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

Suryadi,

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Author: Suryadi

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BEYOND HOMELAND BORDERS

MINANGKABAU CASSETTES AND VCDs

OUTSIDE WEST SUMATRA

Having described the complex nature of Minangkabau pop music and its commercial recordings in the homeland, in this chapter I explore the (re)production, circulation, consumption and reception of pop Minang outside the region of its origin.³⁴⁸ I distinguish two areas: foreign countries (focusing on Malaysia) and the national (Indonesian) context (focusing on Riau province). Both Malaysia and Riau have close connections with Minangkabau in terms of religion and culture. Historically, both regions were destinations of the early migrations of Minangkabau people (De Josselin de Jong 1985; Kato 1997). By taking these regions as case studies, I want to explore the distinctions between the (re)production, dissemination, and reception of Minangkabau pop music in the home country and outside the home country. How have the products of the West Sumatran recording industry been received outside West Sumatra? I observed that the reception of Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs outside the place of their origin goes far beyond the main audiences among Minangkabau *perantau* communities. I argue that commercial recordings of regional music are an important means for the ethnic diaspora, Minangkabau in this case, to keep up their emotional ties and satisfy their nostalgia for their homeland. I believe that the conception of the nation-state influences the perceptions of regional music of a given ethnicity. This is because every state has its own cultural policy. The extensive and vigorous dissemination of regional music recordings beyond their original geographical boundaries and across nation-state boundaries in Southeast Asia, which is inhabited by many different ethnicities, has some bearing on (re)constructing identities among migrants in many urban areas of the region.

Demographically, in Southeast Asia, we see many ethnic communities that have out-migrated to places outside their homelands. This has affected the socio-cultural and political domains of each region, because humans tend to have difficulty disengaging with their own culture. Migrants tend to continue their own cultural practices in the new places, including practices related to music. Thanks to modern recording technologies like cassettes and VCDs, ethnic cultural elements like music have now become portable and therefore can be distributed far outside their original cultural area. Migrant populations across the world contribute to transnational and diasporic audiences. The Minangkabau ethnic community in Indonesia is an example. Well known for a strong tradition of *merantau*, Minangkabau migrants (*perantau*) can be found in many places in Indonesia as well as in some neighbouring countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Australia.

348 This chapter is based on Suryadi 2007 and partly on Suryadi 2005.

The research findings discussed in this chapter are the result of fieldwork trips to the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur in February and December 2004 and two short visits in January 2008 and August 2009. Besides my observations and interviews with music shop owners and customers in the Chow Kit district in Kuala Lumpur, which carries the nickname ‘miniature Indonesia’, I also visited Pahang, capital of the Malaysian state of Kuantan, and Seremban, capital of the Malaysian state of Negeri Sembilan, where many Minangkabau descendants live. Chow Kit is largely occupied by Indonesian migrants and you will find many music shops selling music albums of Indonesian regional and national music. Most of these albums are in cassette or VCD format.

As recording media can shape and bring about cultural images, this chapter looks at the distribution and reception patterns of regional cassettes and VCDs, Minangkabau in this case, tracking demographic changes in Indonesia and surrounding regions, and examines how these regional recordings serve as ‘binding’ for the Minangkabau people in their migration destinations. It is important to understand the relationship between ethnicity and regional cassettes and VCDs in contemporary Southeast Asia in the context of ethnic communities’ increasing mobility beyond their initial geographical borders.

MINANGKABAU MIGRANTS IN MALAYSIA

Historically, Minangkabau people have long out-migrated to the Malay Peninsula, which now forms part of Malaysia. This was one of the oldest Minangkabau *rantau* destinations. Most of the residents of the Malaysian state of Negeri Sembilan, in particular, have ancestors originating from Minangkabau in central Sumatra. They trace their historical origins to Minangkabau (Swift 1965). Minangkabau people had out-migrated to Negeri Sembilan since the fourteenth century, when it was still under the authority of the Sultanate of Malacca (see De Josselin de Jong 1985; Gullick 2003). As witnessed by a European observer of the region in the early nineteenth century, Minangkabau migrants in Negeri Sembilan set up communities based on the traditions of their hometowns in West Sumatra (Newbold 1835). Therefore the two regions maintain strong cultural relations up to today (Saifullah 2008). Like the Minangkabau in West Sumatra, the people of Negeri Sembilan are Muslims and they have matrilineal kinship (De Josselin de Jong 1985; Hadler 2008). The people of Negeri Sembilan call their customs *Adat Perpatih*, and state that these customs were brought by their ancestors from Minangkabau. It was a tradition from the 1790s to 1870s if the king of Negeri Sembilan died, that its nobles looked for a new king as his successor from the Minangkabau kingdom of Pagaruyung in West Sumatra (Panghulu 1970; Idris 1970; Sati 1983; Ajisman et al. 2009), which suggests strong cultural and political ties between the two regions. An old Negeri Sembilan proverb says: ‘Beraja ka Johor, Bertali ka Siak, Bertuan ka Minangkabau’ (‘Have a king from Johor, have an ally with Siak, have a master from Minangkabau’), which means that the ancestors of Negeri Sembilan’s monarchy came from Minangkabau and settled temporarily in Siak (now located in Riau province) before they crossed the Strait of Malacca and reigned in Johor (Idris 1968:19-20).

Descendants of Minangkabau migrants in Malaysia continue to play a significant role in the political, military, intellectual, and religious fields up to the present. For the earlier period, we can mention that the coup against Sultan Mahmud of Johor Kingdom in the early eighteenth century was launched by a Minangkabau adventurer from Pagaruyung named Raja Kecil (Andaya 1976; Barnard 1994). Minangkabau descendants became prominent religious and political leaders in the Malay Peninsula, both during the colonial era and the modern period (see Aziz 2003; Chaniago 2010; Musda 2010).

