—in Indonesia it is called 'drama' usually consisting of family drama (*drama rumah tangga*) and teenage drama (*drama remaja*)—is the most appealing genre of Indonesian *sinetron* for many reasons, though there is a wide variety of 'new' *sinetron* formats and styles in Indonesia. *Sinetron* melodrama like *Tersanjung* (Flattered) and *Kehormatan* (Honour) portray the lives of rich families, their love affairs and tears, and glamour and are upper class oriented. These '*sinetron gedongan*' (*sinetron* of elite class)—as many print media call them—then, are seen as selling dreams. Thus, the portrait of the Indonesian *sinetron* industry since the late 1990s continues similar to the trends in the film industry during the New Order[7]. As Taufiq Ismail (1977) and Salim Said (1987)[8] pointed out, Indonesian cinema in the New Order era was always middle class and nouveau rich oriented (cited in Heider, 1991, p. 27).

Sinetron as a form of modern Indonesian culture marginalise regional cultures for the socially diverse national audience. Indonesian *sinetron* are mainly urban Jakarta-oriented. Although in some *sinetron* both comedy series and dramas, regional settings are used as local colour, the language used is always Indonesian with occasionally local/regional phrases thrown in. *Sinetron* like *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* (Doel, a Student) and recently a popular comedy series *Bajaj Bajuri* (Bajuri's Bajaj) are examples of "regional" *sinetron* that celebrate the rowdiness of Betawians and

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[7] More about the cinema industry during the New Order see Krishna Sen (1994). See also Sen (2002) on the new pace of Indonesian cinema post-New Order.

[8] Taufiq Ismail (1977) wrote these observations about the depictions in Indonesian films. He reported that of the 27 finalist films in the 1977 Indonesian Film Festival, 85.1 percent were set in cities; 92.6 percent concerned with middle classes; 18.5 percent featured Mercedes and Volvo cars; 70.3 percent showed at least one family with only one child; 52.1 percent of the urban films had nightclub scenes; 40.7 percent of the films showed extramarital sex; 7.2 percent showed suicide (Heider, 1991, p. 27). Ten years later, Salim Said (1987) made another tally of 15 finalists of the 1987 Indonesian Film Festival and the result was much the same. Said even acknowledged that the urban middle classes emphasis was even sharper and extramarital sex was up. He reported that there was no religion mentioned in those films (Heider, 1991, p. 27). See also Krishna Sen (1999) on melodramas in Indonesian cinema.

their everyday practices inclusive with the people ethos [9]. Yet, this degree of regionalism is rare on the national 'supermarket' television screen. More detail on *sinetron* as the popular cultural industry will be discussed in the next *Chapter Three*.

A New Kind of Communal Censorship

In terms of censorship in post-authoritarian Indonesia, private television broadcasting stations have been experiencing less government control. Although the censorship standards used for film are also applied for particular television products, such as locally-made television serials (*sinetron*) and advertisements, the enforcement of censorship for television content from the state authority has been minimal. In the case of *sinetron* productions, for instance, according to several television managers, private television stations do not have an obligation to present all *sinetron* to the government censorship body, LSF[10]. Only foreign imported films should go first to LSF before they are screened. In fact, the Broadcasting Bill no. 32/2002, article 47, obliges, "Broadcast content in the form of film and/or advertisement must pass censor of the competent authority." Based on this Bill, the television stations and production houses have interpreted that *sinetron* is an exclusion of broadcasting material to be censored.

According to Public Relations manager of RCTI in a personal interview, so far private television stations have used their own internal standards to censor all visual materials including advertisements, talk shows, quizzes, and other variety shows. Self-censorship is practised because nowadays there is a trend in Indonesia for particular ethnic or religious groups to attack television stations to protest unwanted coverage or materials broadcast on television—which might be called 'communal censorship'. This communal censorship, usually a demonstration or mass protest, has been bothersome to private television stations. For example, conservative Islamic groups protested the *SCTV* broadcast of a Latin telenovela, titled *Esmeralda*, only because it had a female servant character named 'Fatima' in the show. The group

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[9] Irawanto (2004) demonstrates how the representations of regionalism and ethnic identities, particularly the Betawi in Jakarta, have been marginalised in the *sinetron* productions.

[10] The Institute of Film Censorship (*Lembaga Sensor Film* LSF) was a strong censorship body during the New Order era (see Sen, 1994, Sen & Hill, 2000). In the *reformasi* era, the Department of Information was closed by the president Abdurrahman Wahid, so that LSF was placed under the Department of National Education in 1999. In 2000, when Megawati became the President, LSF was moved under the non-departmental Ministerial body called Culture and Tourism Development Body (*Badan Pengembangan Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata* BPKP).

objected to the use of the name 'Fatima', as Fatima was one of the Prophet Mohammed's daughters. This conservative group called on the channel to stop broadcasting the drama, and threatened to attack the station.

In February 2002, the Indonesian Ulema Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) issued a *tausiah* (a protest or a moral call) to stop the broadcasting of three television programs i.e. a live music show *Dansa Yo Dansa* (Dance come on Dance) on *TVRI*, a talk show *Love & Life* on *Metro TV*, and a magazine TV show *Majalah X* (Magazine X) on *SCTV*. *Dansa Yo Dansa* was objected to as it presented couples dancing in each other's arms. *Majalah X* was seen to be erotically exploring female bodies, and *Love & Life* was objected to for discussing sexuality and sensuality. In that protest, MUI also stated that there would be particular communal groups who do not agree with pornography on the media, who would take legal action against those television channels. The result was that *TVRI* has continued to broadcast *Dansa Yo Dansa,* whilst *SCTV* has discontinued *Majalah X*, and *Metro TV* has changed the topics of discussion in *Love & Life*. This kind of intimidation of the media continues into the present.

In August 2002, a television community service advertisement titled 'Islamic Rainbow' (*Islam Warna Warni*) sponsored by the Liberal Islam Network (*Jaringan Islam Liberal* JIL) broadcast on *RCTI* and *SCTV,* was condemned by *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI), a conservative Muslim community group who wanted the ad banned. MMI claimed the advertising misrepresented the facts about Islam and its followers. The MMI also complained about the advertising of condoms for contraception on several private TV stations. They not only sent the protest to all Indonesian media, but also called in to the stations. In May 2003, a group of Islamic conservatives called Anti Pornography Forum (*Forum Anti Pornografi dan Pornoaksi*, FORGAPP) protested and attacked *Trans TV* for screening a performance of the controversial female *dangdut* singer Inul Daratista, who offended Indonesia's conservative Muslims and Ulemas with her erotic styles of dance and performance[11].

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[11] The Inul Daratista controversial case in 2003 was a remarkable case that openly challenged the morality and the increasing Islamic conservatism that is gradually sweeping a large part of Indonesian society. Inul is a new comer *dangdut* singer from a rural area of East Java. What had concerned people in Indonesia was Inul's "*ngebor*" dance, which roughly translates to "drilling". Her style of dangdut dance has sparked condemnation from Muslim Ulemas. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued a "*fatwa*" (a religious instruction) against Inul and declared Inul's dancing style as *haram* (forbidden) and immoral.

Fearful of such communal attack, Teguh Juwarno from *RCTI* in a personal interview explained his TV station has already established its own censorship department, and its censorship standards rely on Non Government Organisations (NGOs) such as media watch, women's NGOs, religious groups, and others. Meanwhile, another TV station, *SCTV* (under responsibility of its programming and broadcast department), applies its own censorship standard, particularly for Western productions. In particular for *sinetron* productions, *SCTV* tends to trust and rely on the production houses, which supply the programs to the station. Several programs like news, current affairs, TV magazine, quizzes, and talk shows have never been sent to the LSF body. The programming producers of these shows are responsible for editing and censoring the content.

It has been expected that the political transformation of Indonesia after *reformasi* 1998 would give more freedom of expression, including for television. The social pressures from public bodies, particularly religious and ethnic groups, are often pervasive. There are particular social interest groups who monitor television for content abuse of what are called the "nation's morals" (*moral bangsa*). Among those interests are the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Islamic Defender Front (*Front Pembela Islam* FPI), Anti Pornography Forum (FORGAPP), conservative Muslim community Hizbuth Thahir Indonesia (HTI), and the Balinese Hindu Dharma. For instance, the Hindu Balinese community protested against a *sinetron* depicting particular ethnic and religious communities and their everyday ritual life *Sukreni Gadis Bali* (Sukreni, a Balinese girl) in 1993 and *Angling Dharma* (name of person) in 2001. *Sukreni* and *Angling Dharma* were seen as failing to represent the cultural realities of the traditional Balinese. In *Sukreni*, for example, the use of sheep instead of pigs (so as not to offend Muslims) for ritual celebration was considered inappropriate. It was also considered against formal tradition to show Balinese wearing headbands, which Balinese males wear only for religious purposes. Also the presentation of a coffee stall (*warung kopi*) as a place for sex trading was not appropriate representation for the protesting Balinese. According to the *Hindu Dharma* (a specific Balinese religious institution) leader, there are no coffee stalls in Bali used for sexual trading. Similarly, other Balinese viewers protested *Angling Dharma* aired on *Indosiar* as the drama was perceived as insulting to particular

religions (Islam and Hinduism) and distorted the traditional Balinese history. They complained to the Ministry of Religion in Jakarta.

Materials pertaining to SARA (ethnicity, religion, and racial relations)[12] and sexual themes are the most crucial and sensitive issues in the Indonesian context. Sexual scenes and the wearing of bikinis and mini skirts have become the prominent foci of censorship in the Indonesian television industry. Sadism, violence, and coarse language, however, receive less attention. For television, the censors focus primarily on foreign films and productions and less on local programs. That is why almost all Western TV series like *Charmed*, *Buffy*, *Friends* or *Dowson Creek*, are broadcast after 9.00 pm, whilst family drama, romance, and action *sinetron* are screened in the evening at 6 pm to 9 pm for general audiences. In addition, there is no age category label for any broadcasting material including *sinetron* in Indonesia, except for Western and Indonesian films. So, all *sinetron* are deemed suitable for all ages. The potential viewers of television are counted from 5+ years old (AC Nielsen in *Media Scene*, 2003).

In December 2003, the management of ten private television stations instigated and signed an agreement to issue codes of television ethics called Guidelines of Television Practices (*Pedoman Perilaku Televisi* PTT). In this guideline, private television stations, which are organised under the Association of Indonesian Private Television (*Asosiasi Televisi Swasta Indonesia*, ATVSI), agree to evaluate and minimise the scenes of mysticism, pornography, violence and criminality, alcohol and drug abuse. The guideline also recommends a charge and social sanction for the TV station that violates this code of ethics. As stated in the guideline, ten private stations are also required to establish a committee called Committee for Upholding the Guidelines of Televisual Practices (*Komisi Penegakan Pedoman Perilaku Televisi,* KPPPTV) to monitor the implementation of the code of ethics and to examine public protests and complaints toward the television channels. The establishment of the committee is also expected to prevent the television stations from communal attacks. However, the implementation of the code of ethics and the establishment of KPPPTV remain undetermined until the present-day.

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[12] For more discussion about the issue of SARA in Indonesian media see Sen & Hill (2000), Hill & Sen (2005), and Kitley (2000).

TVRI in Post-Authoritarian Era

Ang (1991) acknowledges that the idea of public service broadcasting is historically and institutionally varied, but in the end, this institution becomes "paternal" and is characterized by "cultural responsibility and social accountability." In Ang's terms the "audience as public" consists "not of consumers, but of citizens who must be reformed, educated, informed, as well as entertained--in short, 'served'--presumably to enable them to better perform their democratic rights and duties" (Ang, 1991, p.28-29). Parallel to this view, Negt and Kluge (1993, p. 113) point out that public-service television, as a state institution, has reproduced the exclusiveness, paternalism, and elitism of the bourgeois public sphere (a notion derived from Habermas).

Indonesian television, particularly the state-owned television *TVRI*, for more than thirty years has functioned as one of the ideological apparatuses of the state in promoting national identity and political stability throughout the archipelago (see Sen & Hill, 2000). "Television in Indonesia cannot be understood as a wholly distinct form of cultural expression; modes of analysis and criticism of television must be sensitive to the political, economic, and cultural discourses in which it is situated" (Kitley, 2000, p. 332). Indonesian television was "a creature of the New Order" (Sen & Hill, 2000, p. 131) in the sense that the medium was institutionally and textually developed in the context of its rising significance as the government's propaganda tool for its policies, and as a site for defining Indonesian national culture by the regime. Has the state-owned television (*TVRI*) shifted in the post-New Order era? What is the role of TVRI in the *reformasi* period? How does the new broadcasting bill (*UU Penyiaran no. 32/2002*) encourage and underpin the rise of regional/community television broadcasting in Indonesia? And how will this new regulation affect the existence of private television stations and the status of *TVRI* in the future?

To Be or Not to Be a Public Television

As stated in government regulation (*Peraturan Pemerintah*) PP no. 36/2000 (6 June 2000) Television of Republic Indonesia is the only public television service owned and funded by the government. This regulation changed the status of *TVRI* from a directorate under the Department of Information to become an independent

government enterprise (*Perusahaan Jawatan*, Perjan), but the government was still responsible for funding the station. All *TVRI*'s employees, who hold status as government officers/civil servants, were organised under the Department of Finance. However, as Kitley argues PP no. 36/2000 does not provide evidence of the government's intention to establish *TVRI* as an independent public broadcasting service (Kitley, 2002, p. 94).

As part of that *TVRI* transformation, a year later i.e. in June 2001, the government assigned Sumita Tobing, formerly an employee in the private television sector, as the managing director of the station. Four months later, in October 2001, Sumita initiated a change in the status of *TVRI* to become an independent 'profit making' institution. Sumita, on behalf of *TVRI*, also discontinued the agreement (which had never been fully implemented) between *TVRI* and those five private TV stations (*RCTI, SCTV, TPI, ANTV, IVM*) to pay *TVRI* 12.5 percent of their advertising revenues, as Sumita was confident that TVRI itself could also gain income from advertisements (Fibri & Yasra, 2003, p. 52). Sumita then urged the government to change the status of *TVRI* from government enterprise (*Perjan*) to become a fully limited liability institution (known as *Perseroan Terbatas*, PT). On 17 April 2002 the government issued regulation PP No. 9/2002 to give the status of *TVRI* as a limited company (*Perseroan Terbatas*), and consequently the government removed the 2003 operational budget for this TV station (Fibri & Yasra, p. 52-53).

However, as *TVRI* continued to face financial problems, on 15 April 2003, Megawati's government revised the status of *TVRI* again, which remained a limited liability company but was to be overseen by the State Ministry of Government Enterprises (*Kementrian BUMN*). Since then this Ministry has been responsible for the transformation process. As part of the transformation process, the former minister of government enterprise, Laksamana Sukardi, ex-treasurer of and activist of PDIP party, formed a new board. Laksamana also established a new management structure of TVRI and replaced Sumita Tobing with Hari Sulistyono in the position of managing director. Hari previously headed the now defunct news Internet portal Lippostar established in 2000 by Lippo Group of which Laksamana used to be CEO. Eny Harjanto, Laksamana's friend and a prominent CEO of Citibank Indonesia, was

appointed as News and Programming Director of *TVRI* (Dewanto, Yasra, & Setiawan, 2003).

Although those reputable business persons are employed by the government to manage *TVRI*, the financial condition of *TVRI*, especially some regional *TVRI* stations, remains problematic. In fact, the impact appears to be negative, with the 23 regional stations now experiencing financial problems and some on the edge of bankruptcy since the central government in Jakarta no longer provides funding for the regional stations and these regional "*TVRI*" stations are no longer under control of the central *TVRI* in Jakarta. For instance, regional *TVRI* Medan in North Sumatra, was not on air between March and April 2003. *TVRI* Medan shut down its 22 relay transmitters entirely in North Sumatra. *TVRI* Padang in West Sumatra has also been closed since April 2003.

Meanwhile, *TVRI* Surabaya has asked the provincial government to top up its operating budget. *TVRI* Surabaya needs to meet its operational costs of about 1.5 billion rupiah per month, with 600 million rupiah for relay programs from Jakarta, and 200 million rupiah for the operation of 18 transmission stations in East Java province ("Nasib "TVRI" daerah," 2003). The worst case was experienced by *TVRI* Denpasar Bali, which was unable to broadcast for two months in 2003, as this regional station could not pay its electricity bill. Since March 2003, *TVRI* Denpasar only broadcast its own local programs. Regional *TVRI* Yogyakarta is in a somewhat better position. *TVRI* Yogyakarta can still operate its 15 local programs because they are sponsored by several companies[13].

With its status of a fully limited company, *TVRI* has started to reintroduce advertisements. The *TVRI* management believes that is the only possible way to seek income for *TVRI*, with only ten percent of the budget government subsidised. It does not make sense to continue requiring audience fees (*iuran pemirsa*), while audiences are indeed not watching TVRI. However, the new Broadcasting Bill 32/2002 requires

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[13] Since regional *TVRI* stations no longer receive funding from the central government, the employees, particularly those who are a civil servant status (*Pegawai Negeri*, PNS), become a provincial government's employees and receive salaries from it, while non-civil servants get paid from the regional station itself (Personal interview with the head of News Department of *TVRI* Surabaya, May 2003). Some regional *TVRI* stations are now fully funded by the provincial government, and others receive funding from the provincial government and seek the rest from commercial/advertising. Some regional stations still pay a fee and broadcast relay programs from the central *TVRI*, but others, who cannot pay the fees, broadcast only their own local productions.

TVRI as a public television broadcaster to find its funding not only from the governmental subsidies and non-commercial resources, but also from the audience contribution through subscription fee (or *iuran televisi*). The broadcasting bill article 15 states that the public broadcasting institution can seek funding from: (1) broadcasting subscription fee (*iuran televisi*); (2) the state and/or regional budget (APBN/APBD); (3) public donations; (4) advertisements; (5) other legitimate business relating to broadcasting.

Considering these funding sources, it is problematic for *TVRI* to function as a real public service broadcaster. How, then, is it possible for the central *TVRI* and the 23 regional stations to function as a public service institution, which serves to catalyse the formation of an institutional space within the broader public sphere that would become the base of a broader institutional transformation of the media in Indonesia? The Bill's assertion also contradicts the role of public service broadcasting, which should provide free space and access for its audience. Public service television, according to Negt and Kluge (1993), cannot utilize its capability for communication in the same way as "the private consciousness industry" (Negt & Kluge, p. 100).

Nielsen's January 2001 survey showed that though the audience share of *TVRI* was far below that of the private television stations, there is still hope for *TVRI*, as this station is still popular with audiences in three cities: Bandung, Semarang, and Surabaya (see *Table 2.2* in the previous part). However, two years later, another Nielsen survey shows that the number of individuals watching *TVRI* programs had further declined. The data of television audience share from 19 January – 22 February 2003 indicates that *TVRI* was watched by only about 600,000 people. From 23 February – 1 March 2003, the audiences who watched this station were only 550,000 people (*Media Scene*, 2003). The people meter technique (rating), which only operates in the cities, does not count all the television viewers in Indonesia. *TVRI* could still be watched throughout large parts of the Indonesian archipelago not picked up by the ratings.

In fact, *TVRI*'s national programming content does reflect diversity of programming and does provide audiences with alternative entertainment and information to commercial television. With its own programs, *TVRI* has produced "audience as public," in Ang's terms, "not of consumers, but of citizens who must be reformed,

educated, informed, as well as entertained" (Ang, 1991, p. 29). *TVRI*'s programming such as *Aneka Ria Anak-Anak Nusantara* (children's performances from the Indonesian archipelago), *Musik Pop Daerah* (regional pop music), *Panorama Indonesia*, *Pagi di Nusantara* (morning in the archipelago), *Wanita dan Pembangunan* (women and development), *Budaya Pertiwi* (local culture), *Bintang Nusantara* (star of the archipelago), *Teknologi Tepat Guna* (operative technology), *Drama Tradisional* (traditional drama), *Tari Daerah* (regional dancing), *Drama Melayu* (malay Sumatera drama), *Cerita Untuk Anak* (tales for children), *Mimbar Agama* (religious program), and so forth, provide a sense of regionalism, multiculturalism, and pluralism. Programs like *Teknologi Tepat Guna* provides education for farmers and small domestic enterprises, whilst programs like *Wanita dan Pembangunan*, *Panorama Indonesia*, *Pagi di Nusantara* offer localised information for audiences. Programs such as *Budaya Pertiwi*, *Drama Traditional*, *Tari Daerah*, and *Drama Melayu* present alternative entertainment to counter Hollywood movies, Telenovela, Indian drama, and even locally produced dramas, *sinetron*, which flourish on private channels.

Apart from that, the performances and persistence of regional *TVRI* are still remarkable. For instance, *TVRI* regional Padang has become an alternative public television in the West Sumatera provincial areas. TVRI Padang has been successful in making a breakthrough and consistently presenting local content about the *Minangkabau* (ethnic origin of West Sumatera) customary (*adat*) and cultures ("Dikelola profesional," 2005).

In sum, *TVRI* has potential for massive audience numbers. With 400 transmitters and 23 regional stations, *TVRI* is able to reach larger numbers of the television viewers in the country. Unfortunately, this station is unable to invent audiences by designing programs that represent the richness of ethnic diversity in Indonesia. *TVRI* has failed to provide a viable alternative to private television for its audiences.

Local/Regional and Community Television

The Symptoms

The expansion of regional autonomy of government has also opened up the possibility for development of more local commercial television and community service television. Responding to this situation, several local and community television channels for local audiences with local content have been established by both local government and local media business groups. The initiative to establish local and community television institutions is also supported by major private companies located in provincial areas, like the oil company PT LNG Bontang in Kalimantan, by individuals, and by several NGOs concerned with public and community television such as KTVPI, Yayasan SET, ISAI, and so forth.

There have been more than 53 local private and community service broadcasters (see appendix 5). However, only some of these broadcast consistently. *JTV* and *Bali TV* broadcast eight to nine hours a day from 3 pm to midnight. Other local and community television channels broadcast only two to five hours per day. Local and community televisions in Indonesia vary from those that are commercial such as *JTV*, *Bali TV*, *Pacific TV* and *Riau TV*, and some that are non-profit oriented such as community television channels run by several universities like *Ganesha TV* (ITB Bandung), *TVUI* (UI Jakarta), *Widya Mandala TV* (UWM Surabaya), *UPNTV* (UPN Surabaya), by local communities like *Banyuwangi TV* in Banyuwangi East Java, by local private companies like *LNG TV* Bontang and *PKTV* Bontang, and by the regional governments such as *TV Balikpapan* (East Kalimantan), *TV Pasir* (East Kalimantan), *TV Kota Tarakan* (East Kalimantan), *TV Muara Teweh* (Central Kalimantan), *TV Siantar* (North Sumatra), *TV Pemalang* (Central Java), and *TV Wonogiri* (Solo) (For details on numbers of local and community television stations, see appendix).

Examples of local (private) television stations that have been succeeded in their local areas are *JTV* in Surabaya, *Bali TV* in Bali, and *Jak TV* in Jakarta, owned by Tomy Winata, an Indonesian-Chinese business man, who is a business partner of Indonesian Army, and the opponent of *Tempo* magazine. *Bali TV* is managed by PT. Bali Naradha Televisi, which is owned by K. Naradha's family who also runs *Bali*

Post newspaper. At its launch in 2002, *Bali TV* faced conflict with the Department of Post and Telecommunication, which manages and organises frequency. The Department asked the provincial Bali government to shut off the operation of *Bali TV*, as the station has used the frequency of *Metro TV*. It was argued that *Metro TV* Jakarta had permission to broadcast in Bali in channel 39 UHF; while *Bali TV* had permission to broadcast in channel 37 UHF. In fact, the data from the Ministry of Communication and Information Office stated that *Metro TV* had broadcast in Bali using channel 35 UHF. Bali's Governor, however, refused to close the station and argued that the provincial government of Bali had issued the permit (No.1484/BITD/11 November 2002) for PT. Bali Naradha Televisi to operate its station in channel 39 UHF.

Bali TV launched its initial programs voicing the aspiration of the Balinese citizens to preserve their own culture and tradition. Unlike *JTV* that still has to consolidate its position attracting Surabaya's public, *Bali TV* is already accepted widely by Balinese people. When I stayed in my Balinese friend's house at *kampung* Legian Kuta in March 2003, I saw several viewers who live in that *kampung* sitting in front of their TV sets waiting for the broadcast of *Bali TV*. Although it was still some time before the program was due to begin and at that time the *Bali TV* channel was still screening the colour bars with Balinese gamelan music, the viewers appeared to be patient and loyal to wait for the program to start. Most of *Bali TV*'s programs are in Balinese language and present local Balinese cultural performances and everyday life of its people. For this reason, *Bali TV* is a favourite channel for Balinese people and more popular than other private television channels.

It is probably more exciting for Balinese people to watch their own culture and everyday life of their people rather than to watch traffic jams in Sudirman and Thamrin streets of Jakarta screened on *Metro TV*, which is irrelevant for the Balinese; there is lack of proximity with these audiences. Indeed, the establishment of local commercial television stations run by the local media groups are expected to provide alternative television medium for particular local/regional viewers. These television stations depict and present the local/regional cultural looks and identity so that the local/regional viewers would not be dominated by the images of urban Jakarta, which flourish on national private television.

However, the pattern of large corporations in controlling the national level television stations has been followed by some local/regional investors. Particular local investors have acted as the so-called regional 'little kings' (*raja-raja kecil*) and started to expand their power to build several local television stations in several regional provinces as is the case with Satria Naradha, a son of Ketut Naradha and CEO of *Bali Post* daily and private local TV, *Bali TV*. The success of *Bali TV* has inspired Satria Naradha to expand his initiative and invest his capital by establishing several other local private television stations in Java such as *Yogya TV* in Central Java, *Semarang TV* also in Central Java, *Bandung TV* in West Java, and *Surabaya TV* in East Java. Similarly, Dahlan Iskan, owner of Jawa Pos Group, has established *JTV* (to cover not only Surabaya area, but also East Java at large) and its network, *Riau TV* in Sumatera.

In addition, since the Broadcasting Bill 2002 requires the private 'national' television station to operate only in Jakarta (i.e. centrally) and collaborate with local/regional TV organisers for network broadcasting, those large corporations then move to establish their regional stations in several cities. Among companies who have asked for a new permit are those existing players that already run private 'nationwide' television companies. For instance, PT. Media Nusantara Citra (MNC), holding company of *RCTI*, *Global TV*, and *TPI*, has lodged an application to establish *Cakra TV* under its subsidiary company, PT. Media Cakrawala Nusantara (MCN), in several major cities in Indonesia. It is questionable, therefore, whether or not this expansion of new local television channels and the increased number of TV channels will bring about the potential climate of media democratisation in Indonesia post-New Order.

Jawa Pos TV (JTV): An Example

JTV in Surabaya, owned by Dahlan Iskan, a media magnate in East Java, who has also expanded his newspaper business in many local/regional areas of Indonesia, has declared itself committed for putting the local/regional cultural performing arts and cultural events central stage of the station. This local private station operates from 12 noon to 11pm. Seventy percent of its programs are produced in-house and thirty percent are sourced from production houses and other TV programming suppliers. *JTV* first aired in 2002, and its content is seventy percent local Surabaya and East

Java affairs. Several months after its launch, *JTV* was temporarily closed by the East Java provincial police for licensing reasons. There was a misunderstanding between *JTV*'s management and the provincial police. The management used government regulation (*Peraturan Pemerintah* PP) no. 25/2000 which regulates the authority of provincial government as the autonomous body. Meanwhile, the regional police under the order of the Department of Post and Telecommunication, claimed that JTV broke the regulation UU no. 36/1999 about Telecommunication and UU no.24/1977 about broadcasting.

The audience share of *JTV*, according to Nielsen Media Research in 2002, was about 0.5 or it was watched by approximately 500,000 people. Coverage of *JTV* so far is Surabaya, East Java province, and several regional areas of East Java, except Banyuwangi, which can receive *Bali TV* better than *JTV*. Among its in-house programs, *JTV* mainly depicts local Surabaya events, traditional arts performances such as *Ludruk* (traditional comedy play), *Kidungan* (Surabaya's traditional rhymes), *Kentrunk* (bamboo musical concert), *Ketoprak Reformasi* (Javanese traditional play), its local news using Javanese Surabaya language and dialects, *Pojok Kampung* (Kampung Corner) and its popular public TV talk-back program, namely *Cangkrukan* (Gathering) every Sunday night. Recently, since the coverage areas of *JTV* have increased to include Madura Island, the station produces a local news program called *Pojok Meduro* (Madura Corner).

Pojok Kampung is a news program broadcast twice a day on *JTV*, at noon and at 9 pm. *Pojok Kampung* has become controversial and the subject of public outcry in Surabaya and among other East Java audiences. The use of East Javanese dialect, known as *Suroboyoan,* and terms has been perceived by particularly the middle-class audiences as rude and vulgar. For instance, to describe a rape incident, the news presenter said "*arek wedok iku diencuk koncone dewe*" (the girl was fucked by her male friend). The use of the term '*diencuk*' is considered coarse as this term is used only among intimates and in informal or casual conversation among the *kampung* Surabaya people. Also some viewers consider the use of terms such as '*empal brewok*' (*empal* is a fried beef, *brewok* means have a beard) to describe vagina and '*pistol gombyok*' (*pistol* is a gun, *gombyok* means thick/dense) to describe penis, "unwise" in journalistic language. However, these terms are commonly used by the

yellow/cheap newspaper *Memorandum* daily in Surabaya and sometimes even used by *Jawa Pos* the national daily itself.

Sometimes, the local TV owner and producer do not know how to translate and interpret the term 'local' itself. Being local television seems to mean presenting all the materials in local language and dialect, as in the case of *JTV* in Surabaya. This station has also dubbed Western Hollywood movies and Latin soap operas *telenovela* in *Suroboyoan* language. So we find James Bond 'speaking' in Javanese *Suroboyoan* dialect. This is not mandated in any sense by legal definition, nor indeed does the dubbing make James Bond "local." Being local television does not mean that the station should dub Hollywood films into local dialect or read national news using local dialect and terms.

If the case of *TVRI* Padang (as mentioned previously) proves that a public (regional) channel can exist and is acceptable for its regional audiences because they present the very local "authentic" cultural productions (Minangkabau Adat), then that is what local television is. So, if *Pojok Meduro* (Madura Corner) of *JTV*, for instance, is broadcast not only to present news spoken in Madurese dialect, but also to present events mainly happening in Madura Island, which consists of five subregions, that will make *JTV* a truly local medium for local people. In fact, some news presented both in *Pojok Kampung* and *Pojok Meduro* still contains "national" (Jakarta) events and the East Java provincial government ceremonies (Surabaya), though little about Madura and other East Java subregions.

The use of *Suroboyoan* language in *JTV*'s *Pojok Kampung* news program has also disturbed both the regional broadcasting commission (KPID) East Java chapter and some urban middle classes. The commission has deplored the use of a gritty local *kampung Suroboyo* dialect claiming it has annoyed the audience and broken the standard of journalism. Indeed, *Suroboyoan* is a form of Javanese but it is more direct and considered by many, especially those outside East Java, as coarse. According to the news director of *JTV*, Arif Afandi, the station chose to use the local dialect and eschew a more formal language not only to attract viewers, but also to keep on distinguishing his station from private nationwide television stations. Afandi also maintained that when less *Suroboyoan* dialect was used in favour of a more refined level of Javanese language known as *krama*, the ratings of *Pojok Kampung*

declined (Personal interview, January 2005). Afandi said that his station actually uses a language that is commonly used by the public, particularly in Surabaya. He stated that if his station discontinued using *Suroboyoan* in its programming pattern then the local language would vanish. "We want to preserve our local culture," said Afandi in a personal interview.

Indeed, there is increasing lack of linguistic diversity in Indonesia, as people tend to switch their own traditional dialects to ones that are considered more polite or acceptable nationally. As a result the frequent use of traditional or regional languages and dialects seems to be unacceptable or backward in the same way that the broadcast of more traditional/local performing arts and cultures are seen as depicting the traditional rather than presenting the modern aspects of life.

This criticism of *Pojok Kampung* for its use of *Suroboyoan* on public media for urban and middle class viewers of JTV seems to suggest that *Suroboyoan* is acceptable only if spoken within the 'private sphere' of home or within the neighbourhood of the *kampung*. Part of the public sphere, local media is under pressure to conform to the "mainstream" or common cultural practices, including language use, rather than to present the distinguishing features of the locality.

Moreover, as more and more contemporary urban Javanese prefer to use *Bahasa* Indonesia as their formal and informal everyday language and at the same time, the middle classes who maintain to speak Javanese language tend to use more refined (either middle level, *madya*, or high, *krama*) language rather than the lower level, the use of local dialects and accents on television then seems to become embarrassing and awkward. Furthermore, since the Javanese hierarchy of language is also still practiced in areas of Java, particularly in Central Java and in the border areas between East Java and Central Java such as Madiun and Ngawi (known as '*Mataraman*' from the word *Mataram* which was a Central Javanese Kingdom in pre-modern Indonesia), there is cultural resistance from viewers in these regions.

Conclusion

The distinguishable characteristic of Indonesian television in the early 2000s is the tension between rapid marketisation and moral controls from particular communities' interest groups, including the state and the intellectual institutions. Private television

in Indonesia (at the time this thesis was written, there were 10 nationwide stations) mainly relies on advertising revenues for continued operation. Thus, television channels (as other media organisations in Indonesia) at all levels has been oriented to profit-making. With less government control, the dissemination of both political and non-political information is relaxed. The conflict for private television in Indonesia is now between ratings, profits, and new patterns of censorship from the communities' interest groups.

This intense competition for advertising revenues and audience share has brought consequences. First, there has been a concept of 'supermarket TV' or mixed TV in which private television stations present the viewers of the middle to lower classes (eighty percent of TV audiences in Indonesia are identified as C, D, and E classes) with variety entertainments of similar formats and contents. It is said that with this supermarket format, the viewers have freedom to pick programs that they like and disregard programs that they do not like. In fact, the viewers do not have real alternatives. The television institutions have created the programs for the kinds of viewers they have imagined.

Second, the booming production houses and entertainment businesses and the lure of revenue share within the private television business have attracted certain players in the media business. The former media magnates, their sons, and close friends still actively control the television corporations, while expanding their business both by establishing new and acquiring existing print journalism media and the radio. When liberalisation and marketisation of media have become part of the euphoria of democracy in Indonesia, the ownership and concentration of media in the hands of a few people seems not to be of concern to the government and the media regulatory bodies in the country. Moreover, the listing of the holding companies of private television stations has enabled the companies not only to expand their business, but also to do deals with foreign players

The need to implement the state policy on regional autonomy and to present the diversity of local cultures throughout the archipelago has encouraged the emergence of local/community television in Indonesia, although the initiatives to establish local television channels mainly come from local private enterprises, the regional existing media magnates, and the regional governments. Since the Indonesian television

industry is centralised and primarily depicts urban middle class of Jakarta, local
television channels are needed to provide televisual images and information to create
a balance through pluralist broadcasting content, which gives the local public more
opportunity to participate in the areas of "information, knowledge, representation and
communication" (Murdock, 1994) in their local contexts.

Chapter Three

The *Sinetron* Industry: Power, Capital, and Pop Art in Indonesia

> *Indeed, we cannot base our notion of culture on a single, discursively privileged concept. Art, music, literature, and history are the result of both economic and political forces, including class processes and the ordering of social behaviour* (Jack L. Amariglio, Stephen A. Resnick, and Richard D. Wolff, 1988, p. 487).

This chapter seeks to situate Indonesian television drama (henceforth *sinetron*) within economic-materialist determinants and power/political factors that have characterised production of national popular culture. This is, firstly, an attempt to examine the historical development of *sinetron* in order to observe the degree of political involvement of the New Order government in defining and creating the features of national pop culture during the 1990s. Further, I want to isolate the ways regime power and interests articulated through the creations of the *sinetron* texts by focusing on certain aspects of the euphoria about *sinetron* amongst Indonesian audiences, through the examination of the *sinetron* festivals. The discussion is particularly about how the state's power interfered with the commercial machine of the national pop culture in the so-called '*Indonesian Sinetron Festival*' (FSI) during the 1990s.

Secondly, I investigate a different site and time, in the period of *reformasi*, when the *sinetron* production houses and television stations no longer struggle against state power over content; rather, they struggle to compete for markets and advertising revenues. The business deals among production houses and TV stations, thus, become important to win large audience shares and to sustain the operation of the company. As such, unlike the film industry in Indonesia, which was largely circumscribed by state regulation such as export and import and exhibition, quotas, and the like (see Krishna Sen, 1994), the *sinetron* business appears to be less influenced by those economic regulatory pressures. Thus, the business deals between television stations and production houses not only provide a landscape of

specific 'business-political' negotiation of media, but also portray the links between the financing and marketing arrangements of those institutions for the creation of the national *sinetron* audiences.

Based on the business deals, it appears that audience quantity is more important for both production house and private TV station to produce a dominant theme of urban or "metropolitan superculture" (Geertz, 1963) rather than themes which depict the ethnic diversity and cultural practices of Indonesian people. A typical issue as to whether the market (represented in ratings) or idealism (as a popular art) is more important has, thus, formed a continuing debate in the public discourse around *sinetron*. For instance, public and academic seminars in the country have thrived by continuing to question how the television institution's market interest and idealism can be balanced in television content. I present this particular issue in this chapter to reveal how production houses and private television stations approach this debate. The last parts of this chapter examine some examples of the trends of *sinetron* between 2000 and 2004 productions to present the distinctive local genres of the Indonesian television pop culture.

Sinetron Festivals: A New Order Construct

"In the early years of the New Order the notion of culture as apolitical retained intellectual currency, but all cultural production was bounded by political regulations, which emerged from governmental practices and were codified over the next three decades" (Sen & Hill, 2000, p. 11). This proposition aptly summarises the all-encompassing political manifestations of the late New Order in Indonesian national cultural works. Politics and culture were intertwined in the life of the nation-state under President Soeharto's authoritarian regime. In order to understand the play of the state's political interest on national cultural production, it is significant to look briefly at the early emergence of *sinetron* on the national television channels and at the organization of the *Indonesian Sinetron Festival* (FSI) between 1992 and 1998. With this background, it will become possible to sketch in the 'past' circumstances of the New Order. For the New Order regime, all cultural productions labelled as 'national cultural identity' should be controlled and ordered under the state framework, or as Michael Bodden describes, "the production of meaning, identity,

and culture was seen [by the state] as dispersed, fragmented and contingent" (Bodden, 2002, p. 294).

Sinetron has come to encompass all television cinematic forms including sitcom, drama (romance, family, children's), horror, mystery, action, science fiction, and legend. Industry insiders divide *sinetron* into two genres according to shooting location: 'single stage drama' (*drama berpanggung tunggal*) are those that are shot indoors, which are less produced, and the rest are 'outdoor drama' (*drama luar ruang*). *Sinetron* on Indonesian television are commonly formatted as long series and serials of 52 episodes or more. In the late 1990s, a new format of *sinetron* has been introduced. This new format of *sinetron* is produced for one-time only telecasting and is known as *drama lepas* (single drama). The formats are named FTV (an acronym for *Film Television*), LMS (an acronym for *Layar Mini Seri* or Screen Miniseries), SMS (an acronym for *Sinema Mini Seri* or Cinema Miniseries), and *Telesinema* (Television Cinema). Indonesian genres do not easily map on to categories common in Western television genre classification[1]. In effect, all "visual art that offers a story" (Chudori, 2001a) screened on the television medium has been called '*sinetron*'.

