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Chapter Eight

Goyang Ngebor:
Dangdut Spectacle and the Discourse of
Female Victimisation

During the past decades, the culture industries have multiplied media spectacles in novel spaces and sites, and spectacle itself is becoming one of the organizing principles of the economy, polity, society, and everyday life (Kellner, 2003: 1).

Throughout the year 2003 the Indonesian public was intrigued with a newcomer in the *dangdut* music industry, Inul Daratista, and her media-made famous dance style *goyang ngebor* (lit., drilling sway), which involves the speedy gyration of the hips. Dangdut is a pulsating mix of “Indian popular music, Middle Eastern and indigenous melodies” that incorporates modern musical instruments, such as “electric guitar, piano, electric organ, and a Western trap drum set” (Pioquinto 1995: 59). The MUI that had released a *fatwa* (edict) on *pornografi dan pornoaksi* (pornography and porno-action) in 2001 reacted against Inul’s drilling dance and categorised it porno-action (*The Jakarta Post* 2003(a)). Not long after this declaration, the self-acclaimed ‘king of dangdut’, Rhoma Irama, also condemned the dance as a threat to the nation’s morality (*Forum Keadilan* 2003(a)). Several *Melayu* (Malay) cultural activists also regarded *goyang ngebor* as a threat to *budaya Melayu* (Malay culture) (*Gatra* 2003(e)). However, these condemnations actually elevated Inul’s popularity. She immediately received support not only from the media industry that adopted her as a commercial icon, but also from politicians. Taking this controversy as a starting point, this chapter aims at examining the positioning of Inul in the contestation for power among groups with various opposing concerns and standpoints, and what it says about the identity struggle amongst women in post-Suharto Indonesia.

In addressing this aim, this chapter highlights the advent of a “media spectacle” as part of the monumental development of popular culture in Indonesia. “Media spectacles”, as Douglas Kellner (2003) argues, are “those phenomena of media culture that embody contemporary society’s basic values, serve to initiate individuals into way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles as well as its modes of conflict resolution” (2003: 2). Kellner bases his argument on Guy Debord’s concept of the “society of the spectacle”, which describes “a media and consumer society organized around the production and consumption of images, commodities and staged events” (ibid.). However, rather than using the concept of the “society of the spectacle” as Dubord proposes, which describes “a quasi-totalitarian nexus of domination”, Kellner proposes to “perceive a plurality and heterogeneity of contending spectacles in the contemporary moment and to see spectacle itself as a contested terrain” (2003: 11). Just as this chapter attempts to show, it is thus necessary to “unfold contradictions within dominant spectacles, showing how they give rise to conflicting meanings and effects, and constitute a field of domination and resistance” (ibid.).

The opening of the media industry in Indonesia during reformasi made possible the creation and witnessing of spectacles that were previously unlikely to be made public. The ‘zoom in’ shots of Inul’s buttocks, in this case, would not have been screened under the previous regime (*Gatra* 2003(j)). Various media forms, such as VCDs (both official and pirated), DVDs, print, Internet-mediated and television, were instrumental in making these new spectacles available. The support for Inul, and the resultant increase in the tension between the opposing arguments concerning her, is inseparable from the context in which issues of women’s voices, open media, religious revivalism and the waning of state control arise to the surface. Problems arose when the relocation of stage performances to reach broader public audiences, or from rural to urban venues, was mediated and sensually intensified via video recordings and television screens.

While this chapter embarks and focuses its analysis around the dispute between Inul and Rhoma Irama, it should be noted that the row between the two eventually developed, engaged and affected more actors and factors, a larger spectrum, and more varied, overlapping issues. In this chapter, the dispute serves as an entry point to view broader and more entangled issues concerning state, religion, women’s status, the feminist movement, power contestation within the popular culture landscape, and the discourse of victimhood. The controversy was laid out as a spectacle that audiences could observe daily on television screens and in other electronic media, and that readers could read about in newspapers and other print media. Therefore, the

realities were knitted into everyday life. Through the controversy over goyang ngebor, we can observe the significance of the dangdut spectacle and the discourse of female victimisation in the identity struggle during the post-Suharto period. Reading the transformation of Inul's positioning from an aggressor and victim to become a survivor, as will become clear later, will also provide a description of identity formation among women in Indonesia in the aftermath of Suharto's resignation.

Contextualising Goyang Dangdut



Figure 8.1: “*Lomba Goyang Inul*” (Goyang Inul Contest), community celebration of Indonesia Independence Day in *kampung* Condronegaran, Yogyakarta. The contestants were elementary-school-aged girls and boys (field notes, 10 August 2003)

Dangdut has been and continues to be an extremely popular music genre in Indonesia since the 1980s.¹ It has successfully surpassed the class barrier that originally positioned it lower than other popular music genres. No longer performed only on cheap stages in villages, dangdut is currently performed in cafes, stages constructed for extravaganza shows, and on television. Dangdut is a regular entertainment feature during celebrations of Indonesian Independence Day, not only on off-air stages in the villages, but also on

¹ Dangdut has also been the subject of a number of articles and chapters in edited volumes, such as: Frederick 1982; Pioquinto 1995; Browne 2000; Sen and Hill 2000; Sonja van Wichelen 2005; Heryanto 2008(b); Weintraub 2011. The first book written on dangdut is: Weintraub 2010.

nationally-aired television broadcasts.² Not only has dangdut been successful in the entertainment world; its populist characteristic is one of the most effective means for political parties to attract mass audiences.

In the more erotic dangdut landscape, there has also been the rise of *dangdut vulgar* (vulgar dangdut). In Yogyakarta of Central Java, for example, there were dangdut performances featuring female singers at the Sekaten³ night fairs in Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Ceres Pioquinto 1995) and at Purawisata, Yogyakarta (Susan Browne 2000). A newer trend, *organ tunggal* (solo organ), involves only a single musician playing keyboard (replacing the entire band) and one or more female singers wearing sensual attire and performing sexually suggestive moves (*Kompas* 2002(b); *Kompas* 2002(c); *Kompas* 2003(a)). It is this development that was later lamented by Rhoma Irama.

Rhoma Irama's Dangdut

Although the origin of dangdut dates back to the early colonial period, the term itself was coined only in the early 1970s (Frederick 1982: 105).⁴ This onomatopoeic term refers to the prevalent drumbeat, 'THUMP-thump'. In its early days, the urban elite and intellectuals used the term *dhank dhut* to refer in a derogatory manner to this style of music.⁵ The prominent drumbeat is closely associated with dynamic foot tapping and moving of the upper and lower parts of the body thus making dangdut very suitable for dance.

² One of the most striking dangdut performances to commemorate the 58th Indonesian Independence Day in 2003 that I saw on television was the one staged in Aceh. The stage was huge with some large holes in the backdrop. The musicians were all women and wore military camouflage uniforms. The background dancers, one in each backdrop hole, created sexy silhouettes and suggestive images of striptease dances. The female singers wore veils or at least *selendang* (shawl) wrapped around their heads, while the males wore tunics. Considering the military operation and the demand for Islamic sharia in Aceh at that time, the wearing of the military camouflage uniforms by the musicians and the head covers by the singers seemed to fit their contexts, but how did the silhouettes of the sexy dancers in the background relate to what was happening in Aceh? (Field notes, August 2003).

³ Sekaten is a celebration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad that in Yogyakarta and Surakarta is celebrated by a *Pasar Malam* (night carnival), which features games, rides, entertainment, and food stalls. The most popular entertainment venue is in the dangdut tents. In 1996, the dangdut performances in Sekaten in Yogyakarta were banned and considered not "in accordance with national cultural values" and "could destroy the image of Yogyakarta as a cultural centre" (*Kompas*, 25 June 1996, in Browne, 2000: 7). However, to "appease the disappointed masses", the mayor relocated dangdut entertainment to Purawisata Taman Hiburan Rakyat (public entertainment park) and every weekend at the Yogyakarta zoo, Gembira Loka (*Kompas*, 25 June 1996, in Browne 2000: 7-8).

⁴ The following notes on Rhoma Irama's dangdut are, unless otherwise mentioned, culled from Frederick's article.

⁵ Said Effendi, a prominent Indonesian Malay musician of the 1960s, preferred to use the term *irama tabla* and argued that the word *dangdut* —to characterise the insertion of the Indian tabla sound—was used by the elite to degrade this new variant of Malay music. See *Koran Tempo* 2003(c): 3.

