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Producing the local: Javanese performance on Indonesian television

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6 A potential gold-mine? Commercializing Javanese performance

Not only during the ‘spice mania’ did people cast their eye on Java. At present, as the world enters the global information era through transnational television, the attacks of the television conglomerates in Java are once more impossible to evade. With a population of 103,592,109 in 1995, an economic growth of 7.4 percent in 1996 and the strong growth of a middle class, Java has become an interesting gold-mine to be fought over by many parties. (Wijaya 1997:115)¹³²

Films, series and shows produced abroad and adaptations of foreign productions were part of the trend in Indonesia’s private television programming that resulted in ‘the emergence of an all-imported culture’ (Asmarani 1998:11). These programmes were imbued with an aura of modernity and were more attractive, especially to the younger generation, than the regular TVRI programmes, in particular its traditional art and culture programmes that many of the audiences considered to be old fashioned. Moreover, from the perspective of production, they were cheaper than locally produced programmes.

At the time – in the early 1990s – only government television stations were active in programming to do with the regional arts. In his article ‘Forces for change in the regional performing arts of Indonesia’, Yampolsky (1995:716-717) explains that

While in theory the independent stations could develop their own programmes on regional matters, including the arts, in fact they do not do so, preferring to broadcast material from abroad. So the only stations active in programming concerned with the regional arts are the government stations, and their needs are those of the government: professionalized, morally acceptable, propaganda-friendly performances, with or without ritual origins but in either case functionally secular.

In a footnote the author mentions that the ‘educational’ channel TPI had begun broadcasting programmes on regional culture, but he did not expect this channel to approach regional performing arts any differently than the government did (Yampolsky 1995:716). When he published his article, Yampolsky could not foresee that soon ‘Java’ was to be re-discovered as a potential gold-mine (Wijaya 1997:115) and that Indosiar, that would go on air in January 1995, would set the trend and take the lead. In what has usually been called the global information era (*era informasi global*), Java had become an important locale, both for its cultural resources that provided television stations with interesting programme material, and for ‘the Javanese’, the demographically largest minority group in Indonesia and the largest identifiable target group for marketing purposes. In particular, the rapidly developing middle classes whose purchasing power was growing in step with the strengthening economy (a growth of 7.4 percent in the year 1996) were an ideal market for advertisers (Wijaya 1997:115; Mahfuf 1997; Frith 1996:266). The continuously expanding area coverage by

¹³² Tak hanya ketika ‘demam’ rempah-rempah saja Jawa dilirik. Kini saat dunia memasuki era informasi global lewat TV transnasional, lagi-lagi ‘serbuan’ para konglomerat media TV ke Jawa tak terelak. Dengan jumlah penduduknya 103.592.109 jiwa di tahun 1995, pertumbuhan ekonomi 7,4 di tahun 1996 serta berkembangnya kelas menengah yang tajam, Jawa adalah ‘ladang emas’ yang sangat menggiurkan untuk direbut banyak pihak.

television was densest in Java. Thus, winning the hearts of the more than eighty million potential Javanese viewers became a priority.¹³³

In order to compete with global television on the one hand and regional TVRI stations on the other, in the first half of the 1990s the private television industry increased local programming – ‘local’ in the sense of both domestic/national and regional (Tedjomurti 1993). It also revitalized programmes with ethnic references (*bernuansa etnik*), and increased the broadcasting of traditional performing arts to excessive amounts (*dengan porsi 'gila-gilaan'*) (Wijaya 1997:115). Traditional Javanese performance genres like wayang kulit, wayang golek, kethoprak and dhagelan, formerly broadcast only by TVRI, now became part of the programming of Jakarta-based private television stations; traditional Javanese culture was expected to generate income.

In this chapter, I elucidate how Indosiar, founded as the fifth private broadcaster in Indonesia, constructed a branding and re-discovered Java. The station’s search for a specific identity and some initial reactions towards its policies offer valuable background information. It gives insight into media ownership and business and other networks and highlights Indosiar’s corporate stance and concomitant ‘issues, voices, positions and messages’ (White 1992:191), and forms the basis for my analysis in the next chapter.

I focus on the issues, voices, positions and messages that Indosiar disseminated in its Javanese programming in the second half of the 1990s. The various messages intersected with each other, because the programmes were part of a planned *flow*, ‘perhaps the defining characteristic of broadcasting, simultaneously as technology and as a cultural form’ (Williams 1974:86). In a planned flow,

[...] the true series is not the published sequence of programme items but this sequence transformed by the inclusion of another kind of sequence, so that these sequences together compose the real flow, the real ‘broadcasting’. (Williams 1974:90-91)

Therefore, programming on a more general level needs to be looked at, since the medium’s ‘highly fragmented and heterogeneous’ character was present ‘[w]ithin individual programs, between programs and commercials, and across a variety of programs’ (White 1992:190-191). In the following sections, I unravel this planned flow to uncover the ‘varying narratives, genres, appeals, and modes of address’ (White 1992:191) that constitute the broadcasts. Mazzarella’s view of the global and the local as ‘mutually constitutive imaginary moments’ (Mazzarella 2003:17) might offer a solution to how to approach these seemingly paradoxical narratives of Indosiar. This approach stresses the dynamics television had to cope with and its ‘ability to move fluently between’ (Mazzarella 2003:18) the constituent forces that shaped its broadcasts.

Indosiar’s arrival in the arena of the private television industry in Indonesia and its reception will be paid ample attention. I commence by reflecting on a trend in the early 1990s to revitalize programmes with ethnic references. It shows how the private television industry

¹³³ According to Wijaya (1997:115), in 1995 Java had 103,592,109 inhabitants.

for persuasive (meaning: commercial) aims chose to broadcast these local media products in its battle to compete with foreign broadcasters.

1 A tinge of Javanese versus spoken Javanese¹³⁴ – Authenticity in plywood and rubber

In the early 1990s, private television stations had begun broadcasting programmes with – what they called – an ethnic touch (*bernuansa etnik*): *Mahkota Mayangkara* (broadcast by TPI in 52 episodes) was followed consecutively by *Mahkota Majapahit* (RCTI) and *Kaca Benggala* (again TPI). The soap serials, categorized as classical battle dramas (*drama laga klasik*) that represented local – in particular Javanese and Sundanese – fictionalized history while focusing on past kingdoms, were followed by another serial, *Singgasana Brama Kumbara* (ANTeve). This was an adaptation of the radio drama (*sandiwara radio*) *Saur Sepuh* by Niki Kosasih that had been turned into film in the late 1980s. Both radio and TV versions were considered to be very successful. The TV serial, broadcast in prime time, obtained a high rating in the competition with two Indian productions, the Mahabharata and Ramayana (HS 1995a).