The expansion of *sinetron* began in 1989 when the first two private television stations, RCTI and SCTV, started to broadcast. The film industry[2] collapsed at the start of the 1990s and "*Sinetron* came at the right time when Indonesians were looking for something that could fill the gap left by a dying film industry," (Widiadana, 1995, p. 1). The film producers and workers moved to this industry. *Sinetron* since then has become the leading commercial television production.

Sinetron have mostly dominated the primetime of the national programming schedule. The shows have also become the most-watched television programs over a decade and have been exploited as the mechanism to attract commercial advertising

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[1] See the discussion of this issue in Sen's book on Indonesian cinema (Sen, 1994)

[2] The production of films in Indonesia declined dramatically from 115 titles in 1990 to 29 titles in 1997, and it continued to drop by 23 titles to become 6 titles in 1998 (sourced from unpublished data of *Grafik Produksi Film Cerita* (Graph of Story Film Production), *Sinematek Indonesia* in January 2003). Although it has not been growing rapidly, the Indonesian film industry appears to have revived since 1999 with the emerging new generation of young talented filmmakers such as Mira Lesmana, Riri Reza, Nan T. Achnas, Nia Dinata, Hari Dagoe, Rudy Sudjarwo, and others. The number of films has increased from 3 titles in 1999 to 5 titles in 2000 and 9 titles in 2001 (sourced from *Sinematek Indonesia*, in January 2003). Even private television channels are now producing screen films, pioneered by *Trans TV* in 2002.

for the private television stations and the *sinetron* producers. Numbers of *sinetron* produced have increased rapidly over the years. In 1995, for instance, there were 1,138 *sinetron* episodes produced; in 1996, the number of productions increased to 2,056 episodes ("FSI nilai*,*" 1996, p.12). Between March 1996 and April 1997, the production reached a peak of about 3,048 episodes covering 224 titles ("39 judul," 1997, p. 11). Only during the 1997 economic crisis in Indonesia was there a reduction in production, and television channels broadcast many rerun *sinetron*, particularly during 1998. However, after little more than a year, from 1999 onward, production of these shows has again boomed.

Table 3.1
Numbers of Titles of *Sinetron* Broadcast on Six Private TV Channels
December 1995 – October 1996

Chan	Dec Oct	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Agt	Spt	
TVRI	5	4	4	5	12	12	10	7	13	18	22
RCTI	89	83	77	75	74	105	94	96	91	99	93
SCTV	15	26	20	75	58	38	30	27	31	38	30
TPI	59	51	40	39	44	55	53	61	87	101	55
AnTV	23	24	42	59	49	39	19	15	50	40	44
IVM	9	14	22	57	57	61	61	62	51	57	73

Source: Research Dept. of Festival *Sinetron* Committee (*Republika* 21/12/1996, p. 7)

The closure of the Department of Information (*Departemen Penerangan*) by president Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) in 1999 and the consequent disbanding of the department's committee of the annual *sinetron* festival (known as *Festival Sinetron Indonesia* FSI in 1999 (discussed later in this chapter) has meant no records have been kept. Under the rule of president Megawati, the former Ministry of Information has been restructured to become the State Ministry for Information and Communication under the name of the National Body for Information and Communication (*Badan Informasi dan Komunikasi Nasional* BIKN). BIKN, however, is not the authorised institution that monitors and controls the output of film and television materials. As a result, since 1999 onward the number of *sinetron* productions both by the production houses and the television stations themselves has

been hard to establish. Nevertheless, according to recent data from *Trans TV*'s department of planning and programming, there were 71 titles of *sinetron* (series only) broadcast weekly on six leading private TV stations in 2002 and the numbers almost doubled to 120 titles screened in 2003.

Table 3.2
Number of *Sinetron* Titles Broadcast on Six Private Channels
Between 2002 and 2003

Channels	2002	2003
IVM	14	25
RCTI	16	18
SCTV	13	20
Trans TV	12	20
TPI	9	19
TV 7	7	18

Source: Courtesy of the Department Planning and Programming *Trans TV*, December 2003

The development of *sinetron*, particularly in the New Order period, cannot be examined without consideration of the earlier existence of a national cinema festival in Indonesia. In the 1992 annual film festival[3] (known as *Festival Film Indonesia* FFI), the Directorate General of Radio, Television, and Film (*Dirjen RTF*) of the Department of Information introduced a new award, called *Piala Vidia*, for television drama productions. As the number of film productions had declined sharply since 1989, the Indonesian Film Festival stopped in 1993, and the Directorate of RTF initiated a national *Sinetron* Festival (FSI) in 1994. The Minister of Information, Harmoko, established the Organising Committee called *Panitia Tetap Festival Sinetron Indonesia* (or Permanent Committee of the *Sinetron* Festival), to organise this annual festival and assigned the committee to work for four years from 1994 to 1998. The members of this committee were mainly representatives from private television stations, government officials, and former committee members of the film

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[3] The Indonesian Film Festival has been re-activated since 2004. The festival is now organized under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, where the National Censorship Board is also under this Ministerial office. The festival is also initiated to contend the persistence of the Jakarta International Film Festival (*Jiffest*), which is organized by an independent organization and is more appreciated by the film critics, intellectuals, and middle class moviegoers.

festival. Alex Kumara, the deputy director of RCTI at that time, was appointed as the chairperson of the committee. The committee funds mostly came from the government via the Department of Information. A separate selection committee was appointed, consisting of journalists, film directors, novelists, and film critics for judging the competing *sinetron*. The membership of this committee changed every year.

Corruption appeared to be pervasive in the organization of *sinetron* festival during 1994 -1998. Every year, controversial issues surrounded the festival. In the 1994 festival, many production houses were reluctant to send their *sinetron* productions to the festival, as they were unhappy that members of the organising committee (*Pantap FSI*), particularly those who produced and directed *sinetron*, had submitted entries, while at the same time they were also members of the jury in the selection committee. Although the organising committee denied such collusion, the festival result showed surprising decisions. For example, *sinetron Salah Asoehan* (Poor Upbringing), directed by Amy Priyono who was also a member of the jury, gained three *Piala Vidia* awards as the best miniseries drama, the best in cinematography, and the best in artistic presentation. Another controversial decision was made against *Kesaksian* (Witnessing), directed by the leading senior film director Teguh Karya who had won 52 *Citra* awards (for films). Karya's *sinetron* was defeated by the slapstick horror comedy *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (Sweet Lady of Ancol Bridge), which was categorised by the selection committee as *sinetron* drama instead of comedy.

When in the 1994 festival, only 492 episodes from 103 titles (from the productions of 1992-1994) out of more than a thousand episodes were entered in the festival, the Minister of Information, Harmoko, intervened. The Minister issued a ministerial decree (*SK Menpen No. 45/KEP/Menpen/1994*) to encourage *sinetron* producers and the production houses to participate in the *sinetron* festival. However, some producers and production houses boycotted the decree by not sending their production for the festival. As a result, no more than 50 per cent (or about 103 production houses) entered their *sinetron* productions for the festival, whilst there were 337 licensed production houses in Indonesia up to 1994 ("Sejumlah sineas," 1995, p.13). As a result of this 1994 experience, the organising committee asked

Harmoko to issue another decree in 1995. Ilham Bintang, the third deputy of *Pantap* FSI for public relations and publication affairs, a senior journalist, claimed that this 1995 Ministerial decree was issued because not many producers had participated in the 1994 *sinetron* festival as they felt that their productions failed to meet the festival requirements ("Sejumlah sineas," 1995, p.13). The Ministerial decree issued on 19 June 1995 (*SK Menpen No. 161A/KEP/Menpen/1995*) obliged all *sinetron* produced to be entered for the festival. If any producer or production house failed to send any of their *sinetron*, the Department would withdraw the production licenses for those dissident production houses.

As a result of the 1995 decree, the number of *sinetron* productions sent for the festival increased dramatically from 492 episodes in 1994 to 608 episodes in 1995 (for more details see *Table 3.3*). It was claimed that the decree helped the organising committee of FSI to monitor *sinetron* quality, *sinetron* numbers, the development of the *sinetron* industry in Indonesia, and to record how many production houses still operated in the country. Further, the decree was also intended to encourage local cultural productions, in particular, television drama productions. It was rumoured that the Minister would force private TV stations to broadcast 80 per cent local programs, though this never happened.

Nevertheless, there was suspicion that this Ministerial decree was not only intended to mobilise *sinetron* producers and the production houses, but also through the compulsion to send all *sinetron* produced to the festival, to ensure increased financial resources for the organising committee (*Pantap*), since the participants had to pay an administration fee for every *sinetron* registered. However, not all *sinetron* titles registered for the festival were automatically included or selected by the selection committee of *Pantap*. Only those titles that met with the "standard" of *Pantap* were considered. For instance, in 1996 there were 126 titles with 784 episodes registered for the festival, but only 117 titles with 649 episodes met the "standard" of *Pantap* and were included in the selection ("FSI nilai," 1996, p. 12). In 1997, from 142 titles with 951 episodes, there were only 39 titles and 226 episodes judged acceptable by the panel ("39 judul," 1997, p. 11).

There were also problems to do with the definition of what came under the category of *sinetron*. Initially the committee had defined the term '*sinetron*' to include all

films produced with the camera, but recorded onto magnetic (video) tape. This means that all film produced with celluloid or 35 mm or 16 mm could not be entered in the festival. The definition of *sinetron* as a magnetic (video) tape production remained current until the 1996 festival. As a result, productions of Garin Nugroho and Slamet Raharjo, both prominent film directors, could not be included in the festival. Nugroho's production titled *Anak Seribu Pulau* (Children of a Thousand Islands) and Rahardjo's *sinetron* titled *Suro Buldog* were excluded from the FSI in 1996, because both of these were filmed on celluloid. In 1997, the committee announced that all *sinetron* productions filmed on celluloid could be included in the festival. At the same time, the Minister of Information, Harmoko, withdrew *SK Menpen No. 161A/KEP/Menpen/1995* so that it was no longer compulsory for producers and production houses to enter their *sinetron* productions to FSI.

Table 3. 3
Number of *Sinetron* Titles Participated in the Festival (1994 – 1998)

Year	Episodes	Titles	*Sinetron* produced in the year (episodes)	Production Houses participated
1994	492	103	1138	284
1995	608	123	2056	377
1996	784	126	2900	n/a*
1997**	951	142	3048	56
1998	1173	160	n/a*	44

Source: compiled from various sources of newspapers published 1994-1998

* There has been no data published about the number of production houses participating in FSI 1996 and no data available for number of complete *sinetron* produced in 1998.

** In 1997, the Department of Information withdrew the Ministerial Decree *SK Menpen* No.161A/KEP/Menpen/1995 that obliged all production houses to submit their productions to FSI. So, as can be seen from the table, the number of participating production houses declined, but the number of *sinetron* produced increased.

There were also accusations of favouritism against *Buletin Sinetron* (*Sinetron* Bulletin), a television infotainment program, which was initiated by the organising committee of FSI for the purpose of delivering information and publicity about the

sinetron festival events during the year. Initially, this infotainment program was designed as a talk show and outdoor interview format. The first productions were given to PT. *Caturvisindo* production house owned by Kasino, a popular comedian ("Acara Buletin Sinetron," 1994). The show was aired on RCTI, the private television station of which Alex Kumara, the chairman of *Pantap* FSI, was the vice president. The thirty-minute show was run biweekly from 4.00 to 4.30 pm.

Buletin Sinetron was monopolised by *Pantap* FSI and RCTI was authorised as the only television channel allowed tobroadcast it and no other television channel was allowed to create a similar show until 1996. In 1996, the production rights were transferred to PT. *Bintang Advis Multimedia* (BAM) of Ilham Bintang, the third deputy of Alex Kumara in *Pantap* FSI. As *Buletin Sinetron* had become popular and automatically attracted considerable advertising, to protect this program, Kumara announced that other TV stations were permitted to produce a show that supported the FSI events but not use the same title as *Buletin Sinetron* for which RCTI held the broadcast rights. The show by then covered not only festival events, but also broadcast news of the newcomer *sinetron* actors and actresses, behind the *sinetron* scenes, and star gossip. Since then, even though FSI was stopped in 1998, Bintang is still producing this infotainment program[4].

The initiative of the New Order government, through the creation of those former *sinetron* festivals, served the interests of certain groups, particularly some leading producers, and top private TV channel owners and officials, who had a close relation to Soeharto, his children, and Minister Harmoko at that time. More importantly, the festival was unable to provide a forum for the appreciation of the local culture and arts. The festival and the organizing committee were institutionalised and created by the government, and their continuing existence depended on the sustenance of the regime. After the New Order government collapsed and by the time the Department of Information was restructured in 1999, the Indonesian *sinetron* festival had shut down.

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[4] Since 1996, *Buletin Sinetron* has had the top rating for the infotainment program category. Until 2001, the show was still leading followed by the similar program *Cek & Ricek* (Check and Recheck) also produced by PT BAM. Seeing the success of these two shows, Bintang started publishing the TV entertainment tabloids *Tabloid Buletin Sinetron* and *Tabloid Cek & Ricek*. *Buletin Sinetron* program is also considered to be the initiator program for the rapidly growing infotainment (gossip) programs on Indonesian television. (See *Chapter Two*)

The pervasive presence of the New Order government—together with particular interest groups and powerful individuals connected to the New Order—in the operation of *sinetron* festivals in the 1990s is one instance of the state's attempt to control cultural production in order to privilege its definition of the so-called 'national culture.' The cases related to the organization of *sinetron* festivals noted above, demonstrate how the government and its apparatuses (the businesses with connection to the regime) tried to control, manipulate, and monopolise the creation, distribution, and promotion of the *sinetron*.

In the 1990s, the operations of *sinetron* festival also constructed the state as the only appropriate body for evaluating cultural creations and activities. However, in the post New Order *reformasi* period, as the creations and activities of national *sinetron* are less hampered by government control and more concerned with trade and market interests, *sinetron* as local cultural production can be viewed more as a site of capitalist media where the situation of "freedom from state's control" is providing more for the welfare of a rapacious capitalism than for the constitution of contemporary national cultural identity.

Behind the Scenes: the Business Deals Between TV Stations and the Production Houses

The development of television and the *sinetron* industry in Indonesia has also contributed to the growth of the production house business. The increasing number of private television stations has brought benefit to the television producers and their creative workers. Since the demands of local programming have increased rapidly, broadcasting businesses have been challenged. Besides in-house productions, almost 35 per cent of local programming broadcast on private television stations has been supplied from production houses. The new private channel, *TV 7*, declared that more than 50 percent of its local contents are supplied by local production houses. PT Multivision Plus dominates with about 80 percent of local *sinetron* productions.

From my interviews with the executives and employees from two major production houses and four television stations, the current state of business appears to give more advantages to the television stations than to production houses. However, in particular cases, the production houses also obtain significant benefits for their productions through the contract system.

According to Rachmiadi, a Vice Director of PT. Indika Entertainment and Tauhid, a Program Manager of PT. Starvision production house, the rights of TV channels are more dominant than those of production houses in the *sinetron* business. In contrast, the obligations of TV channels are less than the obligations of production houses. Sometimes, before producing a *sinetron* the production house must bend to the TV stations' wishes for the selection of the stars and story line.

There are three main models of business agreement between television stations and production houses. First is what is called '*jual putus'* (pay up front or 'cash and carry'). In this model the production house sells its *sinetron* to a TV station, and the TV station will get the profits from advertisings during the run of the *sinetron*. Usually, this model applies for mini series with two or three episodes. In this model, both the production house and the TV station are gambling: if the *sinetron* is watched by large numbers, the TV stations will profit from the advertisements, whereas the production house will lose as it has already been paid by the TV station. However, if the *sinetron* is less watched, the TV channel might make a loss while the production house loses nothing.

The second model is called 'revenue sharing.' In this model, the television station and the production house will share the revenues gained from advertisings for every episode broadcast. Although both parties will take the same risk, the TV station is dominant in deciding the components of the *sinetron*, particularly the stars, the time slot, and the broadcasting cost. In order to obtain a good rating and to attract many viewers (and thus advertising), usually, both TV station and production house discuss the concept, the story line, the cinematographic performance, and the stars before the production of the *sinetron* begins. There are two kinds of sharing between TV station and production house. First, if the *sinetron* obtains a good rating, say nine or over (meaning it is watched by more than three million people), and the money gained from advertisements about 160 million rupiahs (equal to US$ 16,000) (standard minimum defined by TV station) the production house will gain up to 80 per cent from the total advertising revenues of the *sinetron* show. Second, if the revenues of the *sinetron* reach over 160 million rupiahs, both TV station and production house will get 50 per cent each. However, when the revenue gained is less than 160 million

rupiahs, the TV station has to pay the production house about 90 million rupiahs[5]. Under this revenue sharing model, the TV station has the right to swap the time allocation of a *sinetron* (for example, from prime time slot to shoulder slot or off-peak slot) or to reduce the number of episodes or, in the worst case, to stop broadcasting the show.

The third system is called 'blocking time.' Under this system, the production house pays for the time slot on the TV station—the price is usually between 300 and 500 million rupiahs[6]—and the producer has to find the advertisements. Promotion and advertisements are the responsibility of the production house. In this case, if a *sinetron* is rated high, the producer will profit. During the economic crisis in 1997-1998, the TV stations preferred this system, as they did not need to hunt for advertising.

Mostly, the shortest contract to screen a *sinetron* is six months or 13 episodes, though for the mini series, the contract is as short as 5 episodes. In the 'revenue-sharing' system, the contract can be longer than one year or more than 52 episodes. In many cases, for longer serials (minimally 52 episodes), the contract is designed for two to five years for the first run. If the *sinetron* does well in the market, the show will be rerun and the production house will get a certain percentage from the revenues gained (Personal interview with Rachmiadi and Tauhid, January 2003). For instance, the *sinetron* titled *Cinta* (Love) and *Janji Hati* (A Promise from the Heart), produced by PT. Indika were rerun two times on *RCTI* (suggests total runs are three)*, and this company gained a percentage from the revenues. The production houses also have the right to sell their products to other television stations, once their contract ends with a particular TV station. For example, *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* (Doel, a student), which was initially broadcast on *RCTI* during 1999-2002, was recently broadcast on *ANTV* in 2004/2005. This is an example of the advantage of having an extremely well-liked *sinetron*. It can be sold to any TV station and the producer benefits from its rerun, without further expenditure.

While the majority of production houses might struggle vis a vis the television stations, some can assert their strength in relation to TV stations. For instance, in his

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[5] All of the figures used in this paragraph were current in 2003, when I did the fieldwork.
[6] The standard of payment were also current in 2003

statement on the launch of *Trans TV* in 2001, company president, Ishadi S.K. declared that his channel would be unlikely to ever screen *sinetron* produced by Raam Punjabi's (PT. Multivision Plus) company[7]. This statement was controversial, as there was no single private TV station without the presence of Punjabi's *sinetron* since the mid 1990s. When I confirmed this statement with Ishadi in a personal interview, he explained that certainly it was impossible for a new TV station with a limited budget like *Trans TV* to buy *sinetron* productions of Punjabi, which cost 400 million per episode in 2001. Ishadi explained with that amount of money, his channel could buy a bundle of Western imported movies from Warner Brothers cheaper than the *sinetron* price of Multivision. However, since 2003, when *Trans TV* has had to compete for its advertising revenues and market share, *sinetron* productions of PT. Multivision have been run on the channel.

Never Ending Debate: A Popular Art versus Market Commodity

In 1997 and 2000, the leading and international award-winning Indonesian film director, Garin Nugroho, produced two documentary-drama series called *Anak Seribu Pulau* (Children of a Thousand Islands) and *Pustaka Anak Nusantara* (Literatures of Children of the Archipelago) broadcast on *SCTV* and *TVRI*. Both productions featured the everyday lives of Indonesian children from several different regions and of differing ethnic and religious backgrounds. Karen Strassler (1999) recognises *Anak Seribu Pulau* series as an excellent example of telecasting traditional arts as signs of cultural difference harmoniously integrated into the nation. Strassler also argues this documentary "auto-ethnographic" series of childhood, as a discourse of culture, represented "a crucial site where anxieties about the shape of Indonesian modernity are both focused and assuaged" (Strassler, 1999, p. 1). The series appealed to the nuance of locality; unfortunately, the viewers' responses to the series were minimal or mundane (Juliastuty, 2001, p. 58-61). However, it is possible to question whether this was a case of audience rejection of the series or whether the series was seen as a failure because it failed to attract advertisements.

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[7] Raam Punjabi was the influential film producer and distributor of Indian imported films during the 1980s and 1990s (for more detail see Krishna Sen, 1994). When the *sinetron* industry started to boom in the early 1990s, he established PT. Multivision Plus with his wife, Raakhe Punjabi, and brothers and started to produce *sinetron* for private television. Since his melodrama titled *Bella Vista* and its three sequels broadcast on *RCTI* in 1990 were successful, his *sinetron* productions have dominated the market in the private television business. His long experience as a film producer and distributor has familiarised him well with the film/*sinetron* making business.

Similarly, *sinetron* dramas which portrayed regional cultures and everyday practices such as *Angin Rumput Savana* (1997) (Winds on Savana Grass) a story about Kupang's women directed by Garin Nugroho, *Perkawinan Siti Zubaedah* (1997) (Siti Zubaedah's Marriage)[8] a story about arranged marriage in a Betawi family directed by the late Teguh Karya, '*Canting*' (1999) (Canting is a tool to draw on Batik) a story about a traditional Javanese business-family directed by Arswendo Atmowiloto, and *Keluarga Cemara* (1999-2003) (Cemara's Family) a series about a poor family directed by Dedi Setiadi, serve as minor *sinetron* themes in contrast to the abundance of metropolitan-based '*sinetron cengeng*' (melodramas).

These examples of *sinetron* above, and some other similar *sinetron*, mark the critical debate as to whether both artistic and economic/market driven imperatives can be achieved simultaneously by *sinetron* creators and producers. The question of what such production should be for or whether 'idealism' is relevant is a crucial consideration for the creators, the producers, and for the critics. In this section, therefore, I try to explore how the debate over *sinetron* as a popular art form or a big business or market orientation commodity takes place in the context of *sinetron* productions and, more generally, within popular culture in contemporary Indonesia.

Raam Punjabi, owner of *sinetron* 'factory' Multivision Plus, strongly believes in rating as an accurate method of monitoring the so-called 'quality' of television programs. For him, rating is like a ticket that both the *sinetron* and its producer "get a better seat in a cinema hall." Punjabi said, "Whatever we get, we take it at face value yet we cannot run away from ratings. We have to be confident that our product will fetch the desired ratings. If ratings are not there, it'll wipe out the programs" (cited in "Most 'sinetron'," 1997, p. 11). This people-meter method has not only become the tool to market the *sinetron*, but it has also been used to claim and determine so-called 'market taste.' So, when rating is the standard to measure for marketing of *sinetron*, then no other justification is needed than to say "such *sinetron* is less watched" or "the rating is not good."

From these illustrations, it appears that rating becomes the major barrier to the process of so-called 'cultural reconstruction' on national television. Rating appears to

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[8] *Angin Rumput Savana* and *Perkawinan Siti Zubaedah* were two *sinetron* miniseries sponsored by John Hopkins Indonesia and the National Body of Family Planning to promote the family planning program and women's reproductive health.

lock up the space for a popular art to take part in the process of national cultural reconstruction.

When critics pointed out that *sinetron* producers have lost their idealism and tend to produce *sinetron* that exploit glamour, flamboyance, and gender bias, Raam Punjabi responds, "We have attempted in the past to produce *sinetron* which stand on culture such as *Air Mata Ibu* (Mother's Tear). We also produced *Tiga Orang Perempuan* (Three Women) staring an award-winning film actresses Christine Hakim, but the production did not get a good rating. …Do not only point to [the producer] for we only consider business" ("Kultur soal," 2002). Considering how highly public opinion rates his *sinetron* productions, Punjabi maintains that he has always given the viewers what they want. This implies, for Punjabi, that the viewers do not care for quality as long as they are entertained, or indeed that the only measure of quality must be premised on popularity. Punjabi claims that he has also invested in acclaimed productions like *Bukan Perempuan Biasa* (Not an ordinary Woman) and *Tiga Orang Perempuan*[9], which engaged with gender bias issues within the Javanese family.

Prami Rachmiadi of PT. Indika Entertainment realises that Multivision has determined the style, characteristic, and the market for *sinetron* in Indonesia. "Our [Indonesian] *sinetron* have been shaped by the formats of Multivision" (Personal interview, January 2003). Consequently, he acknowledges, it has been difficult for his company and other production houses to not follow the production format of Multivision. He maintains that Multivision has set the style of Indonesian *sinetron* and the market taste. According to Rachmiadi, following the success of Multivision, since mid 2002, Indika has transformed its ideal of producing the so-called 'quality *sinetron*' (he labelled them '*sinetron bermutu*') to producing *sinetron* which appeal to the market. "Indika is now becoming a definitely market driven *sinetron* factory. It means that we have to follow the market demands. We left behind our idealism and now we serve the market" (Personal interview, January 2003).

Rachmiadi continues that producing *sinetron* with high quality cinematographic performance and good story lines will not guarantee the product will be watched by

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[9] I have discussed about the *sinetron* in relation to the construction of contemporary Javanese middle class female identities (Ida, 2003).

large audiences. He argues that *sinetron* which sell a dream will be very much in demand. Rachmiadi pointed out that his *sinetron* production, titled *Alung* (a story about a Chinese Muslim male), which he valued as good for its interesting story line, was rejected by the market during 2002, while slapstick comedy *sinetron* such as *Jin dan Jun* (Jin and Jun) and *Wah, Cantiknya!* (Wow, Beautiful!) both produced by Multivision, remained in the top ratings for long periods (Personal interview January 2003).

A typical critique, as for instance that of Dedi Setiadi, director of a distinguished production *Keluarga Cemara* (Cemara's Family): "In their [*sinetron* producers] heart, only money is pursued, whilst there is no feeling of red-white [Indonesian flag] in their spirit" ("Kalangan kreator," 2002). Such statement puts the producers in a dilemma. On the one hand, they have to try to produce 'good' *sinetron*, as an answer to criticisms from intellectuals and other critical sections of the community. On the other hand, they are faced with the situation that what is considered a "good" *sinetron* is not automatically "good" in the market. However, the general attitude in the *sinetron* industry, and perhaps amongst its audiences, is to try to escape this essential dualism which forces *sinetron* to be either business or art, rather than both. The producers' position is obvious and instantly recognisable, any talk about the *sinetron* as art is for them the height of absurdity. They prefer producing *sinetron* which will sell well in the market and gain high rating, ignoring the untiring intelligentsia criticisms of the formats and stylistics of Indonesian *sinetron*.

As I have discussed extensively in *Chapter Two,* the products of the television industry are determined by the market. Ishadi, president director of private TV station *Trans TV*, interviewed in *Koran Tempo* daily (Multazam, 2005) states that the primary aim of the national private television industry is responding to market demand. Similarly, Hary Tanoesoedibyo, the rising media mogul and owner of three major TV stations *RCTI*, *TPI*, and *Global TV*, firmly states that there is no external power which can influence the television industry, except the market. "Do not try to dictate to the television owner. This is not a mock business," he emphasised when questioned by the reporter of *Cakram* magazine about the nature of the Indonesian television industry in the 2000s ("'Jangan coba-coba'," 2004). Since the producers and the capital holders of television strongly hold a belief that serving the so-called

'market taste' or 'market demand' is important rather than responding to the intellectual and academic critics, it appears that private television companies have clearly determined their own position.

However, there may be emergent models, which opt out of the standard frameworks of Indonesian *sinetron*. For instance, *Jawa Pos TV* (henceforth *JTV*) a local TV station located in Surabaya, East Java, which went on air in 2002, has produced several distinctive local/regional *sinetron* including *Kidung Kya-Kya* (*Kidung* is a Surabaya folk ballad; *Kya-Kya* is a name of a hawkers' night food market located in the middle of Surabaya's Chinatown), and *Dolly-wood* (*Dolly* is a well-known area of prostitution in Surabaya). *Kidung Kya-Kya* is a love story about young people from different cultures, between (indigenous) Surabayanese and Chinese; while *Dolly-wood* tells of the everyday lives of the '*kampung* Dolly', a place of prostitution. Although the profit expectations of the producers and the TV station itself for these *sinetron* have not been met, they have committed to continuing to produce these *sinetron* as long as appreciative audiences are still there to watch.

Struggling among the abundance of 'Jakarta-centric' *sinetron*, these two *sinetron* have offered a different picture of the people in the Indonesian archipelago. Arif Afandi, a news director of *JTV* and a producer of *Dolly-wood* explained to me in an informal chat (at the coffee shop in the Hay Street Mall Perth) that he did not yet think of competing with nation-wide *sinetron*. He said that what is offered on Indonesian television is mainly '*mimpi ibu kota*' (dreams of the capital city). Afandi did not reject the reputation of *JTV* as a '*televisi kampung*' (*kampung* television)[10], as he initiated to produce news in Javanese Suroboyo dialect *Pojok Kampung* (*Kampung* Corner)[11] as well. "We are indeed *Kampung*'s TV, but not [as] boorish/vulgar (*kampungan*)," he said.

Although Afandi agrees that idealism always conflicts with business considerations, especially in the competitive private television business, he believes that there is still a niche that local television will be able to fill. He feels neither optimism nor pessimism about the future of his TV station, but he has realised his position among those major private nationwide TV stations and has attempted to create something

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[10] The term '*televisi kampung*' means a small broadcasting company. The term '*kampung*' (peri-urban or lower class) is used to denigrate Afandi's local/regional small TV station.
[11] See my discussion in *Chapter Two* on Local Television.

different in order to fill a niche. Afandi is not alone. There are other local/regional private television owners and producers like Satya Naradha of *Bali TV*, who has attempted to challenge the domination of those Jakarta-based and nation-wide television stations to bring the richness of local cultural sites to the screen, even though they have to struggle for revenues. Naradha declares, "We still have our idealism to battle the influence of Western global capitalism which will destroy our Bali [12]" (Nugraheni, et.al, 2004, p. 1). He confidently believes that Balinese audiences still need to see their own culture and people presented on the screen rather than to see the faces of people that the Balinese are not familiar with.

Although the debate around such 'idealism' versus 'business/market orientation' continues to be the mainstay of the national discourse about *sinetron*, attempts to promote the regional/ethnic images and to explore the hidden dreams of local/regional people continues on the margins of the industry. In the era of '*sinetronisation*', there are still *sinetron* producers and the creators at the local/regional level, who are not greatly concerned when their productions do not make the top rating or do not sell well. For local stations like *JTV* and *Bali TV*, the contradiction between the local cultural expression and market demand may not in fact be so great. Local TV producers such as Arif Afandi, Satya Naradha, and perhaps some others believe that business calculations should not become the only determining factor to generate the taste of the television audience and the production of cultural images in the country. Indeed, the audiences are not those viewer-monsters that can only be calculated for economic reasons.

Conclusion

All these illustrations above suggest that the formation of popular culture in Indonesia appears to follow the logic of capitalism in treating cultures as a commodity or as an unchanging token of traditional values rather than as sites of creative presentation and cultural configurations of diverse local resources. As things

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[12] Satria Naradha's nationalism about Bali and Balinese culture has been popularised by him through his television and newspaper as '*Ajeg* Bali.' *Ajeg* Bali has been criticised among the Balinese academics and intellectuals as being strongly political biased. A young Balinese Anthropology student of Udayana, Bali, I Ngurah Suryawan, has studied *Ajeg* Bali and its politico-cultural contents. Suryawan's paper "From cultural tourism to *Ajeg* Bali: A genealogy of Balinese cultural and Political Change," draws on Art/Culture and Politics Post-Soeharto in Bali was presented at University of Tasmania, Launceston, 16-18 December 2005.

stand at present, *sinetron* is rather a cultural commodity of the capitalist producers under the claim of "in favour of the market' tastes" (*selera pasar*), than a carnival of local cultural images. Since ideological and political repressions of the state toward the production and distribution of popular culture, particularly *sinetron*, has been reduced, the orientation of the producers is expressed in particular economic strategies that are geared to securing their own position in a competitive arena.

The *sinetron* industry in all its manifestations has played a prominent role in Indonesian social and political life. To some extent, in everyday life, many urban Indonesians cannot avoid some exposure to some aspect of *sinetron*. The advertising and synopses of *sinetron* in daily newspapers and major entertainment tabloids, the huge outdoor billboards of *sinetron* on the major streets of urban areas, the fashions promoted by the stars, all these features permeate *sinetron* as part of urban people's life. The next chapter, thus, looks at how this industry and the national television stations construct audiences.

Chapter Four

Audiencemaking: How the Institutions Construct the Audience of a National *Sinetron*

> *Alternative understanding of television audiencehood can only be successful if we manage to radically dissociate ourselves from the assumptions and procedures which determine the way in which the television audience is known from the institutional point of view* (Ien Ang, 1991, p. 3).

Goenawan Muhammad, a senior journalist of *Tempo* magazine, wrote in his routine column *Catatan Pinggir* (Sideline) an anecdote about Emil Salim, a former Minister of Environment in Soeharto's New Order era. He was hospitalised for two weeks. Lying in bed, there was not much he could do except watch television. Emil Salim watched TV non-stop until he left hospital. Returning home, he wrote a letter to the Director General of Radio, Film and TV, Mr. Subrata, complained that over a period of two weeks, he had become more stupid. Commenting on this, Muhammad, says:

> Emil Salim, a former minister, was probably a bit naive: he should have known that under the Minister of Information Harmoko and the Director General Subroto, the Indonesian people indeed were not expected to become clever. What was important was that they be obedient and passive. Harmokoism has gone now, but Emil Salim, along with all of us, can still ask whether it's possible for viewers to stop being passive, and whether they are just part of the market, that revered idol created by *telenovelas* from Latin America and Raam Punjabi's *sinetron* (Muhammad, 2002, p. 146).

These narratives replicate the paradox of audiencehood in Indonesia. These two different concepts of audiences mark the common oppositional views in perceiving the role of the media for a society: one, a typical bureaucrat, wished for the media to educate the audience; the other criticised the construct of passive recipient and submissive target-segment of the political and the capitalist media institutions. This contradictory position continues to be the mainstay in the discourse of television audiencehood in the country, as demonstrated in this chapter.   While the

"mainstream" framework still requires television as a pedagogical medium, the industry's construct is much more confusing and complex. This chapter, thus, looks at how the television audience is imagined and positioned by the private television institutions and the political and critical institutions, focusing in particular on the institutional discourses between 2000 and 2004.

"Television is, like a nation, a construct of specific institutions" (Hartley, 1992b, p. 104). The institutions that construct television audience discursively are all those who have vested interests and include: (1) the television industry (networks, stations, producers, etc); (2) political/legal institutions (usually formalized as regulatory bodies, and intermittently as government-sponsored inquiries and reports); and (3) critical institutions (academic, journalistic and – surprisingly rarely – self-constituted audience organizations or pressure groups) (Hartley, p. 105). These three institutions have different voices and different stand points when speaking of their interests in the name of the so-called "imagined community" of spectators. In Hartley's notion audience is a construct and an "invisible fiction," which is produced institutionally and imagined either empirically, theoretically, or politically in order to serve "the need of the imagining institution."

> Like nations, television as an institution is limited, impure, with no essence but only difference from other television, other forms, other institutions. Nevertheless, television does frequently transgress national boundaries – the idea of its essential nation-ality is as imagined, or fictional, as the idea of nation itself (Hartley, 1992b, p. 104).

Parallel to Hartley's argument, Ien Ang (1991) argues that television audience "only exists as an imaginary entity, an abstraction constructed from the vantage point of the institutions, in the interest of institutions" (Ang, 1991, p. 2). The television audience is an imaginary construct of discourses that surround and institutionalise broadcast practice in particular circumstances.

In the context of Indonesia, Philip Kitley (2000) has examined diverse views of how the audiences were imagined by the institutions involved in producing television. He investigated the creation of television audiencehood in Indonesia during the New Order era. Kitley demonstrates that the distinctive characteristic of the television audience in Indonesia not only depended on the characteristics of the television

institutions themselves; the national media policy of the New Order also determined how audiences were imagined and constructed. What is obvious from Kitley's study is that Indonesian television audiences were historically imagined and metaphorised as a nation, a family, as public citizens, and as childlike, as idealised by the state through the creation of national programming of the state-owned channel, *TVRI*. In contrast, for private channels, audiences were imagined and positioned as the target market for commerce (especially for *RCTI* channel) and as the hybrid combination between the commercial audience and the public citizen (for *TPI* channel) (Kitley, 2000).

Taking the cue from Hartley's and Ang's arguments, also extending Kitley's work on the construction of audiencehood in Indonesia in the context of the broadcasting industry of the 2000s, in this chapter I aim to look at the discourses of how the audience is positioned in relation to the television texts by the producers and makers of the texts, the private television institutions, the government, and the television critics. More specifically, the chapter explores how the television and *sinetron* industries have created their televisual texts in relation to their view of the viewers. Extending a bit further, this chapter also looks at how the government as a political institution and the television critics as the representative of the critical institutions situate national audiences and place themselves on behalf of the television viewers.

I argue that the voices of 'actual' national television audiences are almost always absent and indeed impossible to fully capture (see Ang, 1991) or are even misrepresented within the imagination and rhetoric of those three institutions. Rather, the institutions' voices, which speak in the name of a fictional audience, only produce arguments about the general aesthetics of broadcast television, particularly *sinetron*, in comparison to cinema/film and to foreign productions. Television audience is rarely situated within his/her own cultural context and within diverse representational and belief systems that operate in the Indonesian archipelago. The spectator of national television, thus, is situated not under the framework of his/her specific cultural signifying practice, but rather, in the light of those institutions' value judgments and their own interests.

Class and Taste

As I have discussed in *Chapter Two*, the determination of audience class and taste by the private television institutions still overlaps and is vague. The expansion of new middle classes in contemporary Indonesia along with their distinctive lifestyle, such as in patterns of savings, investment, residential patterns, private transportation and other lifestyle choices that give definition to who middle classes are and their active role as consumers, have been used by the television (and advertising industry) institutions to create programs that generate the taste of these middle class consumers. In fact, the majority of television viewers in Indonesia, 81 percent, are the middle to lower socio-economic class ("Dominasi TV," 2004, p. 20), not those urban middle classes as perceived by the industrial institutions. The industrial's assumptions about the television audience –along with the story of Goenawan Muhammad earlier- are clearly articulated in the following cartoon.