Meanwhile, the political aspects of the development of the dangdut phenomenon can be traced back to its inception. Dangdut, or more precisely its precursor, Melayu music, took advantage of the atmosphere of Guided Democracy that sought out a more indigenous flavour of music. The popular music of that time, *keroncong*, which blends Chinese, Sundanese, Maluku, and Portuguese instruments and melodies, was deemed as becoming “more bourgeois and foreign”. As substitutes for the Western popular culture that leftwing and nationalist groups pronounced “decadent and unsuitable for Indonesia” (Frederick 1982: 107), Melayu and Indian music and films flooded Indonesia and gave colour to local arts performances.⁶

With the fall of the Old Order, Indonesia became more open to Western popular culture. Pop, rock, and country music soon filled the Indonesian music landscape. Melayu artists incorporated elements of Western music to create a distinctive genre, but it was deemed less original and catered only to the upper-middle class patrons of popular culture, thus resulting in a gap between classes and their respective musical genres. Concerned about the exclusiveness of *Melayu Mentengan*, referring to an elite neighbourhood in Jakarta at that time, Rhoma Irama attempted to create a new music genre that could be broadly accepted, “cutting across class lines and appealing to the sensibilities of Indonesians of all sorts; it must be unmistakably modern; and it must carry a message, however simple, in a language that was easily grasped by young people” (ibid.: 109). Rhoma Irama, or Oma Irama, his original name prior to his pilgrimage to Mecca after which he added Raden (an aristocratic title) and Haji (one who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca) to his name, first sang “a repertoire of Beatles” songs.

In 1971, Rhoma formed a Melayu band called Soneta. Riding the renewed popularity of the Melayu sound while playing a selection of Western popular music, Rhoma and his Soneta group soon seized popular attention. Rhoma’s music style developed during this period. His song lyrics were simple and as such easily remembered by the masses. In 1975, Rhoma’s musical arrangements of dangdut, a newly coined term, were more energetic than the mellow Melayu style and, importantly, replaced the ‘foot-tapping’ of Melayu music with the drive for listeners to “toss off their footgear and rock (*bergoyang*) to the music”. The combination of traditional *joget* dance and rock-and roll movements has become the hallmark of the Soneta group’s performances. Rhoma’s personal desire to mix the medium and message, and to encourage his young listeners to remember his messages prompted him to

⁶ However, Frederick also noted that students of the time, while paying lip service to the attraction of music Melayu, also listened to records of Western popular bands, which were difficult to find, in the privacy of their rooms (f.n. 22, p. 107).

become the first Indonesian artist to provide the texts of the song lyrics in his cassette albums. The Soneta group also offered a new fashion style for musicians: “tiger print velvet slacks, silver lamé bell-bottomed trousers, calf-length white leather boots with brass heels and toe guards, and ultimately an eye-popping romantic, Arabian Nights-like Islamic couture (*busana Islam*)” (ibid.: 112). This aspect of spectacle in dangdut was also evident during the live performances in the tents at the Sekaten night fairs, where Pioquinto also found the theatrical style of performances enhanced by the outfits and make-up of the female vocalists and male musicians, and the “acrobatic positions”, including “splits [and] a somersault”, of the female singers (Pioquinto 1995: 78).

Another aspect of the development of dangdut as spectacle was Rhoma’s role in promoting dangdut through films. Not only did his appearances in films heighten his popularity, but the films also became important in conveying more serious messages of morality as Rhoma shifted to *dangdut dakwah*, through which he propagated religious sentiments. His utilisation of Islamic attributes in his music and performances brought him close to politics.⁷ In the late 1990s, Rhoma’s popularity dwindled in the face of the emergence of newcomers to the scene. However, he clung to the memories of his reign as the king of dangdut, as he observed during his clash with Inul,

[...] as the *King of Dangdut*, borrowing the term that foreigners call me, I have the right to advise so that this music won’t be stamped as the music of evil by the *ulamas*. I have worked hard to bring this music from the periphery to the centre, and now people acknowledge and love it, but now it is thrown to the mud. I cannot be compliant (*Koran Tempo* 2003(b): B1).

The Proximity of Dangdut with Female Sexuality

Today dangdut is identified as a collaboration of inseparable elements of music, dance, and women’s sensuality. The emphasis on *goyang* places women’s appearances in the foreground as they symbolise the ultimate sexual allure. The emphasis on female sensuality in cultural performances is also evident in a range of traditional art forms, such as *tayuban* in Central and East Java, *jaipong* in West Java, and *gandrung* in Banyuwangi.⁸ The recollections of the sexual

⁷ Due to the heavy *dakwah* element in his songs, in 1977, the New Order government banned Rhoma from television appearances, as his performances were viewed as political practises and open support of PPP. In the 1977 and 1982 general elections, Rhoma was a strong campaigner and main vote getter for this Islamic party. In 1996, Rhoma switched his support to Golkar and was branded as a *kutu loncat* (flea) by PPP functionaries. See *Gatra* 2003(k): 30-32.

⁸ These performances involve professional female dancers who dance with the accompaniment of traditional gamelan music. The female dancers invite male members of the audience to dance with them. The heavy flirtation that occurs between the female dancers and their male participants has

aura of these traditional art performances can be seen in contemporary dangdut concerts. In the 1960s, Ellya Khadam entertained audiences with her popular song *Boneka dari India* (A Doll from India) and seductive Indian-styled dancing and facial expressions⁹. In the 1980s-1990s, Camelia Malik rocked dangdut stages with the incorporation of West Javanese jaipongan dance movements in her goyang. As a note, Pioquinto writes, Sundanese jaipongan dance is “generally performed with the sinden’s (singer’s) buttocks toward the audience” (1995: 80). These various styles of goyang became more prominent in qualifying female dangdut vocalists and as such characterising live dangdut performances not only as musical events, but also almost equally importantly as visual spectacles. Pioquinto describes in detail this emphasis on female bodies and sensuality in dangdut shows at Sekaten night carnivals:

[...] live dangdut shows at Sekaten are a spectacle displaying the female body. It is spectacular, first, in the sense of not being a narrative. Much of the stage time is devoted to the display of the female body in a way that does not drive a narrative forward by providing new information of character development. The spectacular aspects of the show are further enhanced by the emphasis on surface decorations such as elaborate stage sets and props, as well as lighting techniques and specific style of costuming which complements and enhances the provocative content of the dance. Similarly, the dance movements are stylized to display the female body in the staged enactment of feminine sexuality. This is in the main realised by the compelling rhythm of dangdut music itself, which sets a pattern that engages the lower body, demanding hip swings in response (Pioquinto, 1995: 71-72).

Advanced audio-visual technology fits perfectly with the characteristic of dangdut performance as not merely musical, but significantly visual, as “it is the female body as spectacle, rather than the voice or the music that is foregrounded” (Pioquinto 1995: 60), and audiovisual media can capture both aspects.

For some, the proximity of dangdut with goyang and female sexuality connotes vulgarity. It is the vulgarity of live dangdut performances that aroused scrutiny by the state, religious forces, and the middle class (Browne 2000). As such, the equation of goyang dangdut with vulgarity is deemed to be a reflection of uncontrolled women’s behaviour in public space, which implied the need for controls, though perhaps not so neatly delineated, from the state (to control order), Islamic groups (to control morality), middle class (to control

sparked objection by some Muslims and the government. Some of these performances are related to celebrations of the harvest in their local areas.

⁹ This song was a copy of an Indian song but was considered important in the history of dangdut music because it introduced the sound of Indian percussion into Melayu music. See *Gatra* 2003(a): 31.

people's tastes), and eventually emergent women's organisations (to control women's agency). It becomes a project for the state, Islamic groups, and the middle class to sanitise popular culture in accordance with the national identity. Dangdut singer-dancers in both live performances and television broadcasts, who stage female sensuality in an atmosphere of sexual licence, are therefore seen as enacting roles for woman that contradict the institutionalised roles of wife and mother ascribed to them by the state and Islam (Browne 2000: 2).

Projects of formalisation of traditional local cultures occur in various art performances. For example, Ben Arps (2006: 11) found that the formal adoption of *gandrung* Banyuwangi as the representative dance of the regency has resulted in the sanitisation of the allure inherent in this singing-dancing performance. Similarly with *tayuban*, Amrih Widodo found that in the official incorporation of *tayuban* as a formal local art performance, the dance was sanitised of its licentiousness and instead focused on the dancers' skills through competitions (Widodo 1995). Thus, while the potential of allure is retained, it is regulated and sanitised in accordance with the so-called local and national formal standards. These are two examples of the state's appropriation of local culture. However, the state did not merely appropriate *dangdut*, its shows were even moved to the zoo! (See footnote 3).