Besides those of Minangkabau descent living in Negeri Sembilan, there are many more Minangkabau people who have migrated to Malaysia since the 1960s. These, and other immigrant groups from Indonesia, are classed by the Malaysian authorities as *pendatang haram* ('illegal migrants'), a term often used by the ruling regime to invoke the unity of the Malaysian ethnic group (*Bangsa Malaysia*) (Holst 2012:133-35); blaming the immigrants is a political strategy used by the regime when elections are coming up to maintain its power and political hegemony. Many Minangkabau migrants in Malaysia have intermarried with local Malay women. They live there amid fluctuating political sentiments between Indonesia and Malaysia as often reflected in public discourses on culture, sports, and the economy. Malaysia's significant economic development in recent decades has stimulated many Indonesian labourers as well as white-collar workers to migrate there.

Chow Kit, discussed below, is a busy district in Kuala Lumpur where many people from Minangkabau run their businesses as traders and restaurant owners offering Minangkabau cuisine. Minangkabau descendants in Malaysia and Minangkabau migrants who came to the country later still maintain their ancestral customs. During my fieldwork in the Chow Kit district, I heard the Minangkabau language being used in communication among the Minangkabau migrants settled there. I speculate that the high consumption of Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs in Malaysia is closely related to the significant number of people of Minangkabau descent living in the country.

PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF POP MINANG IN MALAYSIA

The recordings of *pop Minang* songs that are distributed in Malaysia are (re)produced independently by recording companies in Malaysia. Some of the *pop Minang* VCDs circulated in Malaysia are copies of original versions produced by West Sumatran regional recording companies; others are recom compilations featuring a selection of songs from various albums and compiled into a whole new album with a newly created cover. Most of the *pop Minang* albums distributed in Malaysia are recorded in VCD format, although you might still be able to find some in cassette format. Malaysian distributors are able to sell these albums at a lower cost than imported albums because they are (re)produced locally in Malaysia and are therefore free from foreign import tax. This seems like a good business strategy employed by local Malaysian recording companies to avoid the high taxation imposed by the government.

There are at least a dozen Malaysian producers and distributors who produce and distribute *pop Minang* albums in Malaysia. Most of these recording and distributing companies are owned by Malaysian Chinese. In Southeast Asia ethnic Chinese involvement in introducing modern technologies in business has long been occurring. Since colonial times, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Indonesians of Chinese descent have long been involved in marketing gramophones and discs in Indonesia. But, as described in Chapter 5, they cannot be credited with contributing to the establishment and development of West Sumatra's recording industry.

The producers of *pop Minang* VCDs in Malaysia are mostly located in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur and its immediate surroundings. As a cosmopolitan city, Kuala Lumpur has burgeoned in tandem with the nation's huge economic success. The pop music industry has developed significantly, and the recording industry has been part of this. Minangkabau cassette and VCD producers have enlivened the recording industry in Kuala Lumpur in particular and Malaysia in general. Outside Kuala Lumpur, *pop Minang* albums are also produced by other recording companies located in Malacca City.

Pop Minang VCDs (re)produced by Malaysian recording companies are distributed legally in Malaysia, as evidenced by the fact that they bear a sticker of certification from Lembaga Penapisan Filem Malaysia ('Malaysian Film Censorship Board') that states that the content of the album is not 'harmful' (Figs. 9.1 and 9.2) and has successfully been passed by the censors. But there is no guarantee that the Malaysian producers of such VCDs have got permission from the West Sumatran recording companies that initially produced them. Some West Sumatran producers I interviewed stated that they were unaware that the *pop Minang* albums they produce have been reproduced by Malaysian producers and then officially and legally sold in Malaysia. Likewise, some singers I interviewed in Padang and Bukittinggi said they also did not know that their albums have been reproduced and marketed in Malaysia. This suggests that music piracy in Southeast Asia has become transnational. It is not merely a case of national as well as regional music being pirated within one country, but also national and regional pop music from other countries. As in Indonesia, pirated VCDs are also circulated in Malaysia. Likewise, Malaysian songs by prominent singers are also pirated in Indonesia.

A number of *pop Minang* VCDs are authorized only for distribution in West Malaysia (Fig. 9.1). I have not yet uncovered the reasons behind such a limitation. My guess is that there is a different office for registrations in East Malaysia, so the office in Kuala Lumpur issues permits for West Malaysia only. Perhaps this relates to regulations on the music business issued by the Malaysian government, or perhaps to this relatively authoritarian state's cultural policies that tend to consider foreign music 'harmful' to national stability which may negatively influence the Malaysian public and their values (see Côté 2011). However, there are some *pop Minang* VCDs that are distributed throughout Malaysia.

In Malaysia, a *pop Minang* VCD sells for about RM 12–14 (roughly US\$ 4–5 or Rp 36,000–45,000). This is far more expensive than the selling price of the original genuine VCD in Indonesia, which is about Rp 17,000–25,000 (roughly US\$ 1.5–2). Minangkabau songs that

As described in Chapter 4, the *jua putuih* ('outright sale') contract offered by producers to Minangkabau pop artists is not beneficial for the artists. In this regard, the (re)production system of *pop Minang* music in Malaysia definitely exacerbates the financial loss of West Sumatran local artists. Moreover, it is very likely that such losses will increase in the coming years due both to rampant piracy within Indonesia and to the rising (re)production of *pop Minang* outside its region of origin (especially in Malaysia) that does not give any compensation (be it financial or moral) to Minangkabau artists.

