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Producing the local: Javanese performance on Indonesian television

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Introduction

‘[...] no other social institution in Indonesia has arrested public attention on the scale or with the intensity of the electronic media, especially television. Nothing has attracted the number of hours of attention on a daily basis from around 100,000,000 Indonesians as television programs. This alone warrants special investigation. Without it, any understanding of contemporary Indonesia would be seriously flawed.’
(Ariel Heryanto 2008:5)

Empty streets when the show was on air, the talk of the town (and the village), 3.5 million postcards from audiences in Central and East Java and the Special Region of Yogyakarta (Jauhari 1994:21-22), ... The response to broadcasts of serialized Javanese drama, *kethoprak sayembara*, in the 1980s and 1990s was overwhelming.

With the broadcast of the four episodes of the serial *Ampak-Ampak Singgelopuro* (Fog over Singgelopuro) in August 1993, the regional TVRI stations in Yogyakarta and Surabaya reached their zenith. All parties involved profited from the success. The serial boosted the image of the regional Javanese TVRI stations that used the buzz to boost their branding and to distinguish themselves from the upcoming private broadcasting industry. Local newspapers and enterprises that acted as sponsors shared in the financial profit. TVRI and the sponsoring partners deployed all sorts of alluring practices to make the audiences feel involved: they presented entertainment and suspense, co-operated with actors of famous and popular *kethoprak* troupes, they invited television viewers to participate and offered the chance to win a prize. Although the hyperbole ‘empty streets’ was often used to underline the popularity of a show,¹ whether true or not, it does tell us something about the kind of attention a show attracted.

In a nutshell, the case of the *kethoprak sayembara* serial touches upon the essence of local broadcasts in Indonesia in the final decades of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty-first century and gives us a glimpse of how television is ‘both a witness to and an actor in economic structures, social change, political power and cultural meaning’ (Fickers and Johnson 2010:2). It gives us insight into how national, regional and commercial television, not to mention the government and private sectors, engaged with and reacted to each other. The broadcasts represented (aspects of) Javanese-ness by using a vernacular, Javanese, and local settings, by building on a local performance genre, focusing on local history and topics, involving local artists and targeting local audiences. They were perceived to be firmly linked to a specific space and specific ethnic groups, and addressed feelings of belonging and proximity – a sense of nearness and closeness that manifests itself on the physical, cognitive and emotional level. While highlighting particular cultures, in this case

¹ As in the case of the Balinese *drama gong* when broadcast by TVRI Denpasar (Darma Putra 1998:30), the *wayang golek* of TVRI stasiun Bandung and the Depot Jamu Mat Kirun show at TVRI stasiun Surabaya (see *VISTA-TV* 1993 and 1994).

Javanese, at the same time they had Indonesia as a larger frame of reference. At the height of its success, the kethoprak sayembara serial was subtitled in Indonesian, and the producers suggested the idea of nationalizing the genre in nation-wide screenings. Nevertheless, on account of its strong local character, it did differ enormously from the Indonesian-spoken series that used to be produced in and broadcast from Jakarta. And, as the presence of the commercial stations grew stronger, in the eyes of media watcher, literary author and script writer Veven Wardhana, and many with him, these local programmes were perceived to be becoming an increasingly marginal phenomenon (Wardhana 2002:306; Rosidi 2004:10). Although a new media genre, conceived by and for television, kethoprak sayembara was nonetheless categorized as traditional – mainly because of its display of particular aspects of Javanese-ness. The case of kethoprak sayembara sheds light on the dual role of television in cultural processes, as an observer of and simultaneously contributor to culture.

The main objective of this dissertation is to explore how television represents Javanese-ness, as a factor designed to catch and keep the attention of its putative audiences. Its approach is both thematic and chronological. Three main themes structure the study: representing tradition, localizing persuasion and mediating the local. Since they each demand a proper methodological approach, the specific arguments and points I want to make will be introduced and discussed at the beginning of each of the three parts of this dissertation. Although presented separately, tradition, persuasion and the local are intricately linked to each other in televisual representations of Javanese-ness. In order to reveal ‘the specific, embedded, and diverse ways that people use media to make sense of their worlds and, most importantly, to construct new ones’ (Ginsburg 1994a:139-140), the analysis is based on a number of case studies, displaying Javanese performance by and on television.

