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The recording industry and 'regional' culture in Indonesia : the case of Minangkabau

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CHAPTER 2

THE DISC ERA: CIRCULATION, UTILIZATION, ACCEPTANCE

After the phonograph became an object of public exhibition in Java during the last two decades of the nineteenth century (the first phase; see Chapter 1), this technology then went through the second and third phases: the use and the production of local recordings. This chapter deals with these last two phases, covering the period from 1900 to the 1950s. During this period the ‘talking machine’ and records business in the Dutch East Indies expanded significantly and, directly or indirectly, inspired Native entrepreneurs in the colony to produce commercial records of local repertoires.

Three main points will be elucidated in this chapter: first, the complex nature of the ‘talking machine’ business in the Indies during the first half of the twentieth century and the parties involved; second, the production of early commercial records of Indonesian local repertoires, both in Java and the outer islands, and the parties and individuals involved in this new business; third, responses of Indies colonial society to this technology and to the modern sound of the early commercial records of local music. Special attention will be paid to West Sumatra: I will look at Minangkabau’s first encounter with recording technology and the mediation of Minangkabau culture on discs.

I argue that increasing consumption of the ‘talking machine’ in the Netherlands East Indies during the late colonial period gave a positive impulse to local music. ‘Gramophone recordings stimulated fusion, stylistic borrowing and localization [in music]’ (Tan 2013:459). I also argue that the penetration of records (and radio broadcasting) played an important role in the development of musical culture in the Indies, shaping the foundation for the formation of regional recording industries in Indonesia in the late 1960s.

THE ‘TALKING MACHINE’ IN THE INDIES: FROM PUBLIC EXHIBITION TO PRIVATE RECEPTION

Despite the inauspicious introduction of the ‘talking machine’ to the Dutch East Indies, epitomized in the unpleasant Archibald–Eijssell incident in Surabaya discussed in Chapter 1, the phonograph would come to be increasingly prominent in Indonesian society, first supplementing and eventually supplanting certain attributes and functions of live performance. A widening public recognition of the role of ‘talking machines’ is reflected in the Malay-language names given by Indies Natives to the phonograph or gramophone: *mesin bitjara* or *mesin berkata* (‘talking machine’).

During the initial period when the phonograph was still an object of public exhibition, only one distinguished person in the Indies owned a phonograph for private use.¹¹⁹ He was Melchior Treub, director of the National Botanical Garden in Buitenzorg (present-day Bogor) (Fig. 2.1). Other people could only enjoy the sound of the wonderful machine in its limited public exhibitions. But after 1895, public phonograph exhibitions in the Indies, particularly in Java, seem to have decreased. In urban areas, ‘talking machine’ demonstrations no longer captured the attention of the public because the number of people who owned phonographs had increased. The sound of recorded music from the ‘talking machine’ was no longer something bizarre. People began to anticipate the next innovation: ‘Perhaps there will be other astonishing items to come to this Archipelago (*insulinde sini*).’¹²⁰ One of the next innovations would be silent film.

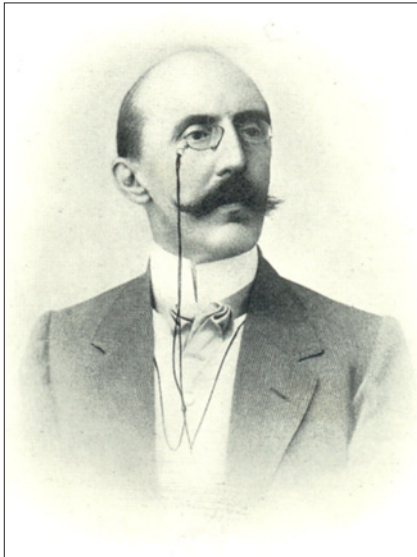


Figure 2.1: Melchior Treub (1851–1910), director of the National Botanical Garden (Kebun Raya) in Buitenzorg (Bogor), the first person in the Dutch East Indies to privately own a ‘talking machine’ (Source: Went in 1911: facing p. 48 [333])

Advertisements for the ‘talking machine’ began to appear in Indies newspapers, offering consumers the opportunity to purchase a gramophone¹²¹ for home entertainment¹²² from the Edison Company or competitors. The major international ‘talking machine’ companies – Columbia, Pathé Frères, Odeon and the Gramophone Company – competed with each other to market their products in the Indies. For example, the American Climbing Monkey gramophone is one of the items imported from Europe offered for sale in an 1895 newspaper advertisement by H. Willems & Co. published on 28 July 1895 in the Cirebon-based Dutch-language newspaper *Tjerimai*. Other European suppliers of the ‘talking machine’, including

¹¹⁹ Bintang Soerabaia, 27 September 1892, quoting from *Slomporet Melayoe*.

¹²⁰ *Primbun Soerabaia*, 16 August 1900.

¹²¹ Invented in 1888 by the German-American Emile Berliner (1851–1929), the name ‘gramophone’ was an inversion of the name ‘phonograph’ invented by Edison. In early advertisements in Dutch-language newspapers in Java, it was sometimes written *grammophoon* (Fig. 2.2).

¹²² Though some showmen or magicians, such as J. Calabressini (Chapter 1) and W. Noordhoorn (*India-Olanda*, 5 September 1896) still conducted demonstrations of phonographs and other new European technologies, they seem no longer to have been interesting enough to attract much public attention.

A

Graphophones à f 60.---

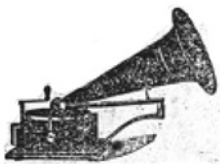
LEEGE ROLLEN f 9.— per dozijn.
 VOLLE ROLLEN » 12.— per dozijn.
 RECORDERS (om zelf rollen te vullen) » 12.50

Bij elke graphophone 12 rollen muziek gratis.

In voorraad bij
ANGLO-JAVA TRADING COMPANY LIMITED.
 Batavia — Bandoeng.

1221 (18 r.)

B



Nieuwe aanvoer mooie uitgezochte
 2.— Gld. **GRAMMOPHOONPLATEN.** 2.50 Gld.
GRAMMOPHOONS thans f 80.— contant.
 W. NAESSENS & Co., Batavia-Sourabaya-Den Haag.

C

Weder ontvangen:
 de gewilde Amerikaansche
GRAMPHONE'S
 met Eboniet platen.
BEKKER-LEFEBRE,
 1342 Rijswijk.

D

GRAMOPHONES
 met 12 platen
f 80.— contant.

Extra platen. f 1.25
 Wasrollen bespeeld. » 1.—
 onbespeeld » 0.75

ANGLO JAVA TRADING CO. LTD.
 Batavia.

5765

Figure 2.2: Early advertisements for the 'talking machine' in the Dutch colonial press in Java (Sources: A. Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 20 January 1900; B. Java Bode, 6 November 1900; C. De Locomotief, 31 March 1900; D. Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 10 July 1900)

the graphophone, appeared in subsequent years, such as Bekker-Lefebvre and the Anglo-Java Trading Company Limited, both situated in Batavia, and W. Naessens & Co., with headquarters in The Hague and branch shops in Batavia, Bandung, and Surabaya (Fig. 2.2).¹²³ W. Naessens & Co. offered various models of the Victor Talking Machine from the USA, for prices of 75, 85, 130, 160, and 200 guilders, including 12 discs.¹²⁴ Gramophone needles were sold for

¹²³ Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 28 June and 10 July 1900; Java-Bode, 18 and 28 February 1900.

¹²⁴ Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 4 September 1903.

0.75 guilder per box.¹²⁵ In June 1903, the firm of S. Bosman advertised that the Gramophone brand, manufactured by Gramophone & Typewriter Limited (London), was available in Batavia. A Monarch gramophone, including 16 discs (recordings of European singers and orchestras) and 400 needles, was offered at the price of 150 guilders.¹²⁶ Gramophone owners required many needles because a single needle had a very short life, with manufacturers recommending that the needle be changed every 15 minutes of playing time. Connoisseurs changed the needle after playing just one disc. Therefore gramophone owners had to have the money to buy needles.¹²⁷ In the same year, 1903, F.W.Js.V.B. Wortman, director of the Gramophone Company for Belgium, Holland, and the Colonies (with offices in Amsterdam and Brussels), placed advertisements in Batavia's newspaper *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*.¹²⁸

Chinese competitors then entered the 'talking machine' trade in the Indies. By 1902, for instance, Tan Hoe Lo & Co.'s Batavia department store¹²⁹ in Pintu Besar offered Edison's phonographs for sale (Fig. 2.5). One recorded cylinder was offered for 1.10 guilder and one blank cylinder for 0.40.¹³⁰ Other Chinese competitors followed, for example, Tio Tek Hong in Pasar Baroe, Weltevreden (Fig. 2.5). His shop, in February 1904, was the first to offer phonographs manufactured by the (USA) Victor Talking Machine Company.¹³¹

Advertising of the 'talking machine' in the vernacular press starting in the first decade of the 1900s indicates that the instrument was also attracting Native people's attention. The 'talking machine' had become a luxury good that was affordable for European, Eurasian (*Indo*), Chinese, Arab, and Indonesian Native upper-class families (Fig. 2.3). However, the marketing of the 'talking machine' remained concentrated in Java. Surabaya was the first city to compete with Batavia in offering the phonograph for sale. The pioneer phonograph supplier in this city was De Bont & Co. in Bergdwarstraat (opposite Baume & Co.). In 1903 it offered for sale products from both the Gramophone and the Edison phonograph companies.¹³² In subsequent years a competitor, W. Burghard & Co. in Gemblongan, appeared.¹³³

¹²⁵ Java-Bode, 28 October 1903. A box (*pax*) contained 200 needles.

¹²⁶ Java-Bode, 22 and 29 June 1903, 7 July 1903. Bosman was manager of the British Gramophone and Typewriter Limited agency in The Hague. The company also supplied optical materials, magazines, and photographic materials.

¹²⁷ To save money, or perhaps because of the scarcity of needles, 'talking machine' owners, as a Minangkabau whose relatives once owned a gramophone in the late 1950s told me, sharpened needles blunted by frequent use by grinding them on stones (Abraham Ilyas, age 66, pers. comm. 13-3-2011). Tens of millions of needles were produced during 1920-1940 and were manufactured worldwide. With the last of the 78-rpm gramophone records being recorded in the early 1960s, the production of needles was reduced to just a trickle.

¹²⁸ See Wortman's advertisements in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* on 22 August 1903, 7 and 21 September 1903, 3, 17 and 19 October 1903. Wortman's standing was apparently higher than that of a local agent and more like that of a branch manager of the Gramophone Company (it changed its name to the American Import Company in 1906). 'Discs were pressed in Europe, sent to Wortman in Holland, and then shipped by Wortman to his agent in Batavia, W.H. Hassellbach, who then distributed them further' (Yampolsky 2013a:91).

