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

This book is a study in diachronic perspective on the impact of recording technologies, more specifically cassette and video compact disc (VCD), on Indonesian local cultures and societies. It examines how modern reproduced sound, which is constantly proliferating and multiplying up to today through various (social) media, but initially facilitated by recording media technology through the agency of regional recording industries, has influenced the contours of Indonesian local cultures. The book relates Indonesia's first encounter with recording technology, examines the nature and cultural ramifications of the expansion of recording technology among Indonesia's ethnic groups, and looks at its engagement with other media. As a case study, the West Sumatran recording industry is explored, along with the commercial cassettes and VCDs it has produced. I examine the features, content, and socio-cultural meanings of mediated Minangkabau cultural expressions.

In this study my starting point is a local perspective rather than a metropolitan one. I focus attention on the outskirts of the nation: West Sumatra in the western part of Indonesia, a province inhabited mostly by the Minangkabau ethnic group. Exploring the use and consumption of recording media in this Indonesian regional context, and its effects on local culture and ethnicity, the study approaches the topic from the perspective of the region. I use the term *ethnicity* in this book, among various understandings and theories about it (see Yinger 1985; Banks 1996; Hutchinson and Smith 1996), to refer to 'the *social construction* of descent and culture, the social mobilization of descent and culture, and the meanings and implications of classification systems built around them' (Fenton 2003:3). Ethnicity is a highly elastic concept applied to groups who say they share or are perceived to share some combination of cultural, historical, racial, religious, dress, food, or linguistic features and also ancestral origins, by which the connection between its members is not conceived as a familial bond (Birch, Schirato and Srivastava 2001:163; Calhoun 2002:56). Of those elements, 'common descent and shared origin is central' (Verkuyten 2006:75). By applying such a region-centric perspective, this study provides a view of the multi-faceted and heterogeneous character of Indonesia's media industries, specifically its regional recording industries, thus complementing the predominantly national and metropolitan-centred approach of studies of Indonesia media and culture.

Indonesia's regional recording industries have not received much scholarly attention. Scholars of media and popular culture spend most of their energy studying the use and impacts of digital social media on urban societies, which is an important arena of contemporary ethnic cultural productions. The products of the West Sumatran recording industry, like the products of other regional recording industries in Indonesia, are an outstanding agency for the Minangkabau ethnic community to express their attitudes to a changing world. Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs chronicle the Minangkabau ethnic group's past and contemporary cultural dynamics in the engagement with the outside world, in which foreign and indigenous elements are constantly competing. I am not simply examining the effects of cassette and VCD technologies on the changing nature of the local music industry,

as has been studied by some experts (for example Manuel 1993; 2012); far beyond that, I argue that regional recording industries, through which the mediation of ethnic cultures has greatly increased and the (re)production of local cultural sounds has continued to accumulate since the early twentieth century, have moulded the traits and existence of ethnicities all over the contemporary world.

This dissertation asks how and to what extent recording media are used in regional cultural production in Indonesia and how recording media interact with ethnicity, Minangkabau in this context. In order to answer this principal issue, I formulated questions that guided me in collecting data and arranging the body of this book. The questions are: when did Minangkabau culture and society first engage with recording media and what were the cultural-historical circumstances that engendered such technology contacts? When did the regional recording industry connected to Minangkabau ethnicity emerge and what political, economic, and social factors stimulated that? What are the products of this local media industry and what are their characteristics? What aspects are involved in this media-based regional cultural production and who are its consumers? To what extent does the regional recording industry, as a manifestation of cultural mediation, bring about transformation of ethnic Minangkabau culture and society?

This dissertation thus focuses on two aspects. First, a chronological outline of the arrival of various types of sound recording technology in Indonesia and the recorded sounds they reproduced, from the phonograph to the VCD, and Indonesia's domestication of them; this gives us a historical depiction of the ongoing mediation of Indonesia's ethnic cultural expressions using recording media technologies. 'Sound technology', as Sterne (2003:7) remarks, 'offers a route into a field of conjunctures among material, economic, technical, ideational, practical, and environmental changes.' Second, the dissertation examines the use of the various types of recording media in a contemporary Indonesian local cultural context and its implications for the public, by taking the case of the Minangkabau ethnic group. Both aspects are closely connected to each other because, as I will elaborate in the following pages, recorded sounds from the past continue to resonate and, together with current reproduced sounds, influence the configuration of the contemporary modern soundscape which in turn influences how people are living now. I want to stress the cumulative effect of the capability of sound reproduction to keep the sounds of the past alive. With this in mind, in order to comprehend contemporary cultures and societies in the world – Indonesia in this context – one must consider the history of sound reproduction in the society and how it has influenced that's society's culture of listening.

Today we are seeing an immense production by Indonesia's recording industries, especially music, nationally and regionally, which is consumed all over the country and even distributed to neighbouring countries. Focusing on the Minangkabau ethnic group of Sumatra, this book explores how local communities in Indonesia have adopted recording media technologies and what impacts the domestication of such technologies have had on them. In this regard, it can be said that the West Sumatran recording industry can be seen 'as a *site* for the examination of how locality emerges in the globalizing world and of how global fact takes local form' (Appadurai 1996:18).