CONSUMPTION AND RECEPTION OF POP MINANG IN MALAYSIA

My research in Kuala Lumpur reveals that *pop Minang* songs in Malaysia are largely consumed by Minangkabau migrants residing in that country. This is understandable, as *pop Minang* songs are in fact regional songs featuring lyrics in the Minangkabau language. From conversation with several Minangkabau migrants in Chow Kit, I got the impression that they still use the Minangkabau language in communicating with each other. But they are actually trilingual: they use the Malay language of Malaysia for communication with locals (other Malaysians), the Minangkabau language within the Minangkabau community and at home, and the Indonesian language for communication with Indonesians of other ethnicities that are migrants in Malaysia. The Minangkabau community in Malaysia, despite being absent from their homeland, maintain a sense of ethnic identity partly by listening to *pop Minang* songs. In Chapter 8 I have shown, by referring to comments on *pop Minang* songs posted on YouTube, that Minangkabau migrants satisfy their longing for their homeland and family members left behind there by listening to *pop Minang* songs. For Minangkabau migrants who have resided in Malaysia for a long time, nostalgia for their homeland is satisfied partly by listening to these *pop Minang* recordings that are easily available locally. For the diaspora, Minangkabau music functions as a representation of their homeland and conveys a sense of familiarity. Having the power to connect across time and memories, such ethnic-branded sound 'holds meaning and significance that reaches beyond the immediate context and physical confines of the home[land]' (Tacchi 2003:281). Through this nostalgic practice, 'the past, imagined or real, [...] can be brought into the present, as a feeling that alters the present, and can further be projected into the future' (Tacchi 2003:293). This illustrates the cultural function of portable music recordings among ethnic-based diasporas in today's globalized world.

In Malaysia, the reception of *pop Minang* music is related to the social class of Minangkabau migrants in the country. Most of these migrants are of the lower-middle class. According to a survey, 99 percent of Minangkabau migrants in Malaysia are traders, and a large majority achieve success (Padang Ekspres, 28-2-2006). In a *rantau* destination like Kuala Lumpur, Minangkabau migrants, surrounded by fellow migrants, retain strong emotional bonds with their ethnic origins, manifested in the form of associations with a regional character based on place of origin. This is especially so for those who come from the same village in West Sumatra. This indicates their strong relationship with their homeland in West Sumatra. Gamawan Fauzi, Governor of West Sumatra, has visited Malaysia on various occasions to encourage a sense of togetherness among Minangkabau migrants so that they may one day return and contribute to their homeland. Such a strong ethnic sentiment can be found in Chow

Kit: Minangkabau migrants form unions such as PIKM (Persatuan Ikatan Minang-Malaysia, 'Association of Minang Society in Malaysia'), and those from the same village seem to remain on very familiar terms with each other. For example, Minangkabau migrants from Sulit Air, a *nagari* in Solok regency in West Sumatra which became famous because of the success of its *perantau* in business in various *rantau* destinations in Indonesia and abroad, formed an association called Sulit Air Sepakat (SAS, 'Sulit Air in Harmony') Malaysia branch in 1996.³⁴⁹



Figure 9.2: Music shop in the Malaysian city of Kuantan that sells Indonesian national and regional cassettes and VCDs (above) and its classification of types of Indonesian music (below) (photographs by Suryadi, 2005)

349 Sulit Air Sepakat is an association of Minangkabau migrants from the *nagari* Sulit Air in Solok regency, West Sumatra. It has branches in many *rantau* destinations, including in Malaysia. SAS was founded by Rainal Rais, a successful businessman from Sulit Air living in Jakarta. He borrowed money from banks and then credited them just to his fellow-migrant traders from Sulit Air. With such financial assistance, many Sulit Air migrants in *rantau* destinations successfully developed their businesses (see Rainal Rais's biography edited by D'Kincaï 2003; 'SAS dari Organisasi Sosial ke Ekonomi', *Kinantan*, Edisi Percobaan/no. 2, Mei 1995:22-23). SAS demonstrates the cohesiveness of Minangkabau migrants from a particular homeland village in *rantau* destinations.

The largest Minangkabau organization in Malaysia is the *Pertubuhan Ikatan Kebajikan Masyarakat Minangkabau* (PIKMM, ‘Minangkabau Community Benevolent Association’)³⁵⁰ (*Padang Ekspres*, 28-2-2006). Minangkabau migrant traders in Kuala Lumpur also established *Koperasi Minang Kuala Lumpur Berhad* (‘Minangkabau Cooperation of Kuala Lumpur Private Limited’). The cooperation and community spirit of the Minangkabau people in Malaysia is thus exemplified by the unity of people from the same province, regency or village.

Minangkabau songs are particularly well liked in the Malaysian states of Kuantan and Negeri Sembilan, and it is there that *pop Minang* VCDs are sold in local markets. In fact, some retail cassette shops are owned by Minangkabau migrant traders. For instance, one of the retail cassette shops in *Pasar Taman Tas*, Pahang, capital of Kuantan, is owned by Abizar, a Minangkabau migrant from Pariaman. He sells many Minangkabau albums issued by Malaysian cassette companies. Abizar said that the main customers for these cassettes are Minangkabau migrants residing in Kuantan and surroundings, who share his cultural background (pers. comm., 28-7-2005).

In music shops and stands in Malaysia, as I saw in Abizar’s shop, Indonesian music recordings are categorized ethnically and nationally, suggesting that both sellers and consumers recognize these music products as markers of local and national identity. Indonesian national pop songs, labelled *pop Indon* (‘Indonesian pop music’), are distinguished from Indonesian regional pop like *pop Minang* (‘Minangkabau pop music’) and *campursari* (literally ‘mixture of essences’; a crossover of several contemporary Indonesian music genres, mainly Javanese *langgam Jawa* and *dangdut*) (Fig. 9.2). But when I asked the sellers about Indonesian songs, they referred me to all the VCDs containing music from Indonesia, the national as well as regional varieties. So, in Malaysia, unlike in Indonesia, Indonesian regional music like *pop Minang* bears two ‘identities’: as Indonesian music as well as an ethnic music from Indonesia.