¹²⁹ The firm sells various goods, from syrups and jewelries to music instruments (see *Bintang - Barat*, Monday 2 July 1894 and subsequent dates).

¹³⁰ *Bintang Betawi*, 25 January and 12 March 1902.

¹³¹ Java-Bode, 29 February 1904.

¹³² *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 18 August 1903 and after.

¹³³ *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 25 February 1904.

In these early years of the twentieth century the gramophone was starting to be assimilated into Indonesian life, as evidenced by the use of the phonograph in rural central Java by an Islamic functionary (*mudin*) to proselytize his faith.¹³⁴ He played Quran recordings for religious adherents in the prayer house. Apparently such recordings of the Quran, which were still a novelty at that time, attracted the attention of many Muslim *ulema*. The evidence indicates that ‘talking machines’ and records had spread into the Javanese countryside in the first decade of the 1900s, and that they were accepted by moderate Muslims. Later, as Chalid Salim writes in his autobiography, the gramophone was even used as a means of entertainment for political internees at the Digoel camp in the New Guinea jungle in the 1930s (Salim 1973:141-2). In Java, the demand to own ‘talking machines’ increased, and the marketing of the machine was extended outside Java. The phonograph was initially priced out of reach of most people except elite members of society, but as more brands came onto the market, including some cheaper brands, the machine could be offered for sale more broadly. As a consequence, its use was no longer dominated by Europeans, but crossed racial and class lines.

Along with the spread of the ‘talking machine’ in the Indies, local sound entered a period of commoditization, which had manifold implications for society, economically, culturally,



Figure 2.3: The *Indische* (Indo) Franken family in Rembang in 1903 enjoyed the gramophone during their leisure time, during the years when the ‘talking machine’ was a showpiece for European and *Indische* upper-class families in the Indies (Source: Nieuwenhuys 1998:114)

134 Tjerimai, 23 July 1902. It reminds me of the use of gramophones by Buddhist priests for their preachings (*bana*) in late-colonial Sri Lanka (Wickramasinghe 2014:88-90).

socially, and even psychologically. The 'talking machine' factories in Europe and the United States assigned representatives to conduct recording expeditions to Asia, Africa and Latin America in order to record local music. The master recordings were sent back to Europe to be replicated for commercial purposes. The first recording expedition from Europe arrived in the Malay world in 1902-1903; that was Fred Gaisberg's¹³⁵ first 'far eastern' recording tour for the British Gramophone Company (established in London in May 1897), assisted by George Dillnutt. They recorded some Malay and Javanese genres in Singapore, one of the cities they visited during their tour in Asia (Gaisberg 1946:64; Kinnear 1994:xvii, 9-14; Tan 1996/1997:2) before continuing to East Asia where they made recordings of Japanese traditional songs and verbal arts (see Miller 1996). In Singapore Gaisberg made recordings of some local repertoires by recording local artists from the British East Indies (present-day Malaysia and Singapore). He also invited some Javanese artists from the Dutch East Indies to Singapore to be recorded, mentioning that he experienced difficulties reaching Batavia which was under the control of the Dutch East Indies authorities. Three years later, in 1905-1906, the expedition to the Orient of the German firm Beka was led by Heinrich Bumb. The team, which consisted of Willy Bielefeld, William Hadert, and Bumb himself, made recordings in Constantinople, Cairo, Calcutta, and Rangoon before heading for Singapore. From Singapore, they made a two-day visit to Batavia. In two days they recorded a number of 'stamboul' (*stamboel*) songs and a series of Javanese songs with the characteristic 'gamelang' (*gamelan*) accompaniment (Want 1976). In subsequent years the Beka Company made recordings in Java and Bali. During the years before World War I, Beka and Odeon were acquired by the Carl Lindstrom Company, consolidating German recording activity in one company. Between the 1910s and 1930s Beka and Odeon made many commercial discs of the songs of urban popular genres such as *krontjong* and *komedie stamboel*, predominantly by some leading artists like Eurasian actor-singer Willem Cramer and *stamboel*'s prima donna Miss Riboet.¹³⁶ In 1928 Beka representatives made a legendary trip to Bali, 'along with Odeon, making the only Balinese gamelan recordings from the era, although the Balinese records were commercial failures at the time'.¹³⁷ And in the early 1930s the company also signed a contract for six years with the most prominent Chinese-descent musician Oei Tiang Kiet (born in Surabaya in 1874) with his famed genuine Chinese music group Jang Kiem and Pat Iem (Soers 1939:7).

In 1904 the first advertisement for commercial recordings of local repertoires appeared in an Indies newspaper at Surabaya. In it, De Bont & Co., the first 'talking machine' supplier in Surabaya, offered for sale recordings of 'Pantoen Tjinta Nona', 'Pantoen Tanem Melatie', and '[Pantun] Nina Bobo' ('Love with a girl', 'Planting jasmine', and 'Lullaby'). These were the delightful *krontjong* ('*keroncong*' in modern Indonesian spelling) songs popularized by performances of *komedie stamboel* (Istanbul-style theatre) at that time (Heins 1975; Yampolsky

135 On Gaisberg's gramophone business, see Moore 1976.

136 Sin Jit Po, 24 November 1925. Peter Keppy 2013:459 refers to information from Jaap Erkelens, a collector of Indonesian early commercial recordings, who mentioned that Miss Riboet recorded approximately 140 songs of *dongengan* ('topical singing') for Beka between 1927 and 1932.

137 See: <http://hajimaji.com/category/indonesia/> and <http://www.dust-digital.com/se-asia/> (accessed 6-10-2013). The website was made by David Murray, who launched the project *Longing for the Past: The 78 rpm Era in Southeast Asia*, which includes an extensive survey and provides a kaleidoscopic collection of 4 CDs with 90 tracks of music from Southeast Asia spanning six decades (1905-1966).

2010). The lullaby had also been recorded by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje on wax cylinder (for the phonograph) along with some other Dutch East Indies repertoires between 1905 and 1909 (see Van Zanten forthcoming). Since these *krontjong* songs that accompanied *komedie stamboel* performances were so popular at that time, in Java as well as outer islands (see Pandji Poestaka, No. 62, Tahoen V, 5 Augustus 1927:1068), therefore they were recorded on commercial discs.¹³⁸ It is very possible that these recordings were part of the Malay repertoires recorded by Gaisberg in Singapore in the previous year, since there is no evidence of anyone else using the newly invented gramophone to record local Malay repertoires earlier than Gaisberg. These first commercial recordings must have been quite popular as all the discs were sold out in less than one month.¹³⁹ In July of the same year Tan Hoe Lo & Co. in Batavia offered phonograph cylinders of local music including *krontjong* songs, songs accompanying *bangsawan* theatre performances, as well as other Asian genres like music accompanying *wajang Tjina Makaw* performances.¹⁴⁰

For the world as a whole, the early twentieth century marks the emergence of a new era of music in which the invention of the phonograph had made it possible for music to be heard outside of the physical presence of musicians. As McNeil notes, the act of disembodiment of music from its physical source was to carry with it a whole new range of cultural, social, and economic implications for the practice and patronage of music (McNeil 2004:315). The invention of the phonograph, which coincided with other innovations in printing, radio, and loudspeakers, led to the creation of a new mass culture in the Indies. It marked the beginning of a ‘musical revolution’, to borrow a term from Hughes (2007:445), in Asian countries, including the Dutch East Indies.

In the first decade of the twentieth century the ‘talking machine’ business in the Indies was still dominated by Europeans,¹⁴¹ Dutch in particular, though they had some

¹³⁸ *Stamboel* songs are typically songs of 16 bars, played in a fast tempo. There were three groups of *stamboel* songs during the era called *Tempoe Doeloe* (‘Old Times’) or Time of *Stamboel* Songs (1880-1920): *Stamboel I* consisted of three songs, ‘Nina Bobo’, ‘Potong Padi’, and ‘Soleram’ (the recordings marketed by De Bont & Co. contained these songs); *Stamboel II* consisted of two songs, ‘Si Jampang’ and ‘Jali-Jali’; and *Stamboel III* consisted of the song ‘Kemayoran’ (see Poll n.d.). The Malay *pantun* style of quatrain verses is essential in *krontjong* song lyrics (Keppy 2008). Other musical intermezzos used in *komedie stamboel* performances were marches, polkas, and waltzes. *Stamboel* songs were used as musical intermezzos between the scenes in *komedie stamboel*, performed by touring comedy troupes of Eurasian (*Indo*) actors that provided folk entertainment and were very popular around the end of the nineteenth century (1891-1903), especially in East Java (Cohen 2006).

¹³⁹ *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 16 May to 6 June 1904.

¹⁴⁰ *Bintang Betawi*, 27 July 1904. *Krontjong* is a hybrid music genre that originated in Batavia in communities of freed Portuguese slaves in the sixteenth century (Yampolsky 1990:2). *Bangsawan* is a type of traditional Malay opera that was very popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Tan 1993). *Wajang Tjina Makaw* is Chinese opera, which, according to Matthew Isaac Cohen in a personal communication, ‘consists of some female performers, but not all-female troupes’. As suggested by its name, the genre originated from southern China’s Macau, but not all troupes hailed from there. Performed by performers wearing thick make-up that resembled a mask, it was very popular among Chinese communities in Java from the middle of the nineteenth century (Boachi 1856:299-300).

¹⁴¹ In this chapter I give only a concise sketch of the ‘talking machine’ business in the Dutch East Indies. My concern is the socio-cultural effects of the growing consumption of the technology in the colony, especially in West Sumatra. For more on the business of the ‘talking machine’ and gramophone records in the Dutch East Indies and the Straits Settlements until 1942, see Yampolsky 2013a.

Chinese competitors. Based in cities in the Netherlands like Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, Dutch traders dominated the business, shipping ‘talking machines’ to the colony. These companies included F. Kirchman & Co., Firma Gerding & Co. and Pijttersen and Nieuwenhuizen in Amsterdam.¹⁴² They tried to find local dealers in the Indies to expand their business network. Van Veen & Co., for example, wrote in one of its advertisements: ‘Looking for well-established traders in major cities of the Indies to become principal agents for the sale of high-quality discs and Gramophones.’¹⁴³ The ‘Toean2 Pijttersen & Nieuwenhuijzen’ Firm in Amsterdam also advertised Malay song discs for sale in 1912,¹⁴⁴ confirming that recordings of local Indies genres had already been produced at that time.