The media landscape of the *dangdut* music industry has shifted a great deal with the opening of the media industry in the late 1990s. The most visible development amongst many others can be found in the flourishing of *dangdut* programmes broadcasted by television stations and the production of other audio-visual media, such as VCDs.¹⁰ The appropriation by the new media brought some changes to the characteristics of *dangdut*. Also, live *dangdut* performances were relocated into audio-visually mediated technology of VCDs and television thus changing its media landscape from a local into a national setting via television, yet at the same time, from a public to a more private setting via video recordings. The opening of the media industry also meant more opportunities for various forms of entertainment and cultural products to find 'new' audiences who had thus far been unreachable. It also made it possible for Inul and her *goyang* to become famous nationwide. This

¹⁰ In the early 1990s, a new generation of 'educated' *dangdut* singers appeared. They wore *busana sopan berkelas* (polite and classy attire) and replaced the formerly weighty themes of social portraits to love songs. In 1995, TPI (Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia) was proclaimed to be a *dangdut* television station. In 1996, MTV Asia broadcast for the first time *dangdut* video clips by Evie Tamala. Those clips were also considered to up-scale the formerly cheap and vulgar *dangdut* clips as they were produced seriously and at considerable expense. In 1998, another new *dangdut* singer, Ikke Nurjanah, entered the international music industry with her appearance on a program on Japanese NHK television station. See *Gatra* 2003(k): 30-32.

phenomenon would have been simply impossible to imagine under the New Order as it called for a more open media and freedom of expression in the society (Gunawan 2003: 18).

The Woman at the Centre of the Controversy

Patrons of popular music in Indonesia would know Inul Daratista.¹¹ She was born in Pasuruan, East Java, on 21 January 1979, to traditional Muslim parents.¹² She was very fond of music from an early age. Initially, she was attracted more to rock and pop music, as she considered dangdut performances to be too vulgar. For her first paid performance, a gig during the Kartini Day celebration in her village, she only received 3,500 Rupiah (approximately US\$2 in the 1980s or US\$0.30 in 2005). After joining a band, she earned three times that amount. When she entered high school, her schedule of performances in rural villages, hours away from home and usually at night, resulted in many skipped classes. For this reason, she dropped out of high school. She married Suminharto, later known as Adam Suseno, when she was only 16 years old. Adam has been and continues to be her manager. She switched to dangdut when the popularity of rock music declined in the 1980s as dangdut became more popular. In order to survive the tough competition amongst dangdut singers, she created goyang ngebor. It is, she claimed, a mix between *jaipong* dance movements with aerobic exercises. As she became very popular with her unique dance style she could perform in three, even five, different places a day, performing at wedding receptions, *sunatan* (circumcision) celebrations, and *Agustusan* (Independence Day festivities) in small towns throughout East Java.

Inul's reputation began to spread to Jakarta, the centre of the national entertainment industry, after amateur video recordings of her rural concerts—said to be made by attendees—started to circulate in many different cities, including the nation's capital. Millions of pirated VCD copies circulated and her

¹¹ As many Indonesians are known by their first name, she is commonly referred to only as Inul. It has been reported that prior to her current stage name, Inul Daratista (1995), she used other names, including Inul Drastistya (1993) and Iin Ariska (1994). See *X-File: Harta, Tahta, Wanita* 2003. Her real name, Ainur Rokhimah means 'beloved sight' (*pandangan tersayang*) (Nova 2003(b): II). Meanwhile, Inul Daratista means 'the girl with breasts' (*Time* 2003: 52). The pervasiveness of her popularity inspires many text messages (Short Message Service, SMS) and jokes. A one-liner I received via SMS during my fieldwork in Indonesia in early 2003 reads "INUL singkatan dari Ikatan NU Liberal" (Inul stands for Association of Liberal Nahdlatul Ulama) (Field notes, February 2003). The insertion of liberal as an adjective for NU is of course not without reason since many NU members, especially the youth, are said to be among the more liberal Muslims in Indonesia. Although a real connection between NU and Inul is difficult to decipher, this jab demonstrates the political saturation of the controversy. Other word puns (or *plesetan*) concerning Inul are also noted by Weintraub (2010: 193).

¹² The following account is culled from a three-volume serial about Inul published in *Femina* a leading women's weekly magazine (*Femina* 2003(a);(b);(c)); a cover story about Inul in *Gatra* (2003(a);(b)); *Nova* 2003(b); and other sources.

popularity skyrocketed. This led her to the heart of the Indonesian music industry. Her popularity blasted through social barriers; class-based lines separating dangdut fanatics became muddled. During my trip from Yogyakarta to Jakarta on an executive train, for example, I saw a group of a dozen men circulating tabloids that featured stories about Inul as they were talking about her (field notes, February 2003). I was overwhelmed by the scene and convinced that the lavish media exposure and the gender implications of Inul's saga must be of significant importance to my research.

The tabloid that those men were chatting about featured a story and photos of Taufik Kiemas, husband of the president at that time Megawati Sukarnoputri, hugging Inul after the shooting of a television talkshow called *Waroeng* (lit., food stall) on TV7, a private television station.¹³ The controversy that erupted after her performance on this television programme accompanied her important debut on national television.¹⁴ While speculation of a personal affair was thought to be too indecorous of gossip, there was some speculation that Kiemas was interested in recruiting the young star to attract interest in his political party, PDIP (*Gatra* 2003(b): 22B). Such political speculation was not uncommon as the appropriation of dangdut in the political arena had been acknowledged since the days of the New Order regime (Frederick 1982, Browne 2000). Although the gossip remained unconfirmed, the political innuendos along with other issues corroborated in the controversy boosted Inul's popularity. Her performances continued to spark public controversy.

¹³ How the pictures were leaked to the public is still not clear. The manager of Public Relations at TV7, Uni Lubis, explained that after the shooting of *Waroeng*, audience members rushed over to approach Inul. Inul was again asked to sing and dance off-air. Later, she asked to have a photo taken with Kiemas. Many members of the audience also took photos. The photo that shows Kiemas hugging her from behind became the most controversial shot. Lubis did not know how the photos came to be circulated on the Internet, exposed in detik.com news portal, and eventually downloaded in the print media. See *Cek & Ricek* 2003(c): 3.

¹⁴ Prior to this, Inul appeared in *Digoda*, a dangdut programme on TransTV (October 2002) and *Laris Manis*, SCTV (January 2003).



Figure 8.2: Collage of tabloids that focused on Inul throughout 2003 to early 2004

Goyang ngebor not only upset the MUI; Rhoma Irama was outraged. He condemned her dance and stage performances as immoral, as no more than staging “*goyang tempat tidur*” (lit., “bed shaking”, referring to movements associated with sexual activity) (*Cek dan Ricek* 2003(e): 4) and “*goyangan pelacur*” (prostitutes’ moves) (*Gatra* 2003(i): 34). He also accused her of throwing dangdut into “*comberan*” (lit., “the mud”) (*Koran Tempo* 2003(b): B1). Rhoma went further to suggest that her *goyang ngebor* could potentially incite men to commit rape (*Forum Keadilan* 2003(b): 22; *Gatra* 2003(l): 30-33). In support of this accusation, he referred to a rape case in which the rapist allegedly claimed to have been aroused after watching a VCD of one of Inul’s performances. The former chairperson of Komnas Perempuan (National Commission for Women), Saparinah Sadli, argues that his accusation “is baseless and misleading” and further comments that “the increase of rape cases” is due to the failure of “the legal system to protect women” (*The Jakarta Post* 2003(c)). Rhoma eventually refused to allow (*mengharamkan*) her to sing any of his songs and any songs written by members of *Persatuan Artis Musik Melayu Indonesia* (PAMMI, Association of Indonesian Malay Music Artists)

(Forum Keadilan 2003(b): 24; *Gatra* 2003(l): 33). When Rhoma blamed Inul of throwing dangdut 'into the mud', he ignored the fact that an extraordinary number of ordinary people enjoyed her performances immensely and by saying this he had likened her fans to people who enjoyed 'mud'. Contrary to the 'egalitarian character' of dangdut music (Frederick 1982: 124), Rhoma's stringent condemnation of Inul's performances showed his distance from the kind of dangdut that is alive among common folk.

In the middle of her dispute with Rhoma, Inul took a short break from public appearances. When she returned to performing, she became even more popular. Television stations took chances by featuring Inul in their prime-time programmes. TransTV management claimed to be lucky to hold the first 'come-back' celebration for Inul with a programme called *Rindu Inul* (Missing Inul, 4 June 2003). Her contract for 13 episodes of *Rindu Inul* amounted to IDR five billion (approximately US\$ 50,000) (Tokoh Online 2003). To compete with this SCTV soon produced *Sang Bintang* (The Star), a music programme dedicated to Inul, and a *sinetron* entitled *Kenapa Harus Inul?* (Why does it have to be Inul?), which was a drama serial based on her life. Inul also starred in a number of television advertisements, ranging from Vape mosquito repellent, Sido Muncul instant herbal drink, and Sakatonik energy drink, to the Chinese motorbike Kanzen.

At the height of her popularity, political parties lined up to enlist her as their campaigner in the run up to the 2004 election. PDIP was reported to have asked her to be their party symbol in the 2004 election campaign and PKB (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*, National Awakening Party) wanted her to be their lead campaigner (*Cek & Ricek* 2003(a): 5; *Gatra* 2003(b): 22B; *Nyata* 2003). In response to public speculation, she responded, "I will help all parties, be it PAN (Partai Amanat Nasional, National Mandate Party), PKB, or anyone else".