Images 4.1

Cartoon: Critic for *Sinetron*
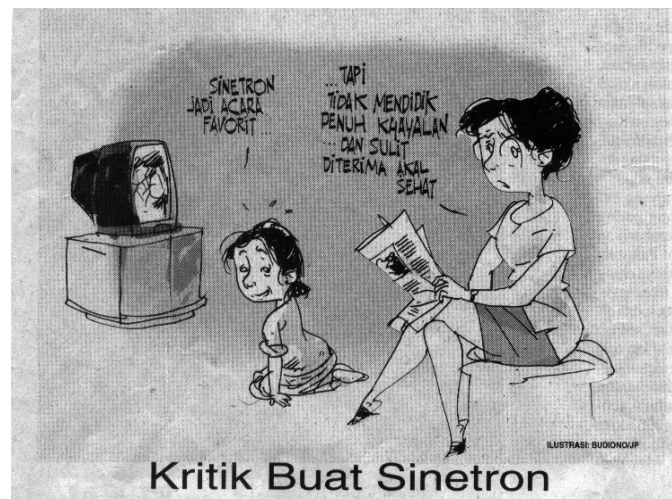
Source: *Jawa Pos*, 4 August 2003 (courtesy of Arif Afandi, Chief Editor of *Jawa Pos*)

This cartoon illustrates a characteristic view of class tastes in relation to *sinetron* on Indonesian television. As such, this cartoon signifies the dilemma of *sinetron* for its diverse audiences as indicated in *Chapter Two*. On the one hand, *sinetron* is popular and well liked by audiences. On the other hand, *sinetron* is seen as rubbish and

poisonous for the society. The class differentiation within the domestic space of urban middle class households in Indonesia is also clearly represented in this cartoon. There is a female maid (in Indonesian *pembantu*), who represents lower class status and is depicted wearing a typical traditional *kebaya* and sarong as iconic maid's clothing. Being subordinate in the household, the maid is presented sitting on the floor and watching television straight in front of the TV set. In contrast, the housewife in a prevailing fashion, sits on a couch in a higher position than her maid. The maid's comment that "*sinetron* becomes a favourite program" signifies that *sinetron* is a well-liked program for viewers of the similar social position of the maid; whereas, for the mistress, who is part of the have community, journalism/newspaper appears more reliable than *sinetron*/television, which does not educate, full of fantasy, and does not make sense. The maid in the cartoon looks happy with *sinetron*, but not with the mistress, who looks disappointed. What is significant here is, that there are different audiences, who have their own taste, and who are in different positions as producers of meaning of television/*sinetron*. Therefore, while *sinetron* audiences consist of diverse individuals and communal audiences, there must be also diverse tastes and diverse 'watching television' experiences produced on the sites of audiences.

When critics call many programs on Indonesian television "rubbish," both the television stations and the *sinetron* producers put the blame on audience taste. Teguh Juwarno, PR manager of RCTI, maintains that his station really caters to audience taste (*selera penonton*). According to him, in an era of fierce competition, a broadcaster must know the (demographic) characteristics of the audience watching its programs. "We must know viewers at any particular programming time. We detect their taste, [then] we give a program that suits their taste, of course, with some improvisations. Even though the program might not be watched, at least we secure what is called 'audience share' at that [programming] time" (Personal interview, January 2003). Juwarno, like some other private channels officials whom I interviewed, believes that it has been not easy to detect the taste of the Indonesian television market. For them, the viewers' taste varies mainly determined by the socio-economic class status (termed SES) and gender. So, actually what are constituted as 'class taste' (*selera kelas*) and 'market taste' (*selera pasar*) in the context of the Indonesian media industry?

The structure of class market for the Indonesian media is defined mainly by Nielsen Media Research[1] into seven categories. These social economic status data are counted from the monthly income earned by urban people living in six major cities of Indonesia: Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Surabaya, Medan, and Makassar. Media companies in Indonesia, including private television stations, select their target market based on Nielsen's data.

Table 4.1
Social Economic Status (in Rupiah)
(Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Surabaya, Medan, Makassar)
1998 - 2002

SES	1998	1999	2001-2002
A1	1,000,000 & above	1,500,000 & above	2,000,000 & above
A2	700,000 – 1,000,000	1,000,000 – 1,500,000	1,500,000 – 2,000,000
B	500,000 – 700,000	700,000 – 1,000,000	1,000,000 – 1,500,000
C1	350,000 – 500,000	500,000 – 700,000	700,000 – 1,000,000
C2	250,000 – 350,000	350,000 – 500,000	500,000 – 700,000
D	200,000 – 250,000	250,000 – 350,000	300,000 – 500,000
E	200,000 & below	250,000 & below	300,000 & below

Source: Nielsen Media Research in *Media Scene 2002-2003*, 2004, p. 19.

US$1 = around 8,000 – 9,000 rupiahs

Officially, almost all private channels state their target market is middle to upper class (A and B classes), aged 5 years and over, and mostly women. Two private channels, *ANTV* and *TPI*[2] which were formerly positioned for middle to lower groups (C, D, and E) have tried to expand their target audience by telecasting programs catering to upper middle class. According to Nielsen Media Research survey, 81 per cent of the television audiences are from middle to lower (CDE) classes. The detailed composition is as follows: from the total samples of

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[1] Since 2002, AC Nielsen Indonesia has no connection with Survey Research Indonesia (SRI). Along with the rapid development of media industry in Indonesia, AC Nielsen Indonesia has established its media research department, which has become a leader among other departments, to become an independent division under the name of NMR (Nielsen Media Research).

[2] TPI is now an official corporate title. The station has dropped any pretense of being a national educational channel, as it was formerly known as *Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia* (Indonesian Education Television)

110,292,297 persons who watched television, the AB class who watched TV was 19 per cent, C class was 45 per cent, D class was 28 per cent, and E class was only 8 per cent (*"Dominasi TV,"* 2004, p. 20)[3]

RCTI and *Trans TV* that previously consistently targeted upper to middle class audiences have tried to extend their audience share by capturing audiences from lower classes (CDE) by broadcasting programs such as *dangdut* music shows and Indian films, which are identified as lower class shows (*tontonan kelas bawah*). Both *RCTI* and *Trans TV* believe that since statistically the largest numbers of viewers of television are those CDE classes, they need to continue to produce programs for those CDE classes, but to package the shows as an upper class entertainment. "We wrap *dangdut* [show] in a lifestyle of AB classes, but we also accommodate the interest of CDE level by reducing the level of the content" (Juwarno in Personal Interview). Similarly, *Trans TV* modifies its popular *dangdu*t music program '*Digoda*' (an acronym for *Digoyang Dangdut*) to attract viewers from AB classes. To achieve this, according to Ishadi, the president director of *Trans TV*, the performance of *Digoda* is modeled on *Moulin Rouge*: "It is *dangdut*, but it could be glamorous," he said (Personal interview, January 2003).

On the other hand, *SCTV*, which was previously known as a '*telenovela* channel' as the station broadcast Latin *telenovela* more frequently than other stations, declares that the station consistently targets women as its primary market. According to Haryanto, a PR officer of *SCTV*, before 1997, *SCTV* had a "feminine" image. This image was represented through the broadcasting of local *sinetron*, what he called 'feminine dramas' (*drama kewanitaan*), which emotionally attracted young women viewers from ABC classes. Since 1997, *SCTV* has transformed its motto to '*SCTV Ngetop'* (*SCTV* Top/Popular). The market segmentation has also shifted to general audiences from ABC classes. In fact, the audience penetration of *SCTV* is mainly the middle to lower (CD) classes. Like Juwarno from *RCTI*, Haryanto states that the main segmentation of *SCTV* is for upper middle class (AB) viewers, but in the present competitive era, *SCTV* also tries to chase middle to lower class markets. This

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[3] The classification of social class based on that statistical system of income continues debatable. These income ratings truly do not reveal the actual class of a person or a family (see Balnaves, O'Regan & Sternberg, 2002). However, since private television companies and advertising agents tend to look for a quick and instant quantitative measurement about the class position of audience, they have adopted those income ratings as an easy method for marketing.

means that the emphasis is rather on sheer numbers of audience than on demographic segmentation of specific groups of audiences.

> The television viewer in Indonesia still sees TV as an entertainment medium, not an information [medium], so the need to become a more specific [channel] is still far off. Because we are still a general [channel], people can still watch various things. Maybe the battle is now not on the [audience] segmentation, but on whether the TV station is capable or not in placing a program at the right time and for the right audience (Haryanto, personal interview, January 2003).

These illustrations above suggest that there is a paradox between the need to maintain the station's particular image and the battle to win the audience share. On the one hand, private television channels in Indonesia seem to position themselves as an elite class entertainment medium. So, in order to establish a positive image of their corporations, nine private channels, except TPI, which still consistently targets the lower classes, firmly declare their target to be upper middle class segments. On the other hand, as the population of television viewers is statistically dominated by middle and lower classes (refer to Nielsen Media's survey in 2004), the private channels see these populations as a potential market of advertising. "It is a truism in the industry that the purpose of commercial television is not to deliver programming to the people but rather to 'deliver' audiences to advertisers" (Feuer, 1984, p. 2). The contest between 'status image' and 'taste' has finally brought consequences in which television stations (and the *sinetron* producers of course) produce shows that look glamorous—to maintain the positioning/image of the channels, but lack content.

Significantly, as I mentioned in *Chapter Two*, for private television stations in Indonesia, market taste and audience taste appear to be interpreted in terms of numbers: numbers of viewers watching the show, not in terms of taste as " the source of the system of distinctive features which cannot fail to be perceived as a systematic expression of a particular class of conditions of existence," (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 175). The explanation of why some *sinetron* or TV programs succeed with the mass audience and others do not, I argue, is not because of the taste of the viewers, but because of the dynamic of preference of the viewers. 'Taste' (*selera*) and 'preference' (*pilihan*) are two different things. What the producers think of audience taste (*selera pemirsa*) seems to refer to audience preference. As Raam

Punjabi, a *sinetron* producer, states, "In order to know the viewers' taste, that is sometimes easy sometimes difficult. So, my formula is to place myself as a viewer. What I want to see [or watch] as a viewer, that's that I make" ("Raam Punjabi*,"* 2003). The words "what I want to see [or watch]" indicate a preference. A preference can be changeable and follow the mass trend, whilst taste "is a generative formula of life-style, a unitary set of distinctive preferences which express the same expressive intention in the specific logic of each of the symbolic sub-spaces, furniture, clothing, language or body hexis" (Bordieu, p. 173). In addition, taste as the "stylization of life" (Weber cited in Bordieu, p. 174) can be predicted based on social class and other demographic characteristics of people, but it cannot be counted in numbers for the ratings system. The emphasis on ratings (also called 'Nielsen' in reference to the company that provides data to the private TV stations) has made numbers (people watching) a crucial determinant of the worth of the television programs in Indonesia. Ratings, thus, are used in the Indonesian television industry as *de facto* and instant evaluation and taste arbiter.

The Paradoxes of Television Audience Measurement

Again, I have explained in *Chapter Two*, how the television program producers utilise rating for their TV stations. The following aims to examine the context of rating in relation to the constructions of television audiencehood in contemporary Indonesian media.

Wednesday is panic day for private television stations in Indonesia. Wednesday at 12.00 noon is the time when Nielsen Media Research send them television ratings data. On Wednesday afternoon, private television companies know what programs are the most-watched and which station is leading during the week. The audience measurement industry and television companies are mutually dependant in the practice of the television industry in Indonesia these days. When I visited *Trans TV*, one private television station in Jakarta, the President Director was busy asking his programming and planning department about the position of the station among others "how many is our rating today?" He told me that he was not concerned about the position of his station, but he was concerned about the numbers of viewers switching on his channel. "I don't worry about our position. I'm confident we are still in the third position. But if our TVR (acronym for Television Ratings) have gone down,

even slightly, I have to explain to the owner," said the president director while we walked through his office. In ten minutes his secretary brought the statistical data showing the station position with the TVR number, the top ten programming ratings, and audience share trend data. He looked surprised when he saw his channel had gained slightly low TVR, then he smiled when he saw '*Crouching Tiger*', a Hong Kong imported mini series, was in top rank. He then got the phone and called his programming manager and said "*Tiger* is number one!"

The president director said to me that even though the ratings system has been criticised, the television companies still use and trust it because the advertisers use ratings to place their advertisements. According to him, in the broadcast industry, the people meter system is seen as the instant and fastest way to measure numbers of people watching a TV channel and TV programs. No matter whether a person watches a program right through or watches only five minutes on the program, they are all counted the same. Ratings are very important as a guide to monitor the reach of television programming and the penetration of TV stations. The ratings system thus appears to have significant impacts on the way the programming is constructed, how entertainment is offered to the viewer, how channel scheduling and promotion are carried out, and, most importantly, how advertising is bought and sold. This phenomenon reflects the comments of Ian Munir, CEO of OzTAM (Australian company), on the role of ratings in the broadcasting industry:

> Ratings are the currency of the industry. They serve two masters: the programmers, because the programmers need to know how many people are watching their particular program, how many people are watching the opposition, whether they won the timeslot or are at least competitive; and obviously the sales department needs the ratings to determine how much it can charge for television commercial in any given program or any particular zone or television time. So ratings are a fact of life. Everyone forgets, however, that they are sample-based estimates and therefore they are subject to sampling error, statistical error and all sorts of outside influences at times (O'Regan, Garland, Munir, Chard, Thomas, & Hartley, 2002, p. 18).

Clearly, there is still debate about the accuracy of television audience measurement. Some people have even expressed concerns that television ratings produced by Nielsen are "tailor-made" or intended to serve the interest of, particularly, the major television stations.

The television ratings, thus, result in paradoxes in the context of viewership in the Indonesian television industry. The first paradox is that there have been contradictions between the results of Nielsen's survey and the surveys conducted by other institutions. For instance, Nielsen's survey during the week of 22-28 October 2000 indicated that *sinetron* titles *Misteri Gunung Merapi* (Mystery of Merapi Mountain) and *Tersanjung* (Flattered) were top rated programs. In contrast, the survey of audience choices conducted by the tabloid *Citra*, a TV entertainment tabloid of Gramedia Group, in October 2000 showed that *sinetron* titles *Dewi Fortuna* (Lady Fortune) and *Cinta Tak Pernah Salah* (Love is Never Wrong) were selected as the top shows. The Panasonic TV Award, a kind of viewer choice award, in November 2000 nominated *Ketoprak Humor* (Comedy *Ketoprak* is a Javanese traditional theatre) as the favourite television program. All three surveys collect their primary data from audiences. This suggests that one might question if the Nielsen ratings are entirely authoritative.

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, *sinetron* melodramas, which feature the life of urban *gedongan* (elite/upper class) community, have flourished on national private television stations. It is a cliché to claim that the increasing number of such *sinetron*—known as '*sinetron* selling dreams' (*sinetron menjual mimpi*)—is because of the market demand or because of the taste of Indonesian society. The *gedongan sinetron* are created and positioned as if they are aimed at upper class, sophisticated tastes by exploiting a portrait of upper class families and their complicated conflicts. The use of young, beautiful female actresses and handsome actors, the presentations of glamour, and the high technique of cinematography used in the *gedongan sinetron* have placed such teledramas in a dilemma. On the one hand, they are imagined as a high-class product; on the other hand, the viewers targeted are those whose life experience contrasts with the picture shown on the dramas, like the maid in the above cartoon. I would suggest that this dilemmatic position, to some extent, has caused the criticism that Indonesian *sinetron* can only sell dreams. As Hartley states, "It is clear broadcasters imagine audiences differently from the way that (for instance) feminist reader-response criticism does" (Hartley, 1992b, p. 121).

More importantly, the people meter method, the formalised procedure of audience measurement, is unable to cover the actual discourses of television/sinetron

audiencehood. Audience quantification survey, according to Ang (1991, p. 84), is "only partial materializations of this desire." Nevertheless, the people meter method of Nielsen, for better or worse, has become the standard of empirical truth that the private television stations in Indonesia live by. The persistence of this method symbolises that the constitution of size of audience is more important for the television/sinetron industry than the determination of actual viewing behaviour. People meter can only recognise television viewing practice as an individual experience, and seems to deny the occurrence of a communal viewing practice.

Audience as Industrial Construct

> Thursday night is important. It's the highlight of the week in the life of 30-year-old Ina Herlina. It's become a hallowed ritual for this employee of a state-owned enterprise to relax in front of the TV to watch [*sinetron*] *Dewi Fortuna*. Missing just one episode of this *sinetron* starring Bella Saphira and Jeremy Thomas is like losing a part of herself. She will do anything to watch it. […] The time when her office had a meeting in the West Java mountain resort area of Puncak, Ina, who was supposed to take down the minutes of the meeting, suddenly disappeared. Telling her boss she had a slight stomachache, Ina rushed to her room to get her weekly dose of soap opera schmaltz. Once it was over, she returned to the meeting room without any feelings of guilt. Ina lied to her boss that her stomach problem was more serious than she had initially thought, so she had to stay longer in the restroom. […] Another case of *sinetron* craving occurred when Ina and a colleague had to attend a workshop in Cepu, East Java. The problem was, her place of accommodation only had one television; worse yet, the TV was in a meeting room full of male viewers, who were virulently anti-*sinetron*. Without thinking twice, she hurried off to Surabaya, capital of East Java, where she bought a 14-inch television set. She immediately returned and put it in her room. "That way I could watch *Dewi Fortuna* without being bothered by other people," she says (so reported *Tempo*, 8 January 2001, p. 46)

Sinetron syndrome has been acknowledged in Indonesia for over a decade. Local television dramas have attracted domestic viewers, particularly since the emergence of private television stations in the 1990s. The story above is an example of those who are addicted to the *sinetron* shows. Every single day the melodramatic episodes flourish on the airwaves. "*Sinetron* have become a fixture for most Indonesian families. For some, their presence is like the best friend you are always waiting for.

[…] Like a magic lamp, *sinetron* hold millions of Indonesian viewers spellbound in front of their TVs, day and night" (Chudori, 2001b, p. 46).

Just like Ina in that story, some other *sinetron* fans restructure their routines to fit in with TV schedules. As reported by the national daily paper, *Media Indonesia*, the Indonesian (Medical) Doctors Association (*Ikatan Dokter Indonesia*, IDI) protested the *sinetron* screened during the 9 am – 11 am timeslot distracted mothers from participating in the maternal and child health program (known as *Posyandu*) conducted in their local area. According to IDI, the running of *sinetron* shows in the daytime meant about 40 per cent of mothers were reluctant to come to the *Posyandu* ("Penayangan," 2000, p.12).

How then is the audience positioned in relation to the television texts, or more particularly, *sinetron* texts? As Hartley has stated "The way in which corporate executives and professional producers imagine audiences is particularly important, since it determines to some extent what goes on air, and it may help to explain why the industry acts as it does" (Hartley, 1992b, p. 108), this section explores how several *sinetron* creators and producers, together with the private television stations, imagine their audience and see to shape and create their productions to offer 'pleasure' to audiences and to conform to their imagined audiences. My underlying interest here is the strategies of the *sinetron* producers in deciding and selecting the dramatic programs to be produced and in the process by which the *sinetron* are created and later distributed to audiences in the archipelago.

There is a new trend in the system of *sinetron* production in which an episode is taped only one day or two days before the show is screened. This system, called '*kejar tayang*' (immediate shooting process), which according to the production houses, this system caters for the possibility of changing the story flow in response to the rating trend and the demands on the television stations for commercial reasons. According to Rachmiadi, a vice director of PT. Indika Entertainment, the dynamic of *sinetron* episodes strongly depends on the rating position, which is interpreted by the producers as market/audience demand (Personal interview, January 2003). In this regard, the audience is positioned as if a story consumer, who seems responsive to the *sinetron* story flow.

Of course such considerations only occur when producers see the promise of large income from such responsiveness to audiences. In fact, there have never been convincing indications that audiences really want the story to be changed. My assumption here is based on the explanations of the producers and the television stations managers given in interviews. For instance, Tauhid, a promotional manager of PT. Starvision production house, explained in personal interview that his comedy drama *Gerhana* (Eclips), for example, was modified to contain more slapstick horror content and played by younger actors, just because horror *sinetron* and mystical shows were extremely common on television at that time. He then presumed that the audience must like horror shows and preferred to see younger actors; and so his company, Starvision, immediately changed the series to follow what was seen as a trend on television. Gufron Sakaril from *IVM* station almost supports Tauhid's explanation above. Sakaril said that the television stations can strongly influence the production houses. If, for example, youth dramas flourish, then the production houses are expected to recognise this trend and immediately modify their productions, as happened with the popular melodrama *Tersanjung* (Flattered series 6). This is the reason for implementing the immediate shooting process (or *kejar tayang*).

It seems that the position and attitude of audience when a *sinetron* is aired, according to Tauhid and Sakaril, are very important for the continuation of the serials: whether the episode is modified for longer telecasting or immediately shortened or concluded. In actual fact, again, the production houses appear to use their own judgement to modify their productions. For instance, Tauhid once again maintained that modifying the story line and characters is common in this industry. He said that the story line of his popular comedy drama *Gerhana* was modified in consideration of the market demand and the trend of *sinetron* themes at the time I did the fieldwork in 2003. *Gerhana* was broadcast for more than 100 episodes, and the story line had also been modified to follow the new trend of *sinetron remaja* (teenage dramas), which had recently flourished on national private channels. This strategy was also adopted for the melodrama *Tersanjung* of PT. Multivision Plus, which has been modified from a story of family conflicts to one of youth conflicts. Exactly, there is no signpost indicated that the audience wants to watch more on youth *sinetron*. As a matter of fact, other *sinetron* producers have created teenage/youth dramas in order to compete

from their contenders' productions. Starvision or Multivision, in this position, then follows the step by modifying their existing *sinetron* production, which is running on the TV stations, for the sake of the revenue battle.

Various strategies are also used to attract audiences to stay loyal to one *sinetron* production. It is believed by the *sinetron* producers that certain elements (sensationalism, do not make sense, simple conflict, and strong characters) contained in the teledrama texts will attract and capture large numbers of viewers. Jujur Prananto, a scenario writer, assumes that the tendency is that viewers now accept only *sinetron* with sensational stories. Prananto realised his first two *sinetron* melodramas *Kupu-kupu Kertas* (Paper Butterflies, 2000) and *Ibu* (Mother, 2002) screened on *IVM* station, failed to capture the attention of audiences. "Probably, the title and the story line were not sensational," he said ("Sedih-marah-senang," 2003).

In 2003, he signed a contract with PT. Multivision Plus to produce a melodrama, titled *Istri Yang Hilang* (The Missing Wife), which he estimated would be more "extreme" than his previous productions, as the title, according to him, suggests sensationalism. Since the *sinetron* makers take their own initiative in creating their productions without knowing exactly who is watching their show, such attempt would only be useless. A sensational title does not always create potential numbers of viewers; and melodrama *Istri Yang Hilang* did not even occupy a place in the top-ten rating chart during that year.

Another view sees that Indonesian audiences also like "irrational" resolutions. Achmad Yusuf, who directed two top rating *sinetron* melodramas *Abad 21* (21st Century, 2000) and *Wah, Cantiknya* (Wow, Beautiful, 2001-02), states that "Society does not like [*sinetron*] with complicated conflicts anymore. So, we no longer make [*sinetron*] with too many and complicated conflicts. Society is happy with light conflict and funny stories" ("Sedih-marah-senang," 2003). He considers that one comedy drama, *Kecil-kecil Jadi Manten* (Young Ones Get Married, 2003), screened on *RCTI*, has been popular and occupied top rating for long periods because of the use of "irrational" ideas in resolving the family conflicts. Yusuf says, "When one family wants its 'tomboy' girl to become more feminine, and the other family wants its feminine boy to become more masculine, the parents prefer to arrange a marriage of their children rather than consulting the psychologist. This way out is illogical, but

it is liked by the society" ("Sedih-marah-senang," 2003). Here the *sinetron* producers appear to assume that viewers are easily fooled with this kind of 'cheap comedy'. Again, viewers, for those *sinetron* makers, are assumed mostly as not intelligent with low-level educational background, who maintain conventional ways of life, or in other words, the society is labelled as 'backward'. Thus, they produce entertainment which does not need to be rational or complex, and must be silly for the kind of viewers imagined by the *sinetron* makers.

Prami Rachmiadi, from PT. Indika Entertainment, one of the big five *sinetron* producers, declares that Indika's products are "smart" productions which do not seek to fool the viewers. By "smart" Rachmiadi meant: "For example, when a person [character in *sinetron*] has an ordeal, we then use only background sound to describe the mourning, no need to say it in words" (personal interview with Rachmiadi, January 2003). Rachmiadi believes that the audience will follow the flow of the situation of the *sinetron* story from the sound effect without any melancholic words uttered to show the sadness. By applying this strategy, he believes that the format of Indika's productions is different from the mainstream format of melodramatic *sinetron* (*sinetron cengeng*) shaped by the giant *sinetron* factory, PT. Multivision Plus of Raam Punjabi. Rachmiadi described the majority of Indonesian *sinetron* audiences as mainly:

> 'Office boys[4]' and below, who like to watch Raam's *sinetron*. He knows their patterns and their demands. There are also *kampung* women between 30 and 40 years of age who have grown up with Raam's *sinetron*. They get used to watching *sinetron* like *Tersanjung*, which is now transformed from the melodramatic drama for the 30s to 40s groups to become a romance youth drama when Raam sees the market trend to youth dramas (Personal interview, January 2003).

In contrast, Rachmiadi pointed out that audiences of Indika are mainly women from middle upper classes (class category of A and B), graduated from at least high school and working outside home. Many of them are young executives. He believes that because Indika knows exactly these demographic characteristics of its audience, this production house always tries to produce 'quality' *sinetron* in terms of the story line

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[4] Office boy is categorised as a low level job in Indonesia (with low level of income). Usually they are graduated from primary or secondary schools, or may even be illiterate.

and the cinematographic technique to meet the taste of those classes of audience. Paradoxically, at the same time, Rachmiadi realised that many of his viewers were also *kampung* women aged between 30s and 40. Faced with this, Indika Entertainment then modified its production formats. For instance, assuming that those *kampung* women viewers were only likely to have a small size television set, the use of long shoots and soft colours has been reduced; whereas, close-up shots and contrasting colours are increased so that the *kampung* viewers with small screen TV would find pleasure with the televisual images. Rachmiadi understands that for upper middle class viewers this kind of camera angle and contrast colour look odd, even tacky (*norak*). Yet, since his company needs to reach the majority viewers, as determined by the television stations and their advertisers, his creators have to cope with this situation.

As a matter of fact, Rachmiadi reveals that Indika's productions accordingly tend to follow the format of Multivision's productions in order to compete for audience and revenue shares. "*Sinetron* audiences like to [watch] extra marital affairs or antagonistic characters that look so wicked. So, the flow of Indika's [*sinetron*] will be directed to [the format of] Multivision by accommodating the interests of the market. Production houses now become a 'make to order' industry in order to fit the market and the television demands," stated Rachmiadi in a personal interview. Rachmiadi perhaps did not realise when making this statement that he was actually saying that production houses, except the large *sinetron* company like PT. Multivision Plus, seem to have little control over their creative efforts, especially under a revenue share contract system with TV stations. No matter which audience the creative producers wish to reach, the fact is that all aspects of a *sinetron* production appear to be determined by the television stations and advertisers who wish to reach their targeted market. Therefore, the audience as a reference group never has an impact on producers and their creative works.

All these features above indicate that the producers' notions of 'who watch their shows' perhaps narrow to a mixture of stereotypes and wishful thinking. Some producers perhaps have a low opinion of their actual viewers' aptitude and taste. It seems that for them, if a show appeals to them, it would not appeal to general viewers. In a different position, other producers see themselves as the audience too,

and if the show fascinates to them, it would fascinate to others as well. A producer, like Raam Punjabi, publicly positions himself in the latter category, as these words indicate: "First, we must put ourselves in the position of the audience. Then, we know what the audience wants. Never try to be didactic to the audience," declares Punjabi whenever he is asked about his strategy to become the successful King of *sinetron* ("Raam Punjabi," 2003). Yet, he has also declared that he has always given the public what it wants, implying that audiences do not care for quality as long as they are entertained with his productions. For this producer, most *sinetron* shows fail likely as if they are not directed to the right audience. Moreover, Punjabi maintained that *sinetron*, as entertainment, should not be controversial or too intellectual.

Raam Punjabi confidently stated that 90 percent of the *sinetron* audiences in Indonesia are the audiences of Multivision Plus. He is also aware of the fact that the majority viewers of his production are those lower classes. In his interview with *Tempo*'s journalist, he says, "You ask that door man [5] whether he watched *Tersanjung* or not last night. If he watched it, it means that he represents one million people" (Chudori, 2001c, p. 56). Knowing that his viewers are mainly lower class society, Punjabi asserts that this society are seeking escapism and an absence of reality, so they want something different from what they face in everyday life (Chudori, 2001c, p. 60). "It's entertainment. Entertainment must be several levels above reality. It must look good and be easy to follow," said Punjabi (Chudori, 2001b, p. 57).

For Punjabi, interaction between the viewer and the *sinetron* is also important. That is why his company, PT. Multivision Plus, tends to produce long multi-episode *sinetron* rather than the mini series such as those produced by PT. Indika Entertainment and PT. Prima Entertainment, his two major business rivals. He believes that the longer the episodes, the more intensive the interaction for viewers. To develop the interaction between audience and the *sinetron* text, Punjabi believes that the creation of a star character is important. "Plot is important, but there must be a character that the audience can empathise with" ("Raam Punjabi," 2003). As he puts himself as the audience, Punjabi presumes that characters in *sinetron* must be down to earth (*membumi*). He imagines that characters should be developed through

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[5] Like the office boy, the door man in Indonesia is categorised as a lower wage employee.

their interaction with audience. So, Punjabi creates characters as an "embryo;" the development of characters themselves, in his thought, depends on the audience responses and demands. That is why Punjabi has never denied concentrating on the young and beautiful actresses instead of talent. The presentation of good-looking stars is important for Punjabi as entertainment has two significant elements; "pleasant to see (*enak dipandang*) and easy to follow (*enak diikuti*)." He thus sees *sinetron* as an entertainment that should cause no discomfort to the viewers. "A good serial…is when a viewer can associate him/herself with the figures in it" (Chudori, 2001b, p. 50). Punjabi also claims for his audience segment, the looks of his stars will determine the success of his *sinetron* (Chudori, 2001c, p. 57). Does the audience think of the same matter as Punjabi? I will discuss this issue in the next chapters on audience reception.

The above illustrates how the audience is imagined by the capitalist producer in his own mind and positioned in relations to the production of the *sinetron* texts. The audience is not positioned as an autonomous subject who has its own privilege to negotiate and make meaning of *sinetron* text as "television viewing as an area of cultural struggle" (Ang, 1996, p. 20). In fact, the *sinetron* text is positioned as a commercial product that is flexible to be changed and tailor-made to fit the markets that the TV stations and their advertisers wish to reach.

Audience as Subjects of the Nation-State

Philip Kitley (2000) has demonstrated the construct of national audience during the New Order Indonesia. The way the television industry imagines audience is important to determine what goes on air; conversely, the way the government imagines audience may determine the things that cannot go on air. In the context of New Order Indonesia, the audience was imagined as childlike, needing to be controlled in his/her attitudes and moral development, to be strongly taught in his/her religious faith, and as a child of a nation, whose national identity is vulnerable and needs to be evoked all the time.

Kitley maintains that the New Order government used television to teach audiences through drama/*sinetron* such as *Dokter Sartika (*Sartika, a Medical Practitioner*), Keluarga Rahmat (*Rahmat's Family*), Jendela Rumah Kita (*Our Window), and other programs laden with sponsored 'development' messages of the government agencies

(Kitley, 2000*).* More than that, the *sinetron* was governed by educational principles, whereby it provided entertainment containing ideological and instructional materials for the unsuspecting viewers. Therefore, positioning *sinetron* as electronic drama theatre to teach the difference between the good and the bad had situated this televisual pop culture as an integrated institution between the government, education, and the media.

Like Kitley's study, this section draws on the discourses of the government toward the construct of national *sinetron* and its audiences, focusing in particular on the discourses during the post-Soeharto New Order period between 2000 and 2004. The theme underlying this section is the criticism (or the complaints) of two Indonesian presidents, Megawati (2000-2004) and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-…), toward the production of national *sinetron*, and in general, about Indonesian television programs. I use these two presidents' narratives to understand how these political people place themselves as 'the audience' and imagine the audience. In the competitive era of private television industry and less government restriction over television, the political gesture of the post *reformasi* government remains resistance. The following illustrations give the clue.

In 2002, former President Megawati expressed that Indonesian *sinetron* do not really reflect the national culture and only sell dreams. Megawati, who was representing herself as a spectator and spoke in the name of society, demanded that *sinetron* production should represent the specific identity of society, identity of those people who watch *sinetron* in their everyday life. More specifically, Megawati picked examples of mythical stories, children's popular legendary tales such as *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih* (Red Onion, White Onion) and *Kancil* (Mousedeer)[6], which are considered local figures of national cultural production. The characters and the stories created in these tales are a form of fantasy intended to teach people good manners and promote the stereotypical images of black (antagonistic) and white (hero) characters. Megawati encouraged these kinds of mythical stories or folklore not only in order to present authentic *sinetron* as a national production, but also to connect the viewers to their nostalgic past.

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[6] *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih* and *Kancil* are the popular children's tales that the older generation and children of my generation know well. However, today, Indonesian children and the young generation are unlikely to hear these two legendary tales, as these legends have been replaced by the more popular Japanese cartoon characters like *Doraemon*, *Pokemon*, *Digimon*, and others.

> Why do we not produce quality cinemas [she meant *sinetron*] that show a real characteristic of Indonesia just like *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih* and *Kancil*… Indonesian *sinetron*, compared to Indian films, is not really deep-rooted in the identity of society…by closing my eyes, I know that it is an Indian Film, [I am watching] unlike Indonesian *sinetron*, the episode is difficult to follow …so it would be better to not to name them '*sinetron* Indonesia' but only '*sinetron*' (cited in Imran, 2000, my translation).

In this construct, the audience is infantilised – treated as children - who still need to be taught the history of the nation, which has been inherited from one generation to the next. Further, she demanded that the national *sinetron* should demonstrate traditional arts as signs of the origin of national cultural identity in order to name it 'Indonesian *sinetron*.' This view places national audience in the position of an ancient, classical citizenship. The irony inherent in her view, which is to think of the importance of originality in national cultural production by, for instance, comparing *sinetron* to Indian film, will also place *sinetron* in a reverential attitude to other/foreign cultural productions.

In 2004, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was complaining about the trend to broadcast more female bodies. Yudhoyono said that he felt uncomfortable with the televisual images that exploited a female's abdomen and her belly. In front of women participants at a national Mother's Day (*Hari Ibu*) ceremony on the 22nd of December 2004, Yudhoyono stated, "our beautiful girls, our noble women must be freed from the practice of showing their stomach and navel" ("Presiden: Jangan," 2004). For Yudhoyono, such shows are considered incompatible with religious (Islamic) norms, social norms, and national identity (*jati diri bangsa*). The issue of sexuality (e.g. pornography) is always embedded in the contestation of national identity. The public and political jargon like "pornography is incompatible with national identity" (*pornografi tidak sesuai dengan kepribadian bangsa*) or "pornography deviates from national culture" (*pornografi meyimpang dari budaya bangsa*) is almost everywhere in the discourse of sex and sexuality in Indonesia.

Although the president on behalf of the government states that the state does not need to regulate the broadcast of such "sex scenes," he requires all parties to respect 'well mannered culture' (*budaya santun*) of the nation (cited in Syahrul, 2004). Images of exposed women's bodies and sex scenes always become controversial

issues in Indonesia. The Indonesian parliament (the people's representative, DPR) has frequently urged private television stations, either directly to the stations' owner or through the national broadcasting committee, to cease the broadcast of pornography, violence, crimes, celebrity gossip and programs that encourage excessive consumption ("Stop siaran," 2004; "DPR desak," 2004).

The members of the legislative body argue that in order to re-position television to play a role in nation building and the process of national enlightenment (*pencerdasan bangsa*), broadcasting of programs which dull the public mind (*menumpulkan logika pubik*), exploit violence, crimes, and sex, should cease. In the name of children and young people, the legislative body, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, and the Coordinating Ministry of Social Welfare, together with the Indonesian Ulema Forum (MUI) urge private television stations to abandon programs that contain pornography and the new popular local term '*pornoaksi*' (porno-action).

The legislative body has passed the draft of anti-pornography bill (*Undang-Undang Anti Pornografi*)[7], which will be implemented by the year 2007. Similarly, the Indonesian Broadcasting Committee (KPI) sets the standards of television content, by regulating and providing broadcasting content guidelines, namely *Pedoman Penyiaran* (Broadcasting Guidelines). This is ironic as television content cannot be standardised or uniformalised. This is yet another version of the "retarded child model of television" (Hartley, 1992b, p. 112), which assumes audiences as a fictional imagining belonging to preliterate children, like a baby who is crawling to learn to what constitutes noble and what constitutes deprived, as the following cartoon suggests.

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[7] The draft document of anti-pornography bill includes articles which would make it an offence to show what it calls sensual body parts, including the navel, hips and thighs. The draft bill would also make it illegal to record anything which portrays erotic dancing, or kissing on the lips. It means that the bill would hamper, for example, the filmmakers' and artists' creativities. As such the bill oppresses women, as it regulates (women) on how to dress and behave.

Figure 4.2

Cartoon: Pornography

Source: *Jawa Pos*, 19 December 2004 (courtesy of Arif Afandi, Chief Editor of *Jawa Pos*)

The concerns of the president, the legislative body, and the committee as to the harmfulness of television content suggest that the dominant paradigm of the powerful effects of television is still held. It appears that the audience, as a national citizen, is imagined as a passive unity of total millions, which is like a "preliterate child," (Hartley, 1992b, p. 112) not only needing education but also requiring protection by the state and its apparatuses. This attitude fails to recognise the difference between audience as unimaginably large mass and as lively individual spectators. This also contradicts the way the television program hosts address the audience with a '*pemirsa yang budiman'* (the wise/sensible viewer) that acknowledges the audience's self-determination.

Recently, the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Communication and Informatics issued a regulation to reduce broadcasting time of television. The Ministerial Decree number 11/July 2005 requires all television stations to stop transmission between 1 am and 5 am, and this has been agreed to by the Association of Indonesian Private Television (ATVSI). Prior to this decree, stations had broadcast 24 hours for the sake of market competition. Although this ministerial decree refers to the Presidential Instruction number 10/2005 about the national

program of saving energy (electricity), the regulation, to some extent, can be seen as signifying that the audience must be disciplined and controlled in relation to watching television. Consumption, thus, needs to be regularised, and the audience must conform not only to 'what is on offer on television,' but also to the duration of consumption. Once again, the audience of Indonesian television seems to emerge as immature, indeed infantile, and bereft of the nationalist imperatives required for the endurance of the state project of national construction.

Clever Audience: the Critical Construct

I have mentioned in the previous section on the industrial construct, that there are producers who consider if the program appeals to them, it would not fascinate to others; whereas, others see themselves as the audience too, so if the program attracts them, it would attract the audience as well. For the latter, a large number of viewers are barred from seeing the programs that they might like because television is lowbrow, and standardised for mass appeal. This kind of producer might think that the shows should have more character and originality so that television would attract a more intellectual audience.

Sourced from personal interviews and media documentation, I can see that film and television critics, journalists, academics, and writers of television in the country appear to situate themselves in the position of the second type of producer above. These critical people have attacked the national *sinetron* for its derivativeness from the sensational and melodramatic style of Indian films, Latin *telenovela* soap opera, and Hollywood melodramas, the stereotyping of the *sinetron* characters, and especially for its failure to focus on depicting the everyday life of the local and cultural practices of Indonesians. These critics position themselves as audiences who would like to see *sinetron* that appeals to them, as intellectual spectators. They want to see more characters and originality in the national *sinetron*'s platform, as the bureaucrat president Megawati demanded.

In these critical institutions' accounts, the audience of *sinetron* is seen as vulnerable and, as if they are uprooted or rootless from their local/regional origins, as Indonesian *sinetron*, for these critics, fails to present the features of the very local characters and lacks orientation in the social condition of the Indonesian community. One point raised by this critical community about Indonesian television production

and the viewer is that the televisual creations, with various degrees of indigenous modifications, have the characteristic form of dramaturgy and narrative in a society undergoing the transition to modernity and to social liberation. However, according to them, the material productions, the settings, and the essence of the content do not represent character and originality of the nation. The following part, thus, presents the ways this critical community situates itself and the national audience toward the television *sinetron* productions and speaks on behalf of the "ordinary" audience.