It cannot be doubted that reproduced sound has influenced the emergence and development of each nation in the course of time. A post-colonial nation-state like Indonesia is no exception. The early construction of Indonesianness in the late colonial era, and the sense of nationality among ethnic groups living in Indonesia in subsequent times, have also been influenced by sound recording and transmitting technologies. History was made not only by guns, *bambu runcing* (bamboo spears), and small-scale vernacular print media. For example, it was in late colonial times that the Indonesian patriotic song 'Indonesia Raya' ('Great Indonesia') and political speeches by Dr. Soetomo were made available on gramophone disc (*Pewarta*, 11-08-1933; Anon. 1932:138), and during the Indonesian struggle of independence radio played an important role in spreading the spirit of nationalism.[1] Indonesia, whose entire archipelago covers a distance equal to that from London to Moscow, and which became an independent country partly due to Soekarno's passionate political speeches using microphones, has an incredible ethnic, culture, and religious variety. Inhabited by hundreds of ethnic groups (large and small) with different physical appearances and cultural identities, and adhering to several different religions, the position of ethnic groups, their relations to each other, and their relationship with the nation-state are not simple, not easily understood. Although it faces many problems, politically, socially, and economically, the nation-state remains in existence. Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' (1991) explains a bit about such complex political and cultural realities. However, Anderson saw literacy as a prerequisite for being able to imagine a nation by way of reading (newspapers, for example). Therefore, his theories may not be entirely applicable to the situation in the Dutch East Indies, considering that until the end of the colonial period the number of Natives[2] who were literate (not to say living in literacy) was restricted to a small group of local elites living in urban areas, mostly in Java.[3] Though there was a vernacular press on a small scale in late colonial times, people's language use remained strongly influenced by orality (Sunarti 2013). Even in modern Indonesia and the Malay world, an oral orientation is firmly entrenched in many aspects of life, including in education (Sweeney 1987; Teeuw 1994). In this regard, historians, as Susumu (2007) and Colombijn (2009) have pointed out, have paid no attention to the role of aural power (such as Soekarno's political speeches using microphones). Reproduced sound (such as gramophone discs and radio programs of local music; see Susumu 2006) could reach a wider audience than print media, and directly influenced the emotions of illiterate as well as literate Natives. In this 'new age, newspapers and radio open all the secrets', as was mentioned by A[boe] Hanifah and his colleagues from *Jong Sumatranen Bond* (Young Sumatrans Union) in 1928,[4] suggesting that not only print but also electronic media influenced the Dutch East

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1 Wild 1987 and 1991. See also 'Menjebarkan pidato dengan radio', *Pandji Poestaka*, No. 38, Tahoen X, 10 Mei 1932, p. 578.

2 In this book I use the term native (from Latin 'nativus', innate, natural) to refer to a person born in a specific place or area. It has a similar meaning to 'indigenous' (from Latin índo' (in) and 'gena', generate) which means a person originating in a country or region (Ansell 2013:86-7). Though the concept of 'native' may be regarded as neutral, the term had been used historically in the context colonialism, as also reflected in the book's Part 1, when the European colonialists 'presumed native populations to be primitive, savage, and uncivilized' (Ansell 2013:87).

3 In 1924, the Indonesian communist leader Tan Malaka noted that the literate Indonesian Natives was no more than 5 to 6 percent (Malaka 1962:25).

4 'Zaman Baroe', *Pemoeda-Soematera: Soeara dari perkoempoelan: Jong Sumatranen Bond*, No. 2, Tahoen kesebelas, September 1928.

Indies colonial society at that time. In a contemporary perspective, modern media, including national and regional recording industries, have contributed significantly to the ongoing formation of national identity in Indonesia and the dynamics of regional cultures.

Since this study deals with ethnicity and the nation-state, it is important to understand two Indonesian concepts in a cultural and political context which will appear repeatedly in the book: *budaya nasional* ('national culture') and *budaya daerah* ('regional cultures'). *Budaya nasional* denotes the culture recognized as being part of the identity of the Indonesian nation-state, which, according to the Indonesian constitution *Undang-Undang Dasar 1945* (UUD '45), is 'culture that arises as the product of the thought and character of the entire people of Indonesia' (Yampolsky 1995:702)[5]. *Budaya daerah* refers to the culture of ethnic communities in Indonesia. A provincial-level administrative region, and sometimes district, is often strongly associated with the ethnic majority living there, with their own particular culture, despite the fact that many members of that ethnic group may have spread over Indonesia and neighbouring countries and still practise the culture of their ancestors. So, in the multi-ethnic state of Indonesia, provincial boundaries are not necessarily identical with ethnic boundaries.