MUSIC AND DAILY LIFE IN CHOW KIT

As Chow Kit is home to a large number of Indonesian migrants from various regions, the large majority of Minangkabau migrants in Kuala Lumpur also live there. Most of them sell textiles or Minangkabau food (*masakan Padang*). Most of the Minangkabau who have opened businesses in Chow Kit migrated to the Malaysian Peninsula after 1960. They may differ from earlier Minangkabau descendants from Negeri Sembilan who have become Malaysian. A large number of Minangkabau migrants in Chow Kit married fellow Minangkabau, while others intermarried with local Malays. The interviews I carried out in Chow Kit show that most of these Minangkabau migrants rarely return to their hometowns in West Sumatra. Most said that Malaysia’s immigration policies make it difficult for them to make frequent trips in and out of Malaysia. Still others are in Malaysia illegally, which makes it even harder for them to move across the borders.

350 This association is now headed by H. Buchari Ibrahim, a Minangkabau migrant from Batusangkar, Tanah Datar regency, West Sumatra (information from rantaunet@googlegroups.com, posted by Firdaus HB on Saturday, 19 March 2011).

Chow Kit is often called 'little Indonesia' in Kuala Lumpur. It can be recognized by its musical atmosphere, which is dominated by Indonesian music, national as well as regional styles. As Ray Allen and Lois Wilcken (1998) and Lloyd Bradley (2013) suggest, music, whether live or recorded, is a cultural element that tends to be preferred to express a sense of group identity among overseas immigrants living in the world's metropolises. There are dozens of music shops in Chow Kit selling Indonesian music in cassette or VCD format. The shops are owned and managed by ethnic Chinese or by Minangkabau migrant traders. It is common knowledge that these two migrant communities, along with ethnic Indians, lead the trade sector in Malaysia's urban areas, while Malay Natives tend to become government employees. In Chow Kit you can hear songs from Indonesia as you walk along the shopping streets. In fact, musical sounds from Indonesia are heard more often than the sounds of music from Malaysia. Based on my observations, music shops in Chow Kit sell mostly Indonesian pop and *dangdut*, together with some Indonesian regional songs, mainly from Java and Minangkabau, with a few Sundanese. There are also Melayu-Riau songs from the Indonesian province of Riau, but Malaysian Malays probably feel sufficient ethnic and linguistic affinity with these Melayu-Riau songs to regard them as their own. This musical atmosphere illustrates how ordinary migrants in Southeast Asian cities prefer music of their own country or ethnicity in their place of migration. A further question can be posed: how does this preference influence the construction of migrants' identity overseas? And how does this emotive power of music relate to sentiments of nationalism? Further study of this notion might be of interest.

As in Kuantan and other places in Malaysia, the Indonesian music marketed in Chow Kit is labelled in various ways: besides *pop Minang*, *campursari*, and *pop Indon*, there are also *Indon song* ('Indonesian songs') and *disco dangdut* (*dangdut* to a house music beat). The term *Indon song* seems to be used to refer to genres that do not fit any other label. Recordings of songs in VCD format are more numerous than those in cassette format. In Malaysia, as in the majority of Southeast Asian countries, although cassette players are still used, their numbers are steadily dwindling. Since the late 1990s, Southeast Asia has been flooded by various brands of VCD players hailing from Japan, Korean and Taiwan. Such models are cheaper than those made in Europe and America and are thus easily affordable for the lower economic classes.

In Chow Kit, nationalism, regionalism and globalism intermingle and are expressed uniquely in a complex system where music plays an important role. In line with their 'increasingly complex and globalized world', these Indonesian immigrants 'carry distinct, often conflicting, personal identities with regard to gender, race, (and, I would add, religion and social class), ethnicity, or nationality' (Josselson and Harway 2012:3). For Malaysian citizens in Kuala Lumpur – an identity that only began to exist towards the end of colonial rule in the Malay archipelago in the 1950s – Chow Kit sits on a social periphery. It holds a very lowly status in the eyes of everyday Malaysians. Since most Chow Kit residents are Indonesian, the district is frequently referred to as *Indon* (abbreviation of the word 'Indonesia'), which has a negative and derogatory meaning.³⁵¹ This low status was reinforced after the economic and political crisis in Indonesia in 1989.

351 Though initially the word *Indon* was neutral in meaning, it now tends to be used to mock and disparage the Indonesian domestic workers and labourers working in Malaysia. 'The adjectives used around *Indon* ranged

It is commonly known by residents of Kuala Lumpur that Chow Kit is a district that houses many illegal Indonesian migrants. Therefore the Royal Police Force of Malaysia often conduct raids there. To avoid detection and deportation, illegal migrants receive shelter from other Indonesian migrants. In such a situation, a nationalistic spirit emerges due to empathy between citizens of the same status, of the same fate, and usually of the same ethnicity. During my fieldwork in Chow Kit, I was frequently told stories of how Minangkabau migrants sheltered their illegal counterparts to avoid detection by the police. However, they were also known to shelter illegal migrants of other ethnicities as well, as long as they were Indonesian. Here it is evident that nationalism is expressed spontaneously when fellow-countrymen encounter one another in a foreign host country, particularly if they share a minority status, whether consciously or not. I have also heard that you can get just about anything you want in Chow Kit, including fake passports – often used to obtain residential permits and other necessary documents. This reinforces the negative image of Chow Kit in the eyes of Malaysian Kuala Lumpur residents.

My core interest here is: how does the musical atmosphere in a cultural enclave in a foreign country where migrants from other countries live influence not only individual and communal matters but also socio-political issues? A recent public and political discourse that has influenced socio-political relations between Malaysia and Indonesia deals with cultural heritage, including song and dance. The Indonesians accused the Malaysians of unilaterally claiming ownership of certain items of cultural heritage. It seems that Indonesians are envious of Malaysia's success in utilizing their cultural heritage – although some of the items originally came from Indonesia – to promote international tourism. Indonesian protestors criticizing Malaysia use the word *Malingsia* ('Malaysian thieves') or *Malingsial* ('unlucky Malaysian thieves').