During the 1920s ‘talking machine’ technology was transferred to Asia through the establishment of local factories and partnerships (Gronow 1981). The German Max Birckhahn (1881–1945) was the first ‘talking machine’ engineer to work in the Dutch East Indies. In 1928 he recorded some local repertoires including *tandak Kedah*.¹⁴⁵ During these years, advertisements for ‘talking machines’ and records in the vernacular press increased, indicating a rise in demand for this technology among non-European communities in the Indies. The disc labels offered were more diverse and some of them were regionally manufactured products, like the Angsa, Gadjah, Singa and Koetjing¹⁴⁶ labels. Recorded music on discs had become part of home entertainment among the upper classes. Though some phonograph showmen still conducted public exhibitions, they now moved to the outskirts of cities or to villages, as suggested by a postcard dated 1916 produced by Tio Tek Hong, a ‘talking machine’ trader in Weltevreden, showing West Java villagers enjoying a gramophone exhibition (Haks and Wachlin 2004:201) (Fig. 2.4). In Bali, Dr Gregor Krause, medical officer of the Netherlands East Indies army, took a photograph showing the Balinese villagers looking with amazement at a gramophone. The picture was taken by Krause during his tenure in Bangli, at the middle of Bali Island, between August 1912 and January 1914.¹⁴⁷

Krontjong and *stamboel* songs were the most popular genres recorded for the gramophone in early local production.¹⁴⁸ Previously these songs sung for the local theatre genres *bangsawan* and *komedie stamboel* had attracted the attention of Fred Gaisberg of the Gramophone Company and Heinrich Bumb of the German firm Beka, who had both made recordings of such music

142 Pewarta Boemi, 29 February 1907, 11 August 1908, 14 June 1910.

143 ‘Mentjahari saudagar jang koeat pada negeriz besar di tanah Hindia boeat mendjadi kapala wakil akan mendjoel papan lagoe dan Gramophoon jang terlaloe baik.’ (Pewarta Boemi, 28 February 1908).

144 The advertisement reads: ‘Sedia papan lagu Melayu’ (‘Malay song discs are available’). See Pewarta Boemi, 23 January 1912.

145 See <http://hajimaji.com/category/indonesia/> and http://www.recordingpioneers.com/RP_BIRCKHAHN1.html (accessed 5-10-2013).

146 Singa and Koetjing were two Malay labels appearing in Singapore during the rise of the recording industry in Malaya prior to World War II. They were started by two of the biggest local agents of the Gramophone Co.: the Koetjing label (Tjap Koetjing) belonged to S. Moutrie and Co., the sole agents of the Gramophone Co., which imported HMV records, whereas the Singa label (Tjap Singa) belonged to ME & T Hemssley & Co., a major distributor of HMV records in Singapore (Tan 1996/1997:9).

147 See http://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/25408271_krause-dr-gregor-balinesen-mit-grammophon-expedition (accessed 10-2-2014). I thank Georges Breguet for bringing this source to my attention.

148 Another genre that was very popular in colonial times is *gambang kromong* (Yampolsky 2013b).

in Singapore and Batavia. *Krontjong* and *stamboel* songs were mostly sung by female singers.¹⁴⁹ Some *krontjong* music groups were invited by institutions abroad to be recorded on disc, like *Solosche Nachtegaal* and *Krontjong Artisen Indonesiërs* from Solo, with their two famous blind Javanese female singers. They travelled to Singapore, where they were taken under the wing of a European family, to perform and to be recorded on the gramophone.¹⁵⁰ Other local genres like Javanese *ketoprak* and *ludruk* had been recorded on disc in the 1920s. One of the big suppliers (*hoofd-agenten*) of such products in Central Java was ‘Bazaar Securitas’ shop in Solo.



Figure 2.4: Gramophone demonstration for villagers in the Indies in the early twentieth century. This picture was taken in Buitenzorg (Bogor) around 1916, produced in the form of a postcard by Tio Tek Hong Company, Weltevreden (Source: Haks and Wachlin 2004:201; see also Merrillees 2012:225)

As the indigenous music industry continued to thrive in the 1930s, local businessmen, collaborating with European experts, began to produce gramophone records (*papan lagu*, *piringan hitam*) under local labels. By the 1930s, gramophone sound had appeared in the

¹⁴⁹ Some famous *krontjong* singers at that time were Miss Toeminah, Miss Noni, and Miss Jacoba Seger from Surabaya; Miss Soeprapti from Tegal; Miss Soelami and Miss Toerminah from Semarang; Miss Tioe from Yogyakarta; Miss Boentari from Solo; Miss Tiem from Cilacap; Miss Lely and Miss Euis from Bandung; ‘Toean [Mr.] Krontjong’ Speenhoof and the leading lady Miss Annie Landouw from Batavia (*Sinar Sumatra*, 3 March 1930, 17 November 1937). Annie Landouw seems also to have performed in Bandung (*Sunday Gazette*, 31 July 1938) and starred in some earlier Indonesian films produced by Tan’s Film Company (*Sinar Sumatra*, 1 July 1940 and subsequent dates). The Eurasian Annie Landouw was a famous singer of the new-style *krontjong* rumba music group named Rumba Tamang Mango (Susumu 2006:145). Other male and female *keroncong* singers popular at that time include Miss Riboet, Miss Alang, Leo Spel, Louis Koch, and R. Koesbini (Yampolsky 2013a:331–34; Yampolsky 2013b:31, 64; *Pemandangan*, 27 and 29 May 1937).

¹⁵⁰ *Sinar Sumatra*, 31 December 1929.

soundscape of most major towns of the Dutch East Indies. Performers of popular Native entertainments at that time, including those from outside Java, were increasingly engaged to make recordings. Despite this indigenous interest, ethnic Chinese occupied a much greater role in the retailing of the phonograph and the production of local recordings (and this continues to be the trend today). Tio Tek Hong Studio,¹⁵¹ Lie A Kon Studio, Tan Tik Hing & Co, Jo Kim Tjan Record, and Hoo Soen Hoo's firm and his recording company named Canary Record were among them.¹⁵² They pioneered the establishment of the first commercial recording companies in the Indies. The Hoo Soen Hoo (Canary Record) Studio in Surabaya, for example, recorded local singers from Java and other Indies islands.¹⁵³ Seemingly, Canary was established in late 1938 or early 1939.¹⁵⁴ In the 1940s this company very actively produced records of regional songs of various ethnic groups and *peranakan* Chinese (Indonesians of mixed Chinese descent), including the leading singer Hoo Eng Djie from Makassar. Canary Record made recordings of 'Celebes Volksliederen' (Sulawesi folk songs) sung by Hoo Eng Djie in 1938, 1939, and 1940 (Sutton 2002:210). Likewise, the prominent firm of Tio Tek Hong in Batavia; this Chinese middleman pioneered in producing recordings of local repertoires for commercial purposes.¹⁵⁵ Such recordings were marketed not only in the Indies but also in British Malaya (Tan 1996/1997:7). These developments can be seen as the birth of Indonesia's national recording industry. As elsewhere with the emergence of mass musical culture, in the Indies too the growth of a mass culture in music had manifold consequences, among which were innovation in music and the reconfiguration of social hierarchies of music genres.

During the 1930s and 1940s, many recordings were broadcast on radio, including Western music as well as local music. It can be said that this was the first experience of media convergence in Indonesia. At that time it was just a simple strategic alliance between the radio medium and a recording medium (gramophone disc): radio stations broadcast the commercial recordings of local genres popular with audiences.

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- 151 In his memoir (2006:24), Tio mentions that his firm in Pasar Baroe first imported phonographs and discs from Europe in 1904, but his business decreased due to World War I. The Tio Tek Hong was also known as an early theatre businessman (Tjasmadi 2008:8). His firm trades various products, from clocks and radios to guns (Pandji Poestaka, No. 62, Tahoen V, 5 Augustus 1927, p. 1070; Pandji Poestaka, No. 85, Tahoen V, 25 October 1927, p. 1528 and subsequent issues; *Pemandangan*, 19 and 23 June 1937). The firm also produced postcards showing people of the Dutch East Indies and local scenery. Some of these postcards are still in existence and are sold today as antiques. See <http://www.bataviabooks.com/Catalogue%2055A%20web.htm> (accessed 12-10-2006).
- 152 See <http://dennysakrie63.wordpress.com/2013/09/22/tio-tek-hong-label-rekaman-pertama-di-indonesia/> (accessed 15-11-2012); see also Tio 2006 and Wolf 2011.
- 153 Yang 1949:27; Yampolsky 2013a:145-6. See also Hamonic and Salmon 1983:158. Hoo Soen Hoo's firm had branches in Semarang and Batavia.
- 154 Apparently, until 1937 Hoo Soen Hoo was still working for His Master's Voice (HMV). Among the discs of 'His Master's Voice' brand sold by him were 'Lagoe Krontjong', '[Lagoe] Stamboel', 'Leloetjon', 'Wajang Orang', 'Ketoprak', 'Lagoe Soenda', 'Lagoe Djawa', '[Lagoe] Arab', 'Lagoe Kasida dan Gamboes', and 'Lagoe Hawaiian' which were sung by many singers like R. Koesbini, Ali Albar, Rehana, Soendari, [Miss] Toeminah, Sech Albar, Moh. Joesoef, Saoda, the Sundanese singer Menir Moeda, and S. Abdoellah, the leading singer of Arabic songs and also a famous *keroncong* singer (Poestaka Timoer No. 16, 15 September 1935, p. 27 and subsequent issues; *Pemandangan*, 21 May and 19 June 1937; Pandji Poestaka, No. 62, Tahoen XV, 3 Augustus 1937, p. 1206; Pandji Poestaka, No. 80, Tahoen XV, 5 October 1937, p. 1573; *Insaf*, Tahoen ke 2, No. 4, April 1938 – *Safar* 1357, p. 58; 'Kesenian dalam Masyarakat Baroe', *Sinar Matahari*, 7 April 1943; *Garuda* 7, 17 February 1952, p. 7).
- 155 See for example Tio Tek Hong Record's advertisement in Pandji Poestaka, No. 64, Tahoen IV, 13 Augustus 1926, p. 1519 and subsequent issues.

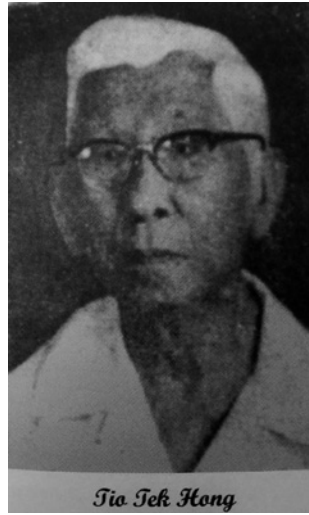


Figure 2.5: Tan Hoe Lo (left) and Tio Tek Hong in his old age in the late 1950s (right), two leading Chinese competitors in the early ‘talking machine’ trade in the Dutch East Indies (Sources: *Bintang Hindia*, *Tahoen kedoea*, No.1, 1904:9; Tio 2006:i)

I found no evidence that radio stations paid royalties to producers of the recordings and the singers they used for their broadcasts. However, what is clear is that radio, which was established in the Netherlands East Indies later than recording media,¹⁵⁶ immediately took advantage of the emergence of commercial gramophone discs. Radio and gramophone recordings introduced a new mode of cultural reception for Natives in the Netherlands East Indies. The development of radio broadcasting in the Indies in the 1930s was supported by the growth of the recording industry. ‘Radio broadcasting became an important mediator between record producers and consumers and an essential medium for the advertisement of records. At the same time, recorded music was the indispensable resource with which radio broadcasters could build stable programs’ (Susumu 2007:3).