As her popularity skyrocketed she was always surrounded by her management team and security personnel. Another reason why she was increasingly unapproachable was that she then worked for big entertainment corporations that had their own bureaucratic systems and policies, a condition vastly different from those when she began her debut into the nation-wide music industry.¹⁵

¹⁵ When I tried to attend the shooting of *Sang Bintang* at SCTV, I had to go to three different places related to this television station. At the front desk of SCTV office in Kebon Jeruk, Jakarta, I was asked if I wanted to *nyanyi bareng* (sing together) with Inul on the show and if I was an FBI (*Fans Berat Inul*, Die-hard-Fan of Inul). In the *Sang Bintang* programme one of the chosen *fans berat* could dance together with Inul and had a chance to chat with her live on TV. When I asked to interview the producer of the programme, I was told to apply for a training programme, which had a number of requirements. I was warned that the training programme was already full until the end of 2003 and that a new schedule would be opened only in the following year (Field notes September 2003).

Inul's popularity began to decline at the end of 2003. However, she had already accumulated enough financial capital to qualify her as the top earning celebrity at that time. That year, she eclipsed the earnings of almost all dangdut singers, including Rhoma Irama. She then moved to a luxurious house located in Pondok Indah, an elite neighbourhood of Jakarta, and began driving expensive cars. Although she no longer stars in television programmes, she still performs around Indonesia and abroad. In late 2005, she started an entertainment chain of karaoke parlours in Jakarta. However, her dispute with Rhoma that began in 2003 remains unresolved.

What is so characteristic of the Inul controversy is that it happened in tandem with the mushrooming of social groups who were bringing forward a variety of ideological perspectives into the public sphere. Many of these newly established social groups were women's organisations with progressive ideas about feminism. In December 1998, less than a year after reformasi was proclaimed, the issue of the involvement of Gerwani in the G30S-PKI incident was revisited (see Chapter Two) during the *Kongres Wanita* (Women's Congress). Many of the ex-members of Gerwani reappeared after years of silence and demanded rehabilitation of their good names. This was an instance in which a contemporary feminist group brought into the public their own perspective of women's issues, violence against women and female victimisation.

In addition to the initiation of this new wave of feminism in Indonesia, religious revivalism has increasingly attempted to insert religious morality into the public arena as a form of control (see Chapter Six). In the face of the deterioration of state control, the Indonesian people have witnessed the burgeoning and strengthening of controlling forces originating from religious groups. Many of these groups are often at variance with reformist religious groups and tend to be at odds with women's liberal aspirations. The controversy over Inul's goyang ngebor and its implications regarding gender configurations should be seen resting within this complex field of contestations among different actors, interests and focuses.

There the Controversy Began and Faded Away

The following section discusses in more detail the controversy over goyang ngebor following chronological and discursive orientations. There are three sub-sections that focus on the transformation of Inul's representations as an aggressor, victim, and survivor. The discussion is dissected by focusing on various aspects of the spectacles, such as dance, attire, public intimacy, and

song. The discussion relies heavily on newspaper and magazine clippings, Internet browsing, Inul's various (pirated) VCDs, and field notes.

"Inul is the Locomotive of Inulisasi (Inulisation)"¹⁶

It is reported that the bootlegged video recordings of Inul's goyang ngebor performances in rural areas in East Java sold three million copies and are responsible for the skyrocketing of her popularity. Based on this, one could say that her fame owes much to piracy (*Time* 2003: 52). However, the popularity of her dance that the massive number of reproductions and distribution of the pirated recordings brought soon caused controversy. While some find her dancing as "less erotic than pneumatic" (*ibid.*: 53), others, based on religious and moral values, object to the sexual explicitness of the overt focus on the singer's buttocks.



Figure 8.3: Illustration, Interview with Rhoma Irama in *Forum Keadilan*, No. 1, 11 May 2003, pp. 22-23

Claiming that her dance could corrupt people's morality, MUI condemned Inul's dance.¹⁷ She was banned from performing in Pasuruan, East Java, a

¹⁶ Rhoma Irama said this in an interview with *Forum Keadilan* (2003(b): 22-23).

¹⁷ By that time MUI in East Java had already banned performances by Inul. It was said that they had offered to fund her to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but she refused their offer (*Cek dan Ricek* 2003(d): 5). MUI's concern regarding Inul is quite different from those who are concerned about female *nasyid*. The objection to the female *nasyid* is based on the conservative Islamic doctrine that considers the female voice as an *aurat* and thus it is a taboo for women to sing (Barendregt 2006: 10). In Inul's case, it is her body movements and not the fact that she sings in public that stirred the controversy.

stronghold of traditional Muslim members of NU, which is, ironically, her home base. For the same reason, she was also banned from performing in Yogyakarta, albeit the fact that erotic dangdut performances had long been part of local popular entertainment in both East and Central Java.¹⁸ However, considering that the Inul phenomenon was undeniably escalating, Browns points out that as most Indonesian Muslims are “basically fairly tolerant of deviance”, Islamic doctrines alone could not be expected to be effective in cleaning up the eroticism in dangdut (Simatupang as quoted in Browne 2000: 10). Realising that many people supported her, Inul continued to perform. In an infotainment programme, when asked by Abdullah Gymnastiar, a popular Islamic cleric-cum-entrepreneur also known as Aa Gym, via a telephone call from Mecca, whether she ever thought that her eroticism could incite lustful acts, she responded lightly, “*Alhamdulillah* (Thank God), no!” (van Wichelen 2005).¹⁹

Goyang Ngebor and its Liaisons



Figure 8.4: Inul's goyang. Inul asked the audience whether they like her buttocks. She turned around, bent her knees, and stuck her buttocks out to them, VCD, *Gebyar Nelayan Pantai Pesisir*, 2002.

The rapid movements of her dance set a clear distance from the slow movements of traditional court dances. This may be one of the reasons for the

¹⁸ *Bernas*, a local newspaper in Yogyakarta published three different and quite contrasting news articles concerning Inul on the same day (19 February 2003). While the Vice Mayor banned Inul from performing in the city of Yogyakarta, the governor, Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, suggested the revocation of the ban. Meanwhile, the regencies of Bantul and Sleman in the Special Province of Yogyakarta welcomed Inul to perform in their regencies if she was banned from performing in the city of Yogyakarta. See *Bernas* 2003(c): 1; *Bernas* 2003(a): 2; and *Bernas* 2003(b): 6.

¹⁹ For a study of the popularity of infotainment in Indonesian television and among female viewers, see Yulianto (2008).

marking of her dance as vulgar, uncultured and in stark contrast to the bourgeois cultural codes. As Bourdieu writes:

[...] quite apart from its socializing functions, dancing is, of all the social uses of the body, the one which, treating the body as a sign, a sign of one's own ease, i.e. one's own mastery, represents the most accomplished realization of the bourgeois uses of the body: if this way of comporting the body is most successfully affirmed in dancing, this is perhaps because it is recognizable above all by its *tempo*, i.e. by the measured, self-assured slowness which also characterizes the bourgeois use of language, in contrast to working-class abruptness and petty bourgeois eagerness (Bourdieu 1991: 372).

It is the tempo of her dancing that differentiates Inul's dance from the general erotic dance of other female dangdut singers, such as those who perform in the dangdut tents at the Sekaten fairs in Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Ceres Pioquinto 1995) and in Purawisata, Yogyakarta (Susan Browne 2000). Female dangdut performers at Sekaten usually perform two sets of dance: "slow rhythmic undulations" and "acrobatic positions", including "splits" and "somersaults" (Pioquinto 1995: 78). Both of these kinds of movements are absent in Inul's performances. If there is anything acrobatic about Inul's goyang, it is the high-speed gyration of her hips that requires considerable stamina to master. Jaipong and aerobic movements are also present in the way she sways her hands, shoulders and hips, and combines them with rhythmic foot-tapping.

In contrast to dangdut performers at Sekaten, whose dancing transforms "women into a series of metonymic images whose physical charms and body parts—face, arms, breasts, buttocks—can be enjoyed piece by piece" (Pioquinto 1995: 80), Inul's performances—both live and in recordings—are dominated by her buttocks. However, unlike the female dangdut singers at Sekaten who often "rely heavily upon the metaphorical simulation of sexual activity ... [like] facial expression such as lip-licking or biting, grimace, grins, smiles or pouts [which] are organised to correspond with the orgasmic simulation in the dancing" (Pioquinto 1995: 81), Inul plays with sexual banter and jokes with the audience and musicians, which are absent in the dangdut performances at Sekaten. In the later phase of her performing career, especially on television programmes, the seductive aspect of her performances was almost entirely erased to promote a more 'refined' impression.

Inul is quite aware about people's comments that her dance is *erotik* (erotic). However, she is also aware that her fans like her dance. As such she appropriates her dancing in response to her audience. She dances more 'all out' when she performs for low-class audiences, as can be seen in the circulated

bootlegged recordings of her old rural concerts. However, when she performs for ‘important people’ she tones down her dance.