Central to this research is the question of how people make use of national, regional, local, public and private television in Indonesia – each in their own way and with their own goals – to represent the local and, in particular, how they construct images of Javanese-ness through the production and dissemination of performance. Performance in Javanese has been used by the Indonesian television industry to achieve various purposes: to entertain and inform its audiences, to represent ‘the local’/‘the regional’, to preserve and nurture the ‘traditional’ and to contribute to the building of a ‘national culture’, for persuasive (commercial or propaganda) aims, as a counter-voice of diversification in the direction of global or ‘Jakartan’ influences, and to express multiculturalism. These issues have been put into the framework of discursive practices about local, national and global cultures in the electronic audiovisual media in Indonesia and of the meta-discourse about these topics within the disseminated genres themselves. The following principal questions have guided my research: How do people – whom I call agents – use and shape tradition, persuasion and the local in Javanese-language productions of performance and their dissemination? Who are these agents and what are their goals? How do the uses of tradition, persuasion and the local contribute to these productions and to the discursive practices concerning these productions?

My research focuses on the continuities and changes in the contents, form and status of Javanese performance because of and on television from the end of the nineteen eighties to

the first decade of the twenty-first century (1988-2008). As the dissertation covers two decades and is the result of a longitudinal study, it offers a historical perspective on the televising of Javanese performance in the dynamics of its context, and on the increasingly complex televisionscape in Indonesia. My linguistically based choice to study televised performance in Javanese provides insight into the particularities of such broadcasting and into how it differs considerably from Indonesian-language programmes. It also limits the scope of a person's viewpoint, in particular as Javanese-language programmes constitute only a small percentage of the entire gamut of broadcasting. The vast majority of the programmes are broadcast in Indonesian and are devised to attract more diversified audiences than just ethnic Javanese (of various social classes and culture backgrounds) and/or speakers (or hearers) of Javanese. Importantly, it does not include any religious programmes, even though these are prominently present in broadcasting in Indonesia, but did not usually use vernaculars like Javanese in the period researched. Another choice concerns the study of the agents in their capacity as contributors to the production of the local. This means that, as far as this relates to the audiences, I focus on the ways in which they are actively present and participate in television programmes, rather than using audience reception research in the traditional sense of the term as a starting point.

Offering a perspective on Indonesian television from an alternative point of view, namely: mediated Javanese performance, this dissertation is above all a plea for a more thorough study of the role of proximity in the production, dissemination and reception of local television programmes, hence the special attention devoted to the term in Chapter 1 and to the phenomenon of proximity in relation to television in Chapter 11. It is true that the Indonesian mediascape in the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century developed in a world characterized by an increasing frequency and intensity of global communication with all the baggage this brings in its train. Nevertheless, it is proximity that reveals the processes taking place 'at the local sites of cultural production' (Winichakul 2003:6). Furthermore, it aims to make a contribution to the historiography of audiovisual electronic media in Indonesia. Finally, its intention is to take the edge off the following arguments and generalizations: that 'Java' is an overstudied 'area', that Javanese culture is hegemonic and homogeneous and that the national, New Order regime was all dominating and determining, leaving no room for local input or creativity.

1 Mediating performance

I use the term performance in its broad meaning. In this I follow Bauman's definition, in which 'performance usually suggests an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience' (Bauman 1992:41).² A performance is 'a deliberate effort to represent' (Peacock 1990:208). It is 'set apart, marked by various signals as distinct from ordinary routines of living' (ibid.), and has

² See Schechner on performance: 'Behavior heightened, [...], and publicly displayed' (Schechner 1995:1). See also Finnegan on forms of 'heightened verbal expression' (Finnegan 1992/1996:xiv).

to be recognized as such (Scannell 1995:13). Scannell's idea of 'communicative intentionality' (1995:14-15) approaches Bauman's definition of performance to some degree. He sees any radio and television programme as 'an organized event that exhibits a communicative intentionality in all its aspects (linguistic, paralinguistic, and nonlinguistic)'. Nevertheless, they differ from other social occasions as they are institutional occasions, and are produced for absent listeners and viewers (Scannell 1995:15).