Bimo Nugroho[8], who is now a member of the national broadcasting committee, characterises and criticises the Indonesian television (*sinetron*) audience as a dreamer who engages keenly with the fantasy scenarios and the norms of authority of the television makers, instead of using his/her own sense and making his/her own interpretations and pleasure (Personal interview, January 2003). For him, television, more specifically *sinetron*, is a medium through which people escape from their life problems and difficulties. "By watching *sinetron*, they [audiences] feel freed," Nugroho said. That is why, Nugroho explains, television programs such as mystery or mystical dramas and comedies are always popular. It is because these programs contain superstitions and they are dreams or illusions.

Nevertheless, Nugroho was confident that the mystical elements of those mystery programs could be recognised as the authentic characteristics of the Indonesian production. So, for him, today's productions, particularly *sinetron*, deserve to be called 'Indonesian *sinetron*'. Nugroho also suggests that Indonesian culture is certainly absurd. According to him, the source of the culture itself is not merely from the cultural roots within the country, but is a result of a cultural blend with the colonial (Dutch) culture.

Nugroho remarked that *sinetron* in Indonesia have inspired and influenced the cultural taste of many people. He gave the example of how the housing architectures shown in *sinetron* have promptly been copied by the people. "Look how in many *sinetron*, houses, furniture, and architecture are in Mediterranean in style. You can check then with the real estate companies; housing styles like those in *sinetron* must

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[8] At the time the interview was carried out in Jakarta, Bimo Nugroho was a postgraduate student of Communication Department of University of Indonesia and an activist of media watch of ISAI. He was later appointed as the director of this institution. When the national broadcasting committee was established in 2004, he became the vice chairman of the committee.

sell well" (personal interview, January 2003). By implication Nugroho suggests that there is something wrong with the behaviour of Indonesian audiences. Again, he has imagined that the television audience only constitutes those who are easily influenced and quickly adopt what has been offered on television. Perhaps his conclusion, to a certain extent, gets it right. However, his imagination to position audience as a fragile, dogmatic, and narrow-minded community will only prove the existence of audience as a passive consumer or a victim of the capitalist media.

Further, criticisms directed at the television and *sinetron* productions also point to the fact that Indonesian cultural productions, especially *sinetron*, are not sourced and created from the social practices of the local/regional. Garin Nugroho, a prominent and internationally well-known award-winning film director, comments that the television and *sinetron* industry in Indonesia is indeed a form of packaging and service industry, as he explains below

> Our [television] industry is a cultural industry of the newly wealthy people (he called them OKB, *Orang Kaya Baru*). Newly wealthy people like to show off. [They] show off a swimming pool, consumerism, and so on. […] If they do a shoot, they put overseas background as the important part. Overseas people are shown off. Not the intrinsic value of overseas [cultures]. A guest room is arranged like in America, what for? (Personal interview, January 2003).

Nugroho maintains that the setting selected for production does not reflect reality. He gave examples of *sinetron* settings where clean rivers run close to the big shopping malls, roundabouts are uncrowded, roads are quiet, and so forth. Such features do not represent real conditions of Jakarta (or any other major Indonesian city). Thus, Nugroho sees the position of television and *sinetron* texts as distant from the actual people, who are mostly the viewers of *sinetron*, and their everyday life. In this context, Nugroho criticised that television texts do not accommodate and acknowledge the existence of large audiences who come from different backgrounds and practise diverse cultural lives. For Nugroho, the audience should be imagined as consisting not only of that particular wealthy urban community, but also as a national audience which constitutes a community of ordinary people with social economic backgrounds that contrast with the images represented. The television industry, for him, unites diversity and puts audiences in one group of a given population.

Veven Wardhana, a television critic, takes a similar position to Garin Nugroho: that Indonesian *sinetron* represents only a particular class of society in Jakarta. *Sinetron*, for him, mainly depicts the life of communities living at Cinere and Bumi Serpong Damai housing estates—these are two elite housing estates located on the boundaries of Jakarta; but the *sinetron* makers create something bizarre about these communities.

> Indeed, they [*sinetron*] tend to adopt American or Indian features, but with Cinere or Bumi Serpong Damai settings. I question the descriptions of these communities depicted in *sinetron*. Is it likely that people from these [elite class background] communities would be jealous when seeing their partner shakes hands with someone of the opposite gender? (Personal interview, January 2003).

Wardhana also criticises Indonesian *sinetron* for not producing authentic observations about the social conditions occurring in society. He comments, "The *sinetron* makers do not conduct research of the society's behaviours before producing a *sinetron*" (Personal interview, January 2003). He gave the example of the many teenage dramas in which students memorise the subject matter for exams, whilst students of this era are not doing that anymore. Wardhana acknowledges that there are still audiences, the actual community members portrayed by the *sinetron* creators and producers, whose attitudes have dynamically shifted and their cultural practices have transformed.

Wardhana, who is also a media columnist, further argues that Indonesian sinetron is still problematic in defining the identity of the nation. Although a few local sinetron productions like *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* (Doel, a Uni Student) are valued as distinctly representing the atmosphere of localness of subculture communities in an urban setting, the *sinetron* makers, according to Wardhana, are often excessive in the way that they exploit social reality of the subcultures: "Javanese characters [in a show] are presented as speaking Javanese language with a strong Javanese accent. In fact, the Javanese who live in Jakarta have already merged and sometimes they have a Betawi accent" (Personal interview, January 2003).

The film director, Garin Nugroho, raises another criticism of the national television industry. He points out that, as the cultural industry, television, especially *sinetron*,

must be correlated to the supremacy of nationhood and link the audience to their imagined community (Personal interview, January 2003). He explains in U.S. films and Japanese productions there must be an essential feature which reflects a picture of their national characteristics. For instance, in U.S. action films, moneys got from robbery must be burned or dropped into the sea or water, whilst Japanese films always contain the country's legends and the practical values like honesty, and so forth. In contrast, Nugroho criticises Indonesian *sinetron* and other television serial productions for giving prominence to the values of consumption, as if that is a national characteristic of Indonesia. For him, Indonesian *sinetron* are fragile, because they have lost the public trust. Dramaturgy of *sinetron* always presents paradoxes just like in U.S. or Japanese productions, but those *sinetron* fail to adapt those U.S. or Japanese paradoxes. Nugroho also views that *sinetron* text as the constructs of those who interpret culture and its symbolic practices in their own framework and privatise the cultural practice of those who are dominant, the wealthy urbanites.

> Television is an indicator to construct an imagined community…[presenting] wealthy family is okay, but there must be an essence in the dramaturgy, for example, honesty, heroism, etc. […] Indian films are 80 per cent presenting luxury scenes, but their intrinsic values reflect the supreme values, like no white people can be the heroes (Personal interview, January 2003).

These comments suggest that the national cultural texts are seen by the critics as distantly associated with the bodily image of people of origin, the large unimaginably mass audience who consume *sinetron* within their own cultural settings and significance.

Conclusion

The (television) *sinetron* producers and makers seem to make their decisions to produce or create a television text based on what they have perceived as suitable for the television viewers. Under the claim of "giving them what they want," the producers have also determined or constructed the class and cultural taste of the television audiences in Indonesia. As for private television channels, the *sinetron* audiences are positioned as target market as well as spectators, who are submissively bombarded with free of charge TV entertainments. For some reason, audiences are

also perceived as a potential support to contribute to the general image-building of the private channels.

Indeed, the popular *sinetron* and other television programs and the audience are much more complicated than the criticisms allow. All criticisms address what should be and what should not be contained on national television texts for the viewers. A dominant paradigm appearing in those criticisms suggests that Indonesian culture is defined by its intrinsic elements to contain moral education and national ideological narratives which provide the fertile form of a broad modernity. *Sinetron* as national cultural production appears to be assigned a task to construct identities by producing meanings about a nation with which it can be identified. At the same time, television is expected by this critical institution to teach audience about cultural distinction, the expansion of differences, while it unifies audience within the same experience and the same feeling as citizens of a nation.

However, all those criticisms seem to contradict what the producers think about their audience and their productions. As demonstrated in this chapter, the *sinetron* producers do not wish to see the realities reflected –in their fantasy/creation they do simultaneously want, what one of the critics' mentioned, clear rivers and fancy super malls or plazas side by side. The way the producers, the government, and the intellectual people position themselves as different types of spectator produces their judgment in their own framework as particular audiences. As such, all those three institutions' premises appear to fail to account for the attitude of ordinary large audiences in the country, just like the *kampung* audiences that I observed and examine in the next chapters, who do not know what to do with the identity of the nation.

Chapter Five

(Re-)Framing Urban *Kampung* Community: Narratives of the *Kampung* and Migrant Subjectivities in Surabaya

> *All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined* (Benedict Anderson, 1991, p. 6).

This chapter examines the place of the urban *kampung* in its cultural geography as it is related in the narratives of contestation between migrants and original residents in the *kampung* of Gubeng in Surabaya. I use the example of a donut box to interrogate the socio-cultural realm of this urban *kampung*, and present the narratives of the *kampung* residents as a text of community discourse in the context of Indonesia post-Soeharto New Order. The urban *kampung*, like *kampung* Gubeng, is a typical site of middle to lower class community resettlement, where the residents are a mix of rural migrants, return migrants, and *kampung* Gubeng-origin descendants. The people maintain their own rural/traditional manners and customs, while at the same time they adapt to the dynamics of modern urban lifestyle of Surabaya city.

When the fieldwork was carried out, there were 40 households in the *kampung* Gubeng lane, with about 165 inhabitants. There were thirty married couples, nine widows/widowers, and two unmarried mature-aged women, who lived alone and were considered as the head of family. The majority of the residents (99 percent) were nominally Muslim, but did not adhere strictly to Islamic *syariah* (law). The residents, mainly young couples and children, are predominantly graduated from senior high school. One family has a daughter who graduated from a university. They keep a photo of the daughter in her graduation gown in the front/living room so that the photo can be seen by outsiders. Having a family member graduated from university is important, especially to consolidate the family's status within the *kampung* neighbourhood.

I start with an anecdote, a short conversation, which has given me an opportunity to piece together a picture of the social and cultural *kampung* landscapes in Surabaya. "*Kampung* people are not used to eating *Dunkin Donuts*," *ibu* Titin once laughingly said to me when I brought a box of *Dunkin Donuts* for her family, with whom I boarded during my fieldwork in *kampung* Gubeng Surabaya. I saw she was delighted and pleased to receive such a famous snack. When the donuts were finished in a couple of days, *bu* Titin placed the empty box bearing the name of the famous donut franchise not into her rubbish bin, but on the edge of the bin. The display of that emptied box not only had consequences for *bu* Titin's status, her family, and the *kampung* neighbourhood, but, it also opened up a space for me to read the socio-cultural circumstance of *kampung* Gubeng as a "narrative text" of the contemporary community in Indonesia.

I had not been aware that the placement of the emptied donut box would become a crucial issue in the neighbourhood. The placement of the box meant everyone who passed by the bin outside *bu* Titin's house could see it. I realised that the box had consequences in the social, cultural, and political formations of the *kampung* community, when Titin's neighbours started to talk about it and brought the issue of *bu* Titin and her extended family into the spotlight of the *kampung* gossip. I was then able to utilise that gossip about the donut box to expand an interrogation of socio-cultural constructs of urban *kampung* community, which continues to have much salience in Indonesian discourse.

The dominant group of the *kampung* people (indicated that they) are '*wong kampung asli*' (*kampung* natives) who grew up in those narrow lanes, although some of them declared that they still have families in rural areas of East Java, and call the village 'home'. These feelings then relate to how the *kampung* subjects position themselves in association with their social class, religious faiths, and *kampung* moralities as characterising the specific array of '*wong kampung*' (people of *kampung*).

Studies on Indonesian urban middle class often define the society into two categories, that is *kampung* (lower class) and *gedongan* (upper middle class) (e.g. Dick, 1985 & 1990; Sullivan, 1986; Mahasin, 1989; Guinnes, 1989). The distinction between these two classes of society is determined in terms of their space and place. *Kampungan* is defined as "those living in more humble dwelling"; while *gedongan*

are "those living in brick houses" (Dick, 1992, p. 64). In fact, nowadays, many houses in the *kampung* are two storey buildings built in brick, with cement paved floors (many with ceramic tiling), and raised iron fences. In *kampung* Gubeng Surabaya, almost all housing has been modelled on upper class housing estates, which have grown in this city. So, since the dwellings in many Surabaya[1] *kampung* have been upgraded, the brick/non brick distinction is no longer so useful. Therefore, the local/Surabaya terminology might be more relevant for describing local class hierarchy.

Kampungs are communities in urban Indonesia often deplored as slum-dwellers, traditional, old-fashioned, backward and even oppressive. The term '*kampungan*' commonly used in social conversation is associated with 'backwardness,' or locally termed as *norak* (awkward). *Kampung* communities are also associated with *wong cilik* (small people) in contrast to *wong gede* (big people) or upper classes and with non-*kampung* folks or the street people. As Sullivan argues, "There is no evidence that local *wong gede*, Chinese or street people are prone to feel (or even *imagine*) close communion with *wong kampung* in the normal course of events" (Sullivan, 1991, p. 19).

Kampung Gubeng is one of the large urban middle to lower class settlements in the Eastern area of Surabaya. Following the conventional pattern of methodology in the Anthropological field, I do not mention the real name either of the *kampung* or of persons with whom I spoke to during the fieldwork. So, I use the first name of the *kampung* lane without the block number, and henceforth, it is called '*kampung* Gubeng.' It is one out of many similar small *kampung* lanes in the sub district (*Kecamatan*) of Gubeng. It contains forty households, of which some are migrants, some are descendants of the *kampung*'s elderly, and a few are boarding residents. The *kampung*, both as a lived and culturally constructed space, exemplifies a model of marginal community in the migratory landscape of Indonesian urban settlement. Instead of narrating urban *kampung* in Indonesia sociologically, in this part, I try to take a particular discursive approach, which situates *kampung* as a text that embodies tradition, modernity, class, ethnicity, morality, belonging, and anomie. My

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[1] Urban *kampung* settlements in Surabaya have been improved through the program called 'Kampung Improvement Program' (KIP), which have been applied since 1968 (see e.g. Johan Silas 1996, Dick 2000)

narrations in this part are sourced from interviews and informal talks with several *kampung* males and females aged between 20 and 50 years, with the head of *kampung* administration (*Rukun Tetangga*, RT), the *kampung*'s key persons, and the gossip that I heard among the *kampung* housewives during evening gatherings with them. The *kampung* inhabitants articulate ideas and images about '*wong kampung*' into their own desires, lives, and interpretations of both their subjective and communal experiences. As those *kampung* people have existentially engaged in fashioning their own lives neither as rural subjects nor urban/city subjects, their narratives shape the particularity of the cultural scene of the marginalized urban subjects.

Migrant Narratives

Ibu Titin's placement of the donut box outside the rubbish bin was not done without purpose. I became aware of the situation when *bu* Titin spontaneously said that the *kampung* people are '*wong ndeso*' (Javanese term means 'village people'), who are not familiar with the donut of that international franchise. She explained that the donut that they usually eat is cheaper, oily, too brown, and tough. So, the placement of the box outside is designed to show *bu* Titin's neighbours that she has bought and tasted an expensive snack. This illustration shows the way migrants or the *kampung* residents manifest themselves in relation to urban/city and rural differences in terms of daily practices such as meals.

The discourse on urban-rural as places differentiated by the meal represents a sample of how the *kampung* people construe the nature and relationship of urban and rural lifestyle in this context. Mainly *kampung* Gubeng's residents told me that the majority of residents there are *kampung* natives though some are from villages in the Southern parts of East Java such as Nganjuk, Tulungagung, Kediri, and Madiun. By the term '*kampung* natives', those residents mean there are several households in *kampung* Gubeng which still have blood ties. As a consequence of extended families and economic pressure, several migrants' parents built or rented houses in the *kampung* for their married children so that they can live close by. Those who cannot afford to build a new house have partitioned off rooms, so that there is another space for their married children and the family. In this way, one house has become two or three houses situated side by side in that *kampung*. Hence, those families are counted

and defined as '*asli*' (native). They declare themselves as 'the originals,' but their parents and/or grandparents are 'the migrants.' This is reflected in the words of *pak* Budi, the only Chinese resident in the *kampung*.

> As far as I know, migrants are more than the original residents in this *kampung*, now. Those elderly people such as *pak* Mustari, *mbak* Mimin, *pak* Karman, and *pak* Yasin are the *kampung* natives. They have lived in this place since their parents were here. *Pak* Parlan's children like *mbak* Arik and *mbak* Titin have grown up and still live here and built their own homes side by side. *Mbak* Mimin and family also still live and built a home in her parent's backyard…but some other young families are migrants… I left this *kampung* when I was in year 4 and went along with my grandmother back to the village. I came back here when I was in high school…I saw many changes here especially many new migrants have settled here. Before, it's different. Only a small number of houses…and we lived in harmony (*rukun*)…I saw new migrants like those food traders seem reluctant to gather with the originals…but they are still *rukun* and willing to take a voluntary work assignment (*kerja bakti*).

Pak Budi is a returned migrant from Kediri. His remarks reiterate his sense of belonging common to local discourse about the *kampung*. *Pak* Budi's comments on unwillingness of the new-comers (migrants) in his *kampung* to commune with the earlier *kampung* inhabitants suggests a common feeling of resistance, in which the long-term residents place themselves above the new comers. That suggests one answer as to why *bu* Titin uses the term '*wong ndeso*' (literary means 'villagers', but it also metaphors as 'backward people') for the *kampung* residents, with *bu* Titin undecided whether to include herself as part of *wong ndeso* who never bought such donuts or to exclude herself from *wong ndeso* by displaying the donut box on the edge of the lane.

Migrancy drives some of the changes in *kampung* Gubeng. Changes in the *kampung* are most often registered in economic living standards such as built infrastructure like public phone stalls (or *Wartel*) and the presence of consumer goods. As *Bang* Musen, a non-Javanese male in his thirties who has lived in *kampung* Gubeng since 1990, recalled:

> In the past, not many people in this *kampung* had a bicycle. Nowadays, many already have motorcycles and electronics goods like TV, VCD, and a *sound system*. There are even two families who have a car. Even *bu* Sugi has established a *Wartel* in her living room (*ruang tamu*). Before, the residents

here did not have any idea about telephones. Several houses even have telephone lines as well. Maybe because many migrants live in this *kampung* and those boarding students from rural places too, so the telephone seems to become essential.

These material changes in *kampung* Gubeng, of modes of personal transportation, communication, and electronic belongings, mark the passage of history in the *kampung*. A sense of modernity, often singularly associated with urban space and building materials, exists in the migrant narrative of the *kampung*. *Pak* Slamet, a male in thirties who migrated from Tulungagung, in the South-Western part of West Java, in the 1980s to sell his noodles while walking around the *kampung* with his pushcart, stated:

> I didn't have anything when I just came from the village to Surabaya. I have been selling noodles since the first time I came here. My house was narrow with a cement floor…I sold the noodles walking around the streets with my small pushcart…When my trading became better and I had a "permanent" place to sell my noodles, so I earned a good income…I was able to build this house even better…with ceramics…with the stairs…I built two stories (*rumah tingkat*), and this is better than my previous house in the village which had an earthen floor and bamboo partitions. I brought my families and relatives here to help me with my improving trade.

Pak Slamet construes the village as a site of the 'traditional', embodied particularly in his "traditional village house." However, over the years of his sojourn in Surabaya and his time spent living and trading in the city, his village house has been improved by him and maintained by his relatives, whose ongoing presence in that village has sustained *pak* Slamet's connection to the rural base. So, every *Hari Raya* or *Lebaran* (end of Ramadan fasting month), *pak* Slamet and his family in Surabaya go back to his home village not only to celebrate the festive time, but also to share his fortune – as material embodiment of the wealth accumulated in the city—among his brothers, sisters, and other relatives in the village as part of the migrancy tradition in Indonesia. In *pak* Slamet's narrative, his village home is maintained to sustain a tie to the past, a tie to *wong ndeso* (villagers) and to a traditional space, while the house in *kampung* Gubeng in Surabaya figures as a location in which *pak* Slamet continues to contest his status as a city/urban inhabitant through the physical embodiment of the house. Some migrants like *pak* Slamet, who have been successful with their business

or jobs, have improved their house in the *kampung*. Those *kampung* natives appear sluggish and their lives are slow to improve compared to those new-comer migrants. Thus, the earlier settlers of the *kampung* feel "threatened," and their attitudes are ambivalent; they feel above those migrants, but as they cannot move at the same level as the new-migrants they then become resistant and, in some cases, they declare that the new-migrants are not integrated with the *kampung* natives.

Image 5.1: *Pak* **Slamet and his pushcart for selling noodle (source: my own documentation)**

Kampung Subjectivities

Kampung communities tend to emphasise 'neighbourship' rather than kinship (Geertz, 1961 and Koentjaraningrat, 1985) in their everyday lives. Studies on urban Javanese *kampung* communities, mostly those in Central Java (Yogyakarta) and West Java (Bandung and Jakarta), have shown that the *kampung* moral community and the ideology of 'social harmony' (*rukun*) are pervasive as the everyday cultural practices in Indonesia (see e.g. Geertz, 1961; Koentjaraningrat, 1985; Guinness, 1986 & 1989; Sullivan, 1992; Sullivan, 1994; and Brenner, 1998). The space of *kampung* is endowed with a sense of community, which entails caring about one's neighbours as well as surveillance of neighbours. Residents and visitors consider themselves to be known to others in the *kampung*. *Bu* Titin describes the sense of community and *kampung* intimacy as follows:

> People of this *kampung* are mainly middle [class]. They are very close. Sometimes we borrow and lend small amounts of money to each other…if we do not have *terasi* [condiment made from pounded and fermented shrimp],

we ask our neighbours for some…if we do not have salt, we go to our neighbour to ask for it.

As Guinness (1986) maintains, *kampung* people tend to position themselves as a "middle class" community rather than an urban lower class, just as *kampung* Gubeng's residents mainly declare themselves "middle" class. They position themselves as different from the rural people, as in their framework the rural are a poor, lower class community. Nevertheless, there is ambivalence in stating whether the *kampung* people are a middle class or lower class community. *Pak* Budi's and *Bang* Musen's descriptions in the following suggest that the socio economic status of the *kampung* people does not reflected the "standard" of class determination defined both by the government through the Central Statistical Bureau (*Biro Pusat Statistik*, BPS) and by the media agency Nielsen Media Research, which for 2002 defined the standard income of urban middle class Indonesia (or B and C classes) between 700 thousand rupiahs and 1,500 thousand rupiahs per month. The demography data (last updated 2001) for *kampung* Gubeng RT (or neighbourhood administration), recorded the average monthly family income of the residents between 250 thousand rupiahs and 1,000 thousand rupiahs, with between six and nine family members living in the same house. Only a few households consisted of three to four members. This suggests that the economic status of the *kampung* is mainly middle to lower class households.

> Many people of this *kampung* are middle [class], but not a few people still live poorly. If we see those who live along this lane, they look like the middle [class], but those who live in the narrow alley behind these houses look poor. Also there are some [food] traders (noodles and drinks), *tukang cuci* (household help, *buruh bangunan* (construction workers) [2] (*Pak* Budi's description).

> The economic level [of people in this *kampung*] is similar. But, they are not a middle [class], their economic level is not high. But, they are also not considered lower class, because some of them can afford to buy a motorcycle and electronic [devices], even though through *kredit* (instalment) …[There is] only one person who is very admired, very honoured [by the *kampung* residents], that is *mbah* Harjo, a parent of *bu* Cicik…from the economic level, his family is higher [than other residents]…only two people have a car, *mbah* Harjo and *pak* Bowo (*Bang* Musen's description).

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[2] These kinds of occupations are associated with lower level income earners.

These two residents seem to feel that the *kampung* residents are of a mixed economic level. Some of them can afford to buy motorcycles and electronic devices, but some still live on the poverty line. Living within this marginal position the *kampung* people perform and practise their own distinctive style of life. For instance, those who are indicated as the '*kampung* rich' (*orang kaya kampung*) employ *pembantu* (servant, usually maid) from their rural area. They usually bring relatives or neighbours from their home areas to be employed as maids. In the three households (out of 40) in *kampung* Gubeng, which employ maids, two householders work away from home and one is a young family with two small children, in which the woman does not go out to work. The maid of this last family lives in another *kampung* close by. Ironically, this family lives next door to a woman who works as a daytime maid for another family in a different *kampung*.

Indeed, within the *kampung* itself there is a differentiation between 'the prosperous', 'the middle', and 'the poor'. This is a distinction that is locally used but can be mapped into the distinction based on what Howard Dick calls "mode of consumption," including the levels of consumption, the possession of consumer durables (e.g. television sets, radio-tape players, and motor-cycles), and the method of their consumption (Dick, 1992, p. 64). Yet, although they are better off than their neighbours in terms of economic level, persons like *pak* Bowo and *mbah* Harjo are still willing to use their car to help their neighbours. When some *kampung* housewives planned to see *bu* Wayoh, one of *kampung* residents who was hospitalised, *pak* Bowo took the housewives to the hospital in his mini van. Commonly personal belongings such as motorcycles can be borrowed by neighbours, or a car may be used for a communal need. So, living with a marginal status seems to foster the sense of community in the *kampung*.

In *kampung* Gubeng, the differences in terms of economic level cannot be seen simply by looking at the physical appearance of houses in the *kampung* lane, as the poor have also attempted to make over their houses like the *kampung* rich families or like what people in the *kampung* call 'common urban people'. They have renovated their houses with ceramic tiling, even though they do not have any seats for guests.

The *Kampung* Morality

Since the degree of communal involvement with *kampung* issues is high and neighbours' surveillance, which is acknowledged and reiterated, exercises a level of "social control," every individual in the *kampung* appears to monitor their attitudes and behaviours to secure their position in the community. *Pak* Budi's narratives about the *kampung*'s attitudes explain the social and cultural landscape of migrant *kampung*.

> *Kampung* is, yeah…like this. Its people like to come out [of the house], chatting, gossiping, these are common…they come out for fresh air, because inside the home is squeezed, packed, and hot. Yeah…this is a *kampung*. Gossiping is common…People in this *kampung* know almost every new thing that has been bought by their neighbour or what [kind of] meals are consumed by their neighbour. Just like *mbak* Titin last time who just bought donuts, which for the people here, is pricey…This was unusual and [she] never had it; besides *mbak* Titin's husband is only a low level soldier. Indeed, *mbak* Titin's father is the rich person in this *kampung*…but that is *kampung*, [if] there is a new bit or an odd bit, [it has been] boisterous…especially, if it's about *esek-esek* (bit of sex). I heard also housewives in this *kampung* talking about *bu* Mamik who is said expecting, [but] not from her husband. The people said that *bu* Mamik sells herself (it is a prostitute). Yeah…*kampung* is like this.

Pak Budi's narration of the cultural landscape of the *kampung* suggests that the persistence of social control upon individuals in the *kampung* has become a regime of surveillance of individuals' conduct within their neighbourhood community. Such public surveillance elicits different responses among the *kampung*'s residents. As such, *pak* Budi's narrative above contains two crucial moral discourses on the *kampung*. First, the issue of the donuts and *bu* Titin raised suspicious feeling among several housewives; how was it possible for the family (Titin's family) to buy such an expensive snack (for the *kampung*), whilst the breadwinner in the family is just a low level soldier, a low income earner. One housewife, *bu* Mimin, declares, "Usually she likes to borrow money, sometimes [she] asks for spices, how come she can afford to buy those donuts?" *Bu* Mimin's suspicion about *bu* Titin suggests that the moral discourse seems to be directed to the issue of corruption. This woman was suspicious of where *bu* Titin had obtained money to buy such a snack. This issue was then circulated among the web of housewives living in the middle part of the

kampung. When *bu* Titin heard about this gossip, she replied, "That's common - *kampung* mouths. The mouth of the *kampung* people is like that. They don't know [what happened], [but they] rattled on." However, when *bu* Titin was involved in the gossip about *bu* Mamik's pregnancy, her attitude completely contrasted to her comment above, and she echoed other *kampung* females' sentiments about *bu* Mamik. People feel pleasure and equanimity when being involved in the arena of gossip, but they militate against the "regime of gossip" when they are the object of the talk.

The moral issue with sexual relationship militates against 'freedom'. From the dominant reactions to *bu* Mamik's case, it was obvious that those *kampung* housewives tended to blame Mamik for being influenced by the urban lifestyle (*terbawa gaya hidup kota*). *Ibu* Askumayah and *bu* Endun similarly relate that Mamik tends to be rather 'free' following the urban lifestyle. For these two middle-aged women, because *bu* Mamik commonly watches pornographic VCDs and her husband allows her the freedom to go out when she pleases, she is then free to have a relationship with another male or what the *kampung* people call 'flirting' (*perselingkuhan*). *Bu* Mamik is a second wife, whose husband rarely comes to stay in her home. This position invites unfavourable gossip about her. For the *kampung* people, the urban life is associated with or embedded in a "free lifestyle," including sexual relationships, so they see that *bu* Mamik has been contaminated with the urban lifestyle because of the lack control of the husband. Moreover, the issue was extended, when *bu* Mimin, the closest neighbour of *bu* Mamik, told the women that *bu* Mamik was actually a prostitute, for the family economy was on the brink. Whatever the case, in fact, not one single *kampung* woman dared to ask *bu* Mamik about her pregnancy, and the women seemed to control themselves in order to maintain their social interaction with her.

While surveillance in the *kampung* is commonly said to control the attitudes and behaviours of its residents, with particular emphasis placed on adultery (*zinah*) and crimes around the *kampung* the dynamic life within the *kampung* shows contradictions. If adultery and/or sexual relationships are controlled, the circulation of porn videodiscs among the *kampung* residents appears fluid or adaptable. As adultery has never been found in *kampung* Gubeng, social control of sexual

relationships is not specifically shaped by this moral discourse. The *kampung* people will only take such issues as a topic of gossip, no more than that. Their attitude toward polygamy and flirting (*perselingkuhan*) is mundane. One woman in the *kampung* is known to be mistress (*istri simpanan*) of a man outside the *kampung,* and another middle-aged woman is the first wife of a polygamous male who married another younger woman. However, these women, who stay with their extended families in the *kampung*, frequently interact with neighbours and the *kampung* housewives, and there is nothing extraordinary in the attitudes of the neighbours toward them. Therefore, the *kampung* community appears to react in a moderate manner to actions that might be considered beyond the bounds of the *kampung*'s moral boundaries.

Indeed, *kampung* is a place where residents look after one another, and despite an increasingly hostile public discourse, which has been heightened since the 1990s, in Indonesia toward flirting the *kampung* has maintained a relatively tolerant attitude toward those considered as 'moral deviants'. *Bang* Musen, who has lived in the *kampung* a long time and likes the friendly atmosphere and social bonding of the *kampung* people expresses the ambivalent feelings and attitudes of the *kampung*:

> The people here, they actually care about everything and most of the time people also care about other people's business…But in the case of moral deviants, they seem to care so much, maybe because they have the same morals…the *kampungan* morals …when one household calls the *bakso* (meat ball soup) vendor into this lane, all the residents in the lane from end to end come out one by one and buy it as well…Also, if one got a new VCD [film], then almost all the *kampung* people have a turn with the disc...This is the *kampungan* moral…one does something, others then follow…one buys something, and the other tends to copy…one did something all the residents know it.

Highlighting the consequence to the general *kampung* attitude like harmony (*rukun*) caring, (*gotong royong*) spirit of the *kampung*, *Bang* Musen also recognises the exclusions that such inclusiveness can create, when based in part on certain moral convictions. The difference and dislike among the *kampung* people, seems to him to be associated with a subjective dimension of the *kampung* subject-position in his/her social interaction within the neighbourhood context.

Image 5.2: *Kampung* **Gubeng place and the people (source: my own documentation)**

Kampung **Religiousity**

The discourses and practices that are relatively tolerant of certain sexual relationships and identities in the *kampung*, appear to parallel to a degree the religious practice of the community. Residents mainly portray *kampung* Gubeng as a not conservatively Islamic space, although the sound of *Adzan* (prayer call) is heard loudly in the *kampung* everyday. Commonly, cities are seen as the domain of secular communities, and *kampung* as the terrain of the devout or conservative Muslim in Indonesia. In fact, this spatial and religious discourse does not occur in the *kampung* as part of the city's space. *Pak* Budi, a Javanese Chinese Muslim who married a Chinese Christian woman, comments about this as follows:

> It is obvious that *kampung* people here are mainly *abangan* [3] (formally Muslim, but do not adhere strictly to Islamic *syariah*). It means that from many of them only one or two persons seriously practice acts of devotion (*ibadah*). Indeed, tolerance is still high. For example, at Christmas the Muslims visit the Christians who celebrate it, and vice versa when *Lebaran* (end of Ramadan) comes. As Chinese and Christian, my wife is regarded as relatives of the *kampung* residents here.

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[3] *Abangan*, for the *kampung* people, is identified as Muslim, but not a conservative one (people term it as '*tidak fanatik*' or literally 'not fanatic') opposed to *Santri*, those who strictly adhere to Islamic law (*syariah*) and faith (*aqidah*). See Clifford Geertz (1960) for more discussion about *Santri*, *Abangan*, and *Priyayi* in the Javanese society.

Abangan practices impinge on the conduct of religious celebration. Every *Maulud* (the birthday of prophet Muhammad), the *kampung* arranges a *slametan* (celebration) with a prayer meeting (*pengajian*) and a meal together. Once, I saw the formal religious segment was only a short formal speech and a recitation of Qur'an (known as '*yasinan*,' from the Qur'an surah *Yaasiin*) by the *ustadz* (religious teacher) from the *kampung* mosque nearby, then everyone started to eat, which was the most delightful part that everyone was waiting for.

According to the *kampung* head, there are wide-ranging beliefs and different orientations amongst Muslims in his *kampung*. Although Muslims in the *kampung* are *Abangan*, many, he said, have declared as *Nahdatul Ulama* (henceforth as NU), which is regarded as a traditional/orthodox Islamic sect originating from Jombang, East Java. Only a few are *Muhammadiyah*, a modern Islamic sect. *Pak RT* does not know why and how Muslims in the *kampung* identify themselves with *NU* and *Muhammadiyah*. However, according to him, this *aliran*[4] (stream) of *NU* and *Muhammadiyah* becomes significant when Ramadan comes. Starting several years ago, *NU* and *Muhammadiyah* have had different interpretations of when to start and finish the Ramadan fasting month; then the identity of the *ummat* (follower) becomes important. If *NU* decides to start Ramadan fasting earlier than *Muhammadiyah,* then *NU* will celebrate *Idul Fitri* (end of Ramadan) first. So it is important for a Muslim to define whether he/she is *NU* or *Muhammadiyah*, as they have to follow the decision of their *aliran*. As *NU* almost always selects the same start and end date for fasting as the Indonesian government does, the majority of Muslims, and in the case of *kampung* Gubeng residents, tend to identify themselves as *NU*.

The identification of *NU* and *Muhammadiyah* is also important in relation to the conduct of ritual celebrations. For instance, for those who identify as *Muhammadiyah*, *slametan* is less commonly practiced, especially memorial services for the dead. As a modern Islamic sect, *Muhammadiyah* followers believe that any *slametan* for the dead amounts to polytheism and is prohibited by Islam. In this they differ from *NU* Muslims, who conduct several *slametan* to remember the dead, from the first day until the 1000th day. Even though many *kampung* Gubeng residents declare themselves as *abangan*, they also confirm themselves as *NU* or

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[4] *Aliran* is not just a personal orientation, but can also be belief or politico-religious affiliation. For more details about *aliran* see Geertz (1960).

Muhammadiyah stream. As well as the above groups, there are also those who hold *Kejawen* (Javanese belief). These people do not identify themselves neither as *NU* nor *Muhammadiyah*, but just state their religious affiliation as *aliran Kejawen.* .

Family and Gender in the *Kampung*

As I mentioned above, the *kampung* Gubeng family is a typical extended family. The *kampung* family averages between five and ten persons living under the same roof. Living in a compound house, the *kampung* families share their rooms with the family of their children and with their relatives who come from rural areas to find jobs in the city. Although their rooms are small, the common culture of communal living is everyday life in this *kampung* lane. The Javanese concept of '*mangan ora mangan asal kumpul*' (literally means 'eat or no eat, as long as we gather') seems to be practiced in this urban *kampung* as well.

The communal caring in the *kampung*, particularly among the middle and lower status families, still persists. When one family does not have sufficient income to raise the child/children, the neighbour sometimes helps to look after the child in terms of providing meals and/or paying the school fees or what I call "neighbour adoption." In this case, the neighbour "adopts" the child and takes the child to stay with him/her. The adoption is not legal, only a social arrangement placing the child with another family. The child is still close and able to visit his/her parents anytime. For instance, in *kampung* Gubeng, there is one family, *pak* Karno's, one of whose grandchildren has been "adopted" by his neighbour, *pak* Miun, who already has two children. As *pak* Karno faces economic difficulties, *pak* Miun has offered to take one of his grandchildren to look after. However, the two men differ in the way they refer to this action. *Pak* Karno said that his grandson is being looked after (local Javanese Surabaya term '*diopeni*' or in Indonesian language '*dipelihara*'); while, *pak* Miun said that he has adopted ('*angkat anak*' literally means 'take a child' and the child is '*anak angkat*') one of *pak* Karno's grandsons. Sometimes, a family in the *kampung* will "adopt" a neighbour's child if that family does not have any children, or if the family has one child or more children of the same gender, it may adopt a child of the other gender from the neighbour.

In *kampung* Gubeng, the average young parents have between one and three small children very close in age. In contrast, the older parents have between three and five children. Some adult children have married, but continue living with the parents. Quite often the young married couples live apart due to work commitments away from Surabaya. For the wives, living with parents is perceived as better, as the husband's income often is not sufficient to fulfil the family's socio-economic needs and the children will be well looked after by their grandparents. Such is the situation for Yanti, the youngest daughter of *ibu* Sugi, a housewife with three small children. Yanti is *ibu* Sugi's only daughter who is married and has children, while her two older siblings do not. Yanti's husband works in Yogyakarta as a casual worker. Yanti said that she prefers living with her mother, who is a widow and works as a security guard (locally known as *Satpam*[5]). By living with her mother, Yanti has some extra petty cash as her mother runs a home business *Wartel* (public phone stall) and sells aquarium fish. In other cases, wives join their husbands but leave their children with the grandparents in the *kampung*. Economic struggle has pressured young married couples to hand over the childrearing role to their parents in the *kampung*, because in many cases their *kampung* parents, especially the women, have some mechanism of economic survival by, for instance, running a small food stall in their home or running a domestic business like sewing and alteration services.

The division of labour between male (husband) and female (wife) in *kampung* Gubeng is not rigid. Although the *kampung* males are mainly considered the breadwinners of the family, in most cases, women (either mothers or wives) in the *kampung* also have to work outside the home or run a business within the *kampung* to support the family. Only three women in *kampung* Gubeng work in the formal sector of employment, in security (*Satpam*), civil service (*Pegawai Negeri*), and lower level staff in the private sector.

Married women with small children (0-5 years old) are less likely to engage in income generating activities. These women also appear to be less mobile and spend their time mostly in the home or neighbourhood within their own *kampung*. They seem to have little interaction with the world outside the *kampung* alley. It seems that there is no wider network for these women, who mainly graduated from junior and

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[5] Males are usually employed as security guards, but *bu* Sugi is one of the Indonesian females who are now filling this kind of job.

senior high school, to interact with other women from the nearby *kampung* lanes. If they do not have any *kampung* social activities like *arisan* (a kind of lottery) or *slametan* (ritual celebration), the women just stay at home watching TV or doing the domestic routine or mostly, just hanging around and chatting with neighbours (locally known as '*nonggo*', the habit of visiting and chatting with neighbours). Some *kampung* women habitually go out of the *kampung* together to the traditional market shopping for food. *Ibu* Titin describes the main activities of *kampung* women as follows:

> The *kampung* women here are usually '*nonggo*' (communing), '*ngrumpi* ' (gossiping), '*cangkruk*' (gathering and chatting)…They don't have jobs…yeah *kampung* women are like that…looking after children. They are rarely going out, only go to [wet] markets.