What’ve been aired are old VCDs. Those are for the consumption of a lower-middle class audience. I always adjust my performance to the audience; what class am I performing for. When I performed for Mr. Taufik Kiemas, my shaking wasn’t all that scandalous (*Cek & Ricek* 2003(a): 5).

Inul rejected the condemnation that her dancing was sensual. She confidently claimed that her goyang gave birth to a dance fever, which she termed ‘*inulitas*’, which soon inspired many dangdut singers (*Bintang Millenia* 2003(a): 4). It was precisely this dance fever driven by Inul that Rhoma Irama attacked: “Inul is the locomotive of *Inulisasi*” (*Forum Keadilan* 2003(b)). While Inul saw her popularity as an indication of her success, Rhoma denounced her as the source of the proliferation of eroticisation of dangdut performances.²⁰

Politics of Costumes



Figure 8.5: Inul in her Lycra costumes, VCD, *Inul Daratista*

In her old shows Inul usually wore cropped tops and leggings (figure 8.5). These stretch outfits provided the least restriction on her energetic movement on stage. Stretch leggings had become a symbol of “liberation of the 1980s for they were a way of one-stop dressing that provided freedom from skirts and

²⁰ Heryanto observes that many claim that “Inulmania and the failure to repress Inul” became “one main impetus” for the demand for the anti-pornography bill (2008(b): 15).

trousers" (Ewing 1986: 287).²¹ Inul too found that wearing leggings was better than a mini skirt as, claiming to follow her husband's suggestion, "*lebih pantas dan lebih bebas jogetnya*" (more suitable and her dancing would be freer) (*Femina* 2003(a): 56). To some extent, her choice to wear cropped sport tops and leggings was also in line with her attempt to distance herself from the common dangdut performers she knew. She said:

I was scared to be a dangdut singer because of (their) fashion style. I saw that dangdut singers in my village liked to wear skirts with high splits. I didn't want to be a dangdut singer because I was afraid to wear something like that (*Femina* 2003(b): 54).

Inul's donning of tight workout outfits emphasises her fit state of health and is more suitable to the fast gyration of her hips. As her dance focuses on her buttocks, these outfits actually accentuate this part of her body.

MUI, which had released a fatwa against pornography, had its own definition of pornography. In the 2001 MUI fatwa, point 8 states: "*Memakai pakaian tembus pandang atau ketat yang dapat memperlihatkan lekuk tubuh adalah haram*" (Wearing sheer and tight attire that shows the shape of the body is prohibited).²² However, MUI did not release a public formal announcement that declared Inul, especially her costumes, *haram* (prohibited).

Public Intimacy

For those familiar with her old concerts, at least from the widely distributed (pirated) VCDs, Inul's dancing on television appeared to be tamed down and refined. Not only is it less intense, but it also lacks the 'original' sexual banter common in the live dangdut performances in rural villages in Indonesia.²³ Inul, too, played with erotic innuendos on stage. In her live performances, she often made sexual jokes both verbally and physically with the musicians and audiences. In regards to this, her performances share characteristics with "real'

²¹ Since the 1980s, stretch fabrics have revolutionised the fashion world. Women wore bodysuits to proclaim their modern-ness. This change was made possible by the high-tech innovation of Lycra, which was invented in 1958 by Joe Shivers. Supported by the booming fitness culture, which was accelerated by Jane Fonda's workout sessions, the use of Lycra became even more pervasive in the 1970s. Leggings became must-have items among young, modern women. The innovation of Lycra became inexorable; "vivid prints were thrown in and leggings evolved as the fashion garment of the 1980s". See Ewing 1986 (2nd edition): 286-7.

²² *Keputusan Fatwa Komisi Fatwa Maelis Ulama Indonesia No. U-287/2001 tentang Pornografi dan Pornoaksi.*

²³ Sexual banter is common not only in dangdut performances, but also in other forms of Javanese folk performances, for example, *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet play in Central Java) between the *waranggana* (singers) and the male musicians, which Cooper calls "seduction scenarios", see Cooper 2000.

dangdut, as performed in rural East and Central Java, than the more refined, sanitised, version Indonesians are used to seeing on their TVs” (BBC 2003).



Figure 8.6: Intimate Stage. The stage was shallow and close to the audience. Two members of the audience came on stage to dance with her, VCD, *Inul Daratista*

In one of her old concerts, she performed on a small and simple stage (VCD *Inul Daratista*, produced by Perdana Records Surabaya, East Java, no date). The stage was raised approximately one meter high. With a light green tent and simple backdrop bearing the name of the group, *Bianglala Rockdangdut*, and no sponsor name, the event appeared to be a private occasion open to the general public. Held during the day, there were many women and children in the audience, not just men. The fact that many women were in attendance means that dangdut is not automatically labelled as the taboo that “associates the presence of women in public places with licentiousness”, as Pioquinto contended (1995: 60)²⁴ when she observed the few females in the audiences at dangdut shows at the Sekaten night fairs. Women’s presence in public cannot be automatically associated with licentiousness. Rather, the fact that the abovementioned event was held during the day reduced the risks of women’s attendance. The street taboo cannot be thrown on to any public activity, or any dangdut performance, but should be defined more by its setting, time, and occasion.

Quite different from Pioquinto’s observations in which the female dangdut singer was at the centre of the stage and the audience members, in compliance with Javanese cultural values of exercising control over their desires, restrain

²⁴ Browne also addressed this contention (2000, 22-23).

their facial expressions thereby enhancing their personal power (1995: 76),²⁵ the audiences at Inul's performance are often engaged and openly express their feelings by dancing, applauding, and calling out to request songs. In one VCD for example, Inul was shown teasing a young male member of the audience who danced with her on stage by speculating about his virility because he was so thin (VCD karaoke, *Inul Daratista*, produced by Perdana Record Surabaya, East Java, no date). In another VCD (*Gebyar Nelayan Pantai Pesisir*, 2002), she teased one of the security personnel. When the audiences jeered at her for being seductive, she replied as she touched him that she might not be able to seduce him because his belly was too big (figure 8.7). In the same VCD, Inul teased the flute player and acted playfully seductive by placing his hands on her waist from behind (figure 8.7).



Figure 8.7: Seduction games, VCD, *Gebyar Nelayan Pantai Pesisir*, 2002.

One noted *kiai*, late Zainuddin MZ, declared that the eroticism in dangdut performances should be kept 'indoors', referring to cafés or bars, and not openly performed on public stages (Wardhana 2003: B7). In response to this, Veven Wardhana, a columnist and media analyst, questioned MUI's objection to the public staging of Inul's dancing and their demand for the relocation of these performances to 'indoor settings' (ibid.). This, he wrote, ironically signalled class discrimination.

The 'prijayization' (cleaning up to be acceptable to the upper social class) of dangdut will find its place in these closed locations. Isn't it one of the measurements of the dignity and value of dangdut if it's staged in a five-starred hotel for an elite audience?" (ibid.).

²⁵ Pioquinto uses the term 'poker face' to describe the facial expressions of male members of the audiences during the dangdut performances at Sekaten (1995: 76).

Zainuddin's objection to Inul's public performances underlines the roots of the controversy: it was the relocation of 'indoor' to 'outdoor' settings; rural theatre to urban audiences; from the periphery to a central setting; and the proximity of low-class culture to outdoor and high-class to indoor.

Altered Lyrics

For some, the lyrics in dangdut music are *menyebalkan* (deviant) (*Gatra*, 24 February 1996: 22 in Browne, 2000: 12); for others, dangdut lyrics that tell of love and village lives make them very popular songs that have "a sympathy with and understanding of" the general populace (Frederick 1982: 124). Song titles like *Rumah Bambu* (The Bamboo House), *Gubug Derita* (The Hut of Agony), *Sepiring Berdua* (A Plate for Two) and *Termiskin di Dunia* (The Poorest in the World) are well associated with the social group that this music genre caters to (Simatupang, 1996 in Browne, *ibid.*). However, the lyrics are important for Rhoma and he carefully mixes his "medium and message" by composing songs that express "experiences and emotions" that are "familiar and realistic" (Frederick 1982: 111). Rhoma expands the range of his songs beyond romantic matters to become also *dakwah media* (*ibid.*: 124).

Because of the appeal of her dance, which is featured more than her voice, Inul's popularity is not demonstrated by sales of her audiocassettes, but rather by sales of the audio-visual recordings (many of which are pirated) and her live and televised performances. In her old performances Inul sang other people's songs. Commonly, female dangdut vocalists often sing Javanese songs, which are not necessarily part of the dangdut repertoire. Some of the popular Javanese songs that Inul often sang on stage came from the *campursari* genre.²⁶ One of the songs that she regularly sang was *Anoman Obong*, which told of a scene from the Ramayana epic in which Anoman, the white ape, tried to free Sita from the demon, Ravana, by setting his kingdom Alangka on fire.²⁷ Inul changed the lyrics and replaced the word 'obong' (Jav., 'to set on fire') to 'bokong' (Jav., buttocks) (VCD *Gebyar Nelayan Pantai Pesisir*). Via the alteration of the word *obong* to *bokong*, an erotic innuendo can be slipped into the song without being sexually explicit.