My focus on televised performance allows me to incorporate a wide variety of television genres in my corpus, including drama, talk shows and other entertainment, news bulletins, infotainment and commercials. These generic categories, referring to global television categories, are also used in Indonesian programming. However, as television genres 'are culturally specific and temporally limited' (Feuer 1992:139), in my study I pay attention to how these 'rhetorical and pragmatic constructions' (Feuer 1992:141) attain a specific meaning in the framework of televised Javanese performance – as illustrated by the above mentioned genre of *kethoprak sayembara*, an example of serialized drama. It was not their artistic qualities that determined my choice of certain television genres to be studied, but rather their performative character determined by their display of Javanese-ness in a dynamic interplay of 'verbal art' (Bauman, 1984; Finnegan 1992:10-11) with (other) aural and visual art. I prefer to call this performative art rather than just verbal art, as the latter term too much recalls pure verblativity although, according to Finnegan, most scholars use it in a wider meaning, referring to performance in its entirety (Finnegan 1992:10-11). Studying televised performance, we should not restrict its meaning to just 'a vernacular phenomenon' (Mitchell 1994:5), but also never lose sight of its visual and aural aspects.

Mediated performance is (at least) double representation. Mitchell points to the limitations of representation as a key word, but also acknowledges its advantages, as it is 'simultaneously linking the visual and verbal disciplines within the field of their differences' (Mitchell 1994:6). He proposes representation should be seen 'as a kind of activity, process, or set of relationships', and as 'the relay mechanism in exchanges of power, value, and publicity', that he characterizes as 'inherently unstable, reversible, and dialectical' (Mitchell 1994:420).

Mazzarella thinks it is important to understand what happens at 'the intersection of two or more systems of mediation' (Mazzarella 2004:353), in this case performance and television. The act of performing reveals meaning because of the people who make the representations. A focus on televised performance immediately and self-evidently calls attention to the agents involved in the mediation processes: actors, audiences, legislators, media practitioners, sponsors, media watchers, television institutions and so on – of whom we caught a glimpse in the *kethoprak sayembara* example at the beginning of this chapter. These agents will be accorded ample attention in the following chapters. The act of performing also enables these agents to acquire a deeper consciousness of their culture (Schechner and Apple 1990:1). Performance shares this reflexive character with media like television. As a reflexive and reifying technology, a medium 'makes society imaginable and intelligible to itself in the form of external representations' (Mazzarella 2004:346). And, just as is performance, a medium is a 'framework, both enabling and constraining, for a given set of social practices' (Mazzarella 2004:346). Considering mediation systems as practices enables us to see them as complex and

dynamic institutions, and to focus on their continuous changes and developments, and ‘conflicting tendencies’ (Sreberny 2000:116).

Another characteristic that performance shares with media like television is orality (Lindsay 2002; Jurriëns 2004:27-8). Since Indonesian audiences have a time-honoured experience of performance, television is well suited to these audiences because of the similarity between both mediation systems (see Coutas 2006:387). In an orally orientated society, these ‘habits of orality’ (Lindsay 2002:325) may partially explain the workings of proximity in Indonesian television. I shall return to orality as a common feature of performance and television in Chapter 11.

Televsual representation of ‘Javanese culture’ by means of performance, that is, narrative-based and image-centred presentation through the use of images, sound and text, produced for invisible (rather than Scannell’s absent) viewers, occurs in multiple contexts and on several levels.³ Representation invariably implies that certain important decisions have to be made about ‘what to include and what to exclude, what to “foreground” and what to “background”’ (Fairclough 1995a:4), and therefore is always only partial. As I show in this study, mediated performance is used for the representation of *budaya* (culture) as well as for other purposes. Since the ‘production and consumption of cultural representations affects the construction of identities – national, ethnic, religious, occupational, familial, sex and gender’ (Thompson 1997:1) – , the ways in which Javanese is represented in the Indonesian media can be influential in the construction of Javanese identities. In my analysis of media products, Fairclough’s questions about media output have been helpful. They concern the ways in which the world is represented, the identities that are created for those involved in the programme or story and the kinds of relationships that are set up between those involved (Fairclough 1995a:5).