Image 5.3: Example of the practice of *cangkruk* and *ngrumpi* taken from *bu* Titin's balcony (source: my own documentation)

Although Surabaya as a major urban area offers many leisure places and big shopping malls, these urban facilities have not much attracted the *kampung* women to go outside their *kampung*. Women of *kampung* Gubeng rarely go out to major shopping malls or semi-established markets unless they need to get something. Only when preparing for celebratory occasions such as in Ramadan in the fasting month approaching *Hari Raya* (end of Ramadan celebration), do these women shop in those urban shopping places. *Ibu* Titin's narratives above maintain that the *kampung* women's place and time are mainly dedicated for the ongoing demand of domestic working and the family guardianship role.

Conclusion

The *kampung* and its socio-economic condition feature prominently in the structure of feeling that contests and negotiates between rural and urban cultural life in Indonesia. While rural migration and urbanisation have continued in Indonesia, the place of *kampung*, particularly the migrant *kampung*, plays an important role in the lives of urban communities and the national cultural resettlement. The place of *kampung* not only represents a distinct physical geography of migrant communities, but it also provides a socio-cultural, economic, and political discursive text, in which identities and communalities are articulated and contested.

This process of translation is producing in what might be called '*kampungan*' morals, the *kampung*'s uniqueness that differentiates the urban *kampung* community from the middle class urbanites. The *kampungan* cultures are pervasive in the *kampung* dwellers' views about their home, their household properties, especially the television set, and the ways of watching television. The following chapter continues to examine the culture of *kampungan* in relations to the *kampung* household's arrangement with their living room and the place of a TV set and the uses of this console.

Chapter Six

"The Socio-Semiotics of Looking": Television in the *Kampung*

> *Once established as the centre of attraction, the TV set marked the physical place where other visual ceremonies were undertaken* (Hartley, 1992a, p. 109).

This chapter focuses on the linkage between class, gender and the symbolic uses of television sets within the family and the neighbourhood in urban *kampung* community contexts. What follows is an attempt to explore the symbolic value(s) of a TV set within this social class, the "geography" of the sets in the domestic space of the *kampung* households, and—to borrow from Hartley's notion—the "socio-semiotics of looking" (Hartley, 1992a) of the *kampung* family. Since television has become a dominant mass medium within urban Indonesian households, especially in Java, in this chapter, I interrogate how the *kampung* people (with their collectivised viewing practice) make sense of television and its place within their homes. It examines the cultures of a living room to which television itself contributes within the context of domesticity of this social class, and the issue of gender within it.

John Hartley (1992a) explores the influence of television set(s) on people's living rooms in the early days of Australian television (1956-1963), and Lynn Spiegel (1992 & 2001) also traces a history of television viewing and the place of television sets within the domestic spaces of urban dwellers in post-war America. These two studies offer insights into the textual-social world of audiences and the culture of TV sets in the domestic interior of the TV sets within the family life drawn from the historical personal archives and advertisement images.

Instead of problematising the effects of television and its content on behaviours, morals, or aesthetic sensibilities of the people, which have been fruitful in academic study in Indonesia, this chapter attempts to analyse the effect of television sets on the people's

living room in urban *kampung* households. Furthermore, this chapter aims to offer an alternative for developing a theory of television audiences in Indonesia, by utilising the anthropological approach, and for reading television audiences within the empirical everyday of looking.

The Socio-Economic Status of a TV Set in the *Kampung*

In his comparative survey of five ASEAN countries in 1980, Harold Crouch suggested that the so-called 'middle class' can be defined essentially by reference to job status and the possession of consumer goods such as cars, motorcycles, TV sets, and radio-tape players (cited in Mackie, 1992, p. 100). For Indonesia, he noted that 5.6 percent of households, both in urban and rural areas, owned a TV set. The national census in 1980, however, recorded that 1.8 million urban households or 32 percent possessed television sets (Mackie, 1992, p. 100). By 1995, Dick (2002) reported that two-thirds of Indonesian households owned a television set. Among this number, 68 percent of households in Surabaya owned a TV set and 83 percent of households in Jakarta owned a set (Dick, 2002, p. 150). Television watching is high in the everyday cultural practices in this country (e.g. Hobart, 1999 & 2001; Sen & Hill, 2000; Nilan, 2000; Kitley, 2000). In his study on Balinese, television and modernisation, Mark Hobart (1999) even conceives how television has influenced the feature of Balinese: "[…] watching television is like standing near a water spout at a bathing place: you get whatever is about. […] This may be for good or ill, but it affects who you become" (Hobart, p. 278).

However, for the middle to lower classes, a television set not only functions as the main leisure activity, but is also perceived as a valuable asset. For instance, it has been common among lower class people to pawn their television set to finance a child's schooling and other extra household expenditures. For them, consumer durables such as motorbike, television set, VCD player, and radio-tape player, are utilised as a "fluid asset" for coping with economic hurdles. Selling assets such as animals and consumer durables including a TV set, to meet basic needs during the 1997 economic crisis, was a principal coping mechanism of urban and rural people, especially in many parts of Java (see Sumarto, Wetterberg & Pritchett, 1999).

Ibu Mien (aged 40), one of the *kampung* Gubeng residents whom I interviewed, described pawning her family TV set to finance her child's schooling. She took her 21inch television set to the State Pawn Company (*Perum Pegadaian Negeri*) for cash when her son entered junior high school in 2000. In order to pay her son's school fees, and buy the books and uniform, *bu* Mien and her husband, who is a casual worker, had to spend about 750 thousand rupiahs. She got 500 thousand rupiahs for her TV set, an amount that contributed to the payment required. *Ibu* Mien explained that she could have asked for a cash loan from one of her neighbours, but she was embarrassed to do that. For *bu* Mien, she and her family preferred to sacrifice the pleasure of watching television rather than take a cash loan, which is viewed as compromising her social status. She said, "Better to stop watching TV for awhile than let my child miss out school." *Bu* Mien continued that not having a TV set at home was not a big deal for her and the family members; they could gain access through neighbours, though she was aware that her neighbours sometimes regarded her negatively for habitually visiting to watch her favourite programs. She revealed, "But it was no problem [for me]. When I got money, I redeemed my TV." After she got her TV back, *bu* Mien considered replacing the set with a bigger one. Size does matter in the measurement of social status of a household in *kampung* Gubeng. Having a big screen TV would consolidate her family's position in the *kampung*.

The situation of *ibu* Titin serves as an illustration of this status measure in *kampung* Gubeng. *Bu* Titin (aged 36), mother of two small boys and expecting her third baby at that time, told me that before she had a 24inch TV set in her house, she only had a 21inch TV set. *Bu* Titin comes from a relatively prosperous *kampung* family background, her father having built three houses in the *kampung* and given one each to *bu* Titin, her sister, and her brother. *Bu* Titin's husband, *pak* Sirun, is a low level naval sailor. To supplement the family income, she and her husband added a second storey to their house with two additional bedrooms and they rent these rooms to boarders (locally-known as *kos-kosan*); so that they have an extra income of about three hundred thousands rupiahs per month. I lived with *bu* Titin's family during my fieldwork in the *kampung*, and noted that she appeared to have considerable influence and authority in her household. She controlled and managed the family expenditure both from her

husband's salary and the money from the boarders. As several of *bu* Titin's neighbours bought bigger televisions, *bu* Titin asked her husband to buy a new, bigger one to replace the old one. Her husband, took a cash loan from his departmental cooperative (known as *koperasi*[1]) with instalment repayments by direct debit from his monthly salary. It did not matter to *bu* Titin to have less spending money for 12 months while deductions were taken from her husband's salary as she enjoyed the higher social status that the new TV set brought. *Bu* Titin also followed the same plan (cash loan from *koperasi*) when buying a new motorbike for her family.

My interviews with several *kampung* women suggested that women have an important role in determining whether to have a TV set to consolidate a family's status or to sell it to fulfil the economic needs of the family. These findings are similar to those reported by Norma Sullivan (1994) in her thesis 'Masters and Managers.' She found that women are positioned as a household manager and manage the household, including "its finances in the private sphere of the home" (Sullivan, 1994, p. 173). As such, a married woman seems to be considered as the person who knows well the economic condition of the family, and so it is the woman's role to maintain the socio-economic balance, as well as the status of the family in the community.

Since *kampung* Gubeng is located close to a reputable state university and a major shopping centre, *Surabaya Plaza*, several houses and rooms there are available for boarding. There are two households that offer rooms for board, and three small houses rented for students and workers. The availability of a television set can be used as a selling point to market accommodation for students. As Uyung, a university student who rents a room in one of the households in that *kampung* explained, the price for room rent is commonly defined according to the size of the room, the bed (single or bunk), whether meals and/or washing are included, and the availability of a TV set. For Uyung herself, a television is most important. Uyung and her friends who live upstairs in the

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[1] It is common in Indonesia for state offices, military offices, and private companies to establish the so-called *koperasi pegawai*, to assist with financial matters of the employees. The *koperasi* sells nine primary goods (*sembilan bahan pokok* or *sembako* e.g. sugar, flour, rice, cooking oil, milk, and so forth) and some household appliances e.g. desk fan, radio-tape player, utensils, but also provides cash loans at a set interest.

same house usually watch TV together with '*ibu kos*' (land lady, literally 'host mother'). The house has only one TV set placed in a living room downstairs.

Unlike Uyung's land lady, *bu* Titin who lives next to Uyung's place, gives up the family's space in front of her TV set to her tenants (*anak kos*). *Bu* Titin and her family sometimes watch TV at their neighbour's place, but mostly they go to her parents' and her sister's family who live nearby. These practices suggest that television, as part of domestic interiors, does not just represent a physical object; it has become a source of domestic income.

Space and the Socio-Cultural Aspect of *Kampung*'s Home

As rural migrants, mainly the *kampung* families still maintain the concept of (Javanese) rural housing design, which does not recognise the separation of rooms based on function such as the living room, dining room, TV room, and so forth. In many *kampung* houses, the divisions of rooms are simply associated with the 'front area' (*ruang depan*) and the 'back area' (*ruang belakang*). The front area/room mostly functions for receiving guest, TV, and living room. The front area must be clean and look fine, as the front is the place to receive guest(s). This living space seems to be constituted as interior space of the house.

The back area consists of kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom(s) and it is perceived as the 'grimy' (*kotor*) or 'messy' (*berantakan*) place. Also among the *kampung* families, it was very rare to have a dining table and chairs. It is uncommon in the *kampung* for food to be served on a dining table, even if one is available. All the cooked food (rice, soup, vegetables, and the meats) are stored in the cabinet called the '*lemari makan*' (food cabinet). All the family members, except for the small children, are expected to serve themselves for their meals whenever they need to have a meal, with no expectation of a specific dining time. In addition, as the housing space in the *kampung* is limited, the strategy to cope with large numbers of family members living in the house is to build bedrooms upstairs. Sometimes, a small space upstairs is also provided for hanging the clothes. When the *kampung* family do not have space for drying clothes, they put them outside the home, on the verge of the *kampung* lane, sometimes together with the

mattresses made out of kapok. All these features represent a distinct socio-cultural pattern of *kampungan* in a metropolitan city of Indonesia.

The extension of the house to two storeys (known as '*rumah tingkat*') and its architectural style appear to be part of the adaptation of what the *kampung* family consider as the style of "city" housing. *Ibu* Endun, whose house does not have upstairs rooms, for instance, said that her neighbours like to adopt the style of housing estates, called '*perumahan*' (to refer to 'real estate housing complex'). She explains,

> Many houses here have built into two storeys like in a housing [estate], even though their families are small. See, houses here already look like in those [housing] complexes…It contrasts to my place with no gate (*pagar*) and already falling apart (*bobrok*).

Indeed, the physical state of houses in *kampung* Gubeng varies greatly. Several houses are built in strong bricks and iron, whereas many houses are still made of old plywood. As I have mentioned in *Chapter Five*, the social class segregation within the *kampung* communities is not the division of '*gedongan*' versus '*kampungan*'– as in studies of e.g. Dick (1982), Sullivan (1986), and Guinness (1986, 1989); rather, the difference occurs within the *kampung* circumstance itself, which is between the '*kampung* rich' and the '*kampung* poor'. *Bang* Musen, a tenant of one *kampung* Gubeng home, in a personal interview explained:

> The *kampung* people here seem isolated. They rarely make connections with the world outside this *kampung*…But they have never compared the life here to the outside…if they make a comparison, it will be among their neighbours here…The people here have never used the term *gedongan*; for them it does not exist. The people here have also never compared themselves to the people who live in the major street…they know that *kampung* people are always *kampung*, and are different.

Nevertheless, the *kampung* people have translated into their own cultural language what is considered as the 'city cultures,' mostly in material terms such as the house construction and building style, the household properties, and the mode of private

transportation. In their interpretation, living in the city like Surabaya, the house style and the home interior should be designed to represent the features of a city house as distinct from (their) rural house. So, in *kampung* Gubeng houses, both the home architecture, especially the outside part, and the interior design are commonly translated by the *kampung* households into the ownership of couch or sofa, window curtains, the (synthetic) flower pot on the coffee table or on the cabinet (known as *bufet*) or on top of the fridge, the aquarium, cushions, iron gates, and even the stairs and its hand rail.

Image 6.1: Examples of *kampung*'s two storey houses are *ibu* Arik's and *ibu* Titin's houses (source: my own documentation)

The Culture of Domestic Interiors and the TV's Place

In the *kampung*, particular items such as TV set, VCD player, refrigerator, and motorcycle are not only for private use, but can also be shared among neighbours, particularly amongst the middle class in the *kampung*. For instance, during my fieldwork, I quite frequently witnessed two housewives coming to store their food and, more commonly, water (in order to have ice water) and water for ice blocks, in my land lady's refrigerator. However, the attitude toward the manner of consumption has shifted among several identified '*orang kaya baru*'[2] (the new rich) in the *kampung*. Among these families there appears to be some attempt to disentangle from the intimate social

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[2] For further discussion of the shift of the (rural) middle class to the new rich (termed '*orang kaya baru*' (OKB)), see for example Hans Antlov (1999), Ken Young (1999), and Ariel Heryanto (1999).

order of their locality, and the use or the consumption of consumer durables is restricted to private/family access.

Dick (1985 & 1992) has observed that communal media consumption takes place among, what he called the *rakyat* (people), a lower class people who usually live in the most crowded areas of the *kampung*. Taking Dick's observation and extending this to the culture of television's place in domesticity of the *kampung* people, this section examines the placement of television sets of the *kampung* households in order to understand how ideals of family life and domestic recreation provide a framework of ideas and expectations about how television could best be installed in the home to negotiate the interest between the family recreation place and public (guest(s) or neighbour(s)) space, and domestic labour. As the place of the television set in the Indonesian households has not been widely studied, the following is my attempt to unpack the array of the living room of the urban middle-lower class community. The significance of examining television's place in this chapter is to relate the social function of the object to a class-based analysis of practices, which is in turn a way of opening up the question of consumption, which will be examined in the following chapters of this thesis.

A television set in urban *kampung* households these days is always accompanied by a VCD player and tape recording player. The placement of the television set is also blended or matched into the overall decorative scheme in the house. Commonly in the *kampung* homes, the set is placed on the *bufet*[3] as part of the ornamental displays of the home. Accompanied by the VCD player, an aquarium, and handicrafts put on the top of a TV, the television set functions mainly as a public display. Installing a television set on the top of the *bufet* with other fine ornaments makes it a focus of visual attention as well as a sign of "aesthetic taste" of home arrangement of the owner. As for many urban *kampung* households, *bufet* and aquarium are seen as part of the 'bourgeoisie aesthetic'; thus this placement of the television appears to be used in part to signify the family's wealth.

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[3] According to Jamie Mackie (1992), in the 1980 national census, it was recorded that 60 percent or 3.7 million households in Indonesia had a '*bufet*' (sideboard or wooden cabinet). However, the consideration to include a '*bufet*' as a sign of middle-class status in this national census was questioned (Mackie, 1992, p. 100)

Image 6.2: TV, *buffet*, and Aquarium in *Ibu* Titin's home (source: my own documentation)

Television for *kampung* people is central in the family life. For this reason, a television set is mostly placed in the centre of the living room. A small set is not placed alone, but is arranged side by side with toys, books, VCD players, plates and cups and saucers in a *bufet*. The set and other ornaments are displayed in an aesthetic arrangement in the *buffet*, which functions also as a multi storage place with many compartments to store household items. The television in it appears to become a piece of decorative technology which could be artfully integrated into the cabinet setting. The association drawn between television and *bufet* gives the television set a privileged place in the contemporary urban *kampung* living room.

Image 6.3: TV and *buffet* in *ibu* RT's home (source: my own documentation)

In several households, a television set is placed in the living room so close to the front door that it can be seen by people passing through the *kampung* lane. This placement seems to "invite" the *kampung* people to get together in the lane around those houses with a television screen turned on, as both in the afternoon from around 4 pm to 5.30 pm and in the evening from 7 pm to late at night, the *kampung* people usually gather in the laneway with neighbours. In the afternoon, there were mainly young married women and mothers of these women chatting while feeding and looking after their small children. The location of the TV set facing the front door means it can easily be watched while doing these activities.

While I was living in the *kampung*, the television in bu Askumayah's house made it the everyday meeting point of the neighbourhood, especially for the women. They watched a TV program from the channel that had been selected by the owner, and sometimes, also used the issue from the program as the basis for their conversation. Particularly on Tuesday or Thursday afternoons between 4 pm and 5 pm when an infotainment[4] (celebrity gossip) program e.g. *Cek & Recek* or *Kabar Kabari* was broadcast, the women came inside the house to watch the programs together. They only watched those parts of the show which interested them, and then went outside again to continue their conversation. When the Muslim evening prayer (*adzan Maghrib*) was called from the *kampung's* small mosque, the community dispersed. A similar pattern is repeated in the evening between 7 pm and 9 pm, when *sinetron* shows are broadcast.

Image 6.4: *Ibu* **Askumayah's TV and the women's web (source: my own documentation)**

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[4] See *Chapter Two* for the discussion of infotainment programs.

As the space of the house is limited, a large screen set becomes the central domestic attraction. While the set is a focus of attention in the house, the owner then places around it things which are also perceived as important for display. Such items include a wall clock, photos of the family members' achievements (like university graduation photos), home crafts, and a table fan, especially when the living room is also a public/working place such as a beauty salon, as in *bu* Sugi's house. (See image 6.5) In this house, television not only functions as an entertainment medium for her salon customers, but it seems also to function as the draw card to attract her customers. The set is used for public attraction in the day time (during salon working hours from 9 am to 4 pm), and it reverts to family use after hours.

Image 6.5: TV and the beauty salon of *ibu* Sugi (source: my own documentation)

In addition, the TV set in *ibu* Sugi's home is placed facing the north, so that the family members can still use the space in front of the set for Muslim prayer in the evening which is done facing west. It is believed that when praying, a Muslim is not allowed to face a mirror or other objects that can reflect the self. This instance seems to suggest that the placement of a TV set also requires consideration of religious beliefs and norms.

As the set is perceived as a valuable household asset, it is placed close to other valuable machines such as the personal computer and the refrigerator. These valuable household appliances are placed in the main area close to the main bedroom for security reasons. In

such "secure" space, the arrangement of sofas is meant not only for comfort but also to protect the devices. The placement of the television with the PC and refrigerator can also be seen as a privilege marker of conspicuous consumption and class status of the family in the *kampung*. In this case (as in image 6.6.), the living space is, thus, supposedly not mainly the interior area, but it has become a 'commodity exhibition' space or an arena for the display of wealth of the family. As Silverstone writes, "our interiors are not just physical spaces. They are social, economic, cultural and political spaces. And they are technological spaces" (Silverstone, 1994, p. 25).

Image 6.6: TV, personal computer, and the fridge in one *kampung* rich home (source: my own documentation)

The motorbike is also another symbol of family wealth in the *kampung*. The limitation of *kampung* space means the main area of the house functions as a secure motorbike garage as well as its main function of living room. The display of wealth in the home continues when the television set and the VCD player are placed centrally on the top of the cabinet for catching the public attention (see image 6.6). While the motorbike is apparent in the main area, once again the refrigerator, even when it is not present in the living room, can be seen by the guest.

Image 6.7: TV and the motorbike (source: my own documentation)

The landscape of the television set in *kampung* homes provides a view of the way the urban middle to lower classes transform their living room into an exhibition environment. The television set, the VCD player, the table fan, and the *bufet* with its contents display a feature of contemporary 'home decoration' in this particular social class community and conventionalised iconography of a model of the *kampung* living room. The variations in placement of the television set in the home demonstrate various experiences of watching television of the *kampung* households and provide a picture of how *kampung* families make up their living room to elaborate the domestic interior into their own sense of a "home theatre." The message is that the television set is the sole or the totalising machine at home that dominates the family's/viewer's attention. In a word, television is the only medium that is part of the home, part of its idealisation and part of its reality.

Image 6.8: TV alone in *ibu* Endun's living room (source: my own documentation)

It is mostly women, either the mother or daughter(s), of the house who determine the domestic aesthetic. They take initiative to place the TV set in a particular position, within the family living room. *Pak* Sirun, *bu* Titin's husband, says, "Usually women know about beauty and neatness. Women know where to place the TV. While me,… yeah…only watch." *Bu* Titin appeared to agree, but also sees a role for the men in the work of domestic aesthetics. She said, "Indeed, it is women who arrange the living room and the *bufet*. Men sometimes do not know how to arrange things. But, when we are setting up the arrangement, the men help."

As part of their domestic duty, women should know the best place for TV, not only to meet the interest of the family members, but also for their (women's) own convenience while doing their routine domestic work. Women, like *ibu* Askumayah and *ibu* Arik, decide whether the family television set is to be accessed by neighbours or is restricted only for private (family) use. *Bu* Askumayah has placed her TV close to her front door and welcomes neighbourhood visiting to watch the television.

The placement of a TV set appears to correlate with the class status or the social position of the householder in *kampung* Gubeng. For many *kampung* households, their door is always open, except in the afternoon between 1 pm and 3 pm when some people have an afternoon nap and at night after 10 pm, and the neighbours can come either for a chat or to watch TV. However, several rich *kampung* householders in Gubeng tend to place the TV set a bit further from the sofa set, in a position for private (owner) access only, and

consequently this TV placement has restricted neighbour's share in the viewing practice in their home.

Image 6.9: TV and privatised place in *ibu* Arik's home (source: my own documentation)

For instance in *ibu* Arik's home, the television set is placed at the centre of the family room, and it is not expected to be used for communal consumption. *Bu* Arik is a sister of *bu* Titin, who lives next door. Although both are the daughters of *pak* Parlan, the *kampung* "rich" family, these two women have a very contrasting attitude in their neighbourhood interaction. *Bu* Titin is more open and sociable to the neighbours than her sister. *Bu* Arik's husband is a low level military officer as is *bu* Titin's husband, but in terms of family income, *bu* Arik is slightly better off than *bu* Titin. *Bu* Titin has a '*kos-kosan*' (boarding room) business; while *bu* Arik has followed her father (*pak* Parlan) and trades household goods and clothes for credit (paid in instalments of neighbourhood purchasers). From her domestic business, *bu* Arik earns more extra income than *bu* Titin. *Bu* Arik only occasionally comes outside and gathers with her neighbours for a short chat and mostly spends her time at home with her small boy and her maid. Residents like *bu* Arik, who are less sociable to neighbours, place the TV set a bit further from the main room for receiving guests, but still visible to the guest(s). For those families, watching television is more a private recreation than a social gathering.

Typically, because the space for domestic leisure is limited, the large space in the middle of the living room in *kampung* homes functions as the bedroom at night. Also, since the

nurturing of small children is usually done while watching television, sometimes both the mother and the child fall asleep in front of the television set. As such, at night, all the family members tend to sleep in front of the set, though there may be bedrooms upstairs. The reason is the place around the TV set is perceived as more comfortable (watching TV while lying down with all family members) and it is the coolest place for sleeping in the night as generally there are not actually enough bedrooms to cater for all the family members. Also the bedrooms are small and hot and air circulation is poor. Cultural values regarding behaviour in front of television suggest that the family considers that watching television is not only part of family union in the night, but also that the place is valued as the "comfort zone" in the home. Almost every household in the *kampung* provides wide space in front of a TV set, since sitting on the floor and/or lying on a mattress or rug is preferable when consuming pleasure from television. So, even though the family may be rich, the *kampungan* culture of watching the TV continues as an everyday practice.

Ways of Looking

Typically in *kampung* Gubeng, the sofas or chairs are rarely used by the family members. It seems as though the sofa is there as a matter of formality to indicate an urban design aesthetic. When the family watches television, for instance, all the members who watch the TV sit on the floor. The couch seems to be only for guests. Many times when I visited houses in the *kampung*, they did not allow me to sit on the floor with them while watching TV together or just chatting. Early in my visits, they always said to me, "Do not sit on the floor, sister, please have a seat on the chair. Guests do not sit on the floor." Yet, later when I frequently came to their homes and sat on the floor they did not ask me to do that anymore, as they saw me not as their guest, but as someone who has become familiar with them. In addition, the people who frequently come to watch television to their neighbour's home seem aware of the norms that require some visitors not to sit on the floor. The chairs or sofa seem reserved only for those perceived high-status guests such as the *kampung* administrative officials (e.g. *RT, RW*), new visitors, or a researcher like me. In other words, those who visit as a formal guest, and not for watching television.

Furthermore, since sitting on the floor or lying on a foam mattress or a rug is perceived as the most comfortable way of enjoying pleasure of the TV in the living/guest room, if an unfamiliar guest comes to the house, then the TV is switched off and the members of the family who normally watch at that time escape to the back room or upstairs or go outside the house. The arrival of the guest becomes a disruption. In several houses, thus, the TV set is placed further into the corner of the living room, so if any guest comes, the family still can remain in front of the screen.

Image 6.10: TV and the study room at bu Lina's home (source: my own documentation)

The place in front of television, as in *ibu* Lina's house, is used for study. Her small child does homework while watching, and so does *bu* Lina's niece who was in high school. She brings her school notebooks in front of the set. During the advertising break, she is back to her reading. There are eight persons (4 adults, 2 teenagers, and 2 small boys) living in *ibu* Lina's house. The TV set certainly is unable to cater the need of every person in the family. Thus, watching television to a neighbour' place is an alternative way to enjoy the televisual pleasure.

Even while doing their work, people watch television, like in *pak* Slamet's home. *Pak* Slamet is a noodle vender. He sells from a pushcart and has a temporary base at the university campus. *Pak* Slamet and his brother sell the noodles from 8 am until 6 pm. His wife and relatives prepare the foodstuff for next day's vending after *pak* Slamet leaves home in the morning. As almost all the day his house is used for food preparation, the house does not have any seats or chairs in its living room.

There is a big aquarium, a 21 inch television set with a VCD player, and a small coffee table which functions as a TV stand in the living room. *Pak* Slamet's house has just been improved with the cement floor covered with ceramic tiles. As the kitchen is not big enough for preparation of large amounts of food, *pak* Slamet's wife uses the living room to prepare the foods, chopping the vegetables and the meats. The television set becomes important to entertain her and her workers while doing their work. So, they are able to watch a *telenovela*, the celebrity gossip 'infotainment' shows, and Indian films, which are the favourite programs for *pak* Slamet's wife and the helpers.

Image 6.11: TV and working space of *pak* Slamet's pink home (source: my own documentation)

The way *pak* Slamet has renovated the house in the city style of their neighbours provides a picture of how this small home trader has made efforts to improve and consolidate their social status in their community. The polished doors, window with a mosaic screen, fine chrome rails on the stairs, pink walls, and the ceramic floor reflect what this rural migrant family views as '*gedongan* aesthetic'. However, all these physical elements of the house do not accord with the life style of *pak* Slamet himself. He and his family tend to maintain customs of their village such as sitting and sleeping on mats on the floor. Unlike *ibu* Mimin's family, who offer their guests a seat on the lounge while their family sits on mats or on the floor, *pak* Slamet invites their guests also to sit on the floor mat in the living room. I noticed sometimes *pak* Slamet and his wife looked embarrassed when a guest came and sat on the floor with them, and *pak* Slamet said, "Sorry, the guest is only offered (*disuguh*, from the word *suguh,* a Javanese

term meaning serve or offer) a plaited mat (Javanese term is *kloso*)." *Pak* Slamet explained that he decided not to have a chair or a sofa in his house, because the family use the living room as the "kitchen" space for his business. He told me that he and his family do not expect anyone (of his neighbours) to come and visit their place, as he is the street food vendor in that *kampung*. Because of these expectations, *pak* Slamet also decided not to decorate his living room following the general pattern of decorating the *kampung*'s living rooms.

Having that "fine" house for *pak* Slamet is more than enough. "This is much better than [our] house in the village, which is still cement and soil floor," he said. Even though *pak* Slamet has improved the building of his house following some houses in the *kampung*, his social status as the street food vendor remains lower than the status of the residents whose head of family works in the formal sector (with an office address).

Indeed, domestic activities in front of the TV set are various, and "television has become embedded in the complex cultures of our own domesticity" (Silverstone, 1994, p. 24). Watching television in the *kampung* households is mostly a shared experience or communalised pleasure. Since the space of home is limited, the television console (together with the VCD player) is set up in a place where family activities are ongoing even in very limited space such is the case for *pak* Warno, a casual worker who came to Surabaya with his wife and lives with another family in a shared rented house in the *kampung*. In the house he lives in, there are two bedrooms and a very narrow living room. *Pak* Warno and his family live in the upstairs bedroom. Most of their domestic activities take place in this room, except for cooking which is done in the shared kitchen and washing clothes in the shared bathroom in the house. Domestic activities like ironing and having meals usually take place in the bedroom, where the television and a VCD player are kept.

A TV set is on the old plywood study table, while the VCD player is placed on the top. Food and a kettle of drinking water are placed on the shelf below the TV. In this 5.5 square meter room, pak Warno and his family experience their family life with television a significant part of it.

Image 6.12: TV, bedroom, and dining room in *pak* Warno's home (source: my own documentation)

Nurturing the small child, studying, ironing, preparing the foods, working, and other routine domestic activities carried out in front of television provide a framework of how space in front of the set has become a specific space for "the distribution of leisure and [domestic] labour activities" (Spiegel, 1992, p.28). A 'home', according to Judith and Andrew Sixsmith (1990 cited in Silverstone, 1994), can be differentiated into three experiential domains: first, home can be associated with 'the personal,' which links to individual experiences (a private space), an escape, a place of and for, memory and solitude. Second, home is also a place of 'the social', as a place of family life. Third, home is 'the physical' place, a place of comfort and security. Through the observation of *kampung* Gubeng residents, however, the circumstance of the *kampung* provides a very different set of relationships than Sixsmith and Silverstone are talking about. The boundary between the private and the public in the domestic space, particularly the space in front of the television set, in the *kampung* is almost always blurred. Since the *kampung* houses are always open for neighbourhood visitors and close family living near by, the culture of domesticity, thus, is almost always public.

Home without TV

As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, for the *kampung* lower class households, television is bought not only for what it is, but also what it can do. For some, television is seen as an object for economic exchange. For others, television is a site of everyday

"ritual" practice. The medium is also valued according to its usefulness as part of the domestic entertainment. However, about ten percent of households do not have a television; *pak* Sonhaji's home is one of these.

Pak Sonhaji is one of the *kampung* poor and lives with his wife and a teenage son. Sonhaji's wife works as a part time housemaid (*pembantu*) and also offers washing and ironing services, while pak Sonhaji is a casual construction labourer (*buruh bangunan*). His son is still studying at high school. The living room of *pak* Sonhaji's house is very small, only four square meters. There are two old wooden chairs and a round coffee table in the living room. A small wooden cabinet is placed in the corner. No television set is installed in this room. They also rarely watch television at their neighbours.

Image 6.13: Home without TV (source: my own documentation)

The neighbours perceive *pak* Sonhaji's family as closed as they very rarely gather with neighbours. According to *pak* Sonhaji's wife, television is not important for her, particularly as she is worried it will consume too much electricity. For the wife, her monthly wage is prioritised for family meals and her son's study.

Pak Sonhaji's house has also been floored with ceramics. Like most of his neighbours, *pak* Sonhaji also thinks that physical appearance of the house is important to demonstrate status. Sometimes, he also worried about not having a TV set at home. He and his family, like most of the *kampung* people, believe that owning a TV set is part of

an indication of wealth and gives one status in the *kampung*. Although their *kampung* neighbours welcome this family to watch the TV in their place, *pak* Sonhaji and his wife felt that their neighbours sometimes seem reluctant to have social interaction with them. The absence of television in the family life, therefore, could also become a problem for having social relationship with neighbours. In particular, when a TV set functions to "invite" neighbours to come and share the consumption, the absence of TV could be crucial as a source of exclusion from that social interaction of the neighbourhood.

Gendered Realm and Spatial Metaphor

This section looks at how the conflation of women's work (as domestic labour) and leisure take place around the space of the TV set. These issues addressed here are an attempt to extend the previous discussion of TV's placement and ways of looking by bringing the issue of gender into focus.

In most homes I visited, the male(s) and children in the home dominate decisions in changing the TV channels, or the use of VCD player or the game console. As for *bu* Titin, she declares that she does not have any specific choice of TV programming and watches any program showing when her family turns on the TV. If her husband watches soccer (the favourite sport for many Indonesians), she does not mind watching it, though she watches for only a short time then falls asleep. However, *bu* Titin watches particular *sinetron* shows, the action-legend drama *Angling Dharma* (the name of the male hero) on Sunday night at 8.00 pm, *Tersanjung* (Flattered) every Friday evening, *Kehormatan* (Honour) on Tuesday prime time at 7.30 pm, and *Si Doel, Anak Sekolahan* (Doel, a Student) every Thursday evening. Her husband also sometimes watches these *sinetron* with his wife. If he does not want to watch the *sinetron*, he goes outside and has a chat with neighbours or just goes to sleep on the mattress. Sometimes, when her husband or two small sons do not want the *sinetron* shows that *bu* Titin wants to watch, she goes to her parents' house or to neighbour's to watch the melodrama that she likes. Several women in *kampung* Gubeng follow a similar pattern. When the same *sinetron* favourite is broadcast, these women gather in the home of one of them and watch the show together. This is usually done in the house of a widow or a woman whose husband lives

with his first or second wife outside *kampung* Gubeng. So, a female space is created in a place where there is no adult authoritative male.

However, for a family with no male, the dominance of an adult woman in the house is significant. In *ibu* Mamik's place, for instance, where there is only one old male (her father) living with her, *bu* Mamik's four children, and her four teenage nieces, the control of changing the television channels (manual change without the remote) is dominated by *bu* Mamik. Since *bu* Mamik's husband mostly lives with his first wife outside *kampung* Gubeng, she has become the master and manager of her family. She only receives small amount money from her husband to fulfil her needs, as well as those of the children, her father, and nieces that are neglected by her sister. The control over viewing television, therefore, appears to correlate with the person who earns and holds income in the house.

Within the family circle, not only women like to watch *sinetron*. The males also like to watch the shows, particularly action-legend dramas or mystery (e.g. *sinetron* titles *Angling Dharma*, *Mistery Gunung Merapi* (Mystery of Mount Merapi)), crime series, and teenage dramas. Except for youth dramas, which only teenage males seem to watch, all the family members gather around the TV set to enjoy these local programs. In this situation, still, the male(s) hold the control to switch over the channels during advertisements.

In everyday *kampung* life, the TV world is very much women's only during the daytime, when school children and the husband and other males have gone out. *Kampung* people rise early. By the time the sun is up the place is a hive of noisy activities and sounds from televisions or radios. People usually prepare for the working day between 6 and 8 am. As such, women start to prepare meals for their husband and children much earlier, often before 6 am. The domestic duty continues until midday, when women prepare the family's main meals for the day. Often, women bring the ingredients like vegetables in front of the TV set. They watch the morning programs such as the quiz shows or Indian films, while preparing foods or doing other domestic chores. Sometime female neighbour(s) come to join and share jobs with the host. At that time, those young

married women confide in each other about their family members and sometimes about their sex lives, about their menstrual cycles, pregnancies, births, their joys and worries, and so forth, (even bowel movements) while they watch television. Sometimes, they talk about their neighbours' secrets and problems, or the *kampung* politics, or their conflict with other neighbours. The TV space becomes the female context only when the children and the male(s) are not present. A similar pattern is much less clear for the *kampung* males.

Television, thus, plays a part in shaping women's communal relationship in this migrant community. This technology has created the forum for women to socialise and share their sorrows, joys, and their private experiences with other women. Television has also facilitated the possibility for women to create women's webs, which may differ from and sometimes even oppose each other. Television, thus, has added to the mode of socialising among the *kampung* women.

> Well, it's always like this, if women gather watching TV. [They] do not watch the TV, but chat, talk about neighbours…if [we are] silent while watching TV, it is not enjoyable; it could [make us] sleepy. Watching TV is enjoyable while cutting vegetables or chatting like this…[We] want to try the recipe like on TV (while pointing to a cooking show), it's impossible, we can't do it, the ingredients are also expensive, and cannot be consumed by the *kampung* people like us.

Bu Min's narrative above exemplifies the *kampung* women's style of viewing television with other women. This woman described that viewing television among women in the *kampung* cannot be separated from the social activity involving ongoing talk among them, with the performance of a domestic activity such as preparing the foodstuff for the family meal, or caring for their small children. The narratives also illustrate that for women who mostly spend their time on domestic obligations, the moment of watching television, especially in the daytime, alone without doing anything else would be boring and of course waste time better spent on their domestic obligations. Since watching television in the daytime surely creates more of a space and time for women to entertain and enjoy the program without disruption from males and children, the obligation to finish domestic duties needs to be combined with the pleasures of watching.

The attendance of other female neighbours with their children increases the enjoyment in performing domestic activities while talking about others and watching television. When the cooking show had finished and the Indian film began, the behaviour of these three women was also transformed. They watched the show more intensely than they did during the cooking show before, and stopped talking and cutting up the foodstuffs. They continued these activities during the advertisements. The conversation was also slightly changed to include commentary on the story of the Indian film that they were watching. However, the pleasure was not prolonged. This communal viewing could not continue until the show finished, as the women had to go back to their own domestic work. They had to wait for children to come home around 11.30 am, and continue their routine in providing for their own family. When it was around 11.30 am, *ibu* Mien and *ibu* Endun said they were going home to continue cooking as their children were about to come home soon. *Bu* Titin then turned off her television set, stood up and started to cook in the kitchen, while carrying her small son on her left hip in a cloth sling.

Women are struggling to negotiate an independent space and time of their own in relation to the television viewing consumption within the domestic space. Their experiences of everyday television consumption are patterned by intersecting power and domestic responsibility. Nevertheless, women find their own way in entertaining themselves with the television. Their practices of television consumption illustrate one of the ways in which the home and the space in front of the TV set are culturally produced and sustained.

Women are relegated to a passive position when the other entertainment technology, the VCD is also found in the home (as can be seen in several pictures above, TV and VCD sets are placed side by side). The use of VCD in the *kampung* home is incorporated within the social organization of the relations between the public and private spheres and within the domestic sphere itself. It also poses a crucial question about its articulations with gender relations, particularly within the determining effect of the structure and size of the domestic space available. With restricted physical environment, the aural landscape created by the use of VCD in the *kampung* household brings to the surface the significance of the gendered organization of domestic space. The following illustration

suggests the emergence of a gendered realm in relation to the use of VCD within the *kampung* home.