²⁶ *Campursari* is a new popular genre in Java that mixes some *gamelan* instruments with modern musical instruments, such as guitar and keyboard.

²⁷ The song was written by Ranto Edy Gudel, a prominent Javanese comedian, in 1996. In 1997-1998, it was popular at the time of the riots calling for Suharto's resignation. This song became even more popular when some people related the theme, which is inspired by the scene in the Ramayana epic about an attack on a powerful kingdom, to the May 1998 riots. See *Suara Merdeka* 2002 (<http://www.suaramerdeka.com/harian/0212/14/nas8.htm>, accessed 20 June 2010).

The most stringent objections to Inul and her dance were presented by MUI, Rhoma Irama and other strict Muslims. Basing their objections on religious and moral judgements, they condemned Inul's dance as pornographic and as defying Islamic morals. This shows how this phenomenon became entangled with the issue of religion. The rise of religious revivalism in the aftermath of the fall of Suharto and the introduction of freedom of expression became the baseline for the condemnation of Inul that was based on Islamic doctrine. However, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, a young and moderate Islamic intellectual, argued that as Indonesia is not a country based on religion, one cannot force religious, in this case Islamic, morals on to the public domain (Abshar-Abdalla 2003).

Inul as a Victim: Voices of Supporters

Rhoma's concern with the development of dangdut started quite some time before his dispute with Inul caught the attention of the media. As a musician-cum-Islamic cleric, his concern was based on Islamic values that oppose the sensualisation of dangdut music. In an interview with *Forum* magazine, he explained that the controversy began a year earlier when he claimed to have received complaints from dangdut artists in East Java concerning Inul's performances (*Forum Keadilan* 2003(b)). He reasoned that the complaints concerned the sexual aspects of Inul's performances.

Rhoma openly condemned Inul's dance on many public occasions. His criticisms concerned anything related to Inul. One of these objections was aimed at the private television station SCTV for broadcasting a music programme called *Duet Maut* (Deadly Duet) that starred Inul and other new female dangdut singers famous for their erotic dances (*Gatra* 2003(h)). The enraged dangdut king became even more infuriated when SCTV did not respond to his objection to the television dangdut programme *Duet Maut* (ibid.). He demanded that the television station stop broadcasting *Duet Maut* and blacklist Inul and the other supporting artists.²⁸ He also sent copies of his complaint letter to other television stations and a number of institutions, such as the Department of Religion, MUI, Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII, Indonesian Council for Islamic Propagation), Front Pembela Islam (FPI, Front of the Defenders of Islam), and Seniman Dangdut Indonesia (*Gatra* 2003(m)). As the head of PAMMI, he initiated a meeting with senior members of this dangdut organisation to forbid all the members from any collaboration with Inul. On 12 May 2003, Rhoma with 60 members of PAMMI followed a parliament hearing

²⁸ This included Anisa Bahar and Uut Permatasari who are also famous for their 'erotic' dances, *goyang patah-patah* (breakdancing) and *goyang ngecor* (lit., casting concrete sway), respectively. See *Gatra* 2003(m).

concerning the urgency to set a law against pornography (*Cek & Ricek* 2003(f): 4). The following day, Rhoma joined thousands of people demonstrating against the rise in media and entertainment that they considered to be pornographic (*ibid.*). He argued that this demonstration was “*bersih dan suci*” (clean and holy), and symbolised by their wearing of white attire (*ibid.*).

As mentioned previously, to ease Rhoma’s anger, on 25 April 2003 Alex Kumara, SCTV Operational Director, arranged a *silaturahmi* (cordial) meeting between Rhoma and Inul.²⁹ It was reported that Rhoma scolded Inul very harshly at the meeting and almost forced her, trembling, to kiss his feet (*Gatra* 2003(h): 29). Following the meeting Rhoma held a press conference that was covered by almost all infotainment programmes on private television stations. While Rhoma gave the impression of being victorious during this press conference, Inul appeared with red, swollen eyes. Many people interpreted her demure, submissive bodily gestures as perfect representations of an oppressed woman, a victim.

Rhoma’s call to hold a press conference afterwards went contrary to his intent, that is, to gain people’s support, and instead resulted in broader criticism against him and sympathy for Inul. No less than former president Abdurrahman Wahid—known as Gus Dur—criticised him as being overly arrogant and curbing freedom of expression (*Bernas* 2003(d): 6; *Bernas* 2003(e): 6). It was reported then that Rhoma was seeking support from a number of ulamas and eventually met with Gus Dur (*Bernas* 2003(h): 7; *Media Indonesia online* 2003; *Gatra* 2003(l): 30). Meanwhile, Inul also gained sympathy and support from high-profile figures other than Gus Dur, including Taufik Kiemas and Guruh Sukarnoputra, the husband and brother of then President Megawati Sukarnoputri respectively, and Saparinah Sadli, then director of the National Commission for Women.³⁰ Some feminist and social activists even symbolised Inul as a victim of violence against women and many artists considered the ban on her creativity a violation of human rights (*Bernas* 2003(f): 6; *Gatra* 2003(g): 26-29). Meanwhile, the Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia (PWI, Indonesian Journalist Union) found that, by banning Inul from appearing on television, Rhoma had violated the Press Law 1999 (*Bernas* 2003(g): 7). Certainly, the dispute between Rhoma and Inul did not affect her popularity.

²⁹ The word ‘*silaturahmi*’ was used by Inul and Alex from SCTV as they thought that the meeting with Rhoma would be cordial. Inul was shocked because it turned out to be very hostile as Rhoma scolded her very harshly. See *Bernas* 2003(i): 8; *Gatra* 2003(h): 27; *Gatra* 2003(i): 33.

³⁰ Saparinah Sadli, the director of Komnas Perempuan, for example, stated that the treatment of Inul was a form of violence against women (*Gatra* 2003(g): 26). See also *Jakarta Post* 2003(b). It was reported that 92 organisations rejected the claim that the increasing numbers of rapes was caused by Inul’s goyang, see *Bintang* 2003: 49.



Figure 8.8: Support for Inul. Inul received support from Sinta Nuriyah, the wife of President Abdurrahman Wahid (Cover, *C&R*, Edition 246/THNV/19-25 May 2003)

Reading Clothing

In preparation for the meeting with Rhoma, Inul was concerned that she did not have any dresses for the occasion. She had only *baju yang ketat-ketat* (tight dresses) in her wardrobe, which she thought were inappropriate to wear when meeting Rhoma (*Gatra* 2003(i): 34). So she borrowed clothes from her manager that turned out to be too big for her. Eventually Inul chose to wear a black turtleneck shirt under a brown oversized blazer. Inul's decision to wear the borrowed blazer was driven less by personal choice than a socially prescribed convention of what is appropriate in certain contexts. As Schulte Nordholt writes:

In practice [...] an individual's 'free-choice' is also embedded in a variety of social conventions, which prescribe or recommend certain ways of dress in particular contexts and make other choices unlikely and even risky (1997:1).

The positioning of Rhoma not only as the pioneer of dangdut—*yang dituakan* (one who is considered to be a senior), both literally and figuratively as he is

almost sixty years old and the head of PAMMI—but also as a well-known Islamic cleric, was important to why Inul, a Muslim herself, strove to dress appropriately in his presence.

Meanwhile, in an interview with *Forum* magazine following the event, Rhoma wore white trousers, a tailored shirt and shoes. He also, as always, brought turquoise praying beads. He told the magazine that this style of clothing was *baju untuk jihad* (clothing for *jihad* or holy war) as if to compare the campaign to boycott Inul's goyang with holy war (*Forum Keadilan* 2003: 22).

Women's Tears

During the press conference, Inul's eyes looked swollen from crying. Later, her tears proved to evoke sympathy for her. In Chapter Four, I discussed the symbolic significance of women's tears in presentations of the victims of the May 1998 rapes. One of the two examples discussed depicted a drawing of a teary slanted eye on the cover of *Tempo* magazine, while the other one was a photo of a made-up Chinese model with a (fake, added-on) teardrop to reconstruct the image of a crying Chinese woman rape victim on the cover of a book entitled *Puncak Kebiadaban Bangsa: Pemerkosaan Etnik Tionghoa 13-14 Mei '98* (The Pinnacle of a Nation's Cruelty: Rapes of Ethnic Chinese, 13-14 May 1998). While these two representations can be considered to be contextually imaginative—as they were either a drawing or an arranged photograph depicting the real victims of the May 1998 rapes who were never revealed—Inul's swollen eyes indicated a trace of real 'violence' that she had faced shortly before the press conference. The immediacy of the 'real' Inul with traces of tears on live television indisputably evoked more sympathy from the audience. Arswendo Atmowiloto, a writer and social commentator, said that "Inul's tears symbolise women's mystical power that can touch every heart. Don't undervalue the language of tears" (Gunawan 2003: ix). Meanwhile, *Tim Advokat Peduli Beban Rakyat* (Lawyers' Team for the Care of the People's Burdens), headed by Hotman Paris Hutapea, a well-known lawyer, distributed a letter in support of Inul to members of the media. It included among other things a statement that "Inul's tears are worthy of defence" (*Gatra* 2003(d)). Regardless of whether or not Inul's tears were real, the presentation speaks strongly as it successfully elicited sympathy from the public.