The production house PT Menaragading Citraperkasa produced *Mahkota Mayangkara* for local and foreign markets. Although an expensive production because of the number of actors and technical staff involved, the specially constructed sets and the long production time, the serial was a financial success. This resulted in the simultaneous production of the three new serials mentioned above, that were bought by three private TV stations: ANTEVE bought seventy-eight episodes of *Singgasana Brama Kumbara* for Rp. 50 million per episode and began airing them on 3 January 1995; twenty-six episodes of *Mahkota Majapahit* (Figure 6.1) were purchased for the same prize and broadcast by RCTI; TPI disseminated a hundred episodes of *Kaca Benggala* (HS 1995b).

The characterization of these programmes as having an ethnic tinge reveals the growing distance between the Indonesian observers and their cultural heritage, that was no longer perceived as ‘their own culture’. It also reveals the impact of global perceptions of indigenous performance, whether it be drama, music or classical battle serials on television: localized genres performed in vernaculars were perceived to belong to the ‘etnik’ category, whereas once they had been categorized as traditional. This approach betrays an auto-orientalist gaze.¹³⁵

Drawing on theatrical, filmic, radio and televisual genres, *drama laga* carry characteristics of these genres. They undeniably have the universal features of modern (melo)drama, soap operas and Indonesian *sinetron*: the development of the plot is driven by crises and dramatic dialogues, camera work and sound, and the court intrigues, love scenes and battles arouse

¹³⁴ ‘*Bernuansa Jawa*’ (Hartanto 1997) versus *berbahasa Jawa*.

¹³⁵ Inspired by Mazzarella’s idea concerning auto-orientalist advertising (2003:138-141).

strong emotions and suspense. The fight scenes are heavily inspired by Chinese kungfu films and Indonesian silat (the art of self-defence). The dynamic rhythm is the result of a quick succession of short sequences and a compactly edited mixture of shots. Of the local features, the influence of kethoprak is particularly traceable: the stories refer to ancient kingdoms and local legends, set in an idyllic past, and often do indeed stem from oral traditions. Scenes that are obligatory in all kethoprak performances (court audiences, battles, clown interludes and love scenes) (Hatley 1985:87) are set in suitable locations (the palace, the *pendhapa*, the forest, the hermitage, the village, etcetera); the characters are stereotypical; the design of the costumes has a traditional kethoprak look, but the materials and colours are modern. Nevertheless, the serials do not obey to the constraints of traditional kethoprak, but just seem to have been loosely inspired by the genre. Most importantly, the language of communication is Indonesian, not Javanese – a trend that was continued in the Indonesianization of *kethoprak humor* (kethoprak turned into comedy).



6.1 Mahkota Majapahit

In the representation of history in, for instance, *Kaca Benggala*, the producers said they were striving for realism and authenticity. They claimed they had consulted library collections in Solo and Demak in an attempt to recreate the original costumes and settings, although they admitted that more research and consultation with historians would have been a good idea, if they were to have come closer to the original. But this would have been too time consuming and very expensive. To disguise this weakness, they said they only used the idea of ‘history’ as the background to the story. This idea was given shape by means of the setting, consisting of kraton buildings constructed of plywood and rubber (*kayu lapis dan karet*), situated in a green, rural environment, in the nature reserve Pangandaran, that the actors-cum-soldiers traversed on their horses. The camera work had to do the rest: full shots to show the rustic

atmosphere were interspersed with medium shots and close-ups to heighten the dramatic atmosphere (HS 1995c). These discussions on authenticity and realism do not touch upon the ability to fly of the fighting heroes, nor do they mention their other supernatural powers. Also the music, newly composed for the serials and usually performed on electronic instruments (the sound of a *suling*, a bamboo flute, played on a keyboard, for instance), was not authentic in the sense the producers used the concept.

Just as an ‘authentic’ setting was alluded to by a construction of plywood and rubber, Javanese culture was alluded to by the Javanese accent used by some characters and the use of Javanese expressions that were not subtitled or paraphrased in Indonesian, the insertion of a short sequence of *tembang macapat* (vocalizing traditional Javanese poetry) or a feast with dancing-women (*tayuban*) accompanied by an accoustic gamelan, a letter written in Javanese script on a kind of Javanese paper, whose text was read aloud in Indonesian (!), batik wrap-around skirts and *iket kepala* (headcloths), a host of properties used in daily life, like an earthenware water carafe (*kendhi*) and buildings made of woven bamboo (*gedheg*). These are but a few examples of how the simulacra were constructed. The mechanism at work here is comparable to what happens in regional pop music: it refers only to elements of regional music, or, as Yampolsky states:

The crucial fact about all of the features of regional music incorporated into Pop Daerah is that they function not as elements of the regional music but as tokens of it, or allusions to it. They do not actually bring regional music into the Pop idiom, they bring the notion of it. (Yampolsky 1989:15)

As these serials were produced for as wide an audience as possible, and even for foreign markets, the decision that Javanese culture would only be alluded to was probably deliberate, so as not to deter non-Javanese audiences. Had the local flavour (*warna lokal*) been too strong, this could have had a negative influence on the reception of these serials.¹³⁶

The *sinetron laga* and their popular predecessors in the form of *sandiwara radio* have settled in the collective memory of their audiences. Not only the stories, and the voices and the appearance of the protagonists are vividly recollected, but also the advertisements that were part of the broadcasting flow. Procold, a product of Kalbe Farma, and *Saur Sepuh* in both its radio, film and television versions are forever united in a nostalgic image (and sound) – the title *Saur Sepuh* or the name of the main actress immediately bring the jingle of the Procold advertisement to mind – , as were many other products of the mostly pharmaceutical companies who sponsored the shows (Figure 6.2).¹³⁷

¹³⁶ The Surabayan Javanese accent of the presenters of *Krucil*, Arswendo Atmowiloto’s children’s programme, for instance, was too strong to be well received by non-Surabayan audiences. The presenters therefore either had either to be trained not to use it or would be replaced by others (Arswendo Atmowiloto 1995).

¹³⁷ <http://lapanpuluhan.blogspot.nl/2006/02/sandiwara-radio-dari-kuping-turun-ke.html> [Last accessed December 2015]; HS 1993:10-11.