One Sunday afternoon, *ibu* Lina's family members and her male relatives sat around watching a video CD of the Formula One (F1) car race. They, especially the two males about 20 years old, commented on the Ferrari team. *Ibu* Lina with her two small sons and her eldest daughter, her sisters, and her 70 year old father, who were also watching the race, only listened to them and did not know anything about the race and the Ferrari. Sometimes, the females asked a bit about the race. After about 15 minutes, the females, especially *bu* Lina and her sister, *mbak* Awok, get up, grumbling that they were bored and dizzy watching the race; they could not enjoy watching such a show. *Bu* Lina is moaning in Javanese Surabaya dialect, "Huh…that is just like a man! [They] like to watch racing, how could they enjoy watching [car] racing? Singing (she meant karaoke) is better. Look, after this, they will watch an action [film], man's [world] again." Although *bu* Lina owns the VCD, she admits that she rarely uses it. Her sons and her male relatives use it frequently. She watches the VCD only when these people switch on the player or she sometimes watches with her female neighbours. As for *ibu* Lina, *ibu* Arik, *ibu* Titin, and *ibu* Mamik also explain that their VCD player is frequently used by their children to watch children's animation movies or for karaoke, confirming what Morley (1986) found in his work *Family Television* that multi-set technology like video (VCR) is primarily used by the males of the family.

Kampung women spend more time talking and gathering with their social web. Tiring domestic tasks have limited the women's space in front of the TV set and the VCD player and made these *kampung* women appear to sacrifice their own pleasure by allowing others do take control of the VCD console in their own homes. *Bu* Titin explains,

> When we first bought this VCD, I was excited and curious about what it would look like. When I saw [it], I could not imagine how the picture is going to be. But then I know that VCD is not different from television. So, I think I don't need to rent the VCD [disc] and I never rent it. I just join in watching the cartoon [movies] VCDs played by my son, it's enough for me…Yes, I had watched VCD

blue {films} with neighbours, like VCD *Itenas*, Bathroom, and of actresses in the toilet[5], but they are not so hard-core porn films.

Morley (1986) states that father and sons, occasionally daughter and least often mother, are in control of this video technology within the household. A related argument was developed by Lull (1988) who notes the "masculinization of the VCR" suggests that the emergence of video as a "new" household technology requires "extension of the masculine roles of installing and operating the machine." Therefore, the responsibility to operate the machine becomes "a kind of male pleasure" (Lull, 1988, p. 28-29). Although, in this study, I did not investigate the depth of "extension of masculine role" in relation to the VCD machine, I believe the lesser engagement of those *kampung* women with the VCD player is because their daily time is not only mainly consumed for routine domestic work and child caring, and chatting with neighbours, but also there is a technological competence occurring in this context. As in most work on women and technology, women historically do not dominate the latest technology. Mainly technologies/toys are male designed and, therefore, more 'boys' toys' than female ones (Wacjman, 2004).

Conclusion

I have described how the TV set is obtrusively positioned within the open lounge interiors and has a decorative value for the *kampung* households in urban Surabaya. The TV set is one of the display pieces of the "household arts," suggesting the set is regarded as not only a utilitarian object or as a technology which is problematically associated with a particular class taste, but also that it has a socio-economic function for every household in this community.

Ninety percent of households in the *kampung* have a TV set. It is a 'show piece', which is not only perceived as a valuable family asset, but also carries the symbolic meaning

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[5] When I did this interview, there was a public issue on the circulation of VCD about the activities of several Indonesian female celebrities inside the toilet of one photo studio in Jakarta. The activities were recorded by a camera hidden in that bathroom. The case was already finalised with the imprisonment of the perpetrator.

for asserting the family status among the community. Television is not just a technology and part of the domestic interior of the house. The consumption itself is a cultural activity, and operates as a kind of cultural symbol of everyday life of a particular section of society. Television is placed centrally in the living room, where it is not only integrated into the interior design of the house, but is also integrated in one way or another into the family's wider social relationships with the *kampung* community.

Since watching television is preferably enjoyed in a communal setting either with family or neighbours, it is common in many *kampung* houses for the parents, children, nieces, and other relatives to sleep together in front of the TV set rather than in their bedrooms. This feature suggests distinctive class patterns of ways of enjoying the television and taste in living room layouts.

Television has also transformed the function of the living room and has added the display of consumer goods in the house for social class contestation. The arrangement of the display of television set has given a particular shape to the emerging ideology of domesticity in the migrant middle to lower class community context. The whole association of decorative objects across the room suited to the persistence of TV set make these objects interconnected elements of a coherent set of the *kampung* domesticity.

The gendered realm in front of the television set appears to be dominated by the males and children. Yet, television has been able to facilitate the formation of women's daytime webs and offers a distinctive mode of socialising among the *kampung* women in this context.

Having discussed the class-specific and gendered geography of television placement in *kampung* households, I turn in the next chapter to the content of what is actually watched on television, particularly by the *kampung* women viewers.

Chapter Seven

Imagining the City, Class, and Cultures

> *On the one hand, television cannot be all that important in the end because it is just an image (<u>lawat</u>). On the other, its effects depend on the quality of thought behind the presentation and what you can make of it* (Mark Hobart, 1999, p. 281).

This chapter aims to explore the kampung viewers viewing experience of 'city people' (Jakarta), the kampung, and the social classes portrayed in the melodramatic sinetron broadcast at the time of my field study from February to June 2003. It examines kampung women spectator's interpretations and comments on two most-watched sinetron i.e. a family melodrama *Tersanjung* (Flattered, series 6) and a comedy drama *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* (Doel, a student, series 6, henceforth *Si Doel*). These two sinetron are set in very different social contexts. *Tersanjung*, like other mainstream Indonesian melodramatic sinetron, mainly describes the life style of the Jakarta elites, whereas *Si Doel* is about the social life of the indigenous ethnic Betawi who live on the outskirts of Jakarta.

Tersanjung, a melodrama modelled on Hollywood soap operas, occupied top rating in Indonesia for over two years. More than 200 episodes of *Tersanjung* have been produced since 1998 by the major *sinetron* 'factory' PT. Multivision Plus. The story is about family battles over inheritance and love affairs among the young of the wealthy. During its production, different actresses and actors have been cast in the main roles and new characters are continually introduced to make the story seem more complex and ongoing. The story of *Tersanjung* series 6[1] continues the journey of Indah's efforts to raise her son after her beloved husband, Rama, passes away. After being expelled from her husband's family home, Indah (henceforth Indah [1] as there are three Indahs in this series) experiences more sorrows and severe adversity than before. She becomes homeless and is threatened by the female antagonists,

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[1] Sourced from the synopsis of *Tersanjung* series 6 (http://www.indosiar.com)

Anita, a girl friend of the rich young male widower, Jimmy. Jimmy is a single father who has a daughter, named Indah (henceforth Indah [2]), and he helps the older Indah and offers a room for her and her son to stay.

Living in Jimmy's place has made Indah's [1] conflicts and problems become even more complicated. The drama continues with the involvement of Anita's mother, who assists her daughter to force Indah [1] out of Jimmy's house. Anita's mother uses black magic (guna-guna) in order to influence Jimmy to be more loyal to Anita. Meanwhile, in a different place, there is another single father, Bobby, who was Indah's [1] lover before they were separated by Bobby's parents, who also has a daughter named Indah (henceforth Indah [3]).

After Bobby recovers from surgery, he continues to search for and finally finds his daughter Indah who had been kidnapped. So the story mainly presents conflicts surrounding the three Indahs. The old Indah [1], Rama's wife, is mistreated by Anita and her mother; Indah [2], Jimmy's daughter, is also mistreated by Anita; and the third Indah [3], Bobby's daughter, who escaped from the kidnappers and lives with another family. In the start of *Tersanjung* series 6, Indah [1] is shown as mentally ill, while the two younger Indah have grown up, married men from very wealthy families, and have become rich housewives. In series 6, the plot has shifted from the misery of old Indah [1] to the lives of the two young women i.e. Indah [2] and Indah [3], with the conflicts and intrigues around them, together with the presentations of luxurious mansions, lavish cars, and glamorous settings.

In contrast to *Tersanjung*, *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* (Doel, a Student), produced by PT. Karno's Film, is distinguished from the mainstream melodramas of Indonesian *sinetron* by its emphasis on local (Betawi ethnic) specificities[2]. *Si Doel*'s parents are portrayed as the *kampung* middle-class who possess a plot of land, operate an old oplet (a small van for public transportation), and a small stall (warung), and continue to live simply. The triangle of romance between the young *kampung* people (represented in Doel and Zaenab characters) and the young rich (represented by Sarah) are packed with pictures of everyday *kampung* life (mostly Doel's family) and spiced with comic episodes. The setting for this comedy drama is mainly in a Betawi

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[2] For more discussion on Betawi *sinetron* and representations of local specificities of this ethnic in modernizing Indonesia on the Indonesian television, see Budi Irawanto's (2004) thesis.

kampung located on the edge of Jakarta city. This drama is unusual in Indonesian television as much of the dialogue is in Malay dialect mixed with popular urban Betawi slang, peculiar to the Betawi people (see Irawanto, 2004).

Si Doel series 6 is a continuation from the previous series[3]. In *Si Doel* 6, which the producer, Rano Karno, says will be the last series of *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* serial, Doel is portrayed pondering whether to marry Sarah, a young rich woman and a *kampung* "outsider," who looks modern and 'liberated,' or Zaenab, a young *kampung* woman from a middle class family in Doel's *kampung*, who looks simple, respectful, and humble. The love story among these three young Betawi finally ends with the marriage of Doel and Sarah, whilst Zaenab enters an arranged marriage with Henri from a rich family living in an elite housing estate outside the *kampung*. Beside this love story, Si Doel 6 also continues to present the struggle between Mandra and his stepmother, Nyak Rodiah, over the family inheritance. Unlike the conflicts in melodramas, the problem between Mandra and Nyak Rodiah is moderated and spiced with comedy. Every conflict in *Si Doel* is resolved in a family atmosphere without intrigues, no domestic violence, and no black magic used, as is typical in melodramas.

My reason for examining the viewing experiences of the kampung viewers is to asses how they see the distinctions between city (metropolitan Jakarta) and the *kampung* space - the rich and the *kampung* people or little people, and whether these *sinetrons* have shaped the *kampung* viewers' views about the contemporary urban community in Indonesia. Extending the tradition of using the "peasant as witness" or villager's view point seeing the city for the first time (e.g. Frederic Jameson,1994 cited in Sun, 2002, p. 32) in the study of cinema texts, in this chapter, I use the *kampung* women as spectators and 'witnesses' for the interrogation of the notions of modernity and urban/city people in this context. I elaborate in detail the circumstance of *kampung* people as members of the mass media audience.

Although the women in *kampung* Gubeng live in the major city of Surabaya, they present themselves as 'urban *kampung* people' (locally termed '*wong kampung kota*'), as distinct from 'city/urban people' (*wong kota*). These *kampung* people see

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[3] I followed the whole episodes of Si Doel series 6 during my fieldwork in Indonesia December 2002 - June 2003

themselves as migrants to the city for work and income. So they are city residents, but consider the village as their home. For them, the term 'wong kota' carries the meaning of 'non-migrant' or not coming from rural origins. Because of this view, the kampung people tend to see 'wong kota' as the upper class community, or as the kampung Gubeng people call them 'wong berkelas' (classy people). In addition, as John Sullivan (1994) points out, the kampung people tend to view themselves as 'not-rich' people, but 'not exactly poor', as the word 'poor' has an unpleasant connotation in the kampung. Class status is used to differentiate the kampung residents' position within the urban class segregation between the rich or the haves and the 'kampung people', instead of 'little people'. Based on this idea, this chapter is an attempt to appraise the significance of class as a basis of different meaning systems in the decoding process of the kampung viewers. This is relevant particularly since there is a class difference between the characters portrayed in the sinetron and those of the viewers. Morley states, "The way in which the subaltern groups and classes in a society reinterpret and make sense of these [media] messages is therefore a crucial problem for any theory of communications as a mode of cultural domination" (Morley, 1983, p. 104).

In a society dominated by the centralised imageries of the middle classes, the subaltern groups and lower class communities are often considered as a minority and passive consumers of images and leisure commodities. Their representations are minimum and often demeaning or misrepresented. Krishna Sen (1994) has observed in the Indonesian film texts that the word 'class' was almost absent from the verbal discourse of the film texts. She maintains that the dominant characters and mimetic behaviours of the so-called the 'social middle class' appeared predominantly in many Indonesian film texts (Sen, 1994). Moreover, Sen found that the formal characteristics of the films' representation mainly produce two kinds of characters: "one group who live and act as Individual" and "the second group who are collective in their lifestyle, act only rarely and only as violent mobs, and are the largely silent objects of the film's discourse" (Sen, p. 129). This second group are those who are called the rakyat (people), and who live in the geographical settings of kampung, a community that differentiates itself from the 'middle class' or the 'big people' in urban Indonesia by the mode of its consumption (Dick, 1982). Taking my cue from Sen's study, in this chapter, I wish to elaborate the context of kampung people, as the

rakyat community, and take them into the discourse of 'subaltern' and to bring into light the ways the community construct the culture of their own in relation to viewing consumption of the so-called 'cultural reality' of urban/city middle class people.

In addition to that, in reading class in Indonesian film texts, Sen (1994) shows that the mimetic strategies in the film texts reproduce a pattern in which the poor are often shown in street settings, or in *kampung* houses with open doors. The failure to present the poor and the *kampung* cultural arrays in the Indonesian film texts has been continued in the productions of television dramas and other programs in the country. Due to this circumstance, I aim to explore ways of seeing of the *kampung* people, as part the subaltern's reading[4], toward the televised products/constructions of city and *kampung* space and place and the inhabitants in these two different human places. By doing this, I expect to start an alternative writing of the class community, not as the construction sites of either the state or the media texts, but as a form of understanding "the voice of the silences/collectivism/subordination" (Sen, 1994, p. 129).

Imagining the Metropolis (Jakarta): Reading 'Class' and Class 'Reading'

As Indonesian *sinetron* productions are mainly set in Jakarta surrounds, in this part, I also examine how the *kampung* viewers read the images of 'metropolis' and its culture represented in the *sinetron*. This is significant to understand the way the *kampung* viewers distinguish the city people – to refer to metropolitan Jakarta inhabitants – from themselves and also from the 'big people' in Surabaya. The pictures of shopping malls and plazas (such as *Plaza Senayan* and *Pondok Indah Mall*), cafés, hotels, elite housing complexes, and Jakarta's main roads such as *Thamrin* and *Sudirman* streets with the tall office buildings, forming the continuous back drop of the *sinetron* scenes, in particular have attracted the *kampung* viewers and given them a particular impression and imagination of how the metropolis and its inhabitants look.

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[4] For Gayatri Spivak (1988) the subaltern cannot speak; it is because of the limitation on her discursive positioning when analysing Indian Hindu *Sati* community (Mark Hobart, 1999). Utilising Hobart's view, quite differently, the *kampung* women here could be seen as subalterns if we make a different reading of Gramsci's distinction between the masses and subalterns, whose role is to articulate the hegemony of the dominant group to the masses.

Although the viewers know that they live in a city as well, their impressions of the Jakarta 'metropolis' and the city, Surabaya, where they live are far removed from each other. For instance, when watching a scene of two young women shopping in a modern mall in Jakarta, viewers like *ibu* Mamik and her neighbour, a middle-aged woman, *bu* Mimin, were fascinated by the picture of the mall. These women commented, "Jakarta looks sophisticated [doesn't it?], maybe there are many remarkable plazas, the things must be expensive [there]. If in Surabaya, well… at best, *Tunjungan Plaza* or *Galaxy Mall*, a place of the rich and the Chinese." The image of Jakarta with its icons of contemporary popular culture such as shopping arcades, supermarkets, clubs, and pubs in the *sinetron* is identified by these *kampung* women viewers as more "sophisticated" (at least from its shopping malls) than Surabaya. The frequent presentation of contemporary city popular culture in the *sinetron* seems to set it apart from the cultural life of the city of those urban Surabaya *kampung* residents.

Image 7.1: One scene from the *sinetron* where two young women come out of the plaza carrying shopping bags (Source: Punjabi & Armand, 2003)

However, for the *kampung* women, Jakarta's shopping malls or plazas are considered not only distant and distinctly 'not Surabaya,' but also a distinctly 'not their class' place. Among women in *kampung* Gubeng, a particular shopping mall or department store is associated with the shopping place of the upper class and/or the Chinese (by definition, rich)[5]. For instance, *Matahari* department store, the largest chain retailer

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[5] Heryanto (1999) remarks that Chinese in Indonesia have been categorised as among the country's rich with the Westerners and top government Indonesian officials before 1990, and in the 1990s onward, Chinese, Westerners, and Muslims together with the so-called 'new middle class' (*kelas menengah*), continue to be referred to as the new rich in Indonesia (Heryanto, 1999, p.163-164).

in Indonesia, is viewed by the *kampung* women as the shopping place of the rich and the Chinese. So, all the garments and things displayed in this store are considered as 'classy'. On the contrary, *Ramayana* department store, which is also a chain retailer, is perceived as the shopping place of the ordinary people. The fact is that *Matahari* department stores are mainly located in modern plazas and shopping malls in several major cities of Indonesia, while *Ramayana* stores are situated in middle level shopping centres. Some *kampung* Gubeng women that I interviewed said that they went to shop to *Ramayana* only once a year for *Hari Raya*/*Lebaran* (Muslim celebration at the end of Ramadan). They explained that it has been a tradition for the people, especially for the children, to have new clothes on the *Lebaran* day. For this special occasion, they want to have new clothes from a classy store, rather than from the open traditional market.

Women in *kampung* Gubeng still like to shop in the wet (open) market for their food and small appliances; and to buy clothes and household electronic goods in retail shops located outside/on the street surrounding the wet market. Commonly, they go in groups. In these markets they can still bargain and easily find the goods that they need, as there are many "specialised" shops such as textile shops, garment shops, utensils shops, and fruit and vegetable stalls. *Kampung* women tend to buy a textile and bring it to the seamstress to make a new dress for special occasions such as for *Idul Fitri* (End of Ramadan), and wedding parties. They will then look for the model in magazines. The *kampung* women, *bu* Titin and her next door neighbour *bu* Askumayah, their neighbours and even some rich *kampung* women are not accustomed to one-stop shopping like in *Matahari* department store, as they feel the place is too sophisticated. Also, making a purchase is too complex, as a sales slip for the goods has to be written up first. Then the customer takes this to the cashier, pays and then takes the slip back to collect the shopping. In the traditional market the whole transaction is simpler, as they take the goods and pay directly to the trader him/herself. Those *kampung* women also feel embarrassed to shop in plazas wearing thongs, not "good" sandals or shoes. "Embarrassed to shop in *TP* (an acronym of *Tunjungan Plaza* the most popular plaza in Surabaya)… we are *kampungan* people not classy enough," *bu* Titin expressed. "Wearing thongs also!" added *bu* Askumayah, one afternoon when we gathered and talked outside *bu* Askumayah's

place. *Kampung* women rarely wear shoes, even on formal occasions such as wedding parties.

This community is a real contemporary 'communal institution' (Chaterjee, 1983) and a fundamental element of the modern in Indonesia, not a backward consciousness. The attitudes of this community and its collective acts, which can be seen, for example, from their dress codes, their speech, and the way they behave, tend to "invert codes through which their social superiors dominated them in everyday life" (Guha, 1983 in Chakrabarty, 2002, p. 9). The *kampung* people favour the wet (dirty) and open market/bazaar, which offers the opportunity for connection in their collective acts, where the space of the crowded open market offers the possibilities of community exchange and diverse communal conventions. So, the market is not only used for economic transactions, but pleasure, pilgrimage, and kinship relationships which also take place in this context. It is the place which is not subject to "a single set of communal rules," rather it is "a space that produces both malevolence and exchange between communities" (Chakrabarty, 2002, p. 76).

Further, the fitness clubs and cafés which are the most frequently shown meeting-places in the melodramatic *sinetron*, are also seen as part of the modernity of the metropolis [Jakarta]. From watching the *sinetron*, for *ibu* Lina, 27 years old, 'Jakarta people' seem to spend their days going to shops and fitness centres, then gathering in cafés, having a chat and some drinks. She sees shopping, fitness exercising, and going to cafés as part of the culture of Jakarta people. *Bu* Lina commented in strong Javanese Surabaya dialect, "There are not any Surabaya people who sit around in the café every day…Well, maybe [they gather] in the tent cafés (temporary food stalls put up under a marquee in the pedestrian precinct every night)." Besides, according to her, Surabaya people are not as rich as the Jakarta people. She also thought that eating or drinking in such cafés must be expensive, and only rich people can afford to buy drinks and food in such places.

Bu Lina's opinion was challenged by Uyung, a university student who boarded in a room in that *kampung* and accompanied me visiting *bu* Lina's house watching the *sinetron* that evening. Uyung said that there are people in Surabaya who gather in cafés, like the one in the *sinetron*, but *bu* Lina might not recognise or know the place. Uyung then mentioned the name of some cafés like *Starbuck Café* in *Galaxy Mall*

and *Nescafe* in *Tunjungan Plaza*. *Bu* Lina then promptly responded, "Yes, maybe [such cafés] are available in Surabaya, but not like the one in Jakarta, Yung!…It's rare for Surabaya people to go to a café…indeed, the culture [of the people] is different from Jakarta people." The interpretation of the "recognizable syntax of urban life" (Chambers, 1986)—the fitness clubs and the cafés—allows a *kampung* viewer like *bu* Lina to understand at a glance the life of the metropolis (Jakarta) people. This confirms what Iain Chambers has maintained, "For the material details of urban life […] suggest many of the structures for our ideas and sentiments" (Chambers, 1986, p. 19). The arrangement of urban space and place invariably has drawn upon the experience of everyday life of the inhabitants. As such places, the fitness centre, shopping mall, and the café, have never been seen and visited by the *kampung* people, so the feeling of 'difference' and 'not as part of the culture' of the city emerges as a form of expressing the distance between metropolitan Jakarta and Surabaya in terms of the physical landscape and the socio-cultural life.

Although these *kampung* women are living in a major city, they continue to differentiate their city from metropolitan Jakarta and constantly assert that Surabaya is not Jakarta. The *kampung* viewers' perception of the socio-economic profile of the Surabaya people might be explained by Howard Dick's (2002) observation that Jakarta, as the capital and largest city, is expected to differ significantly from the provincial counterpart, although the fact is that the socio-economic profiles of Jakarta and Surabaya, for instance, are remarkably similar. Dick says, "By these criteria, Surabaya looks to be a scaled-down version of Jakarta" (Dick, 2002, p. 119). The jargon "Surabaya is the second big city of Indonesia" has stereotypically influenced the people to think that Surabaya can never be as Jakarta. In addition, the stereotype constructions of metropolis Jakarta as if it contains only the rich, suggest that the metropolis' prosperity continues to be a matter of idealisation of the provincial people upon the capital territory.

The tall buildings shown in the *sinetron* make the *kampung* viewers also think that the 'metropolis' Jakarta is developed (*maju*). When *bu* Mamik and her neighbour, *bu* Mimin, watched Jimmy (a male character in *Tersanjung*) chauffeured along *Bundaran HI* (the roundabout in front of *Hotel Indonesia*, one of the icons of Jakarta) and *Jalan Thamrin* (Thamrin street), surrounded with tall buildings, these women

commented on the physical look of Jakarta. Jakarta for them is more developed, since they could see many tall buildings being captured on the screen. Since these two women have never been to Jakarta and witnessed the development of this city, their impressions are mainly sourced from television (in news or other shows) that they watch every day. They compare the tall buildings with the less tall buildings of Surabaya. However, these women agreed that there are also many crimes in Jakarta. When I interrupted to say that in Surabaya there is also a lot of crime, they responded that the crimes in Surabaya are not as vicious as in Jakarta.

However, the *kampung* viewers seem to be blind to the existence of 'common' people in Jakarta. For instance, the representations of the chauffeur, the maid, the gardener, the taxi driver, and other similar people in the big city *sinetron* shows do not seem to be seen as signs of the existence of the common people just like themselves and their neighbours. These viewers appear to selectively see from their preconceived notion of Jakarta's superior modernity with its physical and cultural attributes.

James Donald (1999) has noted the lessons from Simmel, Park, Levebvre and de Certeau that "imagination is always a creative but also constrained interchange between the subjective and the social" (Donald, p. 18). In this sense, the two women viewers imagine or translate the televised visual images and use the visualisation to project possibilities of how things might be. The visual techniques in capturing the physical look of Jakarta metropolis have directed viewers to read and conclude that Jakarta is developed and suggests the prolific romanticisation of modernity.

The *Kampung* Place and Its Cultural Practices

> Atun, Doel's sister was hand washing clothes at the back of Doel's house. She washed the clothes while sitting on a small stool close to the well and in front of the bathroom, with a flimsy door. Suddenly Mandra, Doel's uncle who is short-tempered, came by. Mandra was angry with Doel who was not willing to lend him money to buy a new motorcycle. He swore and spoke rudely using Betawi slang to Atun when he was about to enter the bathroom. Mak Nyak, Doel's and Atun's mother then came and interrupted Mandra, and asked Atun to stop washing and look after the family's *warung* (stall) which was situated in their front

entrance, as Mak Nyak was about to do her noon prayer (*sholat dzuhur*) (Sourced from *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* 6, produced and directed by Rano Karno, 2003).

Watching Mandra swearing in Betawi slang, viewers like *ibu* Supriatin (or known in the *kampung* as *bu* Pri), *ibu* Endun, *ibu* Lina, and *ibu* Askumayah were laughing in front of *bu* Askumayah's television. *Bu* Endun, the middle aged woman and the oldest among those three women, said that she liked to watch *Si Doel*, because Mandra makes her laugh, and also because she likes to see the life of Doel's family in the Betawi *kampung*. She said, "*Si Doel* is like us, *kampung* people who are simple." The women viewers then laughed together when Mandra slammed the fibre plastic door and the door sagged. The physical environment portrayed such as the bathroom, washing space with the well, and the stall (*warung*) seems close to the space and place experience of those urban *kampung* viewers.

Si Doel had also attracted the *kampung* Gubeng viewers because of the touch of "naturalness" of the *kampung* milieu, such as the constant radio sound, the food peddlers' noises and calls, and the sound of *Adzan* (a call for Muslim prayer) from the mosque nearby. "*Si Doel* looks like our everyday life, there [someone] turns on the radio," *bu* Lina commented on the *sinetron*. Unlike the predominant melodramas, *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* provides viewers with the setting of the urban *kampung*, a place always busy with food peddlers and people walking through. The background sound of *dangdut* music and news from the radio in Doel's *kampung* is seen as reflecting a 'natural' part of the urban *kampung* life. *Bu* Lina said that the predominant Indonesian *sinetron* tend to focus more on the story than to show the 'real' everyday life. She continues, "For example, we do not only watch people talk, do we? […]No way […] They (the makers) should also include stories of everyday life or our (*kampung*) everyday background in the *sinetron*, so it looks more natural." This viewer does realise her life is different from the televised fiction constructs. Nevertheless, she seemed to feel that the *sinetron* should reflect more their feeling about the place and its culture, and to present an imagination about the reality that they are engaged with.

Image 7.2: Doel's *kampung* alley on the outskirts of Jakarta (sourced: Karno, 2003) and *Kampung* Gubeng lane in urban Surabaya (source: my own documentation)

For those migrant viewers in urban *kampung* Surabaya, the presentations of Doel's *kampung* home and the activities of the Betawi *kampung* people seem to connect them to their rural home. At the same time, their life in the urban *kampung* with a different home landscape appears to give them a sense that they have 'detached' from the village and from rural traditions, and experience a relatively modern life. The physical look of *kampung* Gubeng also contrasts to the physical landscape of *kampung* houses in *Si Doel* serials. In a typical Betawi *kampung*, the *kampung* rich people's houses are built in a brick style of the housing estate, but the steel gates have not appeared; instead every house has a veranda (known as '*teras*') in the front. *Si Doel*'s *kampung* is also presented built in wood and having more space than the viewers' *kampung*, which is situated in a narrow lane of crowded housing.

Image 7.3: Doel's house (source: Karno, 2003) and a *kampung* Gubeng house (source: my own documentation)

Ibu Lina liked to watch *Si Doel* very much and was always pleased to see Doel's family and the features of Doel's house. She expressed her attitude to accessing water in her *kampung*.

> *Si Doel*'s life is just like in the village. [In the village] we had a well and a backyard (*pekarangan*), but in this *kampung*, we don't because we use taps …we have to pay for water in the city, unlike in the village where water is free…Well, this is a consequence of living in the urban *kampung*, everything is *modern* (Lina's word). Since the rich have a water pump, they can have a large amount of water easily. The poor people like me have to be patient and accept access to only a limited amount of water.

This narrative hints at the feeling of 'exile' from the village home, whilst at the same time she realises that she is now residing in an urban place, in which the land, the space, and even the distribution of basic necessities like water are limited, albeit the infrastructures are modern.

Image 7.4: Hand washing around the well in *Si Doel* (source: Karno, 2003).

The feature of traditionality with the attitude of '*kolot*' (country bumpkin) of the *kampung* Betawi people in *Si Doel* has generated diverse sentiments of the viewers toward the characters. *Bu* Supriatin, a middle aged woman, for instance, expressed her interest in the Mak Nyak character and her outfits - *kain kebaya* (traditional blouse which is pinned together in front and a Batik sarong), albeit there is not a single woman in her *kampung* wearing such *kebaya* anymore. She said, "*Kampung* people in *Si Doel*, every day appear traditional; their clothes, also the way they speak." *Bu* Endun, in a different response, commented that in *Si Doel*, the traditional

features are presented not only physically, but also in the particular characters, especially Mak Nyak. For *bu* Endun, Mak Nyak figure is portrayed as still having traditional attitudes, unlike her and other *kampung* neighbours. She expressed, "Sometimes she (Mak Nyak) still brings tradition, *kolot*, still *kampung*."

Hence, *kampung* is not only associated with the traditional, but the characters are also valued as sticking with tradition and conservative beliefs and attitudes. Although to some extent the viewers feel a close connection with the *kampung* physical settings and the everyday home activities as shown on the screen, those *kampung* viewers also feel a disassociation from the fictional construct and characters of *Si Doel*'s *kampung*. The distance or disassociation emerges from the way these women viewers compare and contrast their lives, which they see as relatively modern in the sense that they do not wear *kebaya* and sarong anymore and are not *kolot* as Mak Nyak.

However, these women continue their admiration not only of the *kampung* landscape and particular figures in the television show, but also of the experiential landscape of everyday life in that fictional *kampung*. For instance, the *kampung* Gubeng viewers of *Si Doel* appreciate Doel's family who always remind each other to pray five times a day and always use '*Assalamuallaikum*' to greet each other. *Bu* Supriatin said that she liked to see Mak Nyak remind her children to pray, though *bu* Supriatin herself is not a committed Muslim and seldom follows Islamic principles and prefers to practice a mix of Islam and traditional Javanese beliefs (*kejawen*). *Bu* Supriatin is not the only such Muslim in *kampung* Gubeng; some of her neighbours are also not so committed to Islamic principles. As I have mentioned in *Chapter Five*, most *kampung* Gubeng residents do not go to the nearby praying hall (*Musholla*) and rarely perform the prayer rituals in their own homes. This seems to confirm Mahasin's (1992) view that among the lower social class in Indonesia, or as he calls them, the lower fraction of the *ummat* (followers of Islam), many still respect communal sentiments and solidarity, and in general tend to be closer to tradition rather than to a strong Islamic faith.

Taking the *pasisir* (coastal region) culture, the urban Muslim culture of Java's north coast (see Nas & Grijns, 2000, p. 2), the producer of *Si Doel* seems to maintain and

exhibit the features of committed Betawi *kampung* Muslim culture[6]. The aspect of religiosity in *Si Doel* is strongly shown, particularly in the utterance of the Islamic greeting '*Assalamuallaikum*', prayer, the sound of *adzan* (call for prayer), the wearing of *kerudung* (woman's headscarf), congregation, and the kissing of the hands of parents or the elderly to show respect.

However, the position from which the kampung viewers give meaning to, and get pleasure from their favourite sinetron characters and narratives, appears to derive from a rather communal sentiment and ambivalent structure of feeling which stresses the contradictions between the fictional ideals and their own familial life in the everyday *kampung* in terms of this ideological interest: *Si Doel*'s *kampung* family is depicted as strongly Islamic and is shaped by a strong Islamic nuance; the other one, the viewers' *kampung* is *abangan* or less strongly adhered Muslims.

This notion becomes even clearer from the response of one *kampung* Gubeng viewer to the cultural nuance of *Si Doel*'s *kampung* and her own. *Bu* Lina values Doel's family and other *kampung* households such as Zaenab's (the female protagonist in *Si Doel*) family as strongly committed to religion. *Bu* Lina said, "Not many *kampung* people commit to their religion like Doel and people in [*Si Doel*'s] *kampung*." When I asked in the interview about *bu* Lina's own family and her *kampung* neighbours, she responded that her family and neighbours were different from the sinetron. *Bu* Lina explained that she has rarely seen her *kampung* neighbours (and of course Lina herself) join religious congregation and regular Koran recitals in her *kampung*, except when there is a slametan. She perceives a contrast between what she watches in the serials and the everyday life of her *kampung* community in terms of these everyday religious practices. *Bu* Lina apparently considers that it is because the Muslims in her *kampung* are not strongly adhered, and, according to her, they rarely perform five prayers a day, even though the loud sounds of prayer calling and Koran recitals are heard five times from the *kampung* Mushalla. Viewers like *bu* Lina is also aware that the sinetron is just a matter of fiction, something that is not real, and therefore cannot be compared to the realm of either her identity or the life of people around her. Although *bu* Lina stressed that she would not find such idealised figures in relation to religious commitment in her *kampung* community, she said that she

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[6] For more discussion about Betawi, its ethnicity and identity, see Budi Irawanto (2004).

would like to see more such figures in the society. The imagination of *kampung* and strong Islamic commitment has been successfully presented in the *Si Doel* serials, and has brought a different way of thinking about and imagining of the life of the lower class communities in contemporary Indonesia.

These illustrations have a special significance for the communal viewing experience. Two things stand out from those women's interpretation above. Not only do these *kampung* women viewers assert that the representations of Mak Nyak and Doel's family characteristics are related to a form of idealisation; more importantly, these representations are connected with somewhat contradictory viewing of Doel's family life and the *kampung* Gubeng family life.

In addition, it is not only the physical settings and the religiosity of the *kampung* people that has attracted the viewers. The presentation of the peddlers who sell cooking utensils and other small household items on credit (known as *abang kredit*, or credit-man) also reflects an idealised *kampung* culture. In *Si Doel* serials, the presentation of Bang Miun (as *abang kredit*) is seen by the viewers like *bu* Lina, *bu* Askumayah, and *bu* Titin as representing the culture of *kampung* people. In *Si Doel,* Mak Nyak is shown paying *Bang* Miun for the textile that she bought a couple of months ago. *Mas* Karyo, a Javanese male character who rents a room next to Doel's house, needed cash and asked *Bang* Miun for credit. *Bu* Titin and *bu* Askumayah said while laughing, "That credit person is like in our *kampung*. Credit has become habitual for *kampung* people." These women then held a discussion about the implications of 'credit' in their own lives. The topic of conversation of these women was about *pak* Dhari, their neighbour, who sells goods and offers loans and goods on credit. They compared the interest rate and the prices of the goods sold by *pak* Dhari and the goods sold in the market shops and in the cooperative kiosk like in *bu* Titin's husband's office. These three women admitted that they have never actually taken a credit from *pak* Dhari; the information the exchanged was mainly based on the stories circulated in the *kampung* neighbourhood.

Figure 7.5: '*Abang Kredit*' and the *warung* in *Si Doel* (source: Karno, 2003) and Mami's *warung* in *kampung* Gubeng (source: my own documentation)

Pak Dhari is different from the '*abang kredit*' *Bang* Miun in the *Si Doel* series. *Pak* Dhari in *kampung* Gubeng is one of the relatively rich persons in the *kampung*. For those *kampung* women, *pak* Dhari is rich because he has made money from the interest paid by his customers. However, in the context of *Si Doel*, *Bang* Miun is depicted as a petty trader, who sells his goods walking around the *kampung*. *Pak* Dhari never walks around the *kampung* to promote his goods or to collect payment from his customers. He displays his trading items and stays at home waiting for people to come to his place and pay their instalments.

The urban *kampung* Gubeng viewers are not only fascinated with the story of *Si Doel*, but also with the details of particular features of habitual life and "culture" of the *kampung* presented. Lull (1991) in his study of television in China, describes the practice of Chinese television viewers as "selectively attentive viewing," that is driven by an intense curiosity about the "similarities and dissimilarities between …their country and the rest of the world" (Lull, 1991, p. 174). The experience of viewing *Si Doel* by *kampung* women viewers allows them to assess the similarities and dissimilarities between that urban Betawi *kampung* and their own *kampung*. The food & groceries stall, for instance, is seen by the *kampung* viewers as similar to their own setting in the sense that the stall is used for neighbourhood chat and a source of *kampung* gossip.

When Atun (Doel's sister) and Munaroh (a neighbour) sat on the wooden bench outside Mak Nyak's stall talking, *bu* Mimin and *bu* Askumayah, other fans of *Si Doel*, talked about the special position of one particular stall i.e. Mami's stall, in the

life of her *kampung*. I heard form several women in that *kampung* that Mami's stall is a common place for gossip, so for some *kampung* Gubeng women, the stall is called gossip hub (*sarang gosip*). *Bu* Mimin and *bu* Askumayah mentioned the names of several *kampung* women who quite often hang around and chat in that stall. According to them, those women mostly talked about other people or their neighbours. *Bu* Mimin declared that she was reluctant to buy something in that stall, as she does not like to join them. *Bu* Mimin explained that she is already an older woman, so she was unwilling to join with those mainly young mothers, though she asserted that sometimes she also likes to gather with them. When *bu* Mimin needs to buy something in that stall, she goes when the stall is empty. She said that she did not like to be involved in such community gossip, even though she likes to hear the gossip eventually. Conversely, *bu* Mayah said that she often comes and joins several women sitting around at Mami's stall. She told me that the women gathered in that stall do not always gossip about others, they usually talk about their own family or their children.

Mami's stall, which sells items such as icy poles, fresh juices, fried bananas and cassava, crackers and other cooked meals, is more often visited than other stalls (known locally as *warung kelontong* or a stall that mainly sells household groceries such as detergent, bath soaps, tooth paste, and so forth) in *kampung* Gubeng. In Mami's stall, the *kampung* gossip and "*kampung* politics" are talked about and circulated, particularly at about 11am when some mothers have finished with cooking, or between 3 and 4 pm after they have a rest or nap. The existence of a stall in the *kampung*, thus, is congruent with the idea of the communal space of economic and information exchange.

The *kampung* subjects and milieu articulated in the television series has stimulated the *kampung* people to both associate and dissociate their experiences and everyday practices. Sometimes the viewers thought that the values portrayed, particularly in *Si Doel*, are similar to theirs, but at another level, the viewers acknowledge that they are very different from the *kampung* people portrayed. One particular difference that the *kampung* women viewers note about the people in *Si Doel*'s *kampung* compared to the *kampung* Gubeng residents is in the representation of Doel and Zaenab themselves. In the series, Doel is depicted as a university student, whereas in

kampung Gubeng, the males are mainly senior high school educated only. Similarly, Zaenab is represented as studying French at a language college. For *kampung* Gubeng viewers, these portrayals are obvious idealisation and are different from the reality in their *kampung*. Even less educated than the males, many young *kampung* women finish their schooling either at primary or junior high school level and are married by the time they are 20 or 21 years old. Thus, the viewers do not see the communality and religiosity of *Si Doel*'s *kampung* as equally 'idealised' as their *kampung* socio-cultural circumstances.