The colonial government’s NIROM (*Nederlandsch Indische Radio Omroep Maatschappij*, ‘Netherlands Indies Radio Broadcasting Company’) had taken a leading role in this process of recirculation of the content of recordings (Yampolsky 2014). It broadcast local music in addition to Western music, taken from commercial recordings. Of the local music genres broadcast by NIROM, six were dominant: *kroncong*, Melayu music, Arabic music, Javanese music, Sundanese music, and Chinese music (Susumu 2007:7-8). *Kroncong* was the most

¹⁵⁶ The radio was first introduced in the Indies in the early 1920s. In 1925 the first radio station, *Bataviaasche Radio Vereeniging* (BRV), was established in Batavia. The government-owned radio company NIROM began broadcasting on 31 March 1934. NIROM started with four stations and increased to 20 after operating for 18 months. At the beginning of 1939 the number of NIROM’s transmitters was 27. The 19 transmitters that broadcast programs for European residents of the colony got their modulation from the Batavia key station by means of telephone lines having a total length of 800 miles or 1,270 kilometres. This technology immediately affected Dutch East Indies Natives, as reflected in early modern Indonesian literary works (Suryadi 2011a). For the history of radio in Indonesia, see Kementerian Penerangan – *Jawatan Radio Republik Indonesia* 1953, Witte 1992, Witte and Tondowidjojo 1994, Lindsay 1997, and Witte 1998, especially for the history of NIROM.

popular (Susumu 2006:145; Susumu 2007:12). In 1938, NIROM, which had 25 stations with 60,000 listeners, had 15,000 disc recordings,¹⁵⁷ which may have included recordings on discs like 78 rpm, 45 rpm, 44 rpm, and 33 1/3 rpm. Susumu's research on the magazine *Soeara NIROM* from 1936 to 1942 found that the *kroncong* music discs acquired by NIROM came from various labels, including Beka, Odeon, Columbia, and Gramophone (Susumu 2006:189).

The extensive recording of local repertoires on commercial discs seems to have enriched radio programming. According to Susumu (2007:10), by 1936 the number of local music genres broadcast on NIROM stations increased from eight to twelve. Among the latter were Sumatra-based music from Batak, Aceh, and Minangkabau, which was accompanied by a decrease in the popularity of *kroncong*. By 1939, NIROM devoted 80 per cent of its broadcasting time to music, of which three-quarters was played from gramophone discs (Witte 1992:29).

In Batavia [radio] [...] Chinese music had the highest frequency. Arabic and Melayu music had increasing frequency, and *Kroncong* and Javanese music had increasing frequency. Eight kinds of local music could be confirmed, with Batak, Gambang Kromong, and Minangkabau music played most frequently.

In West Java [...] Sundanese and Chinese music had the highest frequency and Sundanese the highest number of program hours. The frequency and hours of *Kroncong* and Melayu music decreased, while the frequency and hours of Arabic music increased.

In Central and East Java [...] Javanese and Chinese music had the highest frequency and Javanese music had an exceptionally high number of program hours. The frequency and hours of *Kroncong* music were decreasing, while the frequency of Arabic music compared to other regions was higher. Seven kinds of music were programmed, with Minangkabau, Ambon, and Batak music played most frequently.

Musical programming at Medan station was the highest. [A]s at other stations, regional characteristics can be seen, with Melayu music having the highest frequency and number of hours. *Kroncong* music had almost the same number of hours, with Arabic music following. Hawaiian and Batak music had higher frequency and hours than Chinese, Sundanese, and Javanese music. Five kinds of local music were programmed, three Sumatran plus Ambon and Gambang Kromong. Indian music was more prominent than on other stations, reflecting the comparatively high number of Indians resident in Medan. (Susumu 2007:10-11)

Susumu's findings suggest that, apart from Batavia station, the genre most popular on other stations corresponded to the ethnic majority inhabiting the region where the station was located. However, facilitated by recordings and radio, some genres became popular outside of their ethnic homeland. Among them were Sumatran-based genres including Minangkabau. Records and radio broadcasting enabled people of a particular ethnicity to enjoy music genres of other ethnicities. This must have increased people's awareness of other ethnic groups and led to more understanding among them. This growing awareness fostered a sense of togetherness among the diverse ethnic groups in the colony, as distinguished from the Dutch as colonizers. I conjecture that this – along with printed materials – contributed to the initial formation of nationalism and a national Indonesian culture as well.

157 'Beberapa tjatatan tentang penjiaran radio di Hindia', *Pandji Poestaka* No. 33, Tahun XVI, 26 April 1938, p. 631.

There are no definitive data available on the number of discs distributed in the Indies in the late colonial period. Pekka Gronow (1981:274) estimates some 50,000 to 100,000 titles of Oriental music had been recorded commercially by diverse European and American recording companies from 1900 to 1930. In fact, the history of the Indonesian recording industry in this period remains obscure and in need of further study, especially the role of *peranakan* Chinese in transferring the new recording technology to the country. Philip Yampolsky (1999:14) states that 15,582 sides of 78-rpm discs (75 percent of the companies' estimated production) were distributed in the Dutch East Indies and Malay Peninsula markets from 1903 to 1942. Yampolsky does not account for other types of gramophone records, such as 45 rpm, 44 rpm, and 33 1/3 rpm, which also circulated in the Dutch East Indies and in British Malaya. By comparison, Canary Record in Surabaya produced some 20,000 discs of Sulawesi folk songs between 1938 and 1940 (Sutton 2002:210). Presumably, during the height of the gramophone era in Indonesia between 1900 and the 1950s, there were thousands of records of local repertoires distributed in the country as well as abroad.

THE 'TALKING MACHINE' COMES TO WEST SUMATRA

West Sumatra's capital of Padang was among the first cities of the outer islands to be touched by the 'talking machine'. The first advertisement for the phonograph in West Sumatra appeared in the Padang-based Dutch-language *Sumatra-Courant* on 30 August 1898, with the text 'Edison's, Home Phonograaf. Wordt bij gelegenheid der kroningsfeesten te Padang ten gehoor gegeven' ('Edison's Home phonograph will be demonstrated on the occasion of the coronation festivities in Padang'). This was the general public's first encounter with recording technology in Padang, shortly after the new machine began to be advertised for sale in Java's press. Historically, Padang was the most prominent town on the west coast of Sumatra until it lost this role in the 1920s after shipping lines moved to the east coast of Sumatra due to the significant development of Singapore and Medan.

Historically, Padang was the first Sumatran city to encounter 'modernity'¹⁵⁸ and the city's urban entertainment developed earlier than in other towns of Sumatra. Reading the *Bentara Melajoe*, the second indigenous newspaper published in Padang in the 1870s,¹⁵⁹ one gets a picture of the dynamics of Padang in terms of economy and culture due to a good sea transport network between this city and regional and international ports, including Batavia, capital of the Dutch East Indies. Padang developed significantly after the colonial government built a railway network and a port, Emmahaven (now Teluk Bayur), in the 1890s. Urban culture emerged in the city, which was characterized by a diversity of performing arts – European, Native, and other Asian (see Paulus et al. 1919:235) – which frequently came together in a single large-scale popular cultural event called the *pasar malam* ('evening fancy fair'), which was often initiated by top Dutch colonial officials.¹⁶⁰ Providing an opportunity

158 For more on Padang city and its history and development, see Amran 1986 and Colombijn 1994, 1996.

159 On the history of the indigenous press in Padang in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Adam 1975.

160 L.C. Westenenk, assistant-resident of Oud Agam, Tanah Datar and 50 Kota, West Sumatra residency, was one of these officials. In 1907 he initiated the first *pasar malam* event in Fort de Kock (Bukittinggi) which was subsequently held annually. See Westenenk et al. 1907.

for the participation of all ethnic groups, pasar malam venues seem to have been a melting pot for cultural integration, music and theatre in particular. As Barendregt notes, urban entertainment in Padang in the first quarter of the twentieth century was lively and varied.

The musicians performing here [in Padang] were usually affiliated with particular theatrical troupes. They played what was called *musik hiburan* (entertainment music), *musik populer* (popular music), and *kroncong* (a popular Portuguese-influenced genre of songs with violin, banjo and guitar accompaniment, which was immensely popular with Europeans [and Eurasians]). Western and indigenous music was also performed at the regular *kermis* (fair) and the annual Oranjebal, held on the [Dutch] queen's birthday. Other Europeans also had an influence on music in the Indies. Russian and Italian musicians in particular are known to have formed their own orchestras in the late 1920s, playing a genre of music that soon came to be known as *hiburan* (entertainment). *Hiburan* was partly influenced by American entertainment genres, in which small combos accompanied dancing. (Barendregt 2002:422)

In this period in Padang, Dutch theatre (*tonil*), which was performed in theatres and clubs (*rumah bola*) for European inhabitants, indirectly influenced indigenous performing arts (Kerckhoff 1886:304; Cohen 2003). Other ethnic groups that had migrated to Padang had brought their traditional arts repertoires too; for example, the ex-slave community of Niasans from the island of Nias had a dance named *balanse madam* (Indrayuda 2009) which became widely popular. European circus troupes sailed from Batavia to Padang during tours to the Indies, such as Komedi Koeda Abel & Klear, which gave performances in Padang and Padang Panjang during December 1892.¹⁶¹ *Bangsawan* theatre, which had been performed frequently in Padang since the 1880s, inspired local music and theatre groups. The travels of *bangsawan* theatre troupes from Penang, Johore, and Singapore, where *bangsawan* initially emerged (Tan 1993), to Java and Sumatra fundamentally altered the genre, as well as changing the face of the popular theatre scene in the Dutch East Indies. Local performers were used for *bangsawan* performances and local stories were integrated and adapted to suit local tastes.¹⁶² At the same years *komedie stamboel* from Java also reached Sumatra Island. A source mentions that the Malay theatre *bangsawan* and *komedie stamboel* were introduced in West Sumatra by a certain Si Nong who brought them from Riau to Padang.¹⁶³

By the first decade of the twentieth century an urban culture was becoming more evident in the coastal city of Padang. Populated by various ethnic groups – indigenous, European, and other Asian ethnicities – the city had acquired almost all the characteristics of a ‘modern’ city, such as insurance companies, hotels, Masonic lodges and executive clubs, and cinemas as part of its urban entertainment.¹⁶⁴ Other performing groups, owned by Europeans, also

161 Bintang - Barat, 29 December 1892, quoted from Pelita Ketjil.

162 For the spread of *bangsawan* theatre in the Dutch East Indies, see Cohen 2002a.

163 ‘Tooneel Melajoe’, *Pandji Poestaka*, No. 24, Tahoen II, 12 June 1924, p. 458. Ch. E.P. van Kerckhoff (1886:304) mentions that Si Nong was the son of Raja Burhanuddin (see also Cohen 2003:217), a Minangkabau officer appointed by the Dutch East Indies Colonial Government as the head of Batavia's district of Tanah Abang (*Bintang Hindia*, No. 15, Tahoen jang pertama, 12 July 1903, p. 159; see also <http://niadilova.blogdetik.com/index.php/archives/1137>; accessed 1-8-2013).