In an Indonesian cultural context, the concept *budaya daerah* overlaps with the concept of *budaya tradisional* ('traditional culture') which is associated, if not exactly equivalent, with English *tradition*. Defined anthropologically, *tradition* refers to persistent cultural patterns (including beliefs, customs, knowledge, and values) that evoke or testify to continuity with the past (Calhoun 2002:170). As Indonesia's ethnic groups have long been absorbing elements of foreign but non-European cultures, tradition in this context can be better seen as a process in which culture is continuously renewed with reference to the past (Hobsbawm 1983:4). But tradition is usually seen as opposite to modernity (see Grabun 2001:8), and modernity is associated by Indonesians with all things (both material and immaterial) of European culture encountered in Indonesia. And in the context of this book, I do not make a distinction between 'Great and Little traditions', as Robert Redfield suggests (Redfield 1956), because the distinction between elite or dominant records of cultural or religious tradition and its local, informal, and often oral manifestations associated with peasant groups, in my mind, does not apply to (regional) cultural expressions in Indonesia.

Recording media, the focus of this study, possess a distinctive character that matches the cultural reality of Indonesia, which is heterogeneous in nature. According to Peter Manuel (1993:3), recording media, especially the cassette, are grassroots-based media. Equally grassroots-based is the VCD. Introducing a dramatically new form of media culture in Indonesia and elsewhere, 'VCDs have clearly increased the sheer amount of popular music production, while enriching it with a visual element that can serve as a vehicle for

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5   As described in Yampolsky's 1995 article, the concept of Indonesian national culture is a long-lasting subject of debate among Indonesian intellectuals, government officials, and cultural observers, since the birth of the nation-state right up till today. One definition of national culture that is well known and generally referred to is Ki Hadjar Dewantara's formulation: 'the national culture of Indonesia is all the peaks and essences [*sari-sari*] of culture that have value, throughout the archipelago, both old and new, that are national in spirit' (Dewantara in Yampolsky 1995:704).

local, decentralized creative expression' (Manuel 2012:234). Unlike 'old' media such as cinema, television, and radio, which are one-way, monopolistic, and homogeneous, cassette and VCD tend to be decentralized in ownership, control, and utilization patterns (Manuel 1993:2; Manuel 2012:234). Such decentralized media are popular in developing countries (see Wallis and Malm 1984), including Indonesia, where the political character of the state tends to be restrictive. Cassette and VCD are widely used in all regions of Indonesia and, more importantly, are commonly used to represent and mediate various aspects of regional culture (Yampolsky 2003; Hicken 2009).

Historically, in the Indonesian socio-political context, the nation-state tends to control (*membina*) regional culture, in a sense interfering with it. This can be recognized through many policies launched by the central government in Jakarta, both in the Soekarno and Suharto periods, and in the current Reformasi era. In the state's vision, regional culture as well as national culture must be supervised at every turn by the government (Yampolsky 1995:708; Yampolsky 2001:177). The ways an ethnic group represents itself through the media (recording media, in this context) reflect its reactions to the surrounding socio-cultural and political environments, including the state's interest in controlling it.

Minangkabau culture, the focus of this book, has the status of a *budaya daerah*, which in Indonesian cultural discourse is often associated with *budaya tradisional* ('traditional culture'), while recording media are considered a product of modern technology. Taking this somewhat ironic phenomenon – the representation of traditional regional culture in modern media – I want to comprehend how ethnic groups acclimatize to the modern globalizing world and the ongoing influence of new technological inventions, and how ethnic groups position themselves in the national context of the Indonesian nation-state.

Theoretical framework

By investigating cassette and VCD culture in a regional cultural context, one can perceive how local people face modernity. As experienced by various communities in other parts of the world, *modernity* refers to a transformation of beliefs about the self, expectations of the future, and understandings of human potentialities as a consequence of the industrializing of the world and globalization, which have resulted in 'the secularization of society and the retreat of religious worldviews, and the development of a new fabric of selfhood rooted in concepts of individuality, autonomy, and freedom' (Calhoun 2002:110). By focusing on historical as well as contemporary (re)mediation of Indonesian regional culture, and taking as a case study the Minangkabau of West Sumatra, this study looks at changes over time. In the following sections I discuss some considerations and theoretical notions used in this study to investigate how the mediation of Indonesia's local cultures has had snowballing effects. It is important to understand what occurred in the past in order to understand later developments, as well as to identify resemblances and differences.

Recording technology and socio-cultural implications of sound replication

Sound recording technologies – the phonograph (gramophone) and its successors – are inextricably linked with reproduced sound. No doubt these human creations have affected humans themselves. Through the use of recording technology, sound and hearing in the modern age were 'reconceptualized, objectified, imitated, transformed, reproduced, commodified, mass-produced, and industrialized. Changes in sound, listening, and hearing happened bit by bit, place by place, practice by practice, over a long period of time' (Sterne 2003:2). The replication of sound has amplified and extended sound and our sense of hearing across time and space, and 'our experience of listening [...] is being transformed, and included in this transformation are the ideas we have about the world and ourselves' (Ihde 2007:5). Though sounds of the past may no longer exist, but their footprints (on recordings) will never vanish. Several scholars (e.g. Bull and Back 2003; Weidman 2003; Sterne 2003) have shown how reproduced sound, thanks to the invention of recording technologies, has fundamentally affected the lives of humans, changing not only their perception of space, time, and reality, but also their identity and behaviour. Nevertheless, the effects of modern reproduced sound, made possible by the use of recording technologies invented in Europe, seem to have been overlooked in the study of Indonesian social history, including the colonial period. More than just the sound of recorded music, as generally perceived in many studies, I perceive *modern sounds* in this study as sounds which come into existence through the use of machinery, whether simple or sophisticated, originating in the nineteenth-century industrial West. Such sounds have strongly characterized the urban noise and soundscape, and have become 'an inescapable element of modernity' (Schwartz 2003:492).[6]