From Rhoma's perspective, Inul's tears symbolised her repentance because she realised that she was wrong. Rhoma claimed that after the meeting they all cried and agreed to work together in the future (*Bintang* 2003). Since Inul had *bertaubat* (repented), PAMMI members sponsored a celebration (*syukuran*) at

Studio Persari, Ciganjur (ibid.). In his eyes, Rhoma's strong censure of Inul was part of the moral teaching in line with the Islamic system:

I directly said, 'I am angry with you, but my anger is not Rhoma Irama being angry with Inul. My anger is because of God. Why? [Because] there has been concern.' Then, I said to Inul, 'In the [Islamic] educational system, there are three steps of teaching children and wives. First, if they have done wrong, speak to them softly. Then, if that does not work, use a harsher method. And if even that doesn't work, be rough, hit them (*Forum Keadilan* 2003(b)).

In Rhoma's eyes, her crying, as evidence of her repentance, symbolised her return to her correct position as a Muslim woman. In other words, Rhoma interpreted Inul's tears as a sign of her spiritual rehabilitation.

Performing Order in Public

The ultimate representation of restored order was the moment Inul 'kissed' Rhoma's hand (figure 8.9). Based on my observations, among Muslims in Indonesia, kissing another person's hand is a new practise, beginning perhaps approximately twenty years ago. In my Javanese/mixed religion family, my parents never taught their children to kiss another person's hand, even as a show of respect. However, when my Muslim nieces and nephews began to do this in their schools, the practise spread to the family. We then learned that it is the wife who 'kisses' the husband's right hand and the younger family member who 'kisses' the elder's hand, and never the other way around.³¹ The one who 'kisses' the other person's hand, i.e., takes the other person's hand to his/her cheek or forehead, is the one in the subordinate position. 'Kissing' a person's hand is thus not a reciprocal act; it can symbolise the paying of respect to, or asking for forgiveness from, the one whose hand is 'kissed'. Conversely, when one lets her/his hand be 'kissed', it means she/he accepts the respect shown or grants forgiveness. To this extent, an act of 'kissing' a person's hand demonstrates that everything is peacefully in order.

In the case of Inul 'kissing' Rhoma's hand, it also established an order within expected gender, social, cultural, and hierarchical relations. Inul represented the women, the youth, the junior participants in the dangdut music industry,

³¹ I could not find a more theoretical or historical study of when or from where this practise began. Some Internet browsing led to a forum discussion and one of the entries indicated that students were allowed and even encouraged to kiss the hand of their teacher or kiai, or children the hands of their parents. (<http://blog.its.ac.id/syafii/2011/04/12/tradisi-mencium-tangan-kyai-merupakan-bagian-dari-sunnah/> accessed 15 June 2011). However, it is not allowed to do it to ingratiate oneself. Even the King Abdullah, king of Saudi Arabia, was reported to have banned this kind of practise and refused to let his hand be kissed by the people, unless children kissed their parents' hands. (<http://www.detiknews.com/read/2005/09/13/113110/440479/10/raja-arab-saudi-larang-tradisi-cium-tangan?nd992203605> accessed 15 June 2011)

the ignorant in the religious hierarchical system, and the subordinate members of PAMMI. Respectively, Rhoma represented the men, the elders, the seniors, the *haji*, and the leaders. However, as the hand 'kiss' took place following an open dispute between them it also symbolised a situation of reconciliation. As it was meant to show reconciliation, the one who 'kisses' the other person's hand is considered to be the one in the wrong, i.e., the one who needs to ask for forgiveness. For Rhoma, this was the significance of performing the hand 'kiss' for an audience of millions of fans who would witness it and interpret the action as an admission that he was right and Inul was wrong.



Figure 8.9: Inul solemnly 'kissed' Rhoma's hand—or rather, placed her cheek on the back of his hand as a child would honour an adult—as broadcast by SCTV, April 2003 (source: Champagne and Millah, 2003: 21)

Inul's demure gesture during the press conference also demonstrated a situation that contrasted starkly from her old performances where she played with erotic innuendos and teased men openly. With her silence and bowed-head before Rhoma's confidence and control, the expected power relation between men and women was figuratively restored and maintained.

Inul as a victim is in fact a result of the construction of her as aggressor and this cannot be separated from the dimension of media culture that leans toward violence, and the idealism of reformasi that rejects oppression and, more than that, the victimisation of women. Blaming Inul as the source of moral corruption—by “reducing her self expression merely to her body and sexuality”, said Myra Diarsi of Komnas Perempuan—represents her victimisation (*Gatra* 2003(f)).

“Welcome Back Sang Bintang”: the Media’s Incorporation of Inul’s Survival

Figure 8.10: Inul in new wardrobe by a famous designer (*Cek & Ricek*, Edition 249, 9-15 June 2003, cover)

Following her dispute with Rhoma, Inul’s popularity, not surprisingly, soared even higher. Her survival was signaled by her ‘come back’ programmes on television. Broad public support for Inul partly fuelled her decision to reappear on television.³² With her return, she proved that she had surmounted the challenges thrown at her by her adversary. Quite in contrast to the survival strategies of the victims of the May 1998 rapes (Chapter Four), armed conflict (Chapter Five), religious revivalism (Chapter Six), and domestic violence (Chapter Seven), the iconisation of Inul as a survivor involved a heavy appropriation of commercial signs in which she reworked, and was ‘forced’ to rework, the presentation of her body and sexuality. Inul’s survival was signalled

³² The sympathy for Inul was also boosted by a blunder in Rhoma’s moral campaign to boycott her after he was caught visiting Angel Lelga, his co-star in a television drama, at her apartment at 11 p.m. (see *Bintang Milenia* 2003(b)). While denying an affair at that time, later in 2005, Rhoma suddenly announced his divorce from Angel with whom he had a *nikah siri* (unregistered marriage) arrangement. See *Suara Merdeka* 2005.

by her metamorphosis: from wearing stretch-fabric aerobic outfits to designer labels; from un-choreographed dance moves to cabaret-style performances; and from singing other people's songs to her own songs. This metamorphosis paralleled the development of the media industry in Indonesia, which focused heavily on information and entertainment, and the fusion of the two into infotainment.

Dance Choreography and Background Dancers



Figure 8.11: Inul with background dancers, VCD Karaoke, *Goyang Inul* (Blackboard 2003)

Inul's first dangdut album was a karaoke VCD. According to the producer of the Blackboard recording label, an audio-visual album was more suitable for Inul because she was popular more for her movements than her voice. He said, "*Yang ditunggu orang dari Inul adalah atraksi panggungnya*" (What the public looked forward to was her stage performance) (*Femina* 2003(c)). Thus, her goyang ngebor was emphasised. The camera often focused on and even took close-ups of her gyrating buttocks.

As if to counter Rhoma's criticism of her dancing as un-choreographed, the 'new' Inul performed with more 'up-to-date' choreography and was accompanied by 'modern urban-looking' background dancers. The producers of the 'welcome back' programmes appreciated this new image of Inul. Alex Komara from SCTV, the station that aired *Duet Maut*, for example, also mentioned that during this programme some boundaries for censorship were drawn: her costumes and dances were refined, the camera did not focus on her

buttocks and Inul was not supposed to turn her back to the audience (*Cek & Ricek* 2003(d)). Referring to her new dance choreographies, which involved high profile choreographers such as Ari Tulang and Eko Supriyanto, Inul said:

Using a choreographer doesn't mean I want to change my character. I only want to create something new so that my dance becomes merrier and is not considered erotic (*Nova* 2003(a)).

Politics of Designer Labels

Another sign of the 'new' Inul was her wardrobe. No longer performing in tight workout outfits, Inul began to fill her wardrobe with designer labels, including outfits designed by Adjie Notonegoro and Robby Tumewu, who usually design for high society women (*Nova* 2003(a); *Femina* 2003(a); *Sinar Harapan* 2003). By 'refining her appearance' she could appeal to different social and economic classes.

It was not only Inul who had to adapt to a new fashion style, but also the high fashion designers had to appropriate their designs to compliment her goyang ngebor (*Sinar Harapan* 2003). Most of the designs retained the forms of outfits comfortable for Inul to dance in. The refashioning of Inul's appearance also involved a list of popular make-up artists. It was reported that she spent millions of rupiah annually for facial treatments to complete her 'new' image (*Nova* 2003(b): VIII).