164 Among the first cinemas established in Padang were the Royal Excelsior Bioscope, Biograph Bioscope, Scala-Bio[scope], and Cinema Theatre (Suryadi 2011b).

performed in Padang. These included *Moderne Bangsawan Juliana* owned by W.F. Hunter, and the opera and theatre group (*toneelgezelschap*) *Wilhelmina* owned by M. Hoogveen.¹⁶⁵ *Peranakan* Chinese opera troupes like *Tjoe Ban Lian* also held performances in this city.¹⁶⁶ It is clear that by this time Padang had become a vibrant city in the western part of the Indies, where a variety of urban entertainment – presented by local peoples, other Asians, and Europeans – was performed, similar to the experience of the East Javanese city of Surabaya two decades earlier.

The development of music in Padang in the late nineteenth century was closely related to the role of Eurasians (*kaum Indo*).¹⁶⁷ Generally speaking, *kaum Indo* played a significant role in introducing hybrid music in the urban areas of the Dutch East Indies in which elements of both Western and local music were incorporated, a nice reflection of Eurasians' own genetic inheritance (mixed European and Native blood). The *Indo* community of Padang had a *kroncong* music club which often performed at the *pasar malam* fair and also at the city's European social clubs (*societeiten*), like *De Eendracht* and *Matahari*. One such *kroncong* club named *Petit Advendo* had a membership including *Indo* and other Asian races (Fig. 2.6). *Indo* music groups also inspired indigenous musicians in Padang. The communities living in Sumatra's west coastal towns were receptive to foreign influences in music, as seen in the hybrid music genre of *gamad* as found in Padang, or *katumbak* music as found in Pariaman (see Chapter 5).

The cultural and economic climate of Padang had attracted European traders and their Chinese competitors to expand their 'talking machine' and disc businesses there. In early 1911, A. Jesinowski's shop in Padang offered for sale gramophones and discs with prices ranging from 40 to 80 guilders (for a gramophone) and 2.50 to 3.50 guilders (for a disc).¹⁶⁸ Other distributors were J. Boon Jr's *Tuinenburg* shop in *Tanah Lapang Alang Lawas*,¹⁶⁹ *N.V. Warenhuis-Tokra*, and the *City Magazine* shop, both situated in *Pondok*.¹⁷⁰ *Fort de Kock* (now *Bukittinggi*) was another major town in the highlands of West Sumatra that sold 'talking machines' and discs at an early date.

As had occurred in Java, in West Sumatra ethnic Chinese traders soon went into the 'talking machine' business, competing with European pioneer traders. The leading ones among them were *Siauw Beng Tjoan*'s shops in *Kampung Tionghowa* (*Pondok*) and *Kampung Jawa* (Fig. 2.7), *Public Shop*, *Lie Sam Tjoen Shop*, and *Madju Shop* in *Kampung Jawa*, all three in Padang, *Minangkabau shop* and *Toko Anti Mahal* (*Anti-Expensive shop*) in *Fort de Kock*.¹⁷¹ The latter was owned by a *Minangkabau* merchant.¹⁷² Records marketed in Padang contained European compositions like music by Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, and Mendelssohn, as well

165 *Bintang-Tiong Hoa*, 21 January and 12 June 1915.

166 *Tjaja Sumatra*, 8 October and 8 November 1917.

167 Except for some large cities in Java, perhaps Padang was the city with the largest *Indo* community. *Indo* people in Padang were engaged in business, like press and trade, and as colonial civil servants (Amran 1986:32-52).

168 *Pertja Barat*, 31 January 1911.

169 *Oetoesan Melajoe*, 31 March 1916.

170 See *Sumatra-Bode*, 10 July 1929, 19, 21, 22 and 25 October 1929.

171 *Sumatra-Bode* 25 June 1929; *Pewarta*, 3 May, 22 July, and 11 August 1933.

172 *Sinar Sumatra*, 8 July 1940.



Figure 2.6: A music club named Petit Advendo in Padang in the early twentieth century (Source: KITLV Leiden)

as popular Malay songs of the *keroncong* and *stamboel* genres,¹⁷³ suggesting that the consumers of such records were not only Europeans but also Natives. However, during the first quarter of the twentieth century the consumers of ‘talking machines’ and discs in West Sumatra were still predominately Europeans, as is clearly indicated by the many auctions of gramophones and discs (*platen*) advertised in Dutch-language colonial newspapers in Padang.¹⁷⁴

In the 1930s, some Minangkabau genres like *saluang* and *simarantang*¹⁷⁵ were available on commercial records of the Beka, Odeon, and Tjap Angsa labels. Likewise some Islamic genres like *gambus* songs and Quranic recitation. By the following decade people were able to buy Minangkabau records under labels such as Angsa Minangkabau, Koedo-koedo, Polau Air, Odeon Minangkabau, Tjap Singa, and Tjap Koetjing, at an average price of 1.35 guilders each.¹⁷⁶ The Angsa label was exclusively produced by the Anti-Expensive shop (Toko Anti

¹⁷³ Sumatra-Bode, 10 July, 19, 21, 22 and 25 November 1929.

¹⁷⁴ In 1916 alone, based solely on notices and reports of auctions presented in a Padang newspaper, I found fourteen Europeans living in the city who had gramophone machines (and up to 60 discs each) in their houses. They were J.A. van der Bijl (in Blok No.12; he was an agent for a packet boat service), Admiraal (in Terandam), Bellman (in Terandam), J.F. Bakker (in Emmahaven), Stanley Price (in Hiligoo), Ed Pfennigwerth (in Pondok), De Puijl (in Kandang), W. Perquin (his address was not recorded), Sergeant Majoor V.J.A. Vlinders (near Bataljon 17), J.C.A. Alting Siberg (in Balai Baroe), Van der Dussen (in Kampoeng Djawa), Ch. L.G. Brugman (in Nipa[h] laan), J.B. Schrooijesteijn (in Hiligoo), and Wouters (in van Bossestraat). Based on auction advertisements in *Sinar Sumatra* 3 January, 2 and 9 February, 10, 11 and 30 March, 10 May, 4 July, 26 September, 2, 5 and 10 October, and 14 November 1916.

¹⁷⁵ *Simarantang* is a traditional Minangkabau open-air theatre from the Pariaman rantau region of Sumatra’s west coast (Phillips 1981:5).

¹⁷⁶ *Sinar Sumatra*, 8 and 9 July 1940.

Mahal) in Fort de Kock, as stated in its advertisements in a local daily: ‘Don’t forget to seek out Angsa-label discs, which are exclusively produced by and use the name of the ANTI-EXPENSIVE shop of Fort de Kock’)¹⁷⁷ (Fig. 2.7). Unlike other disc labels, the Angsa had a collar inside so that it would not easily break if it fell, and it was durable.¹⁷⁸ Toko Anti Mahal’s strong competitor was Toko Minangkabau (‘Minangkabau shop’), which was the exclusive seller of the Gajah label of Odeon discs. This shop was the top supplier of Odeon discs in West Sumatra.¹⁷⁹

Some Minangkabau artists were recorded by local producers.¹⁸⁰ Toko Anti Mahal was one such leading Minangkabau producer in West Sumatra in the 1930s and 1940s. Situated on Bioscoopstraat 31 in Fort de Kock (now Bukittinggi), the shop had its own music group, Anti Mahal Orkes, with its much-loved female vocalist Roekiah. Toko Anti Mahal also made commercial recordings under the Angsa label of music groups like Gamboes Boestanoel Ichsan

Toko Anti Mahal.
Dioerksa oleh langganan.

Tapaso oentoeak pamanoehi karandak langganan-langganan dan oerang banjak kami adokan

DJOEL MOERAH JANG SPECIAAL

Moerah dibalik nan moerah, Saak basoe larang batamane dioel moerah nan saroe-po nanto, Ijo basa ADIAK, AGIAH, BAD ESANAK DJO MAMINTAK. Balao dio dioel moerah nan soedah soedah. Segio barang, barang kain, barang krompono dan plait gramophon didioea dengan harga nan sargat moerah. Tapi kaha-dak langgan-nanko tjoea depek dipanoehi dari TANJAL 31 MEI SAMPAI TANGGAL 6 JUN, sajo.

Ko' indak diatang mamabli nan takaliko ditangoeng maoepet manjasa gadang.

Harago plait gramophon:

Krontjong F 1.25	Pa air F 1.—
Gamboes F 1.25	Kordo soen F 1.—
Odeon Minangkabau . F 1.35	Tia Slago F 1.15
Angsa Minangkabau . F 1.35	Tjap Krontjong . . F 1.15
H. M. V. F 1.5	

Oentoeak orang nan mamabli labih dari 6 bocah dipotong 5 pCt dari harago nan tasoeah diatahko.

Toko Anti Mahal
915 FORT DE KOCK.

A

**Soeda lama di Toenggoe,
Baroe sekarang kloeat.**

Lagoe-lagoe baroe
Opname electrisch
dari plait



dengan njanjian
Zangers & Zangeressen
pilihan

jang tjoea bisa dapat dengar-diatas plait BEKA

No. 2010	(Serenade Solo	Miss Tioe
"	(Souvenir Pasar-Gedee	"
" 2011	(Alle2-Matanee Looroo	"
"	(Tjahaia 'Vorstelanden	"
" 2514	(Tjindra Wasi (extra)	Riboet
"	(Itam Poetih	"
" 2527	(Souvenir Paser Gedee	Tioe
"	(Tjahaia vorstelanden	"
" 2528	(Palestina (krontjong)	Amat
"	(Djerok Poeroet Bandoeng	Toemina
" 2531	(Gebroeken Hart	Amat
"	(Baroe Ketemoel (stamboel)	Amat & Toemina
" 2532	(Tjinta Publik	Miss Ida
"	(Persie Pasar Senen	"

Masi banjak jang soeka, maskipoen darie kloeatan lebi deloe:

No. 2515	(Riboet Malaise (krontjong)	Miss Riboet
"	(Lalap Ketimoen (extra)	"
" 2516	(Tawon Goela (extra)	"
"	(Midjil Ketoprak (lagoe djawa)	"

FIRMA SIAUW BENG TJON
Kamp. Tionghoa—Padang—Telefoon 107
TOKO PUBLIC
Kamp. Djawa—Padang—Telefoon 140

B

Figure 2.7: Two advertisements for the ‘talking machine’ and commercial recordings of indigenous repertoires in the vernacular press of Padang in the 1930s and 1940s (Sources: A: *Pewarta*, 9-6-1933; B: *Sinar Sumatra*, 1-7-1940)

177 ‘Djangan loepa mentjari plait tjap ANGSA jang dikeloearkan speciaal oleh dan memakai nama toko “ANTI MAHAL” Fort de Kock’ (*Sinar Sumatra*, 22 September 1939 and subsequent dates).