6.2 Drama Laga *Saur Sepuh* & Sponsor Procold

These examples are evidence that the broadcasters of the drama laga had reached their goals; they had succeeded in developing reliable audiences, preparing them for further persuasion, among other means by the use of commercials (see Chapter 7). Since the serials had been broadcast on a regular basis and had successors, viewers underwent a long-time exposure and became familiar with content and form. Proximity was not just at play in this sense, it was also present on the cultural level. Just as *kethoprak sayembara*, the television genre of the *drama laga* relied heavily on the tradition of serializing (Javanese) drama in other media like print literature, radio and audio cassettes, and film – as, for instance, in the filmic version of *Saur Sepuh* and its four sequels. Suited to both the medium television and local Indonesian narrative practices, a closeness could be engendered with the audiences. The television industry had also reached another goal: it had discovered new ways to wheedle funding from the private sponsors, ones that did not involve the broadcasting of advertisements in commercial slots (Chudori et al. 1992).

The success of these serials that carried a touch of Javanese-ness – *bernuansa Jawa* – in their story, setting (an imagined Java somewhere in an imagined past), costumes and properties (influenced by the Indian Mahabharata and Ramayana television serials and ‘antique’ motifs), with dialogues spoken in Indonesian, probably paved the way for Indosiar to tap the local market. Success meant being scheduled at prime time, having high ratings and, as a result, generating a high income from advertisements. Hence success seen from a persuasive and entrepreneurial perspective.

However, rather than conquering the Javanese market just with programmes with an ethnic touch, Indosiar chose to broadcast local performing arts in which vernaculars were spoken, in particular Javanese and Sundanese. The overwhelmingly positive reception of TVRI

Yogyakarta's kethoprak sayembara serials in the early 1990s must have been an important argument in Indosiar's choice.

Before demonstrating what Indosiar's re-discovered Java looked like, I shall introduce this television station as a newcomer in the private television sector.

2 Indosiar Visual Mandiri: A new competitor in the market

On 11 January 1995 Indosiar Visual Mandiri was officially launched. The station was part of the Indonesia-based company PT Indovisual Citra Persada, owned by the Salim Group, with headquarters in Jakarta.

Television was just one of the activities of the Salim Group.¹³⁸ The Group, founded by Liem Sioe Liong (or Soedono Salim, his Indonesian name), an Indonesian entrepreneur of Chinese descent, consisted of private and public companies involved in a range of industries from banking, insurance, food, cement, automotive, chemicals, media to textiles, both in Indonesia and elsewhere. In the period prior to the economic and monetary crisis in 1997-1998, it was the largest conglomerate in Indonesia (Dieleman 2007:63-64). Its position gave the Group 'considerable economic power, including the power to influence domestic institutions such as the legislature's implementation of laws' (Dieleman 2007:128).

Liem Sioe Liong and the Salim Group had close personal and business relations with President Soeharto, to the mutual benefit of both. However, these close ties to Soeharto caused the group to find itself in heavy weather when the president resigned during the economic crisis. Anthony Salim succeeded his father Liem Sioe Long to solve the severe economic (bankruptcy of many of its companies) and political problems the conglomerate was facing. Indosiar was one of the Salim Group companies that was taken over by the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency (IBRA) (Dieleman 2007:Chapter 4). After the crisis, Salim re-purchased the television station (Dieleman 2007:109). Indosiar's mother company adjusted its strategies, both in the domestic market and abroad. It slimmed down and focused on a limited number of sectors (food, telecom, media and property) (Dieleman 2007:113). In 2011, Indosiar became part of a new network, that resulted from a merger with SCTV, another private television station in Indonesia. It would become Indonesia's second largest broadcasting group (*The Jakarta Globe* 5 April 2011; Lim 2012:3-4).¹³⁹

Although presented as a national broadcaster, from its inception Indosiar has been part of a transnational network (*Multichannel News International*). After all, the Salim group was an international conglomerate, and so were the media networks with which Indosiar was

¹³⁸ For an analysis of the Indonesian Salim Group, see Dieleman 2007.

¹³⁹ The merger was part of a barter between the conglomerates of the Salim and the Sariaatmadja families, strengthening Salim's power in plantations and Sariaatmadja's power in broadcasting (Iswara and Rosalina 2011). Because of Indosiar's enormous losses in 2005 and 2006, and the threat of a possible violation of the Broadcasting Law (that prohibited monopolies) and looming problems with broadcasting frequencies, the merger between the two TV stations had been controversial and, hence, postponed. With the deal finally done, it would become Indonesia's second largest broadcasting group (*The Jakarta Globe*, 5 April 2011; Lim 2012:3-4).

intertwined in one way or another. In its initial phase, it worked hand in glove with TVB Hongkong whose staff took care of the management of Indosiar.

Indosiar's first broadcasts were transmitted by eight transmission stations, covering cities in Java (Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Yogyakarta and Surabaya), Bali (Denpasar), Sulawesi (Unjungpandang) and Sumatra (Medan). The number of transmission stations was soon expanding rapidly, and in 1997 Indosiar covered the whole of Java, one of the principal goals of the station (*Indosiar menambah* 1997), and Bali, as well as parts of other islands in Indonesia.

Indosiar's take-off was launched by a large PR offensive, in which it introduced itself as the station with most modern technology, specialized in local sinetron and committed to offering its audiences new alternatives.¹⁴⁰ This approach was the constant theme of its publicity rhetoric.¹⁴¹ By this means, Indosiar created the image of a glamorous, energetic, metropolitan TV station, attractive to young and old, having a professional crew, the newest technical equipment and with high-quality artists and programmes.

A wide reach, a strong corporate identity and specified programming offered obvious advantages in the struggle for the public's loyalty and the ratings. Nevertheless, Indosiar's identity was not created overnight and this delay was a problem for advertisers, who needed a clear demarcation of market segments to promote their products (Tedjomurti 1995b). This called for 'niching': the station had to specialize in audience segments, in programming and in networking, and simultaneously develop a strong relationship with its audiences (Tedjomurti 1995a). With the slogan *Indosiar memang untuk Anda* – Indosiar is indeed for You – Indosiar explicitly focused on including its audiences by means of its broadcasts, its off-air and social welfare activities (showcasing Indosiar's corporate social responsibility and building on its identity), and its website disclosing the numbers of visitors (*Anda pengunjung yang ke-*). The 'You' for whom Indosiar was producing and broadcasting programmes, was a general audience from all social layers of society and of all ages. In Chapter 8, the station's audiences are analysed in more detail.

*'Private television: do not prioritize business'*¹⁴²

Factors like new television technologies (Kitley 2000:215-249) and rapid economic growth spurred on the privatization of electronic media. All over Southeast Asia state monopoly was giving way to private media monopolies. McDaniel (2002:36) uses the term 'take over', but Kitley (2000:249) observes that in Indonesia 'TVRI ha[d] not let go its monopoly' yet. The new media developments brought forth news programmes diverging in both contents and form from the government news broadcasts, and in a significant increase in the amount of foreign content and number of advertisements (Mc Daniel 2002:36ff.). Between 1990 and

¹⁴⁰ *Advertorial* 1995; Website Indosiar 1997; (ely) 1995a.