The representations examined here occur within and are part of the Indonesian mediascape, a term coined by Arjun Appadurai (1996:33-37). A mediascape is a network of media technologies, productions and institutions, and an arena in which people meet and make representations (Arps et al. Forthcoming). The term accounts ‘for the different kinds of global cultural flows created by new media technologies and the images created with them in the late 20th century’ (Ginsburg 1994b:366). I use the term televisionscape to refer to institutions and broadcasting technologies that ‘produce and disseminate information’ and ‘the images of the world created by these media’ (Appadurai 1996:35).

2 Producing the local

In this dissertation I focus on how people – the agents mentioned above – represent the local and what mechanisms of representation are in operation. As the local has been a very prominent issue in Indonesian government policy, legislation and discourse regarding the electronic media, it forms the starting point of my research. The case of *kethoprak sayembara*

³ I use the terms ‘narrative-based’ and ‘image-centred’ as defined by Appadurai (1996:35).

with which I began this introduction exemplifies what Appadurai calls ‘the production of locality’. Appadurai defines locality ‘as a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts’. This phenomenological quality ‘expresses itself in certain kinds of agency, sociality, and reproducibility’ (Appadurai 1996:178). In my search for representations of the (Javanese) local, I follow Appadurai’s conception of locality as a complex phenomenological quality – although I prefer to use the term ‘the local’ rather than locality, acknowledging that both terms have their shortcomings, as both locality and the local also refer to physical space.

The author’s view on locality ‘as primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial’ (Appadurai 1996:178) should not be taken for granted, as conditions have changed since Appadurai developed his ideas on the basis of research conducted in the 1990s. We should question whether this view is still valid when studying the representation of the local by and on Indonesian television, in which space and scale do play an important role, if (only ‘if’) not actually, then certainly ideologically, emotionally and/or in discourse – as will become clear from my examples of the production of the local. Or, framed in another way, one can question, as has been suggested by Mazzarella: ‘[W]hat spatial or scalar level is denoted by this “local”?’ (Mazzarella 2004:352).

Whereas Appadurai approaches globalization and the production of locality from the point of view of nationalism and the nation-state (1996:188), in this study I prefer to focus on levels below the level of the nation-state. The last three decades, world-wide the regional and the local have become much more prominent politically, as Appadurai also acknowledges (1996:189). Globalization processes have instigated this revalorization of the local (Mazzarella 2004:352). A valuable concept in this respect is ethnolocality, that Boellstorff introduces to indicate the ‘spatial scale where “ethnicity” and “locality” presume each other to the extent that they are, in essence, a single concept’ (Boellstorff 2002:25). As such, ethnolocality mediates between ‘Indonesia’ and the ‘village’ (Boellstorff 2002:38 fn 9), and does not always correspond to one specific administrative area (Jones 2005:81). Ethnolocality enables us to detect and observe the local beyond the frames that have been determined by Indonesian politics and administration.

Recapitulating, the study of televised Javanese performance has enabled me to lay bare the functioning of representation (with all its implications), related to the production of the local and the construction of Javanese-ness.

3 Studying televisual representations of the local in Indonesia

Studies on televisual representations of the local in Indonesia are scarce. Although the number of these studies has increased during the last two decades, it is still an understudied field in cases which require an in-depth knowledge of local languages and cultures. Most research approaches media from a national or an international perspective, and focuses on political and economic aspects of the media, rather than on cultural phenomena. And, while in Indonesia

local television has recently received ample attention from Indonesian academics, unfortunately these studies often are not easily accessible.

Early publications on television in Indonesia focus on the active and prominent role of the medium in building the nation (Alfian and Chu 1981; Chu, Alfian and Schramm 1991). Kitley (2000) and Sen and Hill (2000) have paved the way for further research with their groundbreaking works. They cover Indonesian television from the launch of the national television station TVRI and its role as a national medium, to the founding of the first private television stations, each advocating a different approach. McDaniel offers a broader perspective in two in-depth studies of electronic media, the first discussing radio, television and video in the Malay world (McDaniel 1994), and the second politics, media and national development in Southeast Asia (McDaniel 2002). Both publications scrutinize Indonesian media in great detail.