178 ‘Plait tjap Angsa sengaja diberi karah didalamnja soepaja tahan djatoeh dan boleh poela tahan lama’ (*Sinar Sumatra*, 22 September 1939). According to Philip Yampolsky, the local Angsa label in the 1930s and the 1940s seems to have been distributed only in Sumatra (pers. comm., 3-12-1998).

179 ‘Agen gadangnjo sagalo palat-palat Odeon di Minangkabau’ (*Sinar Sumatra*, 7 July 1939).

180 Besides Minangkabau, music of other Sumatran ethnic groups appearing on commercial discs in the 1930s were Aceh and Batak (Susumu 2007:10). For example, in mid 1937 a producer from Java recorded the Batak vocalist Essau Simanungkalit from Simalungun on the Odeon label. Another Batak vocalist and composer named S. Dis and his manager named Bakri were invited to Japan to make recordings there (the names of the companies are not mentioned) (*Persamaan*, No. 168, 13 May 1937).

and also songs accompanied by Minangkabau traditional musical instruments (Fig. 2.8). The vocalists were selected from various parts of Minangkabau and sang in local dialects. Among these singers were Oedin, who lived in the Kajoe Poetih district of Padang; Rapioen from Mandiangin (Fig. 2.8); Galia who sang in the Batu Palano and Singgalang dialects;¹⁸¹ and Hadji Moein from Lintau district in the Padang highlands who specialized in *qasidah* songs.¹⁸²

In the following years, the number of Minangkabau songs recorded on disc increased. Philip Yampolsky (1999:14) mentions that 170 out of 15,582 sides of 78-rpm discs



Figure 2.8: A commercial gramophone disc of Minangkabau songs under the *Angsa* label produced by Toko Anti Mahal in Bukittinggi in the 1930s (Photograph courtesy of Philip Yampolsky; see also Yampolsky 2013a:148)

¹⁸¹ Other singers at that time were Kasim from Kamang, Taher from Bukit Ambacang, Noeria Sjam from Suliki. See *Sinar Sumatra*, 15, 18 and 19 February 1937 and 6 August 1939.

¹⁸² *Sinar Sumatra*, 15, 18 and 19 February 1937, 6 July and 22 September 1939, and subsequent dates.

distributed in the Dutch East Indies and Malay Peninsula markets from 1903 to 1942 were of Minangkabau genres. Of the sales of outer islands regional musics, Minangkabau music scored second highest (after *keroncong* and *stamboel* songs, which were usually associated with Malay),¹⁸³ indicating that Minangkabau recordings were favourably received by consumers. Advertisements of such records of local music appeared more frequently in the vernacular press, and some of them were written in regional languages other than the lingua franca Malay. For instance, Toko Anti Mahal advertised its products in a Padang daily in the Minangkabau language. This clearance sale advertisement (Fig. 2.7a) read:

In an attempt to satisfy demands of customers and public, we have to sell our products cheaply, the cheapest. A clearance sale similar to this one is rarely found. We, the owner, offer a 'family price', which is really inexpensive. All products, including clothes, sundries, and gramophone discs, are sold at a very cheap price. The discounted products are available only from May 31 to June 6 [1940]. It is guaranteed that you will feel sorry for not purchasing our store's products.¹⁸⁴

The fact that Toko Anti Mahal used the Minangkabau language for its ads indicates that the consumers they envisioned were Minangkabau people.¹⁸⁵ A June 1940 advertisement of records under the Beka label produced by Firma Siau Beng Tjoan in Padang (Fig. 2.7b) illustrates how extensive the recording of local songs on gramophone disc was in those days. The advertisement includes a Beka record number 2532, containing the *kroncong* songs 'Tjinta Publik' and 'Persie [versi] Pasar Senen' sung by Miss Ida. If we assume that Beka numbered its records consecutively, and that records containing Western music and those containing local music were distinguished in different series of numbers, then we can conclude that: within a period of 35 years since the Beka label was introduced in the Dutch East Indies (if calculated from the arrival of Heinrich Bumb's Beka expedition in Batavia in 1905), more than 2,500 records of local songs were produced under the Beka label alone. This of course does not include records with local content under other labels so that, unfortunately, the total number is difficult to determine.

Effects of the gramophone presence in Minangkabau society, thus, were unavoidable. In the 1930s, recordings of Minangkabau music on disc raised questions about authenticity. The local press reported that buyers of Minangkabau gramophone discs complained that the voice of a singer often did not match the song he sang, because his accent did not correspond to the dialect of Minangkabau in which that song originated. People also complained that the singer's voice in the recordings sounded fake, suggesting that human voices mediated through modern media create a variety of images. The daily *Sinar Sumatra* in Padang published

183 Referring to his discography-in-progress of recordings made in the Dutch East Indies market before World War II, Yampolsky 2013b:62 mentions that he has entries for 1,538 *keroncong* recordings, but he estimates there are another 5,400 recordings (of various genres) not yet listed. He estimates there are some 18,500 unique commercial recordings (sides, not discs – most 78-rpm records had recordings on both sides) were issued for the Dutch East Indies before 1942, not counting recordings made initially for other markets (such as Europe, Egypt, or the USA) and sold in the Dutch East Indies. He states that he has identified some 13,100 sides, or 71% of the estimated total for the Dutch East Indies (see also Yampolsky 2011).

184 *Sinar Sumatra*, 1 July 1940. The original text of this advertisement is displayed in Figure 2.7a.

185 See also *Sinar Sumatra*, 8 and 9 July 1940.

a letter sent by a reader who conveys his impression that the recordings of Bandar X songs from Surantih, Kambang, and Air Haji (now in Pesisir Selatan regency) aired by the NIROM radio station sounded ugly because, as the writer of the letter suspects, the singer originated from another Minangkabau dialect other than Bandar X. In the reader's opinion, the songs of a particular region of Minangkabau should be sung by singers who are fluent in that region's dialect. He urges the producer to re-record Bandar X songs by using singers who are fluent in the Bandar X dialect of Minangkabau.¹⁸⁶ This case suggests how the awareness of difference was raised and how the notion of authenticity was triggered as an effect of the mediation of ethnic culture, Minangkabau in this case, in modern media.

As in other parts of the Indies, 'talking machines' and discs became a symbol of modernity among Minangkabau people, even for those who lived in West Sumatra's countryside. For them, these media represented industrial production and capitalism, which came from outside their own cultural environment. The choice to use modern media will certainly influence a person's views on religion, tradition, norms, and daily habits. Such changes are considered by scholars (for example, Calhoun 2002:110) to be the heart of modernity. In the early twentieth century, a new elite class emerged in the Minangkabau homeland due to West Sumatra's economic development and *merantau* tradition. This new class, as depicted in many Minangkabau oral narratives (*kaba*) and early Indonesian novels written by Minangkabau authors from the 1920s to the 1940s (Aeusrivongse 1976; Freidus 1977), worked mainly as colonial government employees and merchants. This new Minangkabau elite equipped the interiors of their houses with imported Western products. The 'talking machine' thus became a showpiece in traditional Minangkabau 'big houses' (*rumah gadang*). 'There are no family dwellings in the neighbouring islands, Ceylon, India, or Southeast Asia, which approach these buildings in originality of design or richness of decorations', asserted the American feminist Carrie Chapman Catt who visited the West Sumatra highlands in the 1910s. Regarding the interiors of the Minangkabau *rumah gadang*, she wrote:

In the houses of rich families there are bedsteads and mattresses, covered by overhanging sheets edged with crochet-work, which is seen in every Dutch home in the East Indies. Tables, chairs, hanging-lamps, clocks, framed pictures, sewing machines, and *gramophones* are frequently found. In one house where we were unexpected visitors refreshments were served on dainty French china and each guest was provided with a finger bowl. These European accessories give a modern air to these quaint dwellings, but the presence of the primitive loom, spinning wheel, and embroidery-frame signifies that the bridge has not yet been burned between the old time and the new. (Catt 1914:741; my emphasis)

Catt's account conveys the popularity of the gramophone among the Minangkabau at that time, and it increased significantly during the following decades. But no later than the 1950s the 'talking machine' wonder declined in West Sumatra, and in other parts of the Indies, due to the invention of other technological 'wonders'. This can be seen in the 1940 Toko Anti Mahal ads, discussed above, offering records of Minangkabau folk songs for a very cheap price (*didjoea dengan harago nan sangat moerah*). This suggests that by the 1940s gramophone

186 'Lagoe-lagoe Minangkabau', *Sinar Sumatra*, 27 September 1939.

discs no longer caught public attention. With the rapid spread of cassette technology (see Chapter 3) in the 1970s, old gramophone discs hung with family portraits on the walls of West Sumatran houses, evidence of those families' wealth and high social status in the past.

NATIVE RESPONSES TO THE 'TALKING MACHINE'

As occurs everywhere, the adoption of a new communications technology in the Indies invariably generated a variety of responses. A general criticism of the 'talking machine' was that its reproduction of sound was inferior to the sound quality of face-to-face communication. As the Archibald case in Surabaya indicates (see Chapter 1), the invention of sound recording technology affected human perception of reality. What was stored on gramophone records was thought of as fundamentally different from what was stored in writing. 'This new stored material came to be experienced as the "real"' (Weidman 2003:462), because reproduced sound plays an important and complementary role in the development of our sensory apparatus and gives us a general idea of the environment we are in. However, the recorded sound (cylinder recordings of Gladstone's voice) exhibited by Archibald was not perceived as 'the real', because the quality of the recordings was poor due to their being produced by using a crude type of phonograph, technologically still far from perfect. Another example of how transmitted sound is considered as 'the real', can be suggested from the case of telephone technology in the Indies in its early years:¹⁸⁷ Native authorities and their subordinates made obeisance to the telephone handset when they rang, because they knew their Dutch superiors would be speaking through it (Fabricius 1949:185). They regarded the machine as representing the physical bodies of their superiors, suggesting how Natives perceived technologized sound at that time (Fig. 2.9).