¹⁴¹ Some examples: 'offering the audiences the best (*Kompas* 10 January 1995); 'presenting first-class, high quality entertainment' (*Republika* 11 January 1995); 'spoiling the eyes and ears of the audiences' (*Suara Pembaruan* 11 January 1995).

¹⁴² Harmoko: 'TV swasta jangan memomorsatukan kepentingan bisnis' ((xta) 1995).

1995, overall spending on advertising in Indonesia had increased sixfold (McDaniel 2002:82).¹⁴³ Indosiar's establishment in 1995 intensified the competition for advertising revenues among private television stations, that McDaniel claims was one of the consequences of the globalization of television advertising as a by-product of satellite television.

This development should be put in a historical perspective. As I have mentioned earlier, since 1981 TVRI had no longer been allowed to broadcast commercials, a ban 'that eventually contributed to the birth of the system of commercial television' (Loven 2008:236). Since this ban, advertisers had had to rely on print, radio, cinema and billboard advertising (*Media Scene* 1996-1997:25), with a preference for print advertising (*Media Scene* 1996-1997:27). In 1989, when the ban on advertising for private television had been rescinded and the first licence for a private television station had been granted, advertising expenditure on television rose quickly. By 1995, the competition for advertising among the five private stations had led to 'an all out war', in the words of *Media Scene* (1995-1996:22). As television advertising expenditures increased from 38 percent in 1992 to 50.2 percent in 1996 (*Media Scene* 1995-1996:58-61), advertising expenditures in the other media decreased (*Media Scene* 1995-1996).¹⁴⁴ In the period 1996-1997, the television share of the total adspend was still increasing, but the growth rate had 'substantially slowed down compared to previous years' (*Media Scene* 1996-1997:9), presaging the economic crisis at the end of the decade. The Indonesian government faced the conundrum that although a target audience of over 5 million people was available to the television advertisers (Sreberny 2000:110), the high cost of advertising revenues ruled out competition between all but five television stations ((xta) 1995). Therefore, as the fifth station at the time Indosiar was the last in the series of private television stations in Indonesia officially licensed to broadcast.

Ratings

In the mid-1990s, when television was considered to be the most important medium to reach consumers in Indonesia (*Media Scene* 1996-1997:27; Ishadi SK 1997:18), 'ratings' had become the buzz word. In its magazine *Media Scene*, the Indonesian Association of Advertising Agencies (Persatuan Perusahaan Periklanan Indonesia, PPI) regularly published ratings of product categories, television advertising expenditures by brand and Indonesian programmes.¹⁴⁵ The amount of attention paid to ratings and to the competition for audiences underscored '[t]he importance of commercial sponsorship and the relation of viewership to station and network revenue' (White 1992:171). The discourse on ratings, media penetration, advertising expenditures and the much-discussed balance between imported programmes and

¹⁴³ McDaniel's data (from about 500 million Rupiah to more than three trillion Rupiah) need to be checked.

¹⁴⁴ Figures are based on Gross Rate Card Cost and are extracted from monitored exposures (*Media Scene*).

¹⁴⁵ For the period 1995-1996, product categories with the highest advertising expenditures on television include beverages, shampoos and hair treatments, foods, toiletries, pharmaceuticals (analgesics) and sweets. These were followed by cigarettes, cosmetics and media, pharmaceuticals (other than analgesics), vehicles and spare parts, and bank and insurance (*Media Scene* 1995-1996:58). The products were marketed either in commercials or in 'infomercials', thirty-minute programmes promoting the direct marketing of products and sponsored by the various marketers (*Media Scene* 1996-1997:163).

local productions laid bare a number of issues affecting Indonesian television in this period. These were not Indonesia-bound but ran parallel to developments elsewhere in the world. The focus on advertising expenditures had made entertainment into a commodity, resulting in an obsession with audience research, sales figures and sales charts, and viewing patterns and reactions (Frith 2000:203, 211). The ratings data were controlled by AC Nielsen who ran the surveys (Barkin 2004:73). The higher the programme ratings, the more income the advertisements would generate, and the idea was that this would be equally true of programmes featuring tradition. The best example was given by RCTI that made history with *Si Doel Anak Sekolah*, a local serial featuring (an interpretation of) Betawi tradition, that obtained the highest rating ever in 1995-1996 (*Media Scene* 1995-1996:151; Loven 2008).

The overall attention of the private broadcasters to ratings and advertising revenues was a target for plenty of criticism, levelled by the government, journalists and media watchers, and not least Indosiar's competitors. At Indosiar's launch, H. Harmoko, Indonesian Minister of Information (1983-1997), expressed his concerns about the station's ideology by addressing the Indonesian private television industry in general terms. His statement reveals the continuing efforts of the Indonesian government to deploy media for the development of the country and hence he urged private media to co-operate with TVRI. Nain (2000:146), who studied the media in Malaysia, calls this strategy by which the state tries to keep control of the media 'in the "national interest", while at the same time seemingly complying with the needs of a "free" market', regulated deregulation.¹⁴⁶

Instead of highlighting commercial interests, Harmoko said the stations should prioritize the people and the country. He therefore expressed the hope that Indosiar's idealism would contribute to the development of broadcasting in Indonesia, as well as to national resilience (*ketahanan nasional*) and the intellectual development of the Indonesian people (*mencerdaskan kehidupan bangsa*). Another concern was the increasing influx of foreign programmes using satellite dishes that should be anticipated.¹⁴⁷ After all, Indosiar should not lose sight of the fact it had been granted a broadcasting licence to provide the Indonesian public with information that supported TVRI. Vigilance should be shown to ward off the negative influences from foreign cultural infiltration by both foreign TV stations and non-Indonesian programming broadcast by private Indonesian mass media, said Harmoko. Harmoko also reminded the private stations to contribute 12 percent of their advertising revenues to TVRI. This third concern voiced by the minister referred to the slack attitude of the private television industry towards its obligation to allocate part of its advertising income to TVRI.

Journalists and media watchers also pointed the finger at Indosiar's (too) commercial attitude. Linked to this issue, print-press journalists in particular stressed the necessity of educating a public who has learned how to 'read' and interpret television contents and hence has acquired 'media literacy' (*Agar kepribadian* 1995; *Budaya audio-visual* 1995). Other issues that rubbed the Indonesian public up the wrong way were the strong 'Chinese' image

¹⁴⁶ Compare to Kitley's 'incomplete deregulation' (2000:235).