Minangkabau too claim that their cultural heritage has been stolen by Malaysia, for example, the song-dance 'Indang Sungai Garinggiang', which was performed by a Malaysian tourism delegation at the Asian Festival in Osaka, 12-14 October 2007. The Minangkabau critics mention that the song-dance claimed by Malaysia as its own creation was originally created by the Minangkabau singer Tiar Ramon in 1981.³⁵² The Indonesian side also accused Malaysia of claiming Minangkabau *talempong* music and its *rendang* culinary specialty as their own cultural heritage.³⁵³ Similar controversy has also occurred with other items of material culture such as manuscripts and traditional textiles. These contested claims of cultural heritage ownership

from sexy to stupid' (Martin 2012). Issues around the disparaging use of the word *Indon* have also entered the political field and influenced diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Indonesia.

352 See Azwar 2007; see also report entitled 'Tambahkan lagu kita yang dicuri oleh MALINGSIAL', <http://www.topix.com/forum/world/malaysia/TS27C8H4J4OKTCLUI>; 'Malaysia kembali 'bajak' lagu daerah Indonesia di Osaka', *Antara News.com*, Thursday, 25 October 2007. (<http://www.antaranews.com/view/?i=1193310660&c=SBH&s=>) (accessed 26-11-2011).

353 See Nusyirwan 2011; http://www.harianhaluan.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5182:talempong-minang-dan-klaim-malaysia&catid=46:panggung&Itemid=198 (accessed 14-10-2011); see also 'Klaim Malaysia untuk rendang Indonesia', *Gatra*, Thursday, 15 September 2011 (<http://www.gatra.com/politik-1/2695-rendang-made-in-malaysia-merambah-dunia.html>); accessed 10-2-2012). For more on cultural contestations between Indonesia and Malaysia, see Clark 2013, Clark and Pietsch 2014.

have even influenced diplomatic relations between these two neighbouring nations of the same descent (*bangsa serumpun*). Malaysian policy patenting such cultural heritage has been criticized by the Indonesian side.³⁵⁴

In these problematic socio-political relations between Indonesia and Malaysia dealing with cultural heritage, Minangkabau migrants and other Indonesian migrants living in Malaysia have also been affected, which influences people's attitudes. When I asked Minangkabau residents in Chow Kit about this, they actually blamed Malaysia. This attitude of course is also related to the way Malaysian authorities have treated them as migrants from overseas. My investigations in Chow Kit and other Malaysian towns show that the Minangkabau migrants settled there retain strong emotional bonds with their home villages in West Sumatra. Such emotional bonds are a cultural phenomenon commonly found among minority migrant groups living as enclaves among majority groups in the world's urban centres. It is too naïve, I think, if we ignore the function of music as one of many elements which play a role in constructing these cultural feelings among Minangkabau migrants in foreign countries. In this regard, migrants' strong ongoing nostalgia for their homeland may have contributed to the cultural and political problems in the Malay world, which today is split up into several nation-states as a result of boundaries drawn by European colonization in the past.

MINANGKABAU MIGRANTS AND RADIO BROADCASTS IN PEKANBARU, RIAU

Chapter 8 discussed the remediation of Minangkabau commercial recordings on radio. In this section I take the reader to the situation in the field. I describe how Minangkabau *perantau* in Pekanbaru, Riau province, are indirectly engaged in Minangkabau commercial recordings. To do this, I examine radio programs that broadcast Minangkabau music intended for Minangkabau migrants in Riau, especially Pekanbaru, the capital of the province. I take as a case study a private radio station called Radio Soreram Indah (henceforth RSI) which specializes in local programming using regional languages. Its programs focus on regional pop songs, especially pop *Minang*.

As noted in studies on regionalism and radio programs in other regions of Indonesia,³⁵⁵ after the media reform introduced by the Reformasi, many radio stations in the provinces seem to be more fervently enthusiastic in representing local culture. RSI is an example of how local radio stations use the opportunities offered by the policy change to promote a sense of regionalism. As Tod Jones observes (2005:211-15; see also Jones 2012; Jones 2013), Indonesia's political decentralization in the Reformasi era has led to a growing assertion of ethnic and local identity, including in regional politics. In this new era, various radio stations, including those situated in Pekanbaru, have created specific programs to provide a

354 For a list of items of local cultural heritage that have been registered by the Malaysian government, see <http://www.ruanghati.com/2009/09/28/inilah-200-benda-dan-seni-budaya-yang-sudah-dipatenkan-malaysia-gamelan-wayang-nasi-goreng-dan-sate-termasuk/> (accessed 14-10-2012). Those marked with red font are claimed by Indonesia as Indonesian ownership.

355 See for instance Arps 2003, Jurriëns 2004, Putra 2009 and 2014, Creese 2009, Birowo 2011, and Putra and Creese 2012.

new conduit for marginalized ethnic, linguistic and social groups to address issues of their identity in an increasingly globalized and decentralized Indonesia. In Edwin Jurriëns's words (2009), Indonesian radio programs now present dialogues rather than the typical top-down monologues as sternly practised during the New Order regime. The drastic Indonesian political change, which brought about media freedom, has led to local radio stations flourishing and enabled them to expand and diversify their technology, programming and ownership. This development is reflected in the great variety of broadcasting stations that have arisen: *radio komunitas* ('community radio'), *radio anak kampung* ('village people's radio'), *radio satelit* ('satellite radio'), *radio wong cilik* ('common people's radio'), *radio siaran* ('broadcast radio'), *radio pemda* ('regional government's radio'), *radio Internet*, *radio 'digital'*, *radio mahasiswa* ('student radio'), etc.