The viewers have used particular scenes from *Si Doel* episodes to talk about one or more aspects of their life and the community life in the *kampung*. Sometimes they compare one aspect of their community to the community portrayed in the series, and an evaluation that is made possible by that televised drama. *Si Doel* provides *sinetron* viewers in Indonesia a picture of one urban *kampung* alley and everyday life of its inhabitants.

The Urban-Haves and the *Kampung* Rich

This part discusses how urban *kampung* women viewers give meaning to the wealthy urban characters in the melodramatic *Tersanjung* serials and the characters of the *kampung* rich in *Si Doel*. In *Tersanjung*, all families are presented as the metropolitan rich. The portrayals of urban rich in *Tersanjung*, who are claimed by the *sinetron* makers to constitute "a group that has plenty of problems and social conflicts" (Imran, 2001), are modelled on the jet-setting families in Hollywood soaps with their stereotypical intrigues and manoeuvres. In *Si Doel*, the urban rich are mainly represented by Sarah's (Doel's girlfriend) family, Ahong, a Chinese who owns a major share in a local brick factory, and Zaenab's parents, who hold a share in Ahong's brick factory.

In contrast to the representations of those rich people in the melodramatic *Tersanjung* serials who look glamorous and glossy, the *kampung* rich in *Si Doel* are depicted merely through their ownership of a good car and their values regarding their position in a community. Ahong the Chinese and Zaenab's family are marked as the rich from their ownership of a brand new *Toyota* van and the wearing of expensive clothing. However, Zainab's mother is still seen as wearing *kebaya*,

sarong, and the loose headscarf (*kerudung*) like the typical middle-aged Betawi *kampung* women. Only Sarah can be described as glamorous, but with a big heart.

Bu Mamik, *bu* Mimin, and *bu* Pri were among *kampung* women viewers who liked to watch *Tersanjung*. When I interviewed them, it appeared that these women had similar responses to the representations of the urban rich in the *sinetron*. For these women, the presentations of the metropolitan rich in *Tersanjung* were considered imaginary (*khayal*, which can mean an imagination, fantasy or dream) and sometimes exaggerated. Moreover, the characters of the Jakarta rich, according to them, are always represented as bad mannered, glamorous and flamboyant. "Rich people only get drunk, go shopping, change partners and like to hurt [others]," said *bu* Mamik. For the *kampung* viewers, the portrayals of the metropolitan rich are always unpleasant; they are represented as wicked (*jahat*), stingy (*pelit*), vengeful (*pendendam*), and greedy (*rakus*).

Quite the opposite, the have-nots are always represented as good-hearted (*baik hati*), ordinary (*biasa-biasa*), suffering (*sengsara*), and submissive (*pasrah*). According to these viewers, unlike 'big people' who seem always happy, the 'little people's' lives are always presented in tears. The women commented that real haves are not always as bad as the representations and the have-nots also not always suffering or good-hearted. These portrayals of the haves or big people and the have-nots or little people in Indonesian *sinetron* replicate the characteristics of Indonesian films during the New Order. In her study on Indonesian film texts, Krishna Sen (1994) analyses that mansion people (*orang gedongan*) or the wealthy were introduced in the personalised space, behind the closed doors of a large mansion, leading a distinct lifestyle, and as would-be villains. The poor or the *kampung* people or the villagers were always associated with the communal space, open houses, and as the "victims" of both the government and the wealthy. "In terms of the formal representation within film texts the middle class remains firmly entrenched within a dominant, and is defined precisely by its social and textual opposition to the 'little people'" (Sen, 1994, p. 130).

While watching *Tersanjung* one Friday night, *bu* Mamik expressed her curiosity toward the construction of the rich, "Are there any people who are very rich like that? But all Raam Punjabi's *sinetron* look like that… the rich look so glaring, so

rich…[they are] bosses, all their fathers are bosses, the story is just about [the life of] the bosses." Like *bu* Mamik, *bu* Titin, who rarely watched *Tersanjung*, responded that many Indonesian *sinetron* sell lavishness. She declared, "I'm bored watching luxury; I watch *sinetron* only to follow the story and the stars." Viewers realise that the fictional creations of the *sinetron* producers, which tend to present luxury in order to attract viewers, do not necessarily represent reality – at the very least they question whether such pictures of very rich people can reflect reality. Watching televised melodrama, with their extravagant feelings and incidents at the expense of characterisation, does not build the viewers' affiliation with the *sinetron* constructs and portrayals; rather, the *sinetron* is watched by those *kampung* viewers merely as a form of routine television consumption.

The *kampung* viewers also noticed the invisibility of a television set in the *sinetron* homes of the rich. In different ways, Awok and *bu* Lina who live in the same house commented that in the houses of the rich they never see a television set, or the family members watching television. They see refrigerators placed in a modern kitchen, luxurious sofas and leather lounges in the living room, but the television set is not there. "The rich people might never watch TV like us, because [they] are rarely at home…[they] maybe like to go *shopping*" said Awok.

When they saw Indah (one of the principal female characters in *Tersanjung*) visit her friend where she was served with a cold red syrup in a wine glass, and she drank a bit then went out, these two women viewers suddenly commented, "the rich are not thirsty, they drink only a bit." Awok continued to comment on the cultural behaviour of the rich toward food as shown in the serial. According to Awok, the rich people only eat very little as seen from the *sinetron* scenes when they have family feasts. Even at breakfast, the rich people only consume toast and a cup of tea. For Awok, the rich people do not seem hungry and waste their food. She saw in the drama that the food served is a lot, but the amount consumed by the rich people looks very small. This is completely different to ordinary people like her and the people in her surroundings. As a *kampung* resident, Awok never serves a drink in a wine glass to her guests. She also reckons that common people eat rice not toast. From all those scenes, Awok then concludes that the existence of the rich is only fictional. In this sense, the individual and community experiences seem to operate as a significant

factor in assessing the realness of human actions on television. If the experiences are different, the dissociative feeling to the televised portrayals is even greater.

Although the constructions of the rich people, particularly their personalities and behaviours are considered fictional for the viewers, the physical settings of the rich such as the mansions, sparkling plates, wine glasses, and the lounges, fascinate the *kampung* women viewers. Steel fences have been built in front of several *kampung* houses in Gubeng, and the ceramic tiles in the houses, to a certain extent, are adopted from the physical settings of the urban-themed *sinetron* shows. The two storey house, the stairs in the house, the mosaic window glass, and the Mediterranean colours such as light brown, orange, dark pink, or red-brown, are displayed in some *kampung* Gubeng houses as precise quotes from the *sinetron* houses.

For the viewers the stereotypical characteristics of the rich in *sinetron* are described as selfish, individualistic, and always criticising the poor. *Bu* Mamik and *bu* Mimin explained that the individualism of the rich in the *sinetron* is similar to that of several *kampung* rich neighbours. In *kampung* Gubeng, there are four households that are considered "rich" by the *kampung* people. These are *ibu* Ami, whose house is located at the *kampung's* main entrance, *mbah* Harjo, whose daughter is married as the third wife of a reputable restaurant owner in Surabaya, *bu* Arik whose husband is a policeman, and *pak* Dhari who offers household goods and money on credit. Each of these *kampung* rich people has a maid, owns a small wagon-style car, has a raised-steel gate, and has built a narrow garage for their car. According to *bu* Mimin and *bu* Mamik, these *kampung* rich people never join or *cangkruk* (gather) that is, sit around, with neighbours in the *kampung* lane. They rarely go outside and participate in communal talk.

Studies from Sullivan (1992) and Guinness (1986) indicate, "the *kampung* is not a community of equals" (Sullivan, p. 72). In other words, there is class distinction within the *kampung* community. While most *kampung* people are lower class and most of them are engaged in low-status work, the communities variously also consist of middle-class figures, white-collar workers, wealthier traders, and professionals. "In the *kampung* milieu as elsewhere in Java, a long, closely-calibrated scale of status differentials is built up around a maze of variables, including age, gender, marital status, occupation, education, income, and property holdings" (Sullivan,

1992, p. 72). Mahasin (1992) also maintains that class communities who live in the *kampung* actually consist of two different socio-economic levels. There is not only the lower fraction living in the *kampung*, but the middle fraction also lives in good houses of the *kampung*. However, Mahasin states that those middle-class people who live in the *kampung* are perceived by the *kampung* people as the *gedongan*.

Conclusion

Although the physical life and culture of the urban Betawi *kampung* shown in *sinetron* appears to be different from the actual space of *kampung* Gubeng people in Surabaya, the rhythm of life and the social relations with neighbours, to a certain extent, have connected viewers to their mental imagery about *kampung* communality and community. The communal-subject's knowledge takes the fictional forms of the television images and figures to be linked not to their individual position (as a singular subject), but as related to their community shared experiences about the neighbours, the cultures, and their own *kampung* cultural geography. The idealisation of a particular figure(s)/character(s) in the *sinetron* narratives tends to be related to the socio-cultural context and everyday life of the neighbourhood where the viewers live.

Those viewers desire to watch the filmic imagination about the world and the people outside of their domestic/local living, but which are close to their realm, and their senses and feelings. However, their pleasure in seeing these kinds of fictional character(s) and realms is not necessarily a compensation for or escape from the reality of daily life; rather the kinds of fictional images and the narrative are utilised as a source to asses the similarities and dissimilarities between their *kampung* and the fictional realm created in the series. 'What is going on' in the narrative of the series, therefore, is not important compared to 'what is going on' in the narrative of neighbourhood life in the viewers community context. In the next chapter I look at precisely how "what is going on" in the neighbourhood inflects the women's responses to the series/serials they watch.

Chapter Eight

Consuming City Girls and the Female Bodies

> *Thus film is like the mirror. But it differs from the primordial mirror in one essential point: although, as in the latter, everything may come to be projected, there is one thing, and one thing only that is never reflected in it: the spectator's own body* (Christian Metz, 1982, p. 45).

> *Theories of female spectatorship are thus rare, and when they are produced seen inevitably to confront certain blockages in conceptualization* (Mary Ann Doane, 2000, p.495).

This chapter discusses the dominant themes that emerge when *kampung* women viewers, situated within their own identities (see *Chapters Five* and *Six*), talk about the portrayals of contemporary urban Indonesian female identities in the popular *sinetron* texts that they watch. I attempt to draw a picture of how the television-watching experiences of the urban *kampung* class viewers might be distinctive and embedded in their particular *kampung* cultural circumstances. In this chapter, I continue to use the *kampung* women's own words in order to communicate the flavour of their talks.

In the following discussion, I focus on illustrating the form of *kampung* women's involvement with the television characters, particularly female characters. The question here is how urban *kampung* women viewers link the characters seen in the *sinetron* to their own identities, and how the effects of class, gender, and religion operate when these women spectators react to the (female) subject's characteristics that are represented in the *sinetron*. In the first part of the chapter, I present several viewers' comments and criticisms of characters in popular melodramas such as *Tersanjung* (Flattered series 6), *Kehormatan* (Honour series 2), and *Si Doel Anak Sekolahan* (Doel, a Student series 6). I discuss the way women comment, judge, and show opposition and/or affirmation toward the representations. I then look at the construction of 'ideal women' that is presented by the *sinetron* to viewers and examine how *kampung* women read and relate the various contradictory ideals that

coexist in the Indonesian *sinetron*, particularly in these three *sinetron*. I then interrogate how the urban middle to lower class audiences assesses the televisual reality as a 'real' representation of women and sexuality in contemporary Indonesia.

Advancing the experience of watching television and extending the cultural significance of visual pleasure and women spectatorship in the 21st quotidian life of the urban *kampung* communities in Indonesia, in the last two parts of this chapter, I investigate how the notion of 'privatised-communal pleasure' (that is simultaneously private and communal) takes place in the way *kampung* women use the pornographic video compact disc (henceforth VCD. The focus of the last two parts is on the engagement of the *kampung* housewives with the television set and presents a distinct picture of the practice of communal *kampung* women watching (pornographic) VCD that reproduce a local cultural form of female visual pleasure in the context of Indonesia. This practice, to my knowledge, has never been the focus of any research in Indonesian feminist and cultural studies.

Visual Pleasure and Female Spectatorship

In any classic feminist studies of filmic pleasure and women's imagination and the subject formation, the audience/spectator is almost always conceptualised crucial to the reading of popular culture texts. The key feminist inquiry into the nature of spectator in film criticism is Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* published in *Screen* journal in 1975. Mulvey argues that the film spectator, involved with the psychoanalytical concepts of voyeurism, scopophilia and fetishism, is constructed as masculine (Mulvey, 1989). Mulvey's insight offers an understanding of the dominant cultural opposition between female and male spectators in the process of looking. In mainstream films narratives, the female figure was the object of an erotic patriarchal gaze, where the female is passive and becomes the object of the gaze, while the male is active, powerful, and the subject of the gaze. Thus, the female is the object of male desire centred within the male character in the film and the male spectator in the audience, thus placing women in a trivial position and the patriarchal heterosexual object of desire (Mulvey, 1989). The spectator is, in Mulvey, a voyeur upon the action within the film. What I am trying to do in this chapter is to reformulate notions of female spectatorship in terms of women television audiences consuming the female characters created in the local television melodramas and

constructing their own positions. The focus of this study is on interrogation of the audience rather than on the television text.

The feminist film and television critics started to use the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan to analyse the patriarchal cultural and psychoanalytical consequences of cinema (Hollywood) narrative ideology. They discuss the cultural position of women as an entity of absence from, or marginalisation to, dominant cultural forms produced in cinematic textual discourses. Many from the studies suggested that women are not the subjects in their own right; rather, they are the objects of the patriarchal domination. " Filmic gaze, in terms of both gender representation and gender address, also 'belongs' to the male, leaving the female audience to identify with either the male-as-subject or the female-as-object" (Pribram, 1988, p.1).

Pribram noted that psychoanalytic-semiotic theoretical work, which links the production of popular cultural texts to the formation of subject-identity of the spectator has emphasised that a cultural text functions to position the audience to receive "certain favoured – and restricted – meanings" of the cultural texts in her/his viewing experience within the dominant values and interests. The audience, thus, is on the passive side, and not an active part of the production of textual meaning (Pirbram, 1988, p. 4). In this regard, the psychoanalytic-semiotic studies do not set apart "the subject formulated by the text" from "the spectator-subject viewing text." So, the relationship between "the intention of the text" and the response of meaning of the audience is parallel or defined as one and the same. "There is no possibility of a mutually informing relationship between spectator and text, and therefore no accumulative building of textual meaning" (Pribram, p. 4). In fact, the viewing process includes the active participation of spectators, since psychoanalysis emphasises that a text is theorised as being more or less powerful, in which particular spectator-subjects positions are constructed through their acknowledgement of a place generated for them by the cultural text. My present study is, therefore, an attempt to react against this strong textual approach, and argue in favour of a cultural "polysemic" (Fiske, 1987) reading of television (*sinetron*) audiences in the Indonesian context.

In contrast to feminist psychoanalytic studies of textual productions and cinema spectatorships, in the cultural studies tradition, the strength of studies of women television audiences and romance readers lies in their capacities to account for the resemblances and correspondences between a certain narrative genre and the cultural competences of a particular group of audiences or readers. Moreover, studies on television melodrama and soap opera audience, in particular, are mostly indebted to the contemporary works of the reading of the romance genre of women readers from Janice Radway (1984) and Ien Ang (1985). Radway's insight, after extensive ethnographic work among forty-two American readers, incorporates elements of cultural text, institutional forces, and readership (reader-response) context, and offers an alternative understanding that women, as readers of romance, use the act of reading to create their own space in the confining routines of their everyday lives as wives and mothers. In a different approach, Ang's study of melodrama audience evokes what Raymond Williams has called a "structure of feeling" (Ang 1985, p. 45). Ang's work also offers insight into notions of how melodrama resists evaluative conceptions of realism. She points out that the construction of a particular female character (as a "melodramatic heroine") in the drama has particular significance for the audiences, which is also related to a form of realism in the process of melodramatic imaginations and identifications (Ang, 1990, p. 77).

> The position from which Sue Ellen fans seem to give meaning to, and derive pleasure from, their favourite *Dallas* character seems to be a rather melancholic and sentimental structure of feeling which stresses the down-side of life rather than its happy highlights; frustration, desperation and anger rather than euphoria and cheerfulness (Ang, 1990, p. 77).

Ang (1990) maintains that indeed the fictional characters in melodramatic soap opera could be polysemic in the sense that they can be read in different ways and with a plurality of meanings depending on the diversity of viewers who watch them. Some audiences liked and empathised with the fictional characters, but the others took a stance against them.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that the mainstream classical work on melodrama soap opera audiences have tended to position the audience from his/her individual perspective, separate from the community or other members of the social group of

which the audience is a part. Moreover, the concept of all melodrama that "personal life is the core problematic of the narrative" (Ang, 1990, p. 79) has not been constituted as part of the everyday realisation of the audience.

I argue that the fictional characters and their personal life cannot be fully understood in relation to the purely personal (audience) experiences and frame of reference about everyday realism, the audience personal identifications, and the values system of the community or social group within which the audience lives. In this regard, my purpose in this chapter is also to explore the way the *kampung* women audiences look at the fictional characters by positioning them within their communal (neighbourhood) viewing practice and the *kampung* cultural circumstance.

Personality and Morality

It was 8 pm Friday night when *bu* Mamik, who had been gathered with her neighbours for an hour, suddenly realised that it was time for her favourite *sinetron* titled *Tersanjung* broadcast on *Indosiar* channel. She lifted her small son then rushed to her home just at the back of the main *kampung* lane where the *kampung* Gubeng women had been sitting around on the cement bench. When she arrived home, her three daughters were in front of the TV watching another show. When still about ten steps from her front door, *bu* Mamik shouted to her daughters to move away from the TV. "Hooey…*Tersanjung*…*Tersanjung*…get out!…get out!," then the three primary school girls stood up and went to the bedroom. Two of *bu* Mamik's girls then went outside. "This is the episode when Indah meets Dandy," *bu* Mamik said as she started to watch the continuing episode of *Tersanjung*. While she was watching the show, the TV set turned off automatically. She then explained that something is wrong with her TV, every ten minutes the set turns off. So, *bu* Mamik had to repeatedly get up and turn it on again. "I have been watching *Tersanjung* since my TV was previously broken. This [TV] has been fixed up and it is about to stop working again; the *sinetron*, however, has not finished yet."

Ibu Mamik is one of the loyal viewers of the TV melodrama *Tersanjung*. She knows well the history, the family trees of the characters in the show, the connections, and the individual characters. She explained,

I have been watching *Tersanjung* since the first actress who played in this show was Lulu Tobing, who was then replaced by Jihan Fahira, and [the male protagonist] Ariwibowo, who was then replaced by Reynold Surbakti…Now [in *Tersanjung 6*] they have been replaced with young actresses and actors, except Adam Jordan [who continues to play in the show since the first episode].

Although *bu* Mamik is a fan of *Tersanjung*, she does not bother too much if she misses an episode while she is busy or away. She likes to watch the serial for the story line and the celebrities in the show. She said that her curiosity about the ending, particularly the fate of Indah's mother-in-law, Yona the antagonist character, makes her stay loyal to the drama.

Bu Mamik appears to recall the television drama characters who are particularly compelling for her. She is interested in the Indah and Dandy characters as, for her these people continue to live a sorrowful life. She also likes to see Bobby, who never gives up the search for his true love, Indah[1], and his daughter, Indah[2]. During the show that we watched together, *bu* Mamik explained the story of particular characters that she is interested in, and commented unfavourably on a particular antagonist male character.

This is Indah(3), she is very beautiful, isn't she. Indah(3) is a daughter of Bobby who had a relationship with Indah(1) when they were young. Bobby is a son of a rich family and his relationship with Indah(1) was rejected by his father because Indah was a poor girl. But Bobby and Indah(1) had [sexual] relations before Bobby's father arranged for Bobby to marry another rich girl, Mia, and Indah(1) became pregnant …It has become common in recent times that young women get pregnant without marrying (*hamil diluar nikah*) Indah(1) did not tell Bobby of her pregnancy, since his rich parents were about to arrange his marriage with Mia, a daughter of another rich family.

After delivering her baby boy, Dandy, Indah(1) ran away and met Rama, a protagonist widower who later married Indah(1). Later, Indah(3) has grown up and was raped by Aryo, the male rascal (*pemuda brandalan*) …Certainly Aryo is a scoundrel (*bajingan*, a Javanese term). He is a rapist (*pemerkosa*) and now he has an affair with another woman (*wedokan*, a Javanese term). Aryo is Putri's father. Putri married Dandy, who is a son of bu Indah, but Putri and Dandy do not know that their parents still have a connection [...] Indeed the story is complicated (*mbulet/ruwet,* a Javanese term), but it is interesting.

Bu Mamik's description of the male antagonist, Aryo, resonates her strong dislike of the character. She uses strong unfavourable phrases such as 'male rascal' (*pemuda brandalan*), 'scoundrel' (*bajingan*), 'affair with woman' (*wedokan*), and 'rapist' (*pemerkosa*) to express her empathy to the female protagonist character, i.e. Indah, who is the target of Aryo's misdeeds. In contrast, her impression of Yona, a female antagonist character in *Tersanjung*, tends to be emotional. When she watched the Yona character slander her own daughter-in-law, who is from a rich family, *bu* Mamik looked furiously angry. In Surabayan Javanese, she growls, "Yoohhh…how come she is so wicked? …This lady is so rude!! Slap her then!!" When the scene showed Yona choking her daughter-in-law, *bu* Mamik yelled, "Rub her mouth with chilli!!" She then watched the episode closely and continued to comment when Yona's daughter-in-law slapped and expelled her, "you have had it!!"

Although Mamik is sickened by the portrayal of the female antagonist character, she questions why the mother-in-law character in many Indonesian *sinetron* that she has watched is so often portrayed as wicked, evil, and rude. She comments, "Mother-in-law [is depicted] too excessive in slandering daughter-in-law. Indeed her wickedness is uncommon." Similar to this criticism, other *kampung* women viewers such as *bu* Suryani, *bu* Titin, *bu* Mimin, and *bu* Lina also criticised the depiction of the female antagonist characters in Indonesian melodramas. *Bu* Suryani says that as a mother she does not have the heart to mistreat her children. "Is there any [woman] who poisons [someone else], kills…[who even] has the heart to poison her own daughter or her husband…does not make sense, [if] there is a person like that." Parallel to this view, *bu* Mimin and *bu* Titin also contend that even though a mother might not like her daughter-in-law, but as a mother, a woman does not have the heart to hurt or harm her. "Even though, sometimes a daughter-in-law does not respect or honour her parent-in-law, a mother's nature won't be that wicked, especially choking, killing her children. I won't mistreat [my daughter-in-law]," said *bu* Mimin, who does not have any daughter-in-law yet!

These *kampung* women viewers realise that the immoral conduct of women depicted in the melodramatic *sinetron* is not real. They believe that women's nature and behaviour does not reflect what has been portrayed in the drama. Although to some extent there has been an affective relationship to the television characters,

particularly to the pious women, viewers do not focus on the identification-relation between themselves and the television characters, specifically on the female protagonist characters. Viewers appear to either like or dislike particular characters, and realise the 'unrealistic' nature of characters created in the show. Press (1991, p. 61) says, "In many cases, middle class viewers, like middle-class readers, identify with, strongly like or dislike specific television characters, and discuss these characters in detail, even characters who they may consider to be unrealistic or who they view in the context of a show they find to be realistic." The cultural reading of the contemporary urban *kampung* class women, in contrast, embodies alternative thoughts of self-dissociation with the images constructed within the melodrama's pleasures.

Image 8.1: The evil woman and two Indah characters, the victims in *Tersanjung 6* (source: Punjabi & Armand, 2003)

Negotiating Women's Idealisation: A Class-Specific Appeal?

As I discussed in Chapter 7, when talking about the character of pious women in the *sinetron* texts, viewers like *bu* Lina, *bu* Mimin, and *bu* Titin still prefer to rely on the figure of a *kampung* woman like Mak Nyak, Doel's mother in *Si Doel* series. Mak Nyak is seen by these *kampung* women as a typical Indonesian *kampung* (traditional) mother, who maintains tradition not only in how she performs as a mother, but also in her attitudes and behaviour towards her family. Although those *kampung* females consider that Mak Nyak is sometimes traditional, her figure is considered ideal as a mother (*ibu*). "I like Mak Nyak, she is an ideal mother. [She] is never angry, she's patient (*sabar*), and generous (*baik*). I couldn't be like her. I couldn't be as patient as her," bu Min said. She added that sometimes women characters represented in the *sinetron* are not realistic. The evil women are depicted so wicked, whereas the pious

women are portrayed like angels (*malaikat*). She says, "While I'm not a strong Muslim, there is no Islamic woman who is very good in this world. Sometimes people cannot be so patient for so long; patience is limited."

Image 8.2: Two different figures, Mak Nyak, a traditional Betawi *kampung* woman in *Si Doel* series (source: Karno, 2003), and Krishna's mother a typical elite class woman in melodrama *Kehormatan* (source: Punjabi & Yusuf, 2003)

Bu Titin and *bu* Lina appeared to concur with this view. *Bu* Lina, for instance, expects to see a combination of an ideal woman's character between Mak Nyak and Krishna's mother (in another melodrama titled *Kehormatan*). For *bu* Lina, Mak Nyak is the figure of an ideal *kampung* woman who is caring for children, patient, and calm, but she remains traditional, while Krishna's mother is seen by *bu* Lina as an urban elite class woman, who can be persistent and determined within the familial conflicts. However, she asserts that she does not want to become like one or the other. According to *bu* Lina, she is different from them. She is, indeed, a *kampung* woman, but she claims that she does not look or act like Mak Nyak, because she does not wear a sarong and *kebaya* and does not hold conservative attitudes like Mak Nyak. *Bu* Lina also recognises that she could not be like Krishna's mother, as *bu* Lina is not rich and not in the same situation as Krishna's mother. She continues:

> Krishna's mother is wise and determined. She is supportive of her children, even of Krishna, who is her adopted son. She continued to support Krishna when he was trapped by Ninis (a female villain). Krishna's mother is still patient even when Bude (her sister-in-law) abuses her. But I think a woman like this does not exist. There are no rich women who are that good. […] Mak Nyak is a traditional woman, simple, [and] strongly religious and patient. Mak Nyak attends to and always grants her children's requests, but Mak Nyak is a Betawi woman, different from *kampung* women here.

When talking about this issue, *bu* Lina was suggesting that the depiction of Krishna's mother is imaginary. *Bu* Titin, who sat down beside *bu* Lina, promptly interrupted, "all films are fantasy!" *Bu* Titin then continued that Indonesian *sinetron* are not realistic, only presenting rich families and glamour. The stories are also typically circular. *Bu* Lina concurred with *bu* Titin's opinion and said that is why she does not believe any rich woman is likely to be very generous as Krishna's mother. "Yeah…Indonesian films are like that," stated *bu* Lina.

Bu Titin added that the ideal portrayal of women for her is like the Tiara character in *Kehormatan*. According to *bu* Titin, Tiara is a figure of the ideal, young, contemporary (urban) woman, who accepts all treatment by her husband, Jacky, and her mother-in-law. She states,

> Since Tiara lives with her parents-in-law, she has been victimised. She agrees to give her husband a divorce, when she is threatened by her mother-in-law and evicted from her parents-in-law's house. She even gives in when her husband, Jacky, asks to marry another woman chosen by his mother. She is a good-hearted woman; that is the ideal woman.

However, *bu* Titin thought that it is not easy to become the kind of good woman shown on television. When I asked *bu* Titin and her neighbours *bu* Lina, *bu* Suryani, and *bu* Mimin whether they want to be like Mak Nyak or *Ibu* Indah or Tiara, these women laughed and together said they could not be. *Bu* Titin then revealed,

> We (she meant for herself and her *kampung* friends) are not perfect yet…not like that. There is no woman in our *kampung* as perfect as that…we still feel annoyed with people, acting patient is difficult. We do not dare to admit when we are wrong; we still cannot be honest to ourselves.

Bu Titin's narratives above suggest that the *sinetron* viewers realise that they are watching fantasy, and that is why even though the televised images are extreme, they do not seriously concern or worry the viewers.

Image 8.3: The two urban ideals: Indah (1) in *Tersanjung* serials (source: image of *Tersanjung* (Multivision Plus, n.d.) and Tiara, who is mistreated by her mother-in-law in *Kehormatan* (source: Punjabi & Yusuf, 2003)

Similarly, *bu* Mamik's favourable impression of the character Indah in *Tersanjung*, whom she considers a sort of 'ideal' contemporary urban middle-class woman, follows a resistive pattern. Mamik feels that Indah is a good-hearted woman (*baik hati*), submissive (*pasrah*), patient (*sabar*), and determined (*tabah*). However, these personal qualities are far beyond her own personality. She explains, "Ibu Indah is too much mistreated…[she] is slandered like this and that, I feel sorry to see her. Although she is mistreated, she remains silent. She is an ideal woman for me." Bu Mamik feels dissociation with Indah's figure. She said that she could not be so patient as Indah.

For a middle-aged woman like *bu* Mimin, the ideal figure of woman is referred to the ideal figure of mother. Ideal woman, for *bu* Mimin, is one who is loyal to the family, obedient to husband, not vengeful, and, most importantly, teaches her children good attitudes and sets them the right examples. However, once again, as a viewer, *bu* Mimin realised that the achievement of her ideal is impossible. "Ideal woman should be loyal to her family [and] be a good example. A woman who focuses on household. However, sometimes women are shown as too soft; it is impossible that a person is so patient," *bu* Mimin commented.

As Metz argues, "the spectator is absent from the screen" (Metz, 2000, p. 412). He maintains, "In this sense the screen is not a mirror. This time the perceived is entirely on the side of the object, and there is no longer any equivalent of the own image, of that unique mix of perceived and subject (of other and I) which was precisely the figure necessary to disengage the one from the other" (Metz, p. 412). In this regard,

the moment of spectatorship seems to be disentangled from the process of identification about the self. The characters in the televisual melodrama are there to be watched, and the spectators are there to watch. As such, those *kampung* women viewers realise that their basic differences such as social class status, age, and issues of family, constitute the differences between the idealised images represented on the screen and themselves as spectators with their own identities.

In other words, although the *kampung* women viewers like to watch their ideal figures, their admiration does not necessarily mean they want to be like these ideals. Those women viewers have realised that they are there to watch various characters and figures shown. As such, the viewers perceive the ideal images shown are too excessive; the images, thus, no longer have any equivalence or "closeness" to the viewers.

The attempt to reflect the female spectator's self-image to the image created in the show is double-sided: the *sinetron* offers a number of possible pleasures in looking at the image, power, and voice of the perfect and extraordinary women, but such image, power, and voice cannot be associated or taken as objects of identification or a mirror for those spectators' selves with their own diverse personalities and experiences. The ideal image is loved for its qualities, but it is questioned and criticised, so that it becomes dissociated from the spectators. Jacques Lacan (1977) has examined how the moment when a child recognises his/her own image in the mirror is crucial for the establishment of ego. Children's mirror phase occurs at a time when their physical ambitions exceed their motor capacity, with the result that their recognition of themselves is cheerful in that they imagine their mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than they experience in their own body.

In his study on the formation of ego of the film spectatorships, Metz (2000) argues against Lacan that indeed, film is like the mirror, but the identification (the formation of the ego) of the spectator is different from the "primordial mirror". The child not only perceives other pictures on the screen, but through the screen the child identifies with itself as an object. Metz maintains, "The child sees itself as an other and beside an other" (p. 410). The child sees other objects, other figures, but mostly, the child sees its own ego in this process, and this identification process is never projected onto the cinematic screen. Hence, the way the *kampung* women viewers react to the

representational images is somewhat oppositional to Lacan's position in that their (spectators) frame of experience "in their own body" has demonstrated that the ideal image is constructed and out of reach. The creation of the pious characters in the *sinetron* becomes merely a source of pleasure (in looking) and of imagination, but the recognition on the ideal image is perceived as outside and alienated.

Women's Pleasure and Sexuality

As has been illustrated above, women who live in the *kampung* community are likely to consider television *sinetron* as not realistic. Indeed, those women viewers desire and expect something from television (*sinetron*), but they do not try to confront the portrayals shown on television with realistic images when watching the shows. They would like to see more idealised figures in their community, but they have realised that such idealised figures cannot exist. This suggests that conscious decoding occurs whereby "the media can be consumed oppositionally or in a mediated sense and not only hegemonically" (Liebes & Katz, 1989, p. 204).

Some *kampung* women viewers acknowledge that women's sexuality and their misbehaviours are exposed frequently in melodramatic *sinetron*, like in *Tersanjung* and *Kehormatan*. The viewers appear to react against the portrayals of unpleasant, wicked, and appalling women in the *sinetron* shows. The *kampung* viewers believe that 'normal women' will not behave in sexually explicit ways as shown on television. *Bu* Mimin, as she feels already old, declares that she does not like to watch melodrama *sinetron*, especially ones like *Tersanjung*, as she perceives that the drama contains many, in her own terms, "improper scenes" and "badly brought up or ill-bred" women. She does not like it when the female characters in the drama are portrayed as drunk, as having sexual affairs, as bitchy, enticing males and as killers. Such misbehaviour in women, for *bu* Mimin, is not found in the *kampung*. *Bu* Mimin criticises,

> Many Indonesian *sinetron* show improper subjects …yeah like improper acts [she means sex scenes]. It is not good for children and young people who watch the show […] and women play a lot in such scenes. […] they (women in *sinetron*) seem to be not normal woman. We (she and her *kampung* community) never experience those kinds [of behaviour]…Yes, we have a woman like Mamik (she is a second wife) and other women in this *kampung* who become mistresses (*istri simpanan*) to males outside this place. But they

are not like the women [in *sinetron*]…well, except Mamik, who is a bit delinquent (*nakal*).

Bu Mimin also questions whether contemporary Indonesian women (*wanita Indonesia jaman kini*) are really like the portrayals shown in the melodrama *sinetron* such as *Tersanjung*. Again, the *kampung* women take the women's identities in the televisual scenes to reflect not their individual identities, but rather their communal existence. In other words, the judgement and assessment of *kampung* women viewers of particular representations shown in the *sinetron* are based on the communal experiences within the circumstances of their *kampung* neighbourhood.

The *kampung* viewers are drawn into admiring particular characters, but they are not persuaded to identify with those televised portrayals. The viewers feel dissociated from the components of television's individuals and the community created, as they believe their own characteristics are distinct from those portrayed. The *kampung* women also mainly see *sinetron*, as a 'filmic' medium, as unrealistic information about the "world outside". As *bu* Titin's remarks show:

> How come women are drunk? [Also] like to go out late at night. We *kampung* people never act [like that], [any such women and such behaviour] are never seen in this *kampung*, don't know if out there. […] How come women kill? How come women [dare to] slap their mother-in-law? That does not make sense compared to our everyday life.

Supporting *bu* Mimin's argument, *bu* Titin also wonders why women in *sinetron* are often portrayed as nasty women. According to her, women in *sinetron* are depicted as enjoying a nightlife and coming home late at night. In the *kampung* women's frame, as suggested by *bu* Titin, women rarely go out clubbing or to karaoke at night. Only 'bad women' (an euphemism for the prostitutes) do that. For *bu* Titin and *bu* Mimin, the so-called 'normal women' must be at home when night comes and not going outside without the company of a husband or her *mukhrim* (Islamic term for families or relatives that are not married or from the same bloodline). "They (the women in the *sinetron*) must have a husband, I reckon. How do they ask for his permission?" *bu* Titin wondered. For her, a married woman belongs to the husband, and so a woman requires her husband's permission to go outside the house, especially at night

time when women are supposed to be at home with husband and children. *Bu* Titin states, "There is no woman in this *kampung* going out for late nights…she can be slapped by her husband or even will be gossiped about by neighbours." From these illustrations, it can be seen that the *kampung* women viewers resist the women's representations, which tend to place women in 'improper acts', particularly those that contrast with the *kampung* style of life or with the stereotypical image of the Indonesian woman held by *kampung* females.

The views about 'what women are and are supposed to be' among the *kampung* women remains conservative. Although the *kampung* women like to see progressive women on television, their beliefs about the role and position of women in a domestic space remain stereotypical in that women should act and behave properly toward the males, particularly in sexual relationships. Some *kampung* women feel embarrassed when seeing a married woman display her sensuality to her husband, as is commonly shown in the *sinetron*. For them, no woman (in their frame of reference) would show her sensuality overtly in front of a male, including the husband. "It's embarrassing for a female to entice a male like that, wearing an open dress (meaning lingerie or short nightie) and looking sexy. If I were her, I would be ashamed," *bu* Mimin said. However, the other three women seem to hold different views to *bu* Mimin's. For instance, *bu* Titin said laughingly, "Actually, sometimes [we] want to [look sexy], but it is improper for a woman. Besides, [it will] embarrass the male, if we (women) seem to ask for it [sex]. But, surely, women want to."

As the ideological and cultural mainstay in Indonesia has put women in subordinate position to men, including in sexual relations, a female's initiative in sex is considered improper or uncommon. "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (Mulvey, 1989, p.19). That female displayed as sexual object, which signifies male desire, puts those *kampung* women in the vague position between desire (like to or want to) and rejection (embarrassed). They desire to see a female showing her sensuality and want to act as shown on screen, but continue to reject the woman's action in enticing the male or taking the initiative in sexual relations as their community cultures and values do not allow such action. Thus, the notion of ideal woman includes this option, in which ideal women are seen as acquiescent and passive in terms of sexual

relations, and that is what these *kampung* women take for granted as part of their identification.

The pleasure of looking and fascination – as mainly theorised in cinema studies—of the cinematic images is influenced by the circumstances, which makes looking itself and being looked at sources of pleasure. Here, the cultural values and norms pervasive in the community life have created a kind of vigilance, where pleasure of fascination has been consciously sealed and separated from the audiences. The audiences thus play on their voyeuristic fantasy, and at the same time produce a sense of separation, a sense of dissociation from the images manifested on the screen. Class culture, therefore, appears to make an extreme contrast between the worlds outside as shown on the screen and the circumstances within the audience's self and community surroundings.

The *sinetrons* have provided the productions of ego ideals for women through the creations of particular characters. In the collective viewing practice, the individual's ego seems to disappear when assessing televised image ideals; rather, the audience tends to use the collective identification to appraise those character identifications as they are constructed in the television texts.

In this regard, the determinant factor in the spectator-subject viewing includes the particularities of class cultural references and communal values orientation of the spectators toward particular gaze, attitudes, and behaviours. Pirbram (1988, p. 5) examines the involvement of three avenues in the study of female spectatorship: (1) the individual female spectator, shaped by the psychic and social processes of subject formation; (2) female spectators as historically and socially constituted groups; (3) female audiences, participants in film's (and television's) broad popular base. The fourth avenue presented here is, therefore, female audiences in communal-viewing using their own cultural references and community values system to react or respond in the spectator-subject formation and identification processes. My study of the *kampung* women's viewing practice, the comparison between their self-formation and the female identities constructed in the visual texts, suggests that the viewers and the fictional figures are coming from different worlds. The *kampung* female viewers, thus, actively chose not to identify with the *sinetron*'s imaginary subjects because such identifications were disenabling.