¹⁴⁷ (xta) 1995; *Menpen Harmoko* 1995, *Indosiar asked* 1995.

of Indosiar, hence its nickname 'Indosiar Visual Mandarin' punning on its name Indosiar Visual Mandiri, and its monopolistic attitude (Wardhana 1997:46-49, 63-66). Indosiar's competitors in the television industry expressed similar concerns. They made comments on the channel's strong financial backing from the Salim conglomerate that would allow it to dominate the market; on the Chinese ethnicity of its owner, a member of a politically-sensitive minority, and its catering to that community; and on his political connections in Indonesia leading to exemptions from imported programme limits (Thomas 2005:141).

These discussions demonstrate the importance of relating the formation of a station's branding and ideologies to media ownership, networks and contextual circumstances. Programming, that will be discussed next, was another factor that determined a station's identity. Recapitulating, a section of Indosiar's co-existing and contradicting narratives, voices and ideologies (White 1992:190) was formed by its position as a new competitor in the Indonesian private television industry, owned by a Chinese entrepreneur with strong ties to the Soeharto family. The circumstances in which Indosiar was founded – in Indonesia and in a global context – favoured commercial broadcasting. They enabled Indosiar to present itself first and foremost as a profit-oriented broadcaster and to be identified as such.

Looking for a niche

Not yet knowing its audiences and mastering ways to persuade them, the station initially followed the mainstream of Indonesian private television programming. Only after it had obtained insight into public demand would it gradually develop its own distinctive style, said director Angky Handoko (*Private TV Indosiar* 1995). In the competition with other private Indonesian television stations to sell commercial slots, Indosiar initially focused on the broadcasting of programmes in those areas in which ratings research/sampling by the Survey Research Indonesia (SRI) were carried out, the cities of Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Semarang and Medan.¹⁴⁸ Jakarta however received the main focus as it constituted the largest market, according to Indosiar Visual Mandiri director Angky Handoko ((ely) 1995a). At first, the station tended to broadcast box office films, series, sitcoms, documentaries and sports programmes, all produced in the United States (*Private TV Indosiar* 1995), besides productions of Japanese and Hong Kong origin and relays of TVRI news programmes. The broadcasting of local *sinetron* was another strategy to attract the audiences' attention. Therefore Indosiar transformed itself into a 'soap factory' (*pabrik sinetron*), profiting from the strong position of locally produced soap series and the high ratings they received ((ely) 1995b).

Only when it began its regular broadcasts of locally produced programmes in regional Indonesian languages did Indosiar begin to distinguish itself from the other private television stations. While the dramatic genres augmented Indosiar's branding, Indosiar adapted the genres to the medium and its aesthetics and, with the help of an amalgam of agents who contributed to and hence helped shape the programmes, imbued them with the Indosiar stamp. Although broadcast nation-wide, these programmes with a traditional character were devised

¹⁴⁸ On ratings and Indonesian *sinetron*, see Habsari 2008.

to capture audiences from specific ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and to woo them with alluring advertisements.

Presenting the traditional shows as an effort to preserve the nation's culture(s) under the slogan 'melestarikan budaya bangsa', Indosiar engaged in New Order discourse and culture policy. In the televised drama, local (including Javanese) and national cultures were reflected upon. This narrative led to a paradoxical image of the station that contrasted sharply with the station's commercial attitude but did suit its mission: to provide services in the field of media communication, in the form of information, education, entertainment and advertising, and to participate in the intellectual development of the nation. To achieve the latter aim, the broadcaster also disseminated government propaganda. At the same time, the focus on the preservation of the culture of the nation covered up the station's commercial run on the Javanese market. Another effect of Indosiar's involvement in traditional performance genres was that in its self-representing practices the station became part of the show, adding an extra layer to the multiple narratives.

With the programming of regional performing arts seven months after its launch, Indosiar introduced a striking change in its persuasive strategies. This leap into a niche affected Indosiar's identity and branding. It allowed the station to approach aficionados of 'traditional' performance genres in local languages, a large potential market, more directly. By broadcasting these genres, Indosiar aimed at pre-persuading its audiences. Once persuaded to play the role of viewer and hooked by the show, they were open to further persuasion. Framing the first broadcasts as a special package was alluring to the audiences, making them feel special too.

3 Re-discovering 'Java'

Indosiar began the broadcasting of regional performing arts using Javanese and other vernaculars on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Indonesian Independence on 17 August 1995. As did all private television stations in Indonesia in the competition for viewers (Wardhana 1997:193-196), Indosiar seized upon a special event as an opportunity to sharpen its profile and promote its special broadcasts. This change in its programming enabled the station to address ethnically oriented markets in the most densely populated areas (Java and Bali) more directly. Framing the programming within the *Pekan Kesenian Tradisional* (PKT), the Week of Traditional Art, from 12 to 20 August Indosiar broadcast the shows to the areas within its reach. In these broadcasts, the station did more than just try to differentiate itself from its domestic competitors. The trend of providing (sub-national) regional ethnic programming should be seen in a wider context, in which domestic commercial television entered into competition with global broadcasters.¹⁴⁹ Hence, this was not restricted to Indonesia. Thomas argues that, in order to be alluring to audiences and to attract advertisers, domestic commercial broadcasters 'had to thoroughly localise or at least culturally

¹⁴⁹ Thomas (2005:212) calls this 'subregional ethnic programming'.

contextualise their programming somewhat' (Thomas 2005:212). Indosiar did so by focusing on local content of a specific kind.

Prominent puppeteers (*dhalang*) and well-known regional art troupes were invited to perform in this special series of shows. The puppeteers were Asep Sunandar, a wayang golek puppeteer from Bandung, Ki Anom Suroto and Ki Timbul Hadiprayitno, both shadow puppeteers from Central Java, representing the styles of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, and a Balinese colleague of theirs.¹⁵⁰ The regional art troupes consisted of Ketoprak Siswo Budoyo from Tulungagung in East Java, Topeng Betawi Setia Warga, led by H. Bokir, Ludruk Surabaya from the radio station RRI Gresik and Wayang Orang Sriwedari from Solo in Central Java, that performed the lakon *Hanoman Obong*, part of the Ramayana. Indosiar's choice of these particular genres and artists actually set a trend for its future programming.

The station wrapped its commercial aims strategically in discourse about proximity and the local. Indosiar's PR staff claimed that its screenings in PKT showed Indosiar's concern about the potential of culture (EH 1995). The shows were performed on stage in their respective regions. Indosiar recorded and edited them before broadcasting them. The reasons behind this approach, Indosiar's PR staff explained, were to make the local artistic nuances and cultural roots tangible, certainly a more difficult objective to achieve if performed in a studio context (EH 1995:59). *VISTA-TV* interpreted the change in Indosiar's programming as a device to demonstrate its nationalistic affiliation (*nasionalisme dan kebangsaan*) by means of the people's artistic expressions (*kesenian rakyat*) (MH/WP/et al. 1995:41).