The population of Riau province is ethnically heterogeneous, and 'culturally or politically Riau was never a bounded entity' (Kato 1984:3-4). The urban economy of Riau, especially Pekanbaru, the capital of the province, situated on the banks of the Siak river, is dominated by Minangkabau³⁵⁶ and Chinese traders, both of whom – like the Buginese from Sulawesi – began migrating to what is now Riau before the European colonization of the region. The Riau regencies of Kampar, Kuantan, and Inderagiri, located near the Minangkabau border, are inhabited by local communities who are culturally affiliated with Minangkabau. In Minangkabau traditional historiography, these areas are called Minangkabau's earliest eastern *rantau*.

In Riau, one of the richest in natural resources of Indonesia's provinces, politics and ethnic relations are hot issues. The local Malays feel that they were impoverished and disempowered by Jakarta during the New Order and that this situation has not changed much since the Reformasi. Because the recent economic development of the region has not created a more prosperous life for Malays in Riau, some have charged that outsiders have benefited from exploiting the natural resources of their land. Only a small number of Riau Malays have found work in the modern industrial sectors of oil extraction, large-scale plantations and forestry, and the high-technology industries of Batam, which have generated enormous profits for those perceived as 'outsiders', thereby causing resentment among Malay Natives towards other ethnic groups (Al azhar 1997; Wee 2002). The majority of Malays are merely spectators, it seems, of the economic developments in their own region (Mubyarto 1997).

RSI's programming reflects the diversity of Riau's population. Responding to the market opportunities created by the ethnic diversity of Pekanbaru's inhabitants, RSI's programs reflect how the media view ethnicity or, conversely, how regionality is represented in the media. RSI is owned by Tuti Suparyati, a woman who is half Javanese and half Malay. According to Tuti, 60 per cent of RSI's programs express a distinct feeling of locality and ethnicity. Two prominent RSI programs aimed at Minangkabau listeners are 'Gendang

356 According to the Indonesian census of 2000, when Riau still comprised a single province, Minangkabau migrants were 11 per cent of the total Riau population of 4.7 million (see BPS Propinsi Riau 2001:34-40).

Acu' and 'Ranah Minang Maimbau'.³⁵⁷ The musical content of the programs is taken from commercial cassettes.

'Gendang Acu' is an interactive program that broadcasts songs from the Kampar regency in the northwestern part of mainland Riau along the Kampar river. Administratively the regency is part of Daratan Riau, but culturally its inhabitants are more closely related to Minangkabau (West Sumatra) than to Riau Malays. In Minangkabau cultural terms, the Kampar region is called '*ikua darek kapalo rantau*' (literally 'tail in the motherland, head in the place of migration'), meaning that here is where the *darek* (Minangkabau heartland) ends and the (eastern) *rantau* region begins. 'Gendang Acu' literally means 'older brother's drum'; *acu* or *ocu* is a word for greeting one's older brother in the Kampar dialect and is also used by local girls referring to their boyfriends or to men who are slightly older. 'Gendang Acu' is a daily program, broadcast for one hour. The announcer takes phone calls from listeners who request one or two 'Kampar songs', 'Bangkinang songs' or 'Acu songs'. Callers often dedicate a song to friends or relatives, as well as to the studio announcer.

Commercial cassettes and VCDs featuring music from Kampar have been on the market since the early 1990s; they are produced by Minangkabau producers situated in Bukittinggi and Padang in West Sumatra, such as Minang Record, Tanama Record and Sinar Padang Record. The number of local singers in the regency is rising, and performers such as Yanti Ahmad, Oren Gompo, H. Surya Abdullah, Ali Agumond, Bahrun Benny, Rio Star, Emy Nurlita, Yasir Yatim have become a source of pride for Kampar society. The titles displayed on these cassettes, such as *House Acu* and *Disco House Acu*, *Dangdut Acu Millenium 2000*, and *Dangdut Acu* (Fig. 9.3), are a good illustration of the strategy adopted by local cultures facing globalization. They reflect the stylistic diversity and musical variety of Kampar local songs and clearly serve as a new cultural symbol for people of the regency. Their distinct identity is reflected in the popular term *kaset Acu* ('Acu cassette'), as opposed to 'Minangkabau cassette' or 'Malay cassette'. They have made Kampar a vibrant and proud local culture.

RSI's program 'Ranah Minang Maimbau' is especially intended for Minangkabau migrants in Pekanbaru and surroundings.³⁵⁸ Like 'Gendang Acu', 'Ranah Minang Maimbau' is an interactive musical program, broadcast by RSI since 1996. Literally 'Ranah Minang Maimbau' means 'The Minangkabau land calls': the homeland (West Sumatra) calls the Minangkabau *perantau* to return home. The program is broadcast weekdays for one hour. Pekanbaru is a major destination of Minangkabau migrants in Sumatra. The city's music

357 Other prominent RSI programs are: *Pantun Melayu* ('Malay pantun'), an interactive program in which listeners participate by submitting *pantun* couplets either over the telephone or through the mail; *Syair Melayu* ('Malay Poetry'), an interactive program structured like *Pantun Melayu*; *Dongeng Melayu* ('Malay Legends'), an interactive program that features a guest who plays the role of storyteller. For two hours, the guest gives a presentation of traditional storytelling, often reciting Malay legends, sagas and myths that are available in print, such as *Lebai Malang*, *Pak Belalang* or *Lang-Lang Buana*.

358 Statistical data from the 2000 census mention that 38 per cent of Pekanbaru's population of 568,146 is Minangkabau, compared to 27 per cent Riau Malay, 15 per cent Javanese, 10 per cent Batak, 1 per cent Sundanese and 7 per cent others (BPS Propinsi Riau 2001:34-40). All these groups represent prospective market segments for the radio business.