The act of separating sound from its physical source was to bring with it a whole new range of socio-cultural, economic, political, and emotional implications. Nowadays modern reproduced sound deeply influences human life, as can be seen in the higher dependence of young generations' ears on earphones, which carry the sound of modern music to their brains and hearts. Modern people also use reproduced sound of particular kinds of music, animals or nature for psychological therapy. It has become a common sight that everywhere, especially in urban places, many of us 'switch on the television set as soon as we enter home and many of us put [recorded] music on to lull ourselves to sleep at night' (Bull and Back 2003:10). In our contemporary world, modern sound produced by modern machines, including recording technologies, have made it difficult to find silence. In the Indonesian soundscape, even in villages (*kampung*) in the countryside, reproduced sound is performed and heard as 'audible dialogue with the world' (Charles Hirschkind 2006:83).

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6   So, the sounds of a crowing cock and bamboo leaves rustling in the wind have appeared on recordings and the sounds of an electric hair trimmer, a tram, church bells, and a digital keyboard, just to mention a few, are examples of 'modern sounds'. In this book I use the term to refer to recordings of the sound of local repertoires, especially music, which I refer to as 'modern reproduced sound', usually associated with the Minangkabau culture.

The more important point to understand here is that reproduced sound, due to its ability to travel across time and space and its capacity to be replicated, has resulted in a cultural classification of human hearing. People began to categorize sound into 'high culture' and 'low culture', such as high quality music versus pop music. This was made possible by the nature of recorded sound to maintain the original sound, but at the same time, due to extensive replication and widespread availability, the 'aura' of authenticity of the original is eroded. In his essay 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', Walter Benjamin (1970:219) notes that 'by making many reproductions, [the reproduced object] substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced.' This notion is manifest in the contemporary mass production of commercial recordings (also by other media like local television) of Indonesian regional cultural repertoires in Indonesia and elsewhere. As Jacques Attali mentions, 'mass production [...] signifies the repetition of all consumption, individual or collective, [which is manifest in contemporary material culture of humans, including] the spectacle by recording of it' (Attali 1985:128).

Like other aspects of human culture, modern reproduced sound carries cultural and personal meanings. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, modern humans have been characterized above all by their reliance on consumption of reproduced sound. Such modern sound has addicted humans, has made them dependent on reproduced sound. Modernity in the course of time has brought with it a vast reorganization of sensory including auditory experience (Hirschkind 2004:131). Through the invention of the phonograph (gramophone) and later recording technologies, the human voice gained a measure of immortality. Mechanical reproduction of sound changes the reaction of the masses toward sound. Recording technology has caused sound to become an object to be 'contemplated, reconstructed, and manipulated, something that can be fragmented, [...] and bought and sold' (Sterne 2003:9). 'Nothing excites the memory more strongly than the human voice, maybe because nothing is forgotten as quickly as a voice [thanks to recording technology]. Our memory of it, however, does not die – its timbre and character sink into our subconscious where they await their revival' (Rudolph Lothar in Weidman 2003:453). And 'memory seems to be at the very core of identity; it connects who we are to who we once were' (Storey 2003a:81). With the invention of technologies of sound reproduction, sound was no longer a quickly vanishing phenomenon. Sounds from the past continually tickle our ears and minds today. With their potential to preserve and reproduce sound, the various types of recording technologies allow people to hear the voices of the dead.

Modern reproduced sound has also affected human perception of reality. Sound recording technologies have enabled humans to store data other than writing and images. At issue was not simply that new technology expanded the possibilities of storage; what was stored through this new technology was thought of as fundamentally different from what was stored by writing. Amanda Weidman (2003:462, 464) mentions that 'the new stored material' preserved by the recording machine 'came to be experienced as "real"'. The phonograph offered a new kind of reality in which the purity of hearing alone was distilled. Indonesian

people have certainly experienced this phenomenon, as a consequence of the rapid spread of sound recording technologies in the country since the 1890s.