The broadcasts, particularly the shadow puppet theatre performances, were said to have attracted large audiences, although they partly (on 10-17 August) coincided with TVRI's Wayang Week (*Pekan Wayang*), programmed for the same occasion.¹⁵¹ Indosiar's Press and Communication Relations officer, Gufroni Sakaril, stated that, in answer to audience responses, Indosiar increased the production and dissemination of traditional performance programmes.¹⁵² The regular broadcasting of traditional performance had a positive impact on Indosiar's branding that had initially been vague; the station was criticized for its commercial attitude, its close association with Hong Kong TV and its programming of mainly foreign blockbusters. Gradually, however, in public discourse 'Indosiar' became virtually synonymous with the broadcasts of local ethnically oriented content. During the long hours I spent in traffic jams during my visits to Jakarta in 1997 and 1998, Javanese and Sundanese taxi-drivers often talked excitedly about their preference for Indosiar, just because of these broadcasts.

Local content, modern entertainment

From September 1995, in the framework of the culture preservation discourse Indosiar broadcast programmes in Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese and Batak vernaculars on a regular

¹⁵⁰ I have not found any detailed information about the Balinese puppeteer.

¹⁵¹ Veven Sp Wardhana (1995) pointed out the phenomenon of special days and special broadcasts that are all broadcast simultaneously, so nobody can watch all of them.

¹⁵² Personal communication Gufroni Sakaril, Jakarta, 22 December 1997.

basis. I shall return to Indosiar's use of this preservation discourse in Chapter 7. Among the Javanese theatrical genres were wayang kulit, wayang orang, kethoprak, dhagelan and ludruk, all broadcast without subtitles or dubbing. Although it has a Javanese background and is oriented towards Javanese viewers, Srimulat is a case apart. Indonesian spoken, with Javanese in the comic dialogues, it was categorized as sitcom rather than traditional art. Night-long wayang kulit performances were aired on Saturday nights, from 23.30 to 04.30 hrs. From October the same year, Indosiar extended its programming of traditional theatre with broadcasts of Sundanese wayang golek, and shorter time slots on other days were filled with broadcasts of other Javanese performance genres.¹⁵³

At the beginning, Indosiar tried to find qualitatively good performances of traditional dramatic genres, meaning: popular entertainment. Once the broadcasts were in great demand, the troupes themselves contacted the TV station. Every month Indosiar received about ten letters of request to perform at Indosiar, of which the station approved four to five.¹⁵⁴

In December 1997, the executive producer of Indosiar's production department Non Drama (!), Panca Cahya Utama, invited me to attend the recording of a wayang kulit performance. It would be a *wayang kulit ngepop*, a shadow puppet show with mass-market appeal, he said. Heru Soesanto, the mayor (*walikota*) of Malang, performed the lakon *Wahyu Kuncoro Jati*, supported by guest stars. The show was organized to celebrate the fifty-first anniversary of the Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia (Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan (BPK)). The performance and the recording took place on 18 December 1997 in the auditorium of the Audit Board (in the BPK building) in Jakarta. During the live show the editing was done in the Indosiar van on the same premises. The production was broadcast on 7 March 1998.

In an interview after the show, puppeteer Heru Soesanto told me that he had chosen to perform a *wayang campursari* – a then recent phenomenon in the development of wayang kulit – to make shadow puppet theatre attractive to younger audiences. Campursari stands for the hybrid character of the show, mixing wayang kulit with other genres and styles. The walikota had often been involved in the popularization of regional art forms (*kesenian daerah*), as he had been a dhalang since 1980. His performances with the famous professional dhalang Ki Anom Soeroto and Ki Manteb Soedharsono must have been a source of inspiration to him.

The campursari character of this particular show was created by the mingling of traditional shadow puppeteering of the dhalang manipulating leather puppets and speaking through them as he told the story, with other performance genres that conveyed other frames of reference by dancers, singers, musicians other than gamelan players and comedians. Hence, the wayang story was enriched by the comic presence of the popular comedians (*pelawak*) Timbul and Rabies who filled the clown scene (*gara-gara*) with their humorous skits. Traditionally this was done by the clown puppets. Dangdut and keroncong-like songs were played by a campursari orchestra consisting of some gamelan instruments, keyboards, drums, a kendhang and a guitar, led by the famous Manthous and his group, Maju Lancar, from Gunungkidul,

¹⁵³ Such as ludruk, *lawak* (comedy) and kethoprak.

¹⁵⁴ Personal communication Panca CU, Jakarta, 17, 18, 23 December 1997.

and the female vocalists (*pesindhen*) – among whom was USA-born ‘Ning Elizabeth Sekar Arum from Malang’, as she was announced by the dhalang – who each sang a song in turn. Four beautiful female dancers from Malang wearing glamorous costumes with traditional features performed the Gambyong dance. A fight scene between the protagonists Arjuna, Cakil and a giant was taken over from the puppets by (human) dancers. The dhalang’s performance embellished by all these interventions by guest stars was intended to be spectacular and give the show more verve. The staging was thought to be innovative, but nevertheless had already set a new standard for shadow puppet performances because of its abundant imitation of television puppeteers.¹⁵⁵

The broadcast of Wahyu Kuncoro Jati was typical of the Javanese genres that Indosiar broadcast: Panca CU claimed it was a ‘traditional’ performance transformed into ‘modern’ entertainment, with a contemporary and innovative character. Its purpose was to attract large numbers of audiences for business purposes and it was free of any ideological mission.¹⁵⁶ That was the task of TVRI – a remark by which Panca CU distanced himself (and Indosiar) from TVRI and its conservative image. However, a close reading of the contributions by the multiple agents that shaped the broadcast and constructed its polysemic character, as I shall do in the next chapter, reveals that the Indosiar programmes did contain other ideological missions.

Linguistically based markets

By broadcasting these productions, Indosiar had shown a preference for local content categorized as traditional rather than programmes with an ethnic tinge, the latter the preference of the other private TV broadcasters. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 4, a genre like kethoprak, not to mention dhagelan and ludruk, that were originally identified as modern urban genres, had gradually been incorporated into the traditional canon, hence their being advertised as traditional art genres. The use of local languages was one of the parameters that determined whether a genre was considered traditional or not. Indosiar used the potential of ‘linguistically based markets’ (Sreberny 2000:116) for the production and dissemination of these media products. Sreberny says that the emergence of these markets – her examples feature Spanish, Chinese and Arabic but are equally applicable to Javanese – supports ‘tendencies towards cultural, linguistic and religious particularity’ (Sreberny 2000:116).