Figure 9.3: Cover image of a Kampar Acu cassette produced by Minang Record in Bukittinggi, 1995

shops offer Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs. The Minangkabau community in Pekanbaru further expanded when some Minangkabau pop artists, like Riyan, Devi Prima, and An Roys, migrated there following the earthquake that shook West Sumatra in 2009 (Haluan, 8-2-2011). In fact, these Minangkabau artists who migrated to Pekanbaru formed an organization called Forum Komunikasi Artis dan Seniman Minang, or FORKASMI ("Communication Forum for Minangkabau Artists"). Many private radio stations in Riau aim their programs at a particular ethnic community, as is also the case in Medan and Palembang. On RSI's 'Gendang Acu' program, the announcer takes phone calls from listeners who request one or two Minangkabau pop songs played from commercial cassettes and VCDs which echo 'the sound of "longing for home"' (Barendregt 2002).

RSI's success with local programs seems to have inspired other radio stations in Pekanbaru to create similar programs, including some for Minangkabau migrants. For example, since the end of 2003, Radio Clapita Emas (RCE), established in 1989, has broadcast an interactive program called 'Minang Hit'. As the title suggests, 'Minang Hit' is intended especially for Minangkabau migrants in the Pekanbaru area. Broadcast on weekdays, the program presents Minangkabau pop songs requested by listeners. A presenter from RCE says that the program has received an enthusiastic response from listeners, which suggests that urban listeners do not consider a local focus in programming to be out of date (Dedi, pers. comm., 23-3-2004).

The variety of programs broadcast by radio stations in Pekanbaru like RSI and RCE represent the ethnic diversity of the city. While RSI initially focused on Malay culture, listener demand led to the development of programs that would appeal to other ethnic groups living

in Pekanbaru as well, such as 'Gendang Acu' and 'Ranah Minang Maimbau'. It may be that local programs aimed at specific ethnic groups broadcast by Riau's radio stations, whether intentionally or not, encourage urban listeners to distinguish different ethnic 'blocs'.

The playing of *pop Minang* music on radio broadcasts in Pekanbaru shows the importance of music as a communications tool and as a way to maintain a sense of togetherness and belonging among Minangkabau migrants. This form of remediation is one way the products of the West Sumatran recording industry have been used in *rantau*. Another way of reception is the conventional one: purchasing Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs from music shops. And the most sophisticated form of remediation is through social media, as described in Chapter 8. The different ways that Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs are used outside West Sumatra suggest that the West Sumatran recording industry has hooked into other (social) media, enabling Minangkabau music and verbal arts to acquire a new image and new audiences.

PIRATED NEW POP MINANG VCDs IN EASTERN INDONESIA

It appears that Minangkabau commercial recordings, especially VCDs, have also had an influence on other ethnic groups. I found that many albums of the genre called *new pop Minang* (*pop Minang baru*) in eastern Indonesia are pirated. I saw them for sale in places in Southeastern Sulawesi and North and Central Maluku, the homelands of ethnicities like Buginese, Butonese, Muna, Tolaki, Ambonese and Ternatean. I found pirated VCDs of *new pop Minang* being sold in eastern Indonesian towns like Makassar, Maros, Kendari, Bau-Bau and Ambon. A Minangkabau friend of mine who migrated to North Maluku told me that local people are very fond of *new pop Minang* albums, in Ternate and surrounding districts, where many Minangkabau migrants (especially from Bukittinggi) migrated during and after the 1958 PRRI revolt in West Sumatra. Possibly the presence of the Minangkabau community has caused local Natives to become interested in Minangkabau music in Ternate. The pirated *new pop Minang* VCDs are frequently played on buses, ferries and other public transportation. Local people don't understand the lyrics, but they like the music (Denny Setiawan, pers. comm., 10-10-2011). It surprised me during my trips to Buton (the most recent one was in January 2009) to find that many Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs of *new pop Minang* were for sale in Bau-Bau, capital of Buton regency, so far away from the Minangkabau homeland.

The covers of these pirated *new pop Minang* VCDs tend to show images of sexy girls, often Western, wearing bikinis (Fig. 9.4). Why do pirates present such images on VCD covers? If the images are intended to attract consumers' sexual desire, then the producers seem to imagine that the main consumers of such pirated VCDs are men. This phenomenon suggests that there are gender issues involved in the production and marketing of commercial recordings of this type of music.

The album title on the pirated cover is usually a humorous one and is written in the Indonesian language or a local language, for example 'Joget Pele Putus' ('Dance like cars in a chain collision'), 'Goyang Cakar Bongkar' ('Scratching and stabbing dance'), '14 Lagu



Figure 9.4: Front and back covers of a pirated Minangkabau VCD made and distributed in eastern Indonesia

Pilihan Minang Plones' ('Fourteen selected *pop Minang* songs in *dangdut* style', which consists of several volumes), 'Minang Bali Pili' ('Selected *pop Minang* songs'), and 'Joget Anjing Aer' ('Dance like an otter's motions'), but the titles of songs on the front and back covers are written in the Minangkabau language (Fig. 9.4). So, the pictorial and visual images of these VCDs (the cover and clips) do not always correspond with their audio aspects (the songs). These pirated VCDs are not distributed in West Sumatra.

Some purchasers I interviewed in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, said that they don't understand the lyrics of the songs because they do not speak Minangkabau, but they are fond of the songs because they are cheerful and are good for dancing. A Butonese linguist and a Butonese cultural observer told me that in the Butonese islands, Southeast Sulawesi, the majority of young people liked new *pop Minang* songs. They proposed a historical claim to explain this phenomenon: that the ancestors of the Butonese came from Johor and Sumatra, possibly from Minangkabau (Abidin [1968]). This claim linking an interest in foreign music with the origins of an ethnic group is very interesting: as if music has become an important cultural element that can serve as evidence of the genealogical relationship between different ethnicities.