The gestures of these *kampung* women spectators are consistent when they watch the images of the female naked bodies. Extending out the viewing experience of the *kampung* women viewers toward the images of female bodies in a form of video compact disc, the following part deals with this issue. My intention to discuss this issue is mainly because watching VCD, in particular, pornographic materials, is inexorable practice in everyday life of the urban *kampung* complex. It is not my initiative to organise women in a specific place to watch a pornography videodisc; I happened to join several women of the *kampung* when they turned on the video to watch.

VCD in *Kampung*

I start this part first, by briefly illustrating the socio-cultural circumstances of the VCD use and the practice of consuming the videodisc in the *kampung* place and domestic space of the residents in relation to the women's engagements. One afternoon in the hot sweaty atmosphere of Surabaya, I stepped into a small *kampung* house near *kampung* Gubeng lane, which was running a VCD rental business. The owner, Mas Amin, uses his living room to display his VCD collection for rental on a plywood shelf attached to the wall. There is a TV set, a VCD player, and two medium speakers placed in the corner of the room. The collection consisted of about a hundred video CDs. When I asked him what kinds of video CDs are popularly rented from him, he said mainly *Campursari* (a mixture of pop and traditional Javanese music), or *dangdut* karaoke are popular among others. Kung Fu movies, Hollywood films, Indian films, and sports such as *Formula One* car races and soccer are also popular.

Pak Amin continued that adult (porn) films (*film orang dewasa*) are rarely rented, as he thought that people might be too shy to rent. These people, he claimed, tend to buy adult (porn) films rather than renting them. *Pak* Amin said that those who rent pornographic films from his place are usually middle aged males. They will ask the same question, "*Mas ada barang?*" (Bro, do you have an item?), or "*Mas ada 'full'?*" (Bro, do you have 'full'? 'Full' means hard core porn[1]), or if they ask for

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[1] The Indonesian police department popularly uses terms "Porno" and "Semi Porno" to categorize pornographic items. These terms are also used by the Indonesian press.

Western porno films, "*Mas ada Bule[2]*?"(Bro, do you have an albino?). Pornography video-cassettes or CDs in Indonesia are also known as '*film blue*'. However, people wanting to obtain such films now tend not to use the term 'blue film' as this term is too well-known, so they use other terms such as those mentioned above. As people are fearful, nervous, or embarrassed about buying or borrowing pornography, the deals must be disguised.

Pak Amin explained that he did not display pornography discs on his shelf, but he has a small collection, which he will show only if the borrower asks for them. Some male university students sometimes ask him about the controversial video CDs reported in the media. These video CDs contain pornographic recordings of university students or Indonesian models or "home video recordings" of sex acts, for instance, a video recording of two ITENAS (Institute of National Technology) students in Bandung, West Java, who participated in sexual activities. This recording is well known as *Itenas*. Other similar sex act home video recordings are available, such as *Bandung Lautan Asmara[3]* (Bandung Sea of Passion), *Sabun Mandi* (Bath Soap), *Pempek Palembang* (Palembang Fishcake) and *Unibraw* (Unibraw is the acronym for Brawijaya University in Malang, East Java). There is also a video CD that was popular during my fieldwork in 2003, titled *Kamar Mandi* (Bathroom), a recording obtained with hidden camera of models and celebrities inside the women's room in a reputable photo studio in Jakarta.

These kinds of amateur pornographic videos often tempt the *kampung* people to search out the material and watch it with friends or neighbours. Sharing and swapping VCD films around *kampung* Gubeng's neighbourhood are common. Sometimes they, especially the young males, rent the film and share the rental cost then watch it together at one person's place. This also occurs among the females, especially the housewives, who often have to stop their activities and surrender their place in front of the TV set to accommodate the males and children. These *kampung* women find that watching VCD together is an alternative. They usually get the discs either from their husband or their eldest son, or sometimes, one or two woman will

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[2] *Bule* is what many Indonesians call Westerners
[3] This is an oblique reference to '*Bandung Lautan Api*' (Bandung Sea of Fire), a national slogan labeling Bandung a revolutionary town in the Dutch colonial era and later the title of a nationalist film made in the 1970s (see Sen, 1994). The porn VCD title seems to denigrate the slogan to refer to the wide circulation of a kind of porn video in Bandung.

buy one in the market when they go shopping, though the discs that the women buy are mainly Indian films or Indonesian *sinetron* (VCD version).

Indeed, VCD now signifies the persistence of people's entertainment. The affordable price of the player, added to the flood of pirated disc recordings[4], have placed VCD as 'merry-cheap entertainment', especially for the *kampung* social groups. In *kampung* Gubeng, people mainly watch VCD films, sports, or local/traditional performances such as *Campursari*.

Communal Consumption of the Female's Bodies

One afternoon at 2 pm, *bu* Mamik told her neighbourhood friends *bu* Askumayah and *bu* Titin that her husband had bought the controversial VCD[5] of the hidden camera recording of several Indonesian celebrities changing clothes in the women's room, which they call VCD *Femy* (Femy is the name of one of the celebrities recorded). They then decided to watch the videodisc in *bu* Askumayah's home, where these three women gathered at that time. Before they watched the video, *bu* Mamik took the initiative to invite several other women, who are usually members of their web. This invitation was agreed to by *bu* Titin and *bu* Askumayah; later *bu* Mamik called *bu* Lina and *bu* Umi. *Bu* Askumayah's place is preferred, because it is considered the 'safest' place as there is no single male living in this house. *Bu* Askumayah's husband has married a second wife and spends more time at her house (known by the *kampung* people as '*mbok enom*' literally meaning 'younger wife'). He only comes sometimes for brief visits to *bu* Askumayah's house. So, these *kampung* housewives perceived *bu* Askumayah's house as the right place to watch a 'forbidden' VCD.

Before they turned on the VCD, *bu* Mamik looked outside and said, "Is there any man who can see us here?" (*gak ada laki-laki kan yang lihat kita disini?*) then she

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[4] It was reported that the distribution of pirate VCD copies in the market in 1999 was up to 40 million copies (*Kompas*, 9 August 1999). For instance, the data launched by the Indonesian Association of the Recording Industry (ASIRI) stated that the legal production of VCD karaoke in 1998 was 1.335.390 copies and this doubled to 2.615.460 copies in 1999. (*Kompas*, 16 August 1999) However, in the market, the number of pirated karaoke discs was greater than that. It was estimated that up to 20 million copies circulated.

[5] *Kompas* daily reported that the VCD sold a hundred discs per day in the street market of Harco Glodok, West Jakarta. Many VCD street vendors sold this item. It was also reported that the distribution of this VCD had reached neighbouring countries such as Malaysia and Singapore (*Kompas*, 15 April 2003).

shut the front door. The recording was of five popular female celebrities, three young *sinetron* actresses Femy Permatasari, Sarah Azhari, and Yosefanny Waas, one previous MTV-Indonesian presenter, Shanti, and a young film actress Rachel Maryam. The video contains recordings of these young women changing their clothes and underwear in the toilet of a photo studio (Budi Han's Studio) for a photoshoot for magazine publications. The recording was gained from a camera hidden in the toilet. It even shows these celebrities changing their panty liners and urinating.

After ten minutes watching the show, *bu* Mamik commented that she felt pity for the celebrities. She continued that she was disgusted with the way the celebrities' bodies were criminally captured by the camera. However, she also commented on the bodies themselves, saying that indeed their breasts are alluring and that is why males slobber. *Bu* Titin and *bu* Umi added that those female celebrities' bodies looked perfect. *Bu* Titin says, "Those actresses' bodies are good, so ideal, pale, and slim…fortunately, no man is watching here." Similar comments were uttered when these women watched the second porno video recording of *Sabun Mandi* (bath soap), which was bought by *bu* Titin. The video recordings show an adult male and a teenaged female having sex in a hotel in Surabaya. *Bu* Titin and *bu* Mamik once again admired the body of that teenager. Her breasts and her bottom are the main body parts that those women comment on. *Bu* Mamik responds, "Though she is still small, [her breasts] look plump and full and sexy. We (she means herself and friends there) lose out." These comments imply that the desire of these female audiences towards the female bodies shown in the video, I argue, has produced paradoxical feelings of the *kampung* women toward such porn images.

Women are torn between their desires for watching the images of the female body and feeling embarrassed by the visualisations. They are attracted by the body imagery shown; however, as those female bodies are a spectacle of the male gaze or objects of desire for the male spectator, the *kampung* women, at the same time, also worry about their own bodies, which they thought could not be compared to those 'ideal' or perfect bodies. In addition, the *kampung* female viewers appear to be worried by the representation of those female (celebrities) bodies, as this visual representation is perceived as luring the male spectator, particularly their spouses.

The choice to watch porn video at a certain time and place, I believe, is not only from the considerations of securing them from male interference, but is also concerned with the females' humiliation before the males when the females show their own bodies.

To the women watching such visualisation there seem to be two possibilities; firstly, they watch the material because they want to understand what pleases their men. Secondly, they desire to consume visualised naked bodies for their own autonomous homo-erotic pleasure. Hence, the *kampung* women choose to watch pornography in a gender-specific and secret circumstance not simply because they will be ashamed to be seen doing so by the local neighbours (as watching pornography is still culturally taboo and politically restricted), rather there are feelings of embarrassment at watching the female body presented for male spectacle. For these viewers, the visuals resonate to them as females, whilst at the same time embarrassing them for their own body images.

The situation seems to develop greater hostility among the women's feelings when the females watch the same visual recording together with males, as happened at *pak* RT's house. The next night the same VCD was swapped and played in *pak* RT's house. The next evening after several women watched the *VCD Femy* in *kampung* Gubeng, I heard from Uyung that *bu* RT borrowed the disc from *bu* Mamik and asked her to join watching it. This is an unusual group for watching television and other VCD shows. This group was established only for their curiosity to watch the controversial show. The viewers were *pak* RT (male about fifty), his wife (43 years), his daughters (Pipin was 22 years and Mega was 13 years), his son (Wiwit was 17 years) and *bu* Iing (36 years), who lives across from *pak* RT. Unlike the circumstance among the housewives, though the front door was also closed, the reason was that *pak* RT was anxious that the *kampung* people should not see his family watching pornography, as the video CD was played at 7.30 pm when the people were still buzzing around. As a typical male viewer, *pak* RT blamed those female celebrities for their ignorance and lack of caution.

Although the female viewers in that room did not confront his view, they looked shy and were less talkative when the video was on. *Pak* RT's oldest daughter, Pipin, only expressed pity for those celebrities, whilst *pak* RT's wife and *bu* Iing were only able

to agree with Pipin. Suddenly, when Wiwit, *pak* RT's son was laughing watching the show, *bu* Iing started feeling embarrassed. She said, "[It is] disgusting, the display (of body parts). I'm embarrassed being a woman." *bu* Iing continued and tried to explain that actually those celebrities do not want to be paid millions for naked pictures, but they are now on show. She contends in Javanese Surabaya language, "In fact, even though they are offered millions, but refused to be photographed naked, now [they] are displayed on the street." Women feel embarrassment and empathy at the same time, when males who watch the video with them have oppositional readings to the females. Since those female viewers realise that *pak* RT is not only male, but also holds political power (as the *kampung* administrative head) as well as being the head of the household (as elsewhere in Indonesia) for the family, the women, thus, seem to suppress strong expression of their feelings.

Conclusion

Kampung women viewers do not emphasise realism in making their television viewing choices. Rather, they criticise and question the construction of the women's images and characters in the *sinetron* texts to reflect the existence of contemporary Indonesian women in the reality. The creations of images of contemporary city girls are not seen as offering new transgressive possibilities or the formulation of 'new' Indonesian women's identities; quite the contrary, the creations are seen as opposing the conventional (if not stereotypical) images of Indonesian women. The portrayals of contemporary urban young women, thus, invite the viewers to resistant and look distantly. Moreover, the characterisations in the *sinetron* texts are recognised as offering different types of persons, but they are not adaptable for the processes of identification among those *kampung* women spectators.

The mode of watching visual representations among the *kampung* women viewers offers a distinct feature of communalised practice of mobility, which allows women (as a collective) to share their private viewing experience with neighbours and acquaintances either in their homes or the neighbours' places. In many works on viewing practice, the individuated experience is more pervasive than the communal shared practice. In this communal viewing practice, the spectator, whose individual identities seem to have been dissolved and become a collective uniqueness, could take their private imaginations and fantasies 'outdoors' (in the public/communal

homes). In addition to that, watching pornographic material offers a closer look at the phenomenon of a 'gendered semi-communal' activity in which particular gender groups i.e. women, who have created their own secure space and time, use the porn videodisc as a vehicle to transport them from the routine domestic life into a world of sexual quests and communal adventure in desiring and contesting the female bodies pictured.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions: Theorising Communal Television Viewing and Women's Spectatorship in Indonesia

To some extent, the conduct of any research must be within the context of earlier conceptual and methodological developments; and this study of television and the everyday consumption of urban *kampung* class is no exception. Framed by Western literatures and perspectives related to the studies of audience and television uses mainly from cultural studies and media anthropology traditions, this thesis has shown that the practice of watching television in Indonesia is a distinct and complex everyday communal mode of practices. The cultural practices of television uses and the meaning making processes of, particularly, urban (female) *kampung* viewers offer various and multifaceted patterns, interpretations, and a typical cultural practice of 'watching television,' which is communal, localised, and autonomous.

Earlier concepts and propositions introduced and developed for Western television practices and contexts are, indeed, appropriate to those traditions and the cultural landscape of the objects of research of those academics and scholars (e.g. Hartley, Morley, Lull, Ang, Spigel, and others), whose works have been much cited in this thesis. As the fit between civil society in the West and the non-Western societies is partial, the distinctive cultural formations and the local context of community that I observed and the information gathered during the fieldwork have offered alternative understandings about cultural consumptions and television viewing experiences in the Indonesian context. Differences become more marked if we look at the preoccupation of television in Indonesia and the distinctive form and content of some local/domestic productions. Nevertheless, the distinctiveness should not be exaggerated here; rather, the *kampung* cultural practice of television viewing is a contemporary conduct of the *rakyat* ('little people') in the 21st century quotidian Indonesia.

In the beginning of this thesis, I described the anxieties reflected in the political and critical public discourses, published in the print media, about the capitalist television

owners and producers for promising utopian possibilities, hedonism, day dreaming, and engendering fears about audio-visual technology out of control. However, the viewing behaviour of the urban *kampung* community in this study is the epitome of a discerning and critical communal culture of television viewing. I found it particularly interesting how the *kampung* people, especially the women, have talked of different kinds and degrees of engagement with television.

I have demonstrated in the first part that the role of television (as other commercial media) in Indonesia has been an issue of continued debate. This is mainly due to the dual role of television as a commodity in the neo-liberalised market, on the one hand; and its continued role as the moral agent and pedagogical medium in the process of development, on the other hand. Positioning within these unresolved dualities, Indonesian television in the first decade of the 21st century is characterised by unprecedented market-driven competition and ownership concentration by certain media magnates and groups.

The first part of this thesis has sketched the contexts of national private television in Indonesia. The concept of 'supermarket television' has appeared as the common term used to refer to the system of private television broadcasting. Like a supermarket, private television stations offer a whole "department" (entertainment, information, education, and so forth) as commodities of one overall complex with an expectation that consumers will choose only particular products, which the station will then reproduce for ongoing consumption.

Moreover, the concentration of the media (television) in the hands of those whose economic power determines the very base of their institutions, often results in the programming formats and contents, and to a certain extent, the 'culture-producing industry' at large, being directed by this economic determination. Nowadays, with a more liberal media atmosphere in the country, the regulations for cross ownership in the media appear to be loosened. Debate about the dangers of media conglomeration, thus, seems to be much less important than the debate on the fact that "*sinetron* does not educate a nation" (*sinetron tidak mendidik bangsa*).

In line with that, the national audience, the targeted market of those capitalised television institutions, is defined and utilised as a key feature for legitimising ratings

of the television businesses. *Sinetron* as the most-watched type of show for more than a decade in Indonesia, is not only a distinctive mark of domestic television productions, but also had become a focus of political contest during the New Order era (*Chapter Three*) and of economic competition for audiences to attract advertising revenues. *Sinetron* ratings have been utilised as a barometer to measure audiences. In fact, the producers and the private stations do not know exactly the actual audience. A *sinetron* is produced initially as a trial product. If many viewers watch the show, the *sinetron* will be continued for as long as it attracts significant numbers of viewers and, more importantly, the advertisements. Therefore, the audiences (i.e. the masses) are presumed to be the economic subjects, imagined as passive and in pursuit of pleasure.

Private television stations and the *sinetron* producers appear to think only of the commercial aspects of their productions. These industrial institutions are unable to give meaning to the narratives and images produced in a way that the audience finds of significance in communal life. The television producers fail to imagine *sinetron* audiences as active community members of the nation-state.

The fact is that television audiencehood in Indonesia, with particular class community as with the case study of this thesis, is a pervasive social and cultural reality in the contemporary 'television-scape'. The dynamic complexity of cultural practices and experiences of watching television among the *kampung* community is not simply a study of "audience response." Rather, this complexity is evidence for the richness of cultural analysis compared to the taxonomic thinking in counting or surveying the nominal identities of the audience.

As I have shown in *Chapter Four*, the production houses and the private stations have been collapsing the idea of audience class and taste. They define and use their own narratives to construct a very distinct audience of their own: a *kampung* class, with an upper middle class taste. This industrial perception is clearly manifested in the creations, both the texts and the aesthetic performances of particular shows such as *dangdut* and *sinetron* shows.

Television in the *kampung* is not just a technology and part of the domestic interior of the house; the consumption itself is a cultural activity integrated into the wider

social relationships within this class community. Community norms and cultural experiences of the communal are conveyed not only in arranging the place of the television set, but also in the ways the (women) audiences consume the texts. *Kampungs* are communities in urban Indonesia are deplored by several non-*kampung* groups as lower class, traditional, old-fashioned, backward and oppressive. *Kampung* communities are also associated with 'little people' that do not engender fellowship with 'big people' or upper classes and with non-*kampung* folks. The *kampung* inhabitants articulate ideas and images about '*wong kampung*' (people of *kampung*) into their own desires, lives, and interpretations of both their subjective and communal/neighbourhood experiences. All these features have made them rich sites of the communalised cultural practices of watching television.

Theories and literatures on Cultural Studies tend to reinforce the ideology of the media consumer as one with individual power to make their own readings of television texts (Fiske, 1987). Audience studies of film and television, particularly Stuart Hall's (1980) essay on 'encoding/decoding' have also offered theoretical insight and empirical evidence to suggest that the audience (or individual) do not necessarily understand the texts in the same way as the television makers of the texts – or even the state's intention to control the messages - intend. These earlier studies on television audience tend to pay attention on the process of individual decoding of the televised texts, and have not yet touched the complexity of the social macrocosm – i.e. the socio-economic realm and cultural environment of the community within which the individual lives– influencing the reception process. Moreover, the earlier researches have tended to ignore some of the determining conditions (e.g. religion and ethnic beliefs, local norms and values of the community) of this social macrocosm.

In the urban *kampung* community, as I observed for this study, the processes of television viewing and meaning-making of the televisual texts are not merely the process of individual experience, but draw connections to the communal experiences in the neighbourhood interactions. I have demonstrated that the communal audiences tend to take the fictional forms of the television images and figures to be linked not to their individual position (as a singular subject), but as related to their community shared experiences about the neighbours, the socio-economic realm and their own

kampung cultural geography. The narratives of neighbourhood life in the viewers' community context are much more important and significant to the communal subjects than the fictional realm created in the television series or serials.

Apart from that, the constructions of female images and figures and their creation and representation on the screen, which have long been a crucial part of the filmic pleasure, have provided alternatives for the critical reading of the urban *kampung* spectator. The representations of contemporary Indonesian city (Jakarta) women in the *sinetron* texts have opened up a space for the assertion of a critical reading by those *kampung* women viewers. Their reading/viewing experiences have shown that those women do not simply take the images as 'the mirror,' rather they are conscious that the representations are just a form of fictional creation and are different to their socio-cultural realm and identities. Moreover, the *sinetron* viewing practice of the *kampung* women demonstrates that media representations appear to work with a degree of contradiction and fluidity as experienced by the viewers.

Extending the practice of watching television, in this thesis, I have looked at the experience of consuming other audio-visual material, that is VCD viewing, which has become commonplace in the urban *kampung* community in Indonesia. From this practice, it is apparent that a 'gendered semi-communal' activity is performed, in which women, who have created their own secure space and time, use the VCD as a vehicle to transport them from a tiring domestic life into a different world. From this experience, it can be seen that the communal practice of watching television (and the VCD) among the *kampung* women viewers has suggested that neither the industry nor any other agency (e.g. a state intent on censorship) can control the meaning at every stage of the televisual consumption.

More on Television and Women's Culture

Indonesian women have often been thought of as a problem, as the focus of attention of the growing 'gender and women's studies' in the country. The vast majority of literatures, which are mainly activist or descriptive academic works, investigate the woman (in her representation) and the media as a problematic media object in a patriarchal system. The notions circulated among the media and feminist critics in Indonesia often see television's representation of women as negative. The suggestions are, thus, that television should represent women in a positive way, or

that women should be represented in such a way that positive role models are presented for the society.

Nevertheless, there is still lack of discussion focussing on how representations of women on television are used and interpellated by women audiences in response to their social positioning. This thesis has attempted to fill that gap. The attempt is to understand television reading/viewing practices among particular urban '*kampung*' class women in relation to existing television programs and texts. However, beyond this analysis of reading practices, my study has attempted to unpack or deconstruct the construct of the audience, in which women are thought to derive pleasure from capitalist television programs, like *sinetron*, which are designed to play upon their emotions and to make them consume. This thesis also attempts to theorise the possibility of the cultural and political use of pleasure by women of a particular class society, using as an example discursive practices around *sinetron* viewing and the consumption of video compact disc films.

For *kampung* women, culture and politics are always close to home and take place in the context of everyday life. For them as well, leisure time within their domestic place and *kampung* lane at all times means television and neighbourhood chatting. With doors open, the practices of watching television and consuming pleasure are not restricted to the individual alone, but take place in the communal neighbourhood context. This distinctive practice seems to be neglected or unknown by the television producers and programmers. Both the producers and the TV stations seem to assume that women have control of the set most of the time, especially in the day time. In fact, the *kampung* women have limited access and time to spend in front of the set, as domestic tasks occupy them and their men and children dominate the televisual space.

Watching *sinetron* among the *kampung* women is not merely an individual pleasure activity. In the process of making meaning of the fictional televised texts, the viewers often try to connect the televisual constructions to their *kampung* cultural realms in order to make the texts more significant for them and more pleasing to watch. Thus, these *kampung* women viewers, culturally conscious or not, have been practising the so-called 'feminine discourse' (see Brown, 1990, p. 190) while watching television.

This 'feminine discourse', in this sense, holds the prospect of empowerment for its feminine subjects. The *kampung* women viewers in fact, are not drawn into excessive enjoyment with the television soaps (*sinetron*) and the idealised fictional figures of women and the society presented in the shows. As the discourse of pleasure for women is overlaid with a discourse that deems *sinetron* to be rubbish – and therefore, this discourse has denigrated the women watching soaps (*sinetron*) – and consequently puts women viewers in a very uncomfortable position. Thus, the way the *kampung* women consume and assess the images and attitudes articulated in the *sinetron* texts has challenged the uncomfortable views embedded in the notion of 'feminine pleasure' with the feeling that women cannot win since dominant (i.e. social patriarchal construct) discourse gives them one message, while their life experiences give them another (see e.g. Allen, 1985; Brown, 1990; Modleski, 1982). The *kampung* women have taken their initiative and looked for their own spaces in the system where they can speak from their own subject positions.

In addition to that, this study of *kampung* 'feminine discourse' has highlighted speaking practices among women viewers when they have been free to talk openly and share perceptions and frames of experience. It is marked in the moment of *kampung* women watching pornography and talking about the bodies (discussed in *Chapter Eight*).

Media-Ethnography in Indonesia: Reflection and Further Challenges

Confronted with the structural complexity of the triangle of relations between the capitalist television industry, the state, and the society – with the community culture excluded from the public realm – the grand academic discourses in Indonesia seems inadequate for theoretical generalisation about the present Indonesian media and the reception behaviours. Since theorising media audience and cultural reception in the Indonesian context remains less popular within the Communication Studies academic discourses, media reception studies continue salient. Thus, instead of giving an update description of media (television) in Indonesia between 2000 and 2004, in the first part of this thesis (the national level), I have presented some of the significant industrial trends at play. While, in the second part, which focuses more on the local level of community, the consumption patterns, and the reception, this thesis has provided a possibility to rethink some of the popular theoretical perspectives in

Western media and cultural studies for the significance application in non-Western societies.

I have mentioned in the introductory chapter that the developmentalist approaches are still dominant in the academic discourses in Indonesia. Research in the fields of communication and mass media is still dominated by the application of a classical-positivism paradigm, which is more pragmatic and easily sold to the media industries and government policy makers; a critical paradigm, which tends to criticise the persistence of the status quo of political and social structures is less 'sellable' (Hidayat, 1999). This condition parallels what has been said by Heryanto (2003), "Intellectuals often enjoy a comfortable life and protection, provided either directly by the most powerful and wealthiest society, or indirectly by the social order that delivers privileges to them" (Heryanto, p. 29).

Hidayat also acknowledges that academicians or lecturing staff of the department of communication, particularly in University of Indonesia, still lack knowledge and expertise in critical studies. They mainly specialise in quantitative methodology, which relies much on validity, objectivity, and statistical reliability (Hidayat, 1999, p. 36). According to Hidayat, there are still few universities lecturing staff, who tries to touch the development of new research paradigm in communication and media studies and continue to use statistical method both for their own research and for teaching the students (Hidayat, p. 36).

Along with the classical perspectives, the developmentalism paradigm first and foremost sees mass media playing the role of the agent of development or the medium supporting development. Because of these notions, the critical media studies approach has become peripheral in the Indonesian public intellectual discourses. Yet, Mark Hobart (2000) suggests that there is still a significant connection between development and media studies. He says, "If development is one of the most powerful, indeed hegemonic, articulations of the later twentieth century world, it is the media that do the articulating. It doesn't happen all by itself" (Hobart, 2000, p. 7).

In this regard, anthropologists can play a significant role as "the good guys." According to Hobart, most of the anthropological approaches to development have

focussed on the importance of understanding "the native's point of view of grounding action in shared local understanding about knowledge" (Hobart, p. 6). In addition, in the field of communication and media studies, anthropology mediates between the inescapable forces of modernity and the locals. Further, Hobart sees that there has been an attitude of "unreflective elitism" among media studies scholars which mainly view that "the meanings of television may adequately be determined as lying somewhere between the producers' intended meanings and the scholars' critical readings" (Hobart, 2000, p. 16), thus leaving behind and marginalising "what audiences make of it."

I have attempted to ground the local cultural practices of watching television in the recognition of the media (television) industrial development and the socio-political changes in post-New Order era. This study, therefore, is an effort to answer queries whether or not cultural studies and media theories coming from a Western perspective have established a cultural grid of media reception theory in the very local (Indonesian) context. This is also to recognise the need to theorise media reception among distinct communal viewers is essential.

However, interrogation of socio-cultural constructs of urban *kampung* community, which continues to be much marginalised in Indonesian discourse, needs to be extended not only in order to be compared and contrasted to the earliest media audience ethnography studies in the West, but also in order to provoke more groundbreaking analysis of local-cultural context media use and the audiences' voices and narratives. Moreover, the growth of local/regional media (television) and content in Indonesia since the 2002 Broadcasting Bill, has opened up possibilities and opportunities to interrogate the local/regional consumption practices of the local/regional television content and articulations in the Indonesian archipelago, which I have briefly noted in earlier chapters of this thesis – and which remains the subject of future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

TV Celebrity Gossip Shows ('infotainment' Programs)
January 2003 – January 2004

Program Name	TV station	Broadcast Schedule
Rumours	Metro TV	7.30 pm & 12.30 am
Great Romances	Metro TV	7.30 pm & 12.05 am
Tang-Go (Gossip shield)	Metro TV	12.30 am & 12.30 pm
Spy'C (Spying celebrity)	Metro TV	12.30 pm & 12.05 am
Kabar Kabari (News- get informed)	RCTI	4.30 am & 4 pm
Cek & Ricek (Check & recheck)	RCTI	4.00 pm & 4.30 am
Bulletin Sinetron	RCTI	4.00 pm & 4.30 am
Intips (Information and tips)	RCTI	11.00 am
Selebriti Nginep (Celebrity sleeps over)	RCTI	4.30 pm
Halo Selebriti (Hello celebrity)	SCTV	11.00 am & 2.30 am
Hot Shot	SCTV	11.00 am & 2.30 am
Otista (Our celebrities)	SCTV	11.00 am & 2.30 am
Poster (Portrait of celebrities)	SCTV	3.30 pm
Bibir Plus (Lips plus)	SCTV	3.30 pm
Portal (Portrait of the famous)	SCTV	3.30 pm
Go Show (Gossip show)	TPI	1.00 pm
Inultainment	TPI	
(Inul[1] entertainmet, a special gossip show of only *dangdut* singers)		
Seneng Bareng Selebriti	TPI	7.00 am
(Fun with celebrities)		
Selebriti up date (Celebrity up date)	TPI	7.00 am
Kroscek (Cross check)	Trans TV	3.30 pm
Insert	Trans TV	11.30 am & 12.00 noon

[1] Inul is a new comer of female dandut singer, who is recently so popular and controversial in Indonesia because of her stage performance.

Bisik-Bisik (whisperings)	Trans TV	8.00 am
E..Ko Ngegosip (Gee, gossiping)	Trans TV	5.00 pm
99%	Trans TV	8.00 am
Digoyang Gosip (Being Gossiped)	Trans TV	8.00 am
Kencan Selebritis (Dating with celebrities)	Trans TV	4.00 pm
KISS (Celebrities' stories)	Indosiar	7.00 am & 10.00 am
BM (Bintang Millenia) *On TV* 1.00 am	Lativi	9.00 am, 2.30 pm, &
Mata Selebritis (Celebrities on eye)	Lativi	9.00 am & 1.30 am
Gosok Gosip (Gossip scratchy) pm	Lativi	2.30 pm, 11.00 am, 2.30
3 Ratu Gosip (3 queens of gossip)	Lativi	9.00 am & 3.00 pm
Hitam Putih Selebritis (Black & white of celebrities)	Lativi	7.00 am
Paparasi (Paparazzi)	Lativi	2.30 pm & 7.00 am
Sosok dan Berita (Person & news)	Lativi	5.00 pm
Betis (Celebrities' news)	ANTV	10.30 am
Klise (Celebrities' stories)	TV 7	5.00 am & 3.00 pm
Klise Live	TV 7	5.00 pm
Ketok Pintu (Knocking [on celebrities'] door)	TV 7	4.30 am & 7.30 am
New Iris	TV 7	3.00 pm
Cuci Mata (browsing)	TV 7	3.00 pm
Citra (infotainment tabloid)	TV 7	5.00 am & 3.00 pm

Source: compiled from TV Schedule from various sources

Appendix 2

Local Mystery/Ghost Programs

January 2003 – January 2004

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Programs	Category	TV stations

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Programs	Category	TV stations
Kismis (Acronym for mystery stories)	Series (infotainment)	RCTI
Wewe Gombel (A Javanese ghost legend)	Series (drama)	RCTI
Selma dan Siluman Ular (Selma and the Snake Transformer)	Series (action-drama)	RCTI
Mitos (Myths)	Series (infotainment)	RCTI
Arwah Penasaran	Series (feature-drama)	RCTI
O, Seraam! (O, scary!)	Series (drama)	ANTV
Ilmu Gaib Dua Alam (Spiritual knowledge of two worlds)	Series (infotainment)	ANTV
Percaya Nggak Percaya (Believe it or not)	Series (reality)	ANTV
Menembus Batas	Series (feature-drama)	ANTV
Dunia Lain (Other World)	Series (reality)	Trans TV
Misteri Alam Ghaib Metafisika (Mystery of the metaphysical world)	Series (infotainment)	Trans TV
Bisikan Gaib (Superstitious whispers)	Series (feature-drama)	Trans TV
Antara Dua Alam (Between two [different] worlds)	Series (suspense drama)	SCTV
Tumis Ma'jum (Acronym for Thursday night's)	Series (infotainment)	SCTV
Pengantin Lembah Hantu (Married couple of ghost valley)	Serials (horror drama)	SCTV
Misteri Kisah Nyata	Series (drama)	Lativi

(Mystery of real story)

Rahasia Alam Gaib	Series (infotainment)	Lativi

(Secrets of the invisible world)

Saksi Misteri	Series (reality)	Lativi

(Eyewitness of mystery)

Jejak Kematian	Series (infotainment)	Lativi

(The death steps)

Sundel Bolong	Serials (drama)	TPI

(Name of a legend female ghost with hole on her back)

Telemisteri: Wanita Sekutu Iblis	Series (drama)	TPI

(Television mystery: Women ally of Satan)

TV Misteri	Series (infotainment)	TPI

(Mystery TV)

Misteri: Gentayangan	Series (drama)	TPI

(Mystery: Flying)

Susuk Kantil Nyi Roro Kidul	Serials (action-drama)	TPI

(Nyi Roro Kidul's personal pellet)

Misteri Gunung Merapi	Serials (action-drama)	Indosiar

(Mystery of Merapi Mountain)

Dendam Nyi Pelet	Serials (action-drama)	Indosiar

(The revenge of *Nyi Pelet*)

Nyi Roro Kidul	Serials (action-drama)	Indosiar

(A Javanese legend of a female sea goddess)

Ekspedisi Alam Gaib	Series (reality)	TV 7

(The expedition to the invisible world)

100% Horror	Series (infotainment)	TV 7

Source: compiled from various sources and the TV guide

Appendix 3

**Market Position
Performance By Program
2002 vs. 2003 – Local Series**

Local Series

Station	# of Title Weekly		TV Rating						TV Share					
			Average		Highest		Lowest		Average		Highest		Lowest	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
IVM	14	25	8.9	6.4	17.6	11.1	2.3	0.8	27.1	23.4	45.1	31.4	15.2	6.5
RCTI	16	18	4.5	6.5	11.5	13.8	0.6	0.3	15.9	22.6	31.0	37.0	6.0	21.7
SCTV	13	20	4.3	3.3	6.9	8.5	1.4	0.3	15.1	15.5	23.6	22.9	7.3	21.5
TRANS	12	20	3.0	2.8	7.4	5.9	0.9	1.3	10.0	12.1	21.0	18.3	6.6	9.2
TPI	9	19	2.3	3.5	3.9	8.3	0.8	1.1	7.7	12.8	10.8	22.2	4.9	7.9
TV 7	7	18	1.0	1.0	1.6	2.7	0.6	0.5	3.0	4.3	4.3	8.9	1.6	10.6

**Market Position
Performance By Program
2002 vs. 2003 – Western Series**

Western Series

Station	# of Title Weekly		TV Rating						TV Share					
			Average		Highest		Lowest		Average		Highest		Lowest	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
IVM	4	4	0.9	0.7	1.3	2.8	0.5	0.1	16.7	13.0	24.1	23.4	11.2	4.4
RCTI	5	6	1.3	0.7	2.8	1.7	0.5	0.2	15.3	10.0	50.2	8.3	7.0	25.9
SCTV	6	3	1.0	0.8	1.5	1.7	0.6	0.3	12.2	12.6	26.5	15.1	5.9	14.8
TRANS	7	7	1.5	1.1	2.9	4.6	0.8	0.1	8.2	12.4	10.5	13.1	5.9	5.1
TPI	5	2	1.4	1.2	2.0	3.8	0.5	0.4	6.7	6.1	9.4	11.0	4.3	2.1
TV 7	2	13	0.8	0.6	0.6	2.5	0.2	0.0	1.4	6.3	2.6	8.5	1.2	1.8

**Market Position
Performance By Program
2002 vs. 2003 – Oriental Series**

Oriental Series

Station	# of Title Weekly		TV Rating						TV Share					
			Average		Highest		Lowest		Average		Highest		Lowest	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
IVM	7	3	3.8	2.7	16.7	5.4	0.2	0.1	20.7	16.1	44.2	15.9	8.3	14.6
RCTI	1	0	1.9	0.0	3.3	0.0	0.7	0.0	10.2	0.0	14.9	0.0	5.6	0.0
SCTV	4	1	1.4	0.2	3.3	0.3	0.4	0.1	14.9	11.9	23.8	11.4	8.1	18.0
TRANS	5	2	2.8	1.8	9.9	3.5	0.5	0.5	11.0	16.7	26.2	29.5	4.4	6.1
TPI	3	1	1.9	0.4	3.1	0.6	1.3	0.2	7.6	5.9	8.5	4.9	6.5	2.8
TV 7	7	3	0.5	0.6	1.1	2.6	0.3	0.2	2.3	3.5	3.1	14.6	1.5	1.1

Appendix 4

Leading Programs of Local Television

TV Stations	Leading Programs	Area Coverage
Bali TV	*Darma Wacana* (religious format), *Seputar Bali* (Around Bali, news), *Klip Bali* (Bali Clip, entertainment)	Bali, West Lombok, and parts of East Java (coastal regions such as Banyuwangi and Situbondo)
Bandung TV	*Seputar Bandung Raya* (Around Greater Bandung, news), *Etalase* (Shop window, leisure program), *Tenggara Pasundan* (Southeast Pasundan, entertainment), *Geulis* (Beauty, entertainment)	Bandung, parts of Sumedang, Cianjur, Puncak
Batam TV	*Batam News*, *Batam TV* (current affairs)	Batam and surround
Borobudur TV	*Berita TVB* (News TVB), *Kuthone Dewe* (Our City, leisure program)	Semarang, Demak, Kudus, Pati, Grobogan
Cahaya TV (Banten)	*Hallo Banten* (News), *Hot Hit Atensi* (Hot Hit Attention, current affairs)	Tangerang, Serang, Cilegon, Jakarta
Gorontalo TV	*Selamat Pagi Gorontalo* (Morning Gorontalo, news)	Gorontalo, Bone, Bolango
Jak-TV (Jakarta)	*Reality Hits* (music), *Entertainment Tonight* [sic]	Jakarta and parts Botabek (Bogor, Tangerang, Bekasi)
JTV	*Pojok Kampung* (Kampung Corner, news), *Omah Doyong* (Leaning House, variety show), *Pojok Perkoro* (Case Corner, crime news), *Pojok Medureh* (Madura Corner, news in Madurese dialects)	Surabaya, Gresik, Lamongan, Malang, Kediri, Madiun, Jember, Bangkalan-Madura
Yogya TV	*Pawartos Ngayogyakarta* (Yogyakarta News, in Javanese *krama*), *Seputar Yogya* (Around Yogya, news in *bahasa*), *Macapat* (six lines Javanese verse form, entertainment), *Yogya Eksotika* (exotic Yogya, leisure program)	Yogyakarta and surround

Lombok TV	N.A	Lombok, Bali, Sumbawa
Makassar TV	*Makassar Sore* (Afternoon Makassar, news), *Makassar Info* (current affair/information)	Makassar, Gowa, Maros, Takalar, Pangkep
Pacific TV (Manado)	*Warung Bacarita* (Talking Stall, dialog), *Pacific Clips*, *Karlotta*, *Musik Radio* (Radio Music, entertainment)	Manado and North Sumatra region
RTV (Riau)	*Detak Riau* (Riau Beat, news), *Senandung Melayu Serumpun* (Malay Songs), *Mozaik Musik* (Mosaic Music)	Pekanbaru, Bangkinang, Dumai, Bengkalis, Kampar, Siak (85% Riau lands).
Tarakan TV	*Lintas Kaltara* (Across Central Kalimantan, news), *Polisi Kota* (City Police, crime news)	Central Kalimantan and surround

Source: *Cakram*, May 2004