From the perspective of broadcasting legislation, Indosiar’s broadcasting in vernaculars was conspicuous. Because of the changes in the Indonesian televisionscape, the government had imposed several restrictions on all private television broadcasting and these would be sanctioned in the 1997 Broadcasting Law, the first bill to include television. When Indosiar was launched, several drafts of the law had already been in circulation (actually since the 1970s); in the early 1990s it was revised (Kitley 2000:225-226; Peranginangin 1997:20-21). Language use was one of the topics with which the law was concerned. The media legislation (and its drafts) required all television programmes, including advertisements, to be broadcast

¹⁵⁵ For a detailed analysis of such ‘mixed’ wayang performances, see Mrázek 1999, 2000 and 2005.

¹⁵⁶ Personal communication Panca CU, Jakarta, 18 December 1997.

in Indonesian. Regional languages should only be maintained if suitable to the programme. Were regional languages to be used, these had to be made accessible to non-native speakers (referred to as inhabitants of other regions) by translating them into Indonesian as far as this was possible. Foreign productions should be dubbed into or subtitled in Indonesian.¹⁵⁷

When regional traditional genres were broadcast, use of the (sub-national) vernacular was taken for granted and beyond discussion. However, Indosiar did not provide the spoken word with Indonesian subtitles to make it accessible to non-Javanese viewers. Possibly it imagined that audiences for the Javanese performance genres would be restricted to ethnic Javanese, although it did broadcast these genres Indonesia-wide, making them accessible (but not necessarily meaningful) to people from other ethnic groups living in a different cultural environment and speaking different languages. This presumed oversight reveals how problematic it was for Indosiar to identify its audiences. Moreover, as the largest identifiable target audience ‘the’ Javanese were not a homogeneous group. Consequently, not all of the then more than 80 million native speakers of Javanese felt ‘their culture’ was represented in these programmes. The ratings were the last factor that hampered the construction of a clear target audience, as they were based on research in the largest Indonesian cities only.

From a commercial point of view, the dissemination of Javanese theatrical genres seemed to be a lucrative business. To gain access to the Javanese gold-mine, private TV stations had to compete with both global and local television, and therefore engaged in the innovation of what were called ethnic broadcasts of performance genres that belonged to the cultural riches of specific ethnic groups (*‘pembaharuan’ tayangan etnis Jawa*) (Wijaya 1997:114-115). Indosiar had been the first station to do this. The station’s choice for linguistically and therefore ethnically based markets stemmed from the idea that Indonesian culture should be based on the apices of regional cultures, as these had been determined by constitutional law. This was no outgrowth of an auto-orientalist gaze as the classical battle serials displaying an ethnic nuance had been. As I have explained before, the government’s plans to stimulate the building of a national culture included the promotion of traditional art and culture. This had been solidly embedded in the policy lines of TVRI, before it was joined by Indosiar. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether Indosiar’s stance was really a response to Indonesian Minister of Information Harmoko’s call to the private media to co-operate with TVRI, as it had been made with business in mind.

With this choice Indosiar set a trend. As a result, other television stations entered the competition and began broadcasting traditional performance genres, while at the other hand some new genres developed in the media. In March 1996, for instance, TPI began broadcasting wayang golek twice a month. TPI stated that this was neither a new initiative nor an imitation (*ngekor*) of Indosiar. Paying attention to traditional art forms had always been an essential part of TPI’s policy, it claimed; in the past it had scheduled *Dolanan* (traditional games), *Dhagelan Mataram* (humorous skits in the Mataram style) and *Wayang Kulit* ((SJ) 1996).

¹⁵⁷ UUP 32/2002, Pasal 38 (1-2), and Pasal 39 (1, 2 and 3); PP 50/2005, Pasal 16 (1-6).

The interest in traditional performance did not last, however, as demonstrated by the unconvincing ratings. After the monetary crisis of 1997-1998, the broadcasting of these genres decreased; finally they were suspended entirely. What was successful and remained popular was comedy: Kethoprak humor and Srimulat, and all the variations on both forms. In November 1998, RCTI began broadcasting Kethoprak humor,¹⁵⁸ followed by Indosiar and SCTV that broadcast their own variants of comic kethoprak and ludruk (Bosnak 2006:80). TVRI Jakarta, also eager to claim its share, scheduled *Wayang orang humor (Vista-TV)*. These programmes did very well in the ratings and offered an ideal context for advertisements. Although often Indonesianized and modernized to a certain extent, these genres were still considered to belong to the sphere of local (Javanese) tradition.

*'Indosiar is Javanizing'*¹⁵⁹

While private TV stations were building relay stations all over Indonesia, the Javanese scent was said to dominate in their programming. As the previous sections have revealed, this Javanese inclination was based principally on economic arguments. As more than half of the country's population was of Javanese descent and Java was the most densely populated island, the television industry used the number of Javanese inhabitants to legitimize its orientation: Javanese performances would attract advertisers (Hartanto 1997:120).

Two main points of criticism dominated the discussions. Looming large was the fact that the orientation of the private TV stations towards the ethnic Javanese seriously limited the number of programmes featuring other ethnic cultures. Critics blamed the 1997 Broadcasting Law for having required the Indonesian television industry to support the building of a national culture without mentioning the need to maintain a multi-ethnic character (Hartanto 1997:121). The only Indosiar programme that actually approached the idea of multi-ethnicity was *Tembang Persada* (Patriotic Songs), featuring familiar songs from various Indonesian ethnic groups, linked to their areas of origin: Java, Batak (*Horas*), Sunda (*Kawih Pasundan*), Padang, Ambon and so on. The second criticism was levelled at Indosiar in particular, alleging that the station had been Javanizing (*men-Jawa*) (*Membangkitkan gairah* 1996; Hartanto 1997:120-121).

Discussions in the media focused on both phenomena. Critical articles published in newspapers and magazines carried titles like: 'Petruk's success story at Indosiar' (*Kisah sukses* 1995) – referring to Indosiar's successful wayang broadcasts in which Petruk is one of the clowns; 'Because of its potential, Java is given priority' (Mahfuf 1997); 'Courting Java with tradition' (Wijaya 1997). Journalists wondered why what were called multi-ethnic programmes focused mainly on Java. After all, Indosiar had relay stations all over the country. Could the strategy to disseminate Javanese materials be legitimized because of the number of native speakers of Javanese who were potential TV audiences (Hartanto 1997:120-121)? In other words: Were the private TV stations simply propelled into making this choice by commercial motives (since they were selling large time slots to advertisers)? Another frequently asked question was whether the slogan preserving the culture(s) of the nation

¹⁵⁸ Personal communication Timbul Suhardi, Jakarta 19 June 2001.