Programming of local content that featured local cultures and vernaculars – local here referring to the sub-national – was very limited according to Sen and Hill. Their findings were based on the research they conducted in Yogyakarta in 1996: they list only three Javanese-language programmes on local TVRI featuring folk or traditional theatre, reduced to broadcasts of one hour or used to fill a night slot (Sen and Hill 2000:119-120). Kitley mentions a few programmes that represent particularistic cultural associations, on both TVRI and the private station Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia (RCTI) (Kitley 2000:340). If we compare Sen and Hill's views to the findings of McDaniel, published only six year earlier, the differences are significant. McDaniel, who conducted his research in 1989 and 1990, was struck by 'the prominence of traditional performance arts' in Indonesian television programming. He mentions that

each night there is at least one show on regional cultural dance, song, or theater. Responsibility for these programs is rotated among the regional stations and the mobile production units. Regional stations often produce even more cultural programs for transmission in their own region. (McDaniel 1994:244)

McDaniel does not specify the languages used in these shows. However, as he uses the bimonthly broadcast of *wayang golek* (rod-puppetry) by TVRI Bandung as a case in point, that was most probably performed in Sundanese, we can assume that the traditional performing arts he mentions make use of local languages (McDaniel 1994:244-245).

The discrepancy between the observations of Sen and Hill (2000) and McDaniel (1994) raises several questions. One of the first questions that comes to mind when comparing their conclusions is why they differ so much from each other considering the limited time span between both studies. Had the introduction of private television by the end of the nineteen eighties influenced domestic programming, and in particular local content using vernaculars, so rapidly and significantly? Had television as a national medium perhaps pushed aside cultural expressions of minority groups, the largest of which is the Javanese, out of view? And, if Javanese performance on Indonesian television did actually have such a limited scope, why did the private station Indosiar make the effort to broadcast day-long *Srimulat* (Javanese-Indonesian comedy) programmes at the end of the fasting month? Or why did all Indonesian

electronic media broadcast a specific *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet) show, performing the story *Rama Tambak* (in February 1998), during the economic and monetary crisis? Also, if a larger number of Javanese programmes had been broadcast, why were they (almost) invisible to researchers? Or is something else at work here? Did a different point of view or a specific focus colour the observations? Was, in the words of Annabelle Sreberny, ‘the “mood” of contemporary analysis’ (2000:114) decisive to the outcome of the studies, and is this discrepancy therefore a question of methodology and gaze?

Kitley (2000:340) and Sen and Hill (2000:123) did perceive changing attitudes towards local productions (local here meaning the sub-national, regional, local as determined by linguistic and cultural characteristics other than national Indonesian) and the potential of these programmes to win more audiences. However at this time this surfacing of ‘streams of heteroglossia’ (Keane 2003:505) was just the beginning of a trend that coincided with the implementation of the Regional Autonomy Law that at the time of their research was not yet realized.

More recently, several authors have studied specific cultural expressions on television that are tied to a locality, a specific group of people and/or a language on levels below that of the national. The studies by Jurriëns (2004) and Loven (2008) deserve a special mention. Both studies were conducted within the framework of the Verbal Art in the Audiovisual Media of Indonesia research programme at Leiden University between 1996 and 2001.

In *Cultural travel and migrancy*, Jurriëns took ‘unconventional roads’ (Jurriëns 2004:x). Situating the electronic media of West Java within the conceptual framework of travel and migrancy allowed him to discuss the interaction between the global and the local. In his analysis of the Sundanese television programme *Inohong di Bojongrangkong* (The leader of Bojongrangkong), the musical genre *pop Sunda* and the radio programme *Dongeng plesetan* (Tales of punning), he demonstrates how these programmes are not merely results of globalization processes, but also a critical comment on them (Jurriëns 2004:84). His study is embedded in an extensive introduction to Indonesian cultural policies and debates and to the West Javanese electronic media.

Loven studied the local television programme *Si Doel anak sekolahan* (‘Educated Doel’), ‘in an effort to disentangle the various understandings of “national television” in late New Order and post-Soeharto Indonesia’. Besides, she explored how the media in Indonesia ‘both shape and are shaped by discourse in society at large’ (Loven 2008:1). Loven offers a thorough insight into the context of the programme under scrutiny, and also provides us with a concise overview of previous studies on media and discourse in general, and media in Indonesia (Loven 2008:9-11).