Figure 2.9: Drawing depicting the reaction of a Native subordinate who receives a telephone call from his European master during the early years of the telephone in the Dutch East Indies. He lowers his eyes and gestures respectfully to the telephone as if he were meeting his master face to face (Source: Fabricius 1949:185)

¹⁸⁷ The first Dutch East Indies telegraph line was built in 1856 between Weltevreden and Buitenzorg, and in 1918 the first direct wireless communications system was established between Malabar Hill in West Java and Blaricum in the Netherlands (Mrázek 1997:3-5).

The Archibald case suggests the initial mixed reaction of Dutch East Indies colonial society to sound reproduction technology. This mixed reaction became more and more complex, acquiring religious and socio-cultural dimensions, during the following decades along with increased use of the ‘talking machine’, a technology that had the ‘potential to preserve the voices of dying cultures’ (Sterne 2003:311). Undoubtedly, indigenous belief systems also influenced the reception of new European inventions such as the gramophone. This was known to European exhibitors like W. Noordhoorn, who targeted local spirit beliefs to attract people’s attention to his phonograph demonstrations in Batavia in 1896. He placed a notice in a local newspaper claiming: ‘It can imitate human sounds, a cough, a laugh, crying; although we do not see the person, as long as we know the person, we can recognize who it is. It truly is like a machine that has a demon [*setan*] inside.’¹⁸⁸ Though I have lived many years, I have only now for the first time seen such a demonic machine.’¹⁸⁹ This new wonder machine held special appeal for status-conscious, aesthetically inclined ethnic Chinese. A 1900 advertisement from Surabaya’s Go Hing Pho Chinese shop, for a phonograph with 72 Chinese opera pieces, states that ‘whoever hears these, will nearly lose their energy, as though they had flown to CHINA’.¹⁹⁰ This comment suggests the changes in human perception of distance and time due to innovations in recording technologies. Of course records were not a complete replacement for live performances of Chinese opera. Following a 1901 ban on Chinese opera performance in Surabaya, one newspaper report admits that ‘the phonographic recordings of Chinese opera songs are pleasing and melodious’ but listening to them caused the writer to feel ‘great regret that the Surabaya authorities refuse to grant permission for Chinese opera to be performed here’.¹⁹¹ The machine was continually perceived with wonder throughout the early years of the twentieth century, as suggested by the Native response in a Javanese village which reflects the local recognition and respect for technology, science, and ideologies of Western dominance.

A man from Semarang with a phonograph or talking machine brought it to a village head’s house, which was rarely visited by Europeans. It hummed some Javanese and Malay songs.

Having looked at and listened to the machine that can sing, of course all the villagers – men and women, old and young – were very surprised and stood dazed because they had never seen a singing machine before.

The villagers said, ‘There is certainly someone inside the machine, it can’t sing without someone within it.’

How dull the villagers are, who said: ‘Londo gaweannee werna werni, pienteranee oradjamak’, meaning ‘white men have made so many things, their cleverness is boundless’.¹⁹²

188 In nineteenth-century urban entertainment, European technologies like the sciopicon and galvanism were more often associated with magic and the supernatural than with rationality and reality. On the spiritualism associated with technologies such as the phonograph, see Connor 2000:386-90.

189 *India-Olanda*, 5 September 1896. I thank Matthew Isaac Cohen for providing me quotations from *India-Olanda* and *Primbon Soerabaia*, referred to in this and following paragraphs.

190 *Primbon Soerabaia*, 22 September 1900.

191 *Primbon Soerabaia*, 8 January 1901.

192 *Satoe toean di Semarang, jang ada poenja ponograaf atawa machine bitjara, soeda bawak ponograaf itoe di roemahnja satoe loerah di satoe desa di mana djarang datang orang bangsa Europa, dan soeda kasih denger bebrapa lagoe njanjian Djawa dan Melajoe.*

A Minangkabau named Abraham Ilyas from nagari Tanjung Sungayang (now included in the West Sumatran regency of Tanah Datar) recorded the ill treatment by Indonesian army soldiers (*tentara pusat*) sent by President Soekarno to West Sumatra to quell the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI) rebellion (1958–1961) (see Zed and Chaniago 2001). Writing his memories of the war in the *syair* (verse) form, Abraham recalls how *tentara pusat* abusively destroyed the gramophone cherished by his relatives because they thought it was a radio set used to listen to broadcasts aired by rebels. He writes:

Memakai sepatu masuk rumah	Entering the house wearing shoes
Tentara Pusat datang menggeledah	Soekarno's soldiers come to raid
Disertai bentakan marah-marah	Accompanied with angry growls
Lemari terkunci langsung dipecah	Locked cupboard is directly broken
Pesawat radio penerima informasi	Radio set as the information receiver
Harus disimpan di hutan sepi	[It] should be kept in quiet forest
Benda terlarang untuk dimiliki	Thing forbidden to be possessed
Dicari tentara ketika operasi	It was searched for by the soldiers
Ganasnya tentara perintah Soekarno	How ferocious the army commanded by Soekarno
Kotak Gramophon mirip radio	Gramophone box like radio
Langka jualannya di toko toko	Extraordinary merchandise in shops
Kini dipecah oknum sembrono	Now it is broken by reckless persons
Kotak Gramophon benda antik	Gramophone box is an antique
Untuk mendengar rekaman musik	To listen to music recordings
Barang berharga hak milik	It is a valuable possession
Kini dipecah dicabik cabik ¹⁹³	Now it is broken and torn apart

Abraham remembers this incident, which happened in late 1958, when he was 13 years old. He was very shocked when one of Soekarno's soldiers destroyed his gramophone, because he doted on the machine. He was astounded by the machine that could play songs with no singers physically present. The machine had been bought by his mother, who worked as a nurse in Batusangkar. Abraham says that the soldier destroyed his happy kid feeling. Abraham recalls that he often played the machine, whose speaker was located inside the box. To play his vinyl records he had to crank the machine. Apparently, his gramophone was an HMV portable model produced from 1925 to 1958 by the Gramophone Company in the

Tiada perloe di tjeritakan lagi, jang pendodoek di antero desa itoe, lelaki prampoewan, toewa moeda, soeda lihat dan denger itoe mechine, jang pande menjanji dan masing masing amat heran sambil berdiri bengong, sebab belom pernah marika itoe mendapeti satoe machine pande menjanji.

Orang-orang desa itoe bilang, temtoe ada orang di dalam machine itoe, kaloe tiada nistjaja tiada bisa bersoewara.

Begitoe boetek pikirannja orang desa, jang lantas berkata: 'Londo gaweannee werna werni, pienteranee oradjamak' artinja: 'Orang koelit poetih perboewatannja matjem matjem, kapinterannja tiada kepalang.' (Primbon Soerabaia, 25 August 1902, which was quoted in Bintang Soerabaia, 26 August 1902)

¹⁹³ Quoted from <http://td73.nagari.or.id/tanjungprri.php> (accessed 4-3-2011).

United Kingdom. Abraham said his mother preferred records of vernacular songs. One record Abraham liked very much was of *simarantang* songs. The sound of the gramophone could be heard far away, because at that time the air was still unpolluted by the noisy sounds of modern vehicles and machinery. If the gramophone was played, neighbours came to Abraham's mother's big house (*rumah gadang*) in order to listen to the records. This was free of charge. The machine was put on a table placed in the middle of the house. The listeners sat around, no prancing or contorting their bodies like people do today when listening to music. As far as Abraham remembers, the machine was never played at night.¹⁹⁴

In reminiscing about his childhood, a Minangkabau intellectual named Khaidir Anwar recalled how village people would gather at a respectful distance from the Tuan Controleur (Dutch colonial official) and his retinue when they came to the village on an inspection tour. Khaidir remarks that while his fellow villagers praised Western technological inventions, they still felt sorry for the Dutch because of their persistence in refusing the message of Islam, and they thought that the Dutch would end up in hell-fire when they died. Khaidir's father was one of the villagers who 'greatly admired the Dutch for their technical achievement particularly in making clocks (the knowledge of which they had learned from the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad) and for their gramophones. He and his fellow villagers believed that it was someone in debt and short of money who invented the gramophone. The person invented a device through which he was able to tell his creditor that he could not afford to pay him' (Anwar 1974:61). Anwar does not mention where his father obtained this story. It is very likely that this story was derived from the funny story 'Hikajatnja Satoe Phonograph' ('The story of a phonograph') issued in *Bintang Soerabaia* on 14 April 1902.¹⁹⁵ Very possibly Khaidir Anwar's father read the story directly in *Bintang Soerabaia* or else he read a reprint of the story published in a Padang newspaper. What I want to say here is that Abraham Ilyas's recollections of his gramophone and Anwar's father's story both provide a picture of how new European-invented technologies other than weaponry led to admiration and respect for Europeans and a tendency by Indies Natives to regard Europeans as superior.

During roughly six decades of the use and reception of the 'talking machine' and discs in Indonesia, from the 1900s to the 1960s, the perceptions and reactions to these technologies were manifested in various ways. One reaction is seen in the debates among the Native Muslim majority in the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya about Quran recordings, the most controversial of recorded religious repertoires at that time. The main questions asked by

194 The 66-year-old Minangkabau migrant Abraham Ilyas now lives in *rantau* in Palembang, South Sumatra. Like many other Minangkabau men, he had fled West Sumatra to avoid the civil war following the outbreak of the PRRI rebellion against the Soekarno regime. His memories of his childhood with the gramophone described above are based on emails he sent to me dated 3 and 4 March 2011.

195 This funny incident about a phonograph occurred in Germany. An unlucky young German medical doctor named Helmers falls in love with Anna Goldheim, daughter of the banker Goldheim. He sends a disc recording to the girl in which he expresses his love and proposes marriage to her. But he is negligent in making the recording: his conversation with a bank creditor who comes to his house to collect a debt was also unintentionally recorded on the disc. Helmers was almost bankrupt and greatly in debt to the bank. But he had always claimed to Anna that he was a rich man and wanted to marry her. After she listens to the recording Anna realizes that Helmers has lied to her. She then refuses Helmers's marriage proposal. Helmers curses his carelessness in using the phonograph.

ordinary Muslims were: Is it allowed to record the holy Quran on gramophone discs produced by European ‘infidels’? and, Do those who listen to such Quran recordings acquire a reward (pahala) from God? (Hurgronje 1900; Witkam 2007). Perceptions and reactions to the ‘talking machine’ were also reflected in the use of these technologies by Indonesian intellectuals and political leaders to foster a sense of nationalism in their campaign to eject the colonizers.¹⁹⁶ Narratives of early modern Indonesian novels (see Maier 2004:312-13) are another lens through which one can see Native intellectuals’ reactions to this technology in particular and to modernity in general in late colonial times. In sum, the availability and dissemination of reproduced sound thanks to the ‘talking machine’ raised the question of identity among Natives and shifted their perception about their own cultures and religions.