Cassette and VCD revolution and reconfiguration of local culture

Paying close attention to the transformative impact of electronic media, it is no exaggeration to say that cassette and VCD technologies have shifted the characteristics of local culture in Indonesia and influenced people's lives. Cassettes and VDCs have transformed local cultures and people's images and stereotypes of these cultures. Public cultural discourses in Indonesia show increasing debate about authenticity among particular ethnic communities. In this book I use the notion of *authenticity* in relation to human character, the quality of being genuine or 'true to oneself' (Chandler and Munday 2014:18), 'the sentiment of being' that 'has become part of the moral slang of our day points to the peculiar nature of our fallen condition, our anxiety over the credibility of existence and of individual existence' (Trilling 1971:93). The debate about authenticity in Indonesia is undoubtedly fuelled by the extensive mediation of ethnic cultures today, by cassettes and VDCs, because the mediation of (local) culture by modern media tends to confirm stereotypes of cultural identity, exacerbating cultural differences between ethnic groups. Prior to the mediation of local culture using recording technology (and other kinds of modern media), ethnic communities' sense of their own culture was shaped primarily by symbolic content exchanged in face-to-face interaction. The increasing use of media technologies, including cassettes and VCDs, in Indonesia's regions has fundamentally changed this pattern. As individuals gained access to media products, they were able to take some distance from the symbolic content of face-to-face interaction and from the forms of authority that prevailed in everyday life (Thompson 1995:180). As I will demonstrate in this book, this phenomenon is represented in the distribution and reception of Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs among the Minangkabau diaspora in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world.

Exploring the impact of diverse media technologies on music, Timothy D. Taylor (2001:7) says, 'Whatever music technology is, it is not one thing alone. It is not separate from the social groups that use it; it is not separate from the individuals who use it; it is not separate from the social groups and individuals who invented it, tested it, marketed it, bought it, or revived it.' Indonesian regional commercial recordings are not objects in a social vacuum. Taking as a case study the commercial production of Torajan ethnic music by local recording companies in South Sulawesi, Andy Hicken (2009:25) states that 'music has gone from an embodied and fleeting ritual practice, accessible only when musicians are physically present, to a disembodied, listening oriented, everyday practice that depends on recorded media.' In this regard, I would say that the extensive mediation and representation of Indonesian regional cultures on commercial cassettes and VCDs, as a consequence of the rise of regional recording industries, may have shifted the way people perceive them and also shifted the composition and the dissemination of local culture.

In Indonesia, cassettes and VCDs, unlike other modern media (television, film, etc.), are widely and extensively used to mediate and to represent local cultures. Characterized by a relative lack of state interference and able to reach all segments of local society, cassettes and VCDs, through regional recording industries, have allowed diverse ethnic groups in Indonesia to reinvent their own culture based on their own needs and perceptions. Peter Manuel, exploring the impact of cassettes on local music in northern India, says that the cassette revolution has brought about a dramatic restructuring and reorientation of the music industry, of the quality, quantity, and variety of popular music disseminated, and of dissemination and reception patterns (Manuel 1993:1). Furthermore he notes:

> The impact of cassette technology, however, is by no means limited to the wealthy sectors of society. Like some of the other new media, cassette and tape players constitute a two-way, potentially interactive micro-medium whose low expense makes it conducive to localized grassroots control and corresponding diversity of content. Cassettes [...] can be used at the owner's convenience and discretion, they thus resist various forms of control and homogenization associated with the capital-intensive, monopolistic 'old' media of television, cinema, and radio. (Manuel 1993:2)

Just as cassettes and VCDs have contributed to transforming traditions, they can also generate cultural innovation and hybridization. This contradicts public discourses in Indonesia which tend to blame these media as modernizing agents causing declining interest in traditions. As Canclini (1995:2) says, 'the abrupt opposition between the traditional and modern does not work'. John B. Thompson argues that modern media have brought about what he calls a 're-mooring of tradition'.

> The mediatization of tradition endowed it with a new life: tradition was increasingly freed from the constraints of face-to-face interaction and took on a range of new traits. Tradition was deritualized; it lost its moorings in the practical contexts of everyday life. But the uprooting of the traditions did not starve them of sustenance. On the contrary, it prepared the way for them to be extended and renewed by being re-embedded in new contexts and re-moored to spatial units which exceeded the bounds of face-to-face interaction. (Thompson 1995:180)

In this regard, it can be conjectured that the vast (re)mediation and accelerating (re)presentation of Indonesian regional cultures in the course of time in different media, especially recording media, must have transformed these cultures, shifting their characteristics, features, and nature.

Research methods

There are three domains that I searched for gathering data used in this book: 1) bibliographical explorations conducted in libraries at Leiden, The Hague, London, Jakarta, and Padang; 2) participating observation: interacting with West Sumatran recording industry practitioners and Minangkabau commercial cassette traders and consumers; 3) collecting as many as possible Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs of various genres. (I have been collecting since I worked on the VA/AVMI project, 1996-2001.) The last two domains were brought together

during my fieldwork in Indonesia and Malaysia. During the period of fieldwork, I also looked into 'vernacular texts' – to borrow the term of Jeremy Wallach (2002:4) – which include banners, posters, stickers, graffiti, and decoration on public transportation vehicles. I tagged the public response to Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs represented in the local press, radio, and television. I also attended seminars organized by universities and cultural centres (*taman budaya*) in Padang, where I had opportunities to talk with Minangkabau cultural observers and intellectuals and hear their thoughts about Minangkabau culture, its music, and the recording industry.