In the Butonese islands, new *pop Minang* songs are very popular not only as accompaniment for *joget* (dance) events, but also for playing on passenger boats, especially when the boats are docked in ports of the Butonese archipelago such as Bau-Bau, Muna, and Wanci. Local sailors are very fond of such new *pop Minang* songs. The *joget* style of dance is very popular among Butonese young people and new *pop Minang* songs are the type of songs generally played for this kind of dancing (Asrif and Sumiman Udu, pers. comm., 10-10-2011).

There is no doubt that these pirated Minangkabau VCDs have been made by local pirates because their clips commonly show local people dancing. In addition, there are many errors in the text of the Minangkabau-language song titles on the back covers of these pirated VCDs, indicating that the pirates who have made these VCDs are not familiar with the Minangkabau language.

The Butonese people I interviewed said that many of the rhythms of new *pop Minang* songs are suitable for the musical tastes of Butonese people, who are very fond of dancing (*berjoget*). Due to the popularity of new *pop Minang* songs distributed by pirated cassettes, local producers and pirates have created songs locally that adopt the musical rhythms of new *pop Minang* songs. In this way, local producers in Wanci, Bau-Bau, and Muna have produced Butonese pop songs by adopting the rhythms of new *pop Minang* songs, and substituting lyrics in local languages such as the Ambon Malay dialect of Maluku or the Wanci language of the *Tukang Besi* islands. Most such songs are called *joget Minang*. This term is never used for *pop Minang* music in West Sumatra.

This phenomenon indicates that elements of regional music of a particular ethnicity, new *pop Minang* in this case, have been creatively adopted by other ethnicities in eastern Indonesia. This adds one more way that products of the West Sumatran recording industry have acquired audiences beyond the Minangkabau ethnic group: not only through social media like YouTube, which copy-paste the original content, but also through a process of adaptation of some of their characteristics as in local Butonese versions of new *pop Minang* VCDs distributed in eastern Indonesia. Actually, this indicates that Indonesian regional recording industries develop in their own ways, which may not be detectable in Jakarta, which is preoccupied with grand discourses on national and international politics and economics, national and international terrorism, and global modernism. I would say that regional cassettes and VCDs, due to their distribution beyond ethnic boundaries, have provided a new site for diverse ethnicities to become acquainted with each other through music.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the circulation and reception of Minangkabau commercial cassettes and VCDs beyond their place of origin in West Sumatra. Taking as case studies the Chow Kit district of Kuala Lumpur (outside Indonesia) and Pekanbaru (inside Indonesia), this chapter has shown that the distribution and consumption of Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs has been mostly among Minangkabau migrants in urban centres. But the distribution of Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs outside West Sumatra has also crossed ethnic boundaries, as suggested by the reception and popularity of new *pop Minang* albums among several ethnic groups in eastern Indonesia. In this sense, commercial recordings produced by the West Sumatran recording industry can be credited with facilitating horizontal cultural contact and understanding between the Minangkabau and other ethnic groups in Indonesia.

The reception of Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs outside West Sumatra takes place in two conventional modes. First, by purchase of these cassettes and VCDs, including pirated copies; second, via radio broadcasts on which the content of Minangkabau commercial recordings is remediated in music programs. Several more modes of reception have been made possible by new (social) media technologies (Chapter 8).

For Minangkabau migrants, the consumption of Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs has helped them to construct a feeling of their homeland in the far distant *rantau*. Music of their

homeland can help maintain a sense of togetherness for Minangkabau migrants living in *rantau*, where they tend to live in cultural enclaves. As the number of Minangkabau migrants dwelling in various cities in Indonesia and neighbouring Malaysia is quite high, some people see economic prospects: they reproduce Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs, including by way of 'legal' pirating, as practised by dozens of Malaysian producers in Kuala Lumpur and Melaka.

Unlike in their place of origin, the (re)production of Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs in Malaysia involves ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs. Many Minangkabau commercial recordings, particularly the (sub)genres of *pop Minang* (Chapter 5), have been reproduced by Malaysian producers. But the marketing of such products still involves Minangkabau migrant traders. The (re)production of Minangkabau pop music by Malaysian entrepreneurs is carried out without being noticed by the original producers or singers in West Sumatra. And yet the distribution and marketing of these products in Malaysia is legalized by the Malaysian authorities. This means that there has been transnationalization of the piracy of Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs, where the destination state, direct or indirectly, supports or facilitates this illegal activity. In a national context, the piracy of new *pop Minang* songs and the adaptation of this music in local recordings by producers in eastern Indonesia is an example of adoption rather than replication.

The extensive migration of ethnic groups in Southeast Asia is the main reason for the distribution and marketing of regional cassettes and VCDs beyond their place of origin. The consumption of Minangkabau cassettes and VCDs among Minangkabau migrants outside West Sumatra has created a translocal site to reinforce collective memory, authentic culture, and a sense of Minangness in *rantau*. Like other electronic media, recordings have enabled people to create a virtual community without requiring physical contact or proximity (Lysloff and Gay 2003).

Political relations between Malaysia and Indonesia fluctuate. One contributing factor is controversy about the ownership of items of cultural heritage shared by these two nations of the same descent. Regional songs are such items of cultural heritage that are claimed by both countries. The complex cultural and political relations between Malaysia and Indonesia have an impact not only on the reception of Indonesian regional music, Minangkabau in this case, in Malaysia, but also on the meanings of such items of Indonesian cultural heritage among consumers there. In the Chow Kit district of Kuala Lumpur, where identities of migrants are labelled by state authorities in a prejudicial way, music tends to emphasize residents' differences rather than their similarities.