¹⁵⁹ 'Indosiar men-Jawa' (Hartanto 1997).

(*melestarikan budaya bangsa*) could be interpreted as taking responsibility only for the culture of the majority (Mahfuf 1997:116-117)?

When Indosiar was said to Javanize (*men-Jawa*) – ‘Jawa’ here meaning Central Java – , this did not have a positive connotation. The discussion that followed seemed to be a continuation of the discourse about the dominance of Javanese culture in the national culture that had already been a thorn in the side for a long time. It seems that Indosiar especially was thought to have become too Javanese; the presence of Javanese culture was perceived to be too strong, even though the number of programmes featuring Javanese performing arts was actually very small in comparison to the overall programming; moreover they filled night time slots. Reactions like these were based on preconceived ideas. The same is probably true of connoting the process of *men-Jawa* solely to Central Java as many groups and actors from East Java had also been regularly invited to perform for Indosiar. Lastly, the number of advertisements explicitly featuring Javanese culture was fairly limited, as I shall demonstrate in Chapter 7.

A wider scope

On the occasion of its third anniversary in 1998, Indosiar widened its scope with the programme *Semarak 3 tahun Indosiar* (Adding lustre to the three years of Indosiar). This might have been a reaction to the criticism of the absence of multi-culturalism in its programming. *Semarak 3 tahun Indosiar* was broadcast live from the Indosiar studios between 19.30 and 22.00 hrs. About 1,200 artists from all over Indonesia, like those of Toraja, Bali, Betawi and Irian Jaya, contributed to the programme that was to reflect the pluriformity of Indonesian cultures (*keragaman budaya nusantara*) and make it alluring to a wider audience (*seluruh masyarakat luas*). Director Handoko hoped the programme would comfort the residents of Jakarta, both the Betawi, the original inhabitants, and the immigrants, and assuage their homesickness. Different genres and styles appeared on the screen. Among the Javanese artists involved were dancer Didik Nini Thowok and comedian Timbul ((Cdr) 1998:10). Indosiar used the programme to proclaim itself a nation builder and a broadcaster who fostered local cultures, the nostalgic symbols of the people’s home regions.

Indosiar also joined the discussion on a recurrent theme about traditional culture in contemporary Indonesia by screening two films: N. Riantiarno’s *Cemeng 2005* (The last primadonna) and Garin Nugroho’s *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang* (And the moon dances).¹⁶⁰ *Cemeng 2005* symbolized the uncertain future of traditional performing arts in contemporary Indonesia. It featured itinerant theatre troupes, *sandiwara jalanan*, from Cirebon on the verge of extinction. *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang*, a film about dance against a Javanese background, represented the confrontation between tradition and contemporary dance. The films represent two directions in the discourse on tradition and new developments: *Cemeng 2005* stands for the discourse of loss; *Bulan tertusuk Ilalang* for the confrontation between the two worlds. As both films had been sold to advertisers as part of Indosiar’s anniversary package (*paket Ulang Tahun*), they served the station’s commercial aims and fitted its preservation discourse. They

¹⁶⁰ Broadcast on 18 January and on 25 January 1998, both at 19.30 hrs.

were also possible precursors to Indosiar's broadcasting policy after the economic crisis, when it slowly but surely stepped away from its ideology of propagating the preservation of cultures of the nation.

Conclusions

When it was established in 1995, in many senses Indosiar found fertile soil. The Indonesian government had put an end to its monopoly on broadcasting (at least officially); it had launched the project of deregulating the Indonesian broadcasting industry and displayed an open attitude towards commercial initiatives – provided that they supported TVRI. The economy was growing rapidly. Four private stations, Indosiar's predecessors, had paved the way for the last station in this period. In short, all the circumstances were propitious for the setting-up of the new private television station.

In the course of its first year of existence, the station constructed a branding that sustained multiple ideologies, hence my idea of apparently paradoxical narratives (to which I shall return in the next chapter). My analysis in this and the next chapter of the agents and the personal and institutional relations that contributed to these ideologies lays bare Indosiar's media practices. Highly commercially orientated, supporting New Order government discourse and engaging in Javanese (and other ethnic groups') performance genres, the station catered simultaneously to the local on both the national and the regional levels, and to governmental and private spheres. The station's ownership and business networks also contributed to the global aspects of the broadcasting.

Opting for broadcasts of linguistically and ethnically based programmes that were categorized as traditional, Indosiar set a trend in the world of private television in Indonesia. With its Indonesia-wide broadcasts of these traditional performance genres, Indosiar bridged physical distances (from the location of the performance, to the TV studios, to the audiences all over Indonesia; from the regional to the national level; from the villages or small towns to the metropole) and temporal ones (from the past in the wayang and kethoprak stories to the contemporary setting of the Jakarta-based TV station). To some extent, Thompson's view of tradition is applicable here: the traditional performance genres were de-regionalized/de-localized, but simultaneously 'continuously re-embedded in new contexts and re-moored to new kinds of territorial unit' (Thompson 1996:94).

With its programming policy, Indosiar took an easy path in several ways. By choosing the most obvious genres from the traditional canon, leaving genres less well-known in Jakarta aside, reducing 'traditional Javanese culture' to just a few icons of regional traditional performance, Indosiar's programming of traditional drama can be called conservative. Its choices were based neither on actual investigation into the culture nor on market research, but on assumptions about what might be alluring to its target audiences, assuming that most ethnic Javanese were wayang and kethoprak aficionados. Indosiar constructed a narrow image of its Javanese viewers and of Javanese-ness.

By preferring 'main stream' performances by popular troupes, the station avoided the risk of failing. The majority of these performances were deliberately designed to be popular (*ngepop*) and often consisted of a mixture of performance genres and (sometimes) media. Their image was intended to be 'contemporary'. This was grist to the mill of the discourse of loss proponents who advocated 'authentic' styles. The material was easily available, and easy to record, edit and disseminate without too many costs. Lastly, Indosiar's interpretation of 'local content' was restricted to Java (meaning performances in Javanese, Sundanese and Cirebonese), Bali, and Sumatra (the Batak songs in the programme *Horas*). This narrow-minded vision of the meaning of the local was actually very 'Orde Baru' and continued the New Order approach to the building of a national culture on the basis of the apices of regional cultures (usually meaning a restricted number of local regional cultures, ignoring most of the other ethnic cultures of Indonesia).