In the meantime, several articles concerning local culture on Indonesian television have seen the light of day. Mrázek and Arps have studied Javanese television shows. Mrázek (1999 and 2000) focuses on the clown scenes to discuss innovation in televised *wayang kulit* in relation to the (then) present world – innovation that is itself the result of the interaction between *wayang* and television. Analysing the Surabayan *Pojok Kampung* (Neighbourhood Corner), a news programme in the local dialect, Arps shows that the language use in the

programme differs increasingly from New Order conventions, concluding (with Van Heeren) that the regionalization is ‘distinctly modern, is oriented to the here and now, it is exemplary for the future’ (Arps and Van Heeren 2006:315). Indigenous audience response to representations of Balinese culture on television have been paid attention in the research of Hughes-Freeland (1996), Darma Putra (1998) and Hobart (2001 and 2002). Hendrawan studied local television in post-Soeharto Indonesia from a global and national perspective, concluding that it is ‘a new actor in the socio-cultural transformation at the local level in Indonesia’ (2015:222).

Ariel Heryanto offers yet other perspectives on television in Indonesia. He discusses television from the point of view of popular culture and identity (2008, 2014). In a special edition of the *Asian Journal of Communication*, Hobart and Fox and their fellow authors examine the cultural practices that constitute Indonesian entertainment television, rather than approaching media from a political-economic or mass communications perspective (Hobart 2006a). Kitley (2004) and Coutas (2006/2008) have written comprehensive essays on the localization of foreign formats in Indonesia. In their 2011 edited volume, Sen and Hill again focus on the link between the media and politics, this time in twenty-first century Indonesia. They analyse media transformations in the post-Soeharto period and investigate how these changes are influencing the development of democracy in the country both positively or negatively. In his work (2002), Indonesian media practitioner and watcher Wardhana reflects on the Indonesian televisionscape in all its aspects from an insider perspective.⁴

My research has profited greatly from studies on local television and localizing processes in a non-Indonesian context – both Asian and other. I specifically want to mention the articles by Ping-Hung Chen on domestication strategies (2004) and Iwabuchi on cultural proximity (2001), both about Taiwan, and the 2010 *Media History* issue about perspectives on localizing the transnational in regional television in Europe (Johnson and Fickers). As television is a global medium, a comparative perspective on localizing strategies might generate new insights.

4 This dissertation

In my research into the ways in which television represents Javanese-ness, I found that an interdisciplinary approach and empirically based method were the most suitable to my materials and my aims. Taking the perspective of mediatized Javanese performance, I frame my analysis within performance and media studies, Indonesian studies and cultural anthropology. My sources and materials consist of television broadcasts, interviews, literature on Indonesian media, articles and essays published in Indonesian newspapers and magazines, letters from audiences, Indonesian legislative texts, scripts, programme descriptions and broadcast schedules, and television websites. I watched television broadcasts, witnessed the recording and production of several programmes in television studios and other spaces, and

⁴ On Wardhana’s work, see Jurriëns 2016.

obtained copies of TV recordings.⁵ I have interviewed performing artists and media practitioners, producers, people involved, or who have been involved, in the management of broadcasting institutions and *budayawan* (culture philosophers and thinkers) commenting on the media industry and media productions and broadcasts. In my analysis of broadcasts of televised performances, I pay detailed attention to language use and to public debate on representations of Javanese culture on television.

In the three parts of my dissertation, I focus consecutively on ideas of tradition, persuasion and the local in my discussion of ways of representing the local, that is Javanese culture, in performances on television. Each theme required a different approach. The first part is focused on the televising of one specific Javanese performance genre, *kethoprak*. In Part II the spotlight turns to the contributing agents and reveals the amalgam of messages, narratives and ideologies as these are integrated into the programme flow. Localizing strategies and the alliances in which local broadcasters engage are the theme of Part III. My rationale for choosing this threefold approach is my own curiosity to discover how research into television from specific angles would generate specific outcomes, that, when made into a compilation, would result in a mosaic. The form of a mosaic is better suited to grasp the character of television, as it will reveal the various facets of the Indonesian televisionscape, keeping the dynamics of the televisual processes.