Officially, I spent three periods doing fieldwork in Indonesia and Malaysia during the summers of 2003, 2004, and 2005. Since this study was carried out while fulfilling my principal task as lecturer at Leiden University, I was only able to conduct field research during summer breaks. Nevertheless, after 2005 I collected additional data during my visits to Indonesia and Malaysia in order to speak at conferences.

In Indonesia I visited the principal city of West Sumatra, Padang, and other towns in the highlands and on the coast in order to observe *in situ* the cassette and VCD shops and stalls, and conducted interviews with their owners and with purchasers. I visited producers, singers, and songwriters of Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs. I have a certain familiarity with the West Sumatran recording industry since I worked as a VA/AVMI research associate (1996-2001) before I commenced this dissertation project. I made visits to Jakarta to observe the business of Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs in the capital of the Republic of Indonesia. I also closely observed the wedding festivities of a family of Minangkabau migrants in this city to see the musical performances at such events. I also made journeys to Pekanbaru, Riau, one of Minangkabau people's principal *rantau* (place of migration) destinations, which I used as a case study to look at the reception of Minangkabau commercial recordings outside West Sumatra. For the same purpose, I did fieldwork in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur (especially the Chow Kit district), and in the Malaysian states Kuantan and Negeri Sembilan, where many Minangkabau migrants have become permanent residents, in order to see the production, trade, and reception of Minangkabau commercial recordings in these Malaysian states which have historical ties with Minangkabau. In short, I surveyed Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs everywhere I travelled in Indonesia and Malaysia.

My desire to write about Indonesian local cultures' encounter with recording technology and the phenomenon of this cultural happening in Minangkabau culture was prompted by the special circumstances in which I found myself. Being myself a Minangkabau and an Indonesian, I have lived through a large part of the period under study, and I personally experienced the transformation of Minangkabau culture and soundscape from a situation which was relatively noiseless and lacking in 'modern' sound before the 1970s to today's situation that is constantly noisy with the sounds of modern media like radio and audio cassette tapes. My involvement both as actor and witness in the process of such change has been one of the factors that stimulated me to carry out this study.

My research takes Minangkabau as a case study, one of 1,072 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups living in Indonesia (Suryadinata, Arifin and Ananta 2003:10). Minangkabau is a prominent ethnic group that has become the subject of studies by many foreign scholars due to its distinctive culture combining patrilineal-based Islamic principles and matrilineality, and its welcoming responses to foreign ideologies and Western modernity. The Minangkabau have long been prominent in political, economic, and intellectual life in Indonesia (Graves 1981; Hadler 2008). It is no exaggeration when M.G. Swift (1971:255) in his article on Minangkabau and modernization says that 'anyone who has studied Indonesia could hardly fail to form the impression that the Minangkabau are a special people [because] in most fields of modern endeavour Minangkabau have been prominent, either as individuals or as a group'.

The homeland of Minangabau people is the province of West Sumatra,[7] though traditionally it covered a far larger region. There are many *adat* communities in neighbouring provinces who culturally identify themselves as Minangkabau, such as those of Kampar and Kuantan in Riau province (Kato 1986; Kato 1997), Kerinci in Jambi province (Van Aken 1915; Jaspan 1973) and Mukomuko in Bengkulu province (Yondri *et al.* 2001). The Minangkabau vernacular, *Bahasa Minangkabau* ('Minangkabau language'), is considered to be an old dialect of Malay (Moussay 1981). In the nineteenth century the British intellectual William Marsden stated that Minangkabau was the 'ancestral home' of Malays and the source of the oldest and purest form of the Malay language and culture (Marsden 1807:218, 223). Results of Indonesia's 2000 census count just under 5.5 million Minangkabau people, or 2.72% of Indonesia's total population of over 201 million in 2000, considered the fourth largest ethnic group in Indonesia after Javanese (41.2%), Sundanese (15.41%) and Madurese (3.37%) (Badan Pusat Statistik 2001).[8]

Minangkabau is the biggest matrilineal[9] society that still survives in our contemporary world. Their traditional geopolitical system was organized in the form of 'small independent republics' called *nagari*.[10] But the Minangkabau people embraced Islam which is patrilineally oriented in its doctrines. Islam penetrated Minangkabau during the first half of the nineteenth century through a conflict between a religious purification movement and the traditional

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7   Though West Sumatra province is mainly inhabited by the Minangkabau majority, there are other ethnic minorities living there, among others the Nias living in Padang and Pariaman and the Pagai (*orang Pagai*) living in the Mentawai archipelago, which falls under West Sumatran provincial administration. Unlike the Minangkabau who embrace Islam, the Nias and the Pagai mostly embrace Christianity.

8   However, a recalculation carried out by Leo Suryadinata, Evi Nurvidya Arifin and Aris Ananta 2003:12-13 found that Minangkabau was the sixth largest ethnic group in Indonesia after Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, Madurese and Batak. As a comparison, they were the fourth largest ethnic group in the country according to the 1930 census, with less than 2 million, or 3.36% of the total population of 59 million at that time (Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek 1934 as quoted by Suryadinata, Arifin and Ananta 2003:12).