ATTRACTION AND IRRITATION OF MODERN SOUND

Starting in the mid-nineteenth century the Dutch had brought Western technologies to the Indies in order to maintain and strengthen their colonial power. The colonial subjects in the colony were then confronted by the astounding sounds produced by factory engines, motor cars, trams, and so on – all important signs of technological modernity. Many old photographs document Native children of the Indies running behind cars, as they were fascinated by the sound of their engines. Children imitated the sound of car engines saying ‘brom...broomm... brooommm’ while playing games using discarded car or motorcycle tires, as I myself experienced during my childhood in a Sumatran village in the late 1960s. Such sounds of machines represented the sounds of modernity (Colombijn 2009), and this was supplemented in the early twentieth century by recorded sound on phonograph cylinders or gramophone discs. Inevitably, these sounds of modernity became part of the soundscape of the Indies, and also disturbed cosmologies of local belief. John Pemberton illustrates this in his fascinating article (2003) about how Javanese labourers at the Tjolomadoe sugar mill in Central Java in the 1930s responded to a bad accident at the factory which killed several workers. They placed an offering, consisting of the heads of white cows, in the sugar machinery, in order to prevent further accidents. They believed that there were spirits in the machine, and that the factory with its noisy machines had disturbed the peace of the ghost of the lady who had lived there before the factory was built, making her angry (Pemberton 2003). This instance suggests how Natives in Indies colonial society perceived some of the sounds of modernity: as odd, outlandish, and likely to bring about trouble. Indeed, the industrial revolution introduced a multitude of new sounds with often unhappy consequences, obscuring unmediated sounds of humans and nature. Finding a way to listen to unmediated sound in daily life is now difficult. Today the world suffers from an ‘overpopulation’ of sound with so much acoustic information that little of it can emerge with clarity (Schafer 1977:71).

196 Anon. 1932:8; Putra 2011:104-5. An advertisement by the Crown store in Kramat Gantoeng 87 Surabaya contains the text: ‘[K]ita ada sedia plaat lagoe “**Nasional Indonesia**”, seperti: P.B.I. Marsch pakai njanji dan tidak njaji, G.N.I. Marsch pakai njaji dan tidak njanji, **Ir. Soekarno** Marsch tidak njaji, Njanjian **Dr. Soetomo** pakai njaji, “**Indonesia Raja**” pakai njaji dan tidak njaji, harga f 2.50 per stuk’ (Soeara-Soerabaja, No. 18, 1 July 1932 and subsequent dates).

Yet other sounds of modernity produced by new media technologies like radio and the ‘talking machine’ were incorporated into the Dutch East Indies urban soundscape. Penetrating the public and private domains, the new sound media of the gramophone and other modern European technologies of sound reproduction changed not only the soundscape but also the conceptualization of sound in urban areas of the Indies. In the 1930s, for example, newspaper reports in Padang, West Sumatra, mention that playing the gramophone in the evening was prohibited. Gramophone shops that demonstrated a ‘talking machine’ after 9:00 p.m. faced prosecution.¹⁹⁷ The reason behind this regulation is that Dutch colonial authorities worried that the modern sound of gramophone records could disrupt public order during the night. It can be imagined that the modern sound coming out of a gramophone could attract the attention of many people. Since there were still limited numbers of Natives who possessed a gramophone and records at that time, those who owned the machine were usually visited by neighbours in order to listen to recorded songs played by the machine. Likewise the shops that sold gramophones often gave demonstrations free of charge for their customers to attract their attention to this product. Natives flocked to listen to the gramophone late at night, but the sound of the gramophone in this context was considered by Dutch colonial authorities as a potential threat to public order. Therefore they passed a regulation prohibiting people playing the gramophone at night.

In sum, the prolific amount of gramophone music that was played and heard at certain times and places changed the Indies urban soundscape, brought about disharmony, and caused an unpleasant atmosphere, though in the course of time it would come to be regarded as normal and routine. Certain parties, especially conservative Muslim groups, criticized people’s disrespect when they continued to play gramophones during prayer hours. In Singapore, the Legislative Council even passed an amendment to the Minor Offices Ordinance in 1934 dealing with ‘post-midnight noises in the colony’, which prohibited among other things the playing of the gramophone and wireless music after midnight unless there was written permission from the police (Tan 1996/1997:14-15). I suspect that the regulation was also intended for maintaining public order, which was very important to the colonizers to maintain their hegemony in the colonies. Actually, it is not the regulation itself that is important in this context, but the social occurrence behind it: what people did with the concept of the gramophone and how it changed their understanding of space and time.

Early modern Indonesian literary texts are another important cultural site for observing the feelings of Natives about the ‘talking machine’ and discs. They represent Natives’ recognition and reception of these technologies. Characters in novels of this period – both serious and popular novels – are described as being passionately involved with the sweet voices emanating from the gramophone and radio, reflecting the change in the domestic soundscape in the houses of the upper classes of Indies society due to the new sound media. For instance, medical doctor Soekartono, the protagonist in Armijn Pané’s *Belenggoe* (‘Shackles’), a leading early modern Indonesian novel, becomes addicted to the voice of the famous *keroncong* singer Siti Hajati on gramophone records. This voice belongs to none other than his secret girlfriend

197 See Sinar Sumatra, ‘Memboenjikan gramophone malam hari’, 19 December 1939.

Jah, who hides behind a number of pseudonyms – Miss Eni, alias Rohjati alias Siti Harjati. This illicit relationship causes his marriage with Tini to break up (Pané 1940:65-7). Armijn Pané, like other Native intellectuals in colonial Indonesia of the 1940s,¹⁹⁸ admired the European technologies which were bringing modernity to their fatherland.¹⁹⁹ In *Belenggoe*, the sense of modernity is evoked not only by the telephone, but also by the radio and the gramophone. H.M.J. Maier mentions that the important theme in *Belenggoe* – revealed in the confusion of its protagonists Tono and Tini – is the problem of the pribumi's identity in the wake of the modernization signalled by the consumption of new technology, taking their minds off their material problems.

The telephone is, of course, a symbol of modernity; it is also an icon of the lifestyle of the elite of the late 1930s Batavia in which *Belenggoe* is situated, along with the cars, streetlights, and parties. Tini and Tono are a well-to-do couple without material problems. Unlike the protagonists in Balai Poestaka tales of that time, they are not concerned with money, tradition, and status, but rather with individual problems and personal communication. In *Belenggoe* this modernity is evoked not only by the telephone, but also by the radio and the gramophone. Tono needs all three of them to survive and make sense of his life – and all three of them are instruments that foreground the indirectness of communication as well as the absence, the invisibility, of the voice's source. (Maier 2004:312-13)

Belenggoe reflects the excesses of a modernity ushered in by the advent of Western technology – telephone, radio, and gramophone – in the Dutch East Indies. Other novels of early modern Indonesian literature, including popular novels, also encapsulated the social and psychological effects of gramophone and radio on Natives in the Indies during late colonial times (see Suryadi 2011a).

CONCLUSION

The extensive trading of several brands of 'talking machines' and gramophone discs in the Dutch East Indies during the first half of the twentieth century enabled groups of people other than Europeans to gain access to these technologies. During the early years of the twentieth century this business was no longer monopolized by European traders; there were ethnic Chinese and Native competitors. The selling of 'talking machines' and discs expanded outside

198 Another Native intellectual who admired the 'talking machine' was Haji Agoes Salim, as suggested by a postcard picture of him at age 25 taking pleasure in wax phonograph recordings in the Dutch Consulate in Jeddah, dated 20 February 1909 (Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 26.365: OI D.47; the historical context of this postcard can be read in Laffan 2003). In the early 1940s Salim's religious sermons on disc under the *Tjap Koeda Doea* label were available commercially, possibly produced by Toko Delima in the Senen district of Batavia (Salim 1941: back cover; *Radja Timoer* no. 7, 1 May 1939:21 and subsequent issues; *Poestaka Timoer* no. 11, 1 July 1939:26 and subsequent issues). His religious sermons were often aired on radio, like on the VORO (Vereeniging Oostersche Radio Omroep, 'Association for Eastern Broadcasting') station (Salim 1935; Salim 1941). According to the historian Jeffrey Hadler, discs of political speeches by Haji Agoes Salim were available commercially in the 1930s in the Indies, including in West Sumatra, his homeland (pers. comm., 7-2-2006).

199 Armijn Pané was the Indonesian intellectual who pioneered translating European books on technology into Malay. In 1937 his Malay translation of the Dutch version of S. Kostyurin's *Handleiding voor radio-amateurs in de tropen* (1932) was published in Batavia. Its Malay title is *Tentang hal radio* (see References). It is known as the first book on radio to appear in the Malay language (Pandji Poestaka, No. 58, Tahoen XVI, 22 July 1938: back cover).

Java and, as a consequence, the use of these technologies expanded both geographically and socially, and Natives had greater access to them than during the period of exhibition (Chapter 1).

The variety of uses of ‘talking machines’ and discs in the Indies epitomized Indies Natives’ complex attitudes toward technology. The modern mechanical sound produced by these technologies gave rise to problems. The domestication of ‘talking machines’ and discs affected the lives of Natives in the Indies, both socially and individually, and gave rise to questions about their own culture, religious beliefs, and identity. The mediation of Indonesian local cultures on disc recordings in the gramophone era led to Natives having new perceptions of their own culture: certain elements of culture were now seen as more authentic and higher in value than other elements. On the one hand gramophone recordings were associated with the idea of modernity, but on the other hand the modern sounds were a nuisance, causing trouble both socially and individually. It is no coincidence that along with this rising ‘annoyance’ of modern sounds, the debate between those oriented toward ‘Western modern culture’ and proponents of ‘indigenous culture’ sharpened in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The rise in local use of gramophones and records projected reproduced sound with a modern nuance into the domestic realm of Natives and changed the urban soundscape of the Indies. Indigenous music became more widely available on disc, and at the same time radio stations in the Indies also used gramophone discs for their music programs. As a consequence, records allowed specialized musical traditions to be presented to a much wider audience, and Natives now had another way to hear and appreciate local music. This led to new modes of distribution, dissemination, storage, and appreciation of local music in the Indies.

Growing consumption of the ‘talking machine’ and discs in the Netherlands East Indies during the first half of the twentieth century prompted local entrepreneurs, including ethnic Chinese middlemen, to make commercial recordings of local repertoires. This new business popularized certain local genres, and they became even more popular after radio stations used such recordings for their music programs. A musical culture based on recording media initially developed in Indonesia with the introduction of records and radio broadcasting, which increased the popularity not only of indigenous genres but also of music of other Asian races or cultures like Chinese and Arab. While the recording of local repertoires became more diversified in terms of genre, local musics expanded geographically to ethnicities in the outer islands, including the Minangkabau in West Sumatra. This was in fact the foundation for the formation of regional Indonesian recording industries, including in West Sumatra, which were established and developed later, after the gramophone disc had been totally replaced by cassette technology and its more sophisticated subsequent competitors, as I will discuss further in Chapter 3.