Representing tradition

Since 1962 television broadcasting of local cultural expressions, including drama was placed in the hands of the national television station TVRI and – later also – its regional institutions. As an instrument of the Indonesian government, TVRI was the mouthpiece of New Order policy, voicing its striving for a national identity and unity. The station took the concept of ‘the local’ for granted and used it for ideological reasons, namely: for the grand narrative of building a national culture. Meanwhile, even as it was doing this, regular broadcasts of specific popular Javanese performance genres added to the branding of regional TVRI stations. They counterbalanced the discourse of loss – loss of local cultures and the Javanese vernacular – , prevalent at Javanese language congresses and among bureaucrats.

This study begins with an analysis of how the regional government station TVRI Stasiun Yogyakarta represents ‘tradition’. This is put into the context of discussions about tradition and culture during the New Order period. I argue that the regional television station in Yogyakarta did more than merely implement government policies in its broadcasting. Benefiting from the contribution of producers who often were performing artists or *budayawan* themselves, and inspired by and building on local traditional performance, it developed its own performance styles and new television genres. Local audiences received the special attention of these producers whose goal was enhancing proximity. Tradition, in this period a frequently discussed concept, on television was interpreted in multiple ways and obtained a flexible character. Strikingly an open attitude towards innovation and the desire to

⁵ Audiovisual recordings of television programmes – some of which were recorded at the KITLV Jakarta (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde) for the purpose of the VA/AVMI research programme (Verbal Art in the Audiovisual Media of Indonesia); some obtained from various television producers in Indonesia; some recorded by friends and some by myself in the course of time.

keep pace with the developments in society became a means to preserve traditional performance genres.

Localizing persuasion

The end of the nineteen eighties marked a period of transition (McDaniel 1994:26) that began with significant economic growth and the first expansion in the Indonesian televisionscape. New technologies enabled the reception of foreign programmes via satellite dishes. As soon as the first private television stations were established, the national broadcasting services had to cede their monopolistic position in the broadcasting of local/regional performance genres. The five new competitors utilized local culture principally for commercial aims, addressing and shaping the needs of the rapidly expanding middle classes. Their competition gave TVRI a serious impetus to improve its productions and broadcasts. Within a decade the economic boom came to an end. The economic and monetary crisis (*krismon*) of 1997 and 1998 had a direct and profound impact on broadcasting and the private television industry suffered severe losses.

In this second part, I discuss how information, persuasion and propaganda were localized. I focus on the broadcasting of Javanese performance, in the first case for commercial aims, in the second case for informative purposes. Contrary to what might have been expected, the analysis of the agents involved in the mediation processes discloses how they balance in between different, often paradoxical ideologies.

Mediating the local

From 1998 onwards fundamental changes were altering the Indonesian televisionscape. They occurred as a result of far-reaching political changes after President Soeharto's resignation and the introduction of the Reformation era, and were reinforced by new legislation like the Regional Autonomy Law, that brought a renewed consciousness of local/regional identity, and the new Broadcasting Law. This led to the creation of an entirely new local broadcasting industry. Whereas the new broadcasting legislation, just as the preceding one, did not specify how the 'local' should be defined, it was the television industry itself that defined its meanings in the broadcasts. In public discourse in Indonesia, the concept of 'the local' was an important topic, but only a few specialists added any real depth to the discussions.

The third part of my study focuses on localizing practices and representations of Javanese cultures within the constraints of and the opportunities offered by these new local broadcasting industries. My first argument is that the concept of the local acquires meaning in the mediating practices of the local television stations. Secondly, local television stations, despite (or because of) their commercial interests, offer a much more diversified representation of Javanese-ness in the content of their programmes than used to be the case under the New Order regime.

In the final chapter, I reflect on the outcomes of this study, putting them in the perspective of some current developments.

The main key concepts of this dissertation, the local, proximity and tradition, will be presented in Chapter 1. Thereafter, I sketch the norms and standards that were set in debates that framed the discourse on Javanese language and culture in the period under scrutiny in this dissertation.