9   For further on the Minangkabau matrilineal system of kinship, see Kato 1978; Kato 1982.

10   There are more than 500 *nagari* in Minangkabau. In the past all *nagari* owed respect to the royal patriarchal family of Pagaruyung Kingdom situated in Luhak Tanah Datar, although politically not under their control. For more on Minangkabau *nagari*, see L.C. Westenenk 1913. See also Harsja W. Bachtiar (1967) for the insights of a Minangkabau *nagari* named Taram in the Minangkabau highlands of Lima Puluh Kota.

nobility; known as the Padri War (1803–1837), the conflict ended after the Dutch colonial power intervened (Radjab 1954; Dobbin 1983). Since then, Minangkabau society has been characterized by both *matrilineality* and *Islam*, two partly opposing systems, because Islam follows the principle that descent and inheritance are through the paternal line. The integration of Islam into Minangkabau culture has influenced traditional Minangkabau art and literary life. The religious purification group introduced stories with Islamic morals adopted from the Middle East in an effort to marginalize the traditional Minangkabau oral stories (*kaba*) that they regarded as containing elements of paganism (see Wijk 1881:i-iii).

The 'odd fusion' between Islam and the Minangkabau matrilineal system of kinship has resulted in a 'culture of paradox', in the words of Jeffrey Hadler (2008:1). Many ethnologists have concluded that this 'paradox' distinctly characterizes the individual personality and culture of emotion[11] of Minangkabau people and their social behaviour. These special Minangkabau characteristics seem to have been generated by the tension between the matriarchate (which tends to be viewed as tradition, or *adat*) and Islamic law. This tension can be seen in Minangkabau songs and other Minangkabau cultural expressions. Nancy Tanner (1969, 1971, 1982) has examined how this paradox is represented in individual relationships in Minangkabau families. Istutiah Gunawan Mitchell (1969) has shown how the Minangkabau socio-cultural environment has caused mental disturbance among Minangkabau migrants. 'Dualism' (*keduaan*) is a main characteristic of the Minangkabau cultural personality, in the opinion of H.H.B. Saanin Dt. Tan Pariaman, who for many years has observed Minangkabau people's behaviour, both in the homeland and in *rantau*. He states that Minangkabau people tend to be 'individualists' or even 'super-individualists'. They suffer a culturally psychopathological symptom which he calls 'Padangitis'. This unique cultural neurosis is characterized by the inclination to conceal one's identity as a Minangkabau if caught making a mistake or committing a crime, or to escape from a problematical reality (Pariaman 1979). It has been suggested that the custom of leaving the homeland (*merantau*) is a manifestation of this neurosis (Naim 1973; Naim 1979; Kato 1982).

The Minangkabau custom of *merantau* is a socially and culturally institutionalized pattern of voluntary migration (Naim 1973; Naim 1979; Murad 1980). It is part of the Minangkabau traditional conception of nature (*alam*), as reflected in a philosophy of life that says '*alam takambang jadi guru*', meaning the surrounding nature is the teacher (Navis 1984). The importance of *rantau* is reflected in the Minangkabau traditional geopolitical conception that divides the homeland into two parts: *luhak* and *rantau*. *Luhak* is the traditional heartland of the Minangkabau ethnic group (*darek*). *Rantau* literally means 'place of migration' and may be loosely translated as 'foreign shores'. Geographically, *rantau* comprises all the Minangkabau expansion (migration) areas that are situated outside the *luhak*. Derivatives of the word *rantau* include the verb *merantau* (out-migrate) and the noun *perantau* (migrant). These three Minangkabau words – *rantau*, *merantau*, and *perantau* – which convey the dynamic mobility of the Minangkabau people, appear frequently in the pages of this book.

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11   For more on the Minangkabau culture of emotion, see Heider 1991 and Heider 2011.

12

Functioning as a 'release valve' for the heartland (*luhak*), from where people from the four fertile basins of *luhak*[12] out-migrated to open new settlements, the initial destinations of the Minangkabau *rantau* were the adjacent lowlands on the west coast of Sumatra (Pesisir Selatan, Pariaman, and Pasaman) and settlements located along the three big rivers flowing to the east coast, that is Kuantan, Inderagiri, and Kampar (Kato 1997). One of the oldest *rantau* destinations of Minangkabau migrants was Negeri Sembilan on the Malay Peninsula (Newbold 1835). But since the 1920s *merantau* means to out-migrate to urban places outside West Sumatra, even abroad. Nowadays, the presence of Minangkabau *perantau* in various parts of Indonesia and neighbouring countries can be recognized especially through the presence of Padang food restaurants (*rumah makan Padang*), whose spicy culinary dishes are tasty to the tongues of many other ethnic groups as well (see Persoon 1982, 1986).

The *merantau* custom is intended to be a search for wealth, knowledge, or experience. With the exception of earlier pioneering migrations to acquire new lands, the Minangkabau *merantau* generally consists of farmers leaving home to seek non-agricultural occupations in *rantau*. Therefore, the contemporary Minangkabau diaspora tends to be found in urban places. Many *perantau* visit their home villages in West Sumatra for a short time (*pulang basamo*), especially during the days of celebration after the fasting month (*lebaran*), to satisfy their longing for their homeland, and to show off their economic success in *rantau* and to share their wealth with their matrilineal family and their fellow villagers. As I will discuss in Part III, West Sumatran recording industry products have played an important role in the emotional bonding of Minangkabau *perantau* worldwide with their homeland.

Like all societies, Minangkabau is continuously changing socially, and directly or indirectly the changes have influenced its matrilineal system.[13] Such cultural change is represented in Minangkabau commercial recordings, the products of the West Sumatran recording industry. The *merantau* custom has drained the life out of villages, and brought many changes to traditional village social organizations (Naim 1985). The Minangkabau diaspora is becoming increasingly independent of and detached from their homeland. Young people are reluctant to stay in the countryside farming rice, and the older generations of *perantau* are not enthusiastic about returning to their home villages. When Minangkabau individuals have a turn holding traditional village positions as *penghulu* and *mamak*, they are absentee leaders (Chadwick 1991:80). The more intellectual among the *perantau* served as principal agents of change, bringing new ideologies and ideas of modernization to their homeland (Swift 1971). This made 'West Sumatra in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became an ideological breeder reactor' (Hadler 2008:180). During this period, there were two opposing groups of intellectuals in Minangkabau society: the *ulema* group had been produced by traditional Islamic schools in a Middle Eastern tradition, while the other group had been produced by a Western-style education and European university training. Many things of daily

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12   They are *Luhak* Agam, *Luhak* Tanah Datar, and *Luhak* Limo Puluah (50) Koto. The fourth *luhak* was shaped later, named Kubuang Tigo Baleh (Navis 1984:104-5). These four regions are considered the traditional heartland of the Minangkabau ethnic group.

13   An important work that examines Minangkabau socio-cultural change is a collective volume edited by Lynn L. Thomas and Franz von Benda Beckmann (1985). See also Kato 1978 and Blackwood 2007.

life they relentlessly debated, including matters dealing with fashion (see Kaptein 2009). Today this ideological impact of *perantau* has been partly replaced by modern media such as television and Internet. Most of the younger generation feel closer to national and global cultures than to their own ancestral culture (Ronidin 2006). But others still follow Minangkabau customs (*adat*) and Islamic values in their lives (see Huda 2013), selectively adopting elements of global culture. Such conflicting cultural practices have characterized the lives of Indonesian people since the colonial era: local/national culture versus global culture, Islam influenced by the Middle East versus modernism imported from Western culture. Nowadays, the debates on mailing lists and Facebook groups, which involve both the Minangkabau diaspora and those living in the homeland, suggest that the contradictions between Islam and Minangkabau *adat* (which is associated with traditional matrilineality) remain a hot topic (see Bagindo *et al.* 2008; Suryadi 2012). However, so far, although some aspects of Minangkabau matrilineality have been eroded under the influence of foreign cultures and ideologies, its heart still functions, as manifested today in children's alliance with their mother's clan and the inheritance of *harta pusaka tinggi*, which is still passed down from mothers to daughters.

Outline of the book

As for the organization of this work, the book is divided into three main sections, nine chapters in all, plus an introduction and a conclusion.

Part I, 'Recording technologies encounter Indonesian local culture' (Chapters 1 to 3), describes the arrival of various types of recording media in Indonesia and the public response to them. It recounts the early mediation of Indonesian local repertoires on gramophone discs. Providing a historical perspective of the Indonesian people's encounter with sound recording technologies, this part recounts recording technology's effects on Indonesian local culture from the first days of its introduction in Java until the formation of the West Sumatran recording industry in the 1970s.

Part II, 'Insight into the West Sumatran recording industry' (Chapters 4 to 7), explores the complex features and socio-cultural significance of West Sumatran recording companies. It examines three categories of their products: *pop Minang*, Minangkabau oral literature genres, and the new genres that were shaped by media which I call media-bound genres, taking the example of Minangkabau children's pop music. This part also looks at what is involved in the production and distribution of the products, and their cultural meanings.

Part III, 'Modes of reception of Minangkabau recordings' (Chapters 8 and 9), surveys two modes of distribution and reception of the West Sumatran recording industry's products. First, it looks at the remediation of products of the Minangkabau recording industry in other media, and the actors involved in the electronic and virtual distribution of Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs. Second, it looks at conventional ways of distribution and consumption of Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs outside West Sumatra. It examines how West Sumatran recording industry products have been received by Minangkabau migrants in *rantau*, taking as examples neighbouring Malaysia and Pekanbaru (Riau province)

in Indonesia. It also looks at the consumption of Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs among other ethnic groups in Indonesia.

The concluding chapter recapitulates the evidence and arguments that have been presented in the book.