New Songs

As Inul's popularity continued to soar, songwriters were ready to supply her with new songs. One of them was Endang Kurnia who wrote the song *Goyang Inul* (Inul's Swaying) recorded on her karaoke VCD with the same title. There was a problem with this since Kurnia was a member of PAMMI, the association of dangdut artists under the leadership of Rhoma who had forbidden the members to work with Inul (*Koran Tempo* 2003(d): B2). It was reported that Rhoma sent a caveat to the Blackboard music producer that produced the karaoke album, but his objections were ignored (*Liputan6 SCTV* 2006).

Some of the song lyrics on her karaoke VCD *Goyang Inul* describe the actual situation that she faced. For example, the song entitled *Goyang Gosip* tells about the controversy around her goyang. Meanwhile the song *Goyang Inul* incorporates her appreciation of the support she has received from the public.

*Goyang Inul*³³

*Para penonton, bapak-bapak ibu ibu, semuanya
 Jangan heran kalau inul sedang goyang
 Rada panas, agak sexy
 maafkanlah*

(rock guitar)

**Para penonton, bapak-bapak ibu ibu,
 semua yang ada disini
 Ada yang bilang dangdut tak goyang
 Bagai sayur tanpa garam
 Kurang enak kurang sedap
 Dari itu Inul goyang
 Agar semuanya senang
 Bagi yang kurang berkenan
 melihat Inul bergoyang
 Jangan marah maafkanlah*

*****Para penonton, bapak-bapak ibu ibu,
 semua yang ada disini
 Goyang yuk ah...*

***Seribu satu macam problema,
 Sejenak kita lupakan saja
 Lihatlah goyang Inul
 Semoga terhibur sayang..
 Bagi yang sedang putus bercinta
 Goyang Inul obatnya
 Mari kita gembira sayang...*

****Tapi janganlah lupa
 Sambil kita berdoa
 Agar kita semua
 Sehat sentosa*

*Para penonton, bapak-bapak ibu ibu,
 semua yang ada disini
 Maafin Inul ya..
 Udah dulu ah..
 Inul's Goyang*

Dear audience, gentlemen, ladies, everyone,
 Don't be surprised when Inul goyangs
 A bit hot, a bit sexy
 Forgive me

Dear audience, gentlemen, ladies, everybody here,
 Some say dangdut without goyang

³³ Written by Endang Kurnia, in VCD Karaoke, *Goyang Inul* (Blackboard 2003).

Is like veggies without salt
Doesn't taste right, not so delicious
For that reason Inul goyang
So that everybody is happy
For those who are not pleased
To see Inul goyang
Don't be angry, forgive me

Dear audience, gentlemen, ladies, everyone here,
Let's goyang, ah...

A thousand and one problems,
Let's just forget it
Look at Inul's goyang
Hope you're entertained, my dear,
For those who are broken-hearted
Inul's goyang is the medicine
Let's be happy, my dear,

But don't forget
We also pray
So that all of us will be
Healthy and prosperous

Dear audience, gentlemen, ladies, everyone here,
Forgive Inul, please...
Got to go now...

Sinetron

The song lyrics that describe Inul's actual situation paralleled the sinetron that incorporated her life story into a television serial. The sinetron, *Kenapa Harus Inul* (Why does it have to be Inul), directed by Arswendo Atmowiloto, told the story of a village woman named Inul who wanted to pursue a career as a dangdut singer. After overcoming various difficulties, she finally became a popular dangdut singer.

This serial thus far has been the only *sinetron* dedicated to an artist (*Koran Tempo* 2003(a): B2; *Wanita Indonesia* 2003). As a debutant in a television serial, Inul's wages equalled those of top artists like Tamara Blezinsky who earned 90 million rupiah per episode (*Prospektif* 2003).

Carnival of Culture

In late 2005, a dispute between Inul and Rhoma Irama erupted again. This second-round of the dispute started again with Rhoma denouncing Inul, this time during a public hearing at a session at the House of Representatives during the discussion of the draft of the pornography law, which was titled *Rancangan*

Undang-Undang Anti Pornografi dan Pornoaksi (RUUAPP).³⁴ This hearing invited many artists, including Rhoma Irama and Inul, to testify. It reaired the old patterns of controversy, although with a lesser degree of public reaction. Given the opportunity to present his opinion about the general need for the proposed law, Rhoma instead condemned Inul as an erotic performer and a danger to the society's morals. Inul cried in reaction to the condemnation and left the meeting room.³⁵

Later, she joined the *Karnaval Budaya* (Carnival of Culture) on 22 April 2006 to protest the *anti-pornografi/pornoaksi* bill draft, which included participation of women's groups, artists, and transvestites.³⁶ The significance of this recycled controversy illuminates the magnitude of celebrity culture in the lives of contemporary Indonesian people and the symbolic meaning of Inul's joining the Carnival of Culture as her initial step in a social movement, although it was the only activist event that she ever joined.

Inul's survival was celebrated by the entertainment industry. Although Inul had received support from politicians and feminist activists, she showed less initiative to participate in more political actions. Instead she agreed with a number of television stations and print media publishers to celebrate her return to the public. Through the metamorphosis of her appearance as a new 'celebrity', Inul was "manufactured and managed in the world of media spectacle" (Kellner 2003: 4). The 'welcoming back' television programme *Rindu Inul*, with the newly adopted styles and up-scale audiences seen around the stage became the iconic resolution of "the multidimensional conflict that had unfolded over several months" with "the media industry being the major victor" (Heryanto 2008(b): 2).

³⁴ In this legal draft, *pornografi* (pornography) is differentiated from *pornoaksi* (lit, porno-action) in which the second term refers more to live performances of 'sensual' entertainment, while the first term refers to the production and distribution of graphic materials. Later, in the approved Anti-Pornografi Law (*Undang-Undang Anti Pornografi* 2008), the word *pornoaksi* was dropped.

³⁵ Rhoma stated before the meeting that he felt that Inul's goyang ngebor was pornoaksi and had to be banned. He took it as an example to be included in the draft for the law against pornography/pornoaction. He claimed that that kind of sensual dance should not be performed because it would cause public unrest and incite lustful acts. (<http://www.detikhot.com/index.php/tainment.read/tahun/2006/bulan/01/tgl/18/time/120818/idnews/521175/idkanal/230> accessed 9 April 2006).

³⁶ *Forum Betawi* Rempu, that claims as representatives of residents of Betawi, demanded an apology from her because her support of the anti-RUU APP movement was deemed as "*melukai hati orang Betawi*" (hurting the feelings of Betawi people). They also threatened to evict her from Jakarta and close her karaoke cafes (see *Kompas* 2006).

Sidenote: Reminiscence of 1965 Women's History

The phenomenon of goyang ngebor cannot be analysed in isolation from the broader context of folk culture in local areas in Indonesia. More so, the stamping of Inul's dance as sexually explicit and as such threatening public morality is inseparable from gender ideology and power relations in Indonesia, especially under the New Order. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the New Order regime was born not only out of the suppression of communism, but also from the 'destruction' of the women's movement (Wieringa n.d.). By associating radical women's movements with communism and sexual perversity, the New Order regime not only castigated leftist women's movements, but also demonised women who step outside their expected social and familial roles. The parallel between women's subversion and sexual dance was evident in the orchestrated allegation of the involvement of Gerwani members in the torturing and killing of the generals during the 1965 uprising. A story of the initiation ceremony where the women took off their clothes and danced the "dance of fragrant flowers" (Tarian Harum Bunga) in the nude circulated widely (Wieringa 2002: 298). This story was visibly immortalised in the relief at the Pancasila Sakti Monument and has been part of the historical imaginings of those born and raised under the New Order regime.

The explicitness of this allegation also victimised a local folk song. The New Order banned the song *Genjer-genjer* from Banyuwangi, East Java, because it was written by a Lekra (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*, People's Culture Institution) member and, it was claimed, was the song played during Gerwani's dance during the torture of the generals (Setiawan 2003: 91-92). Women's sexuality has been ever since then a prime target of state scrutiny:

The New Order is dominated by an all-embracing mythology that classifies disorder, sensuality, and gruesome violence as uncontrollable female attributes, whereas the restoration of order is associated with male qualities (Schulte Nordholt, 1997: 5).

The spectre of sensual female dance allegedly performed by the members of Gerwani during the 'torture and killing' of the generals was reproduced and maintained throughout the New Order regime and created a collective fear that the same evil inhabits folk culture and women's sensual art performances. As much as the 'dance of fragrant flowers' was seen to be defiant, the sexualisation of Inul's goyang ngebor also served as a signifier that woman's sexuality is dangerous.

Inul's stepping into the public limelight and the media amplification of her presence endangered the patriarchal order adhered to by the dangdut king Rhoma Irama, Islamic institutions like MUI, and local governments, which is to

some extent sanctioned by the legacy of the New Order through the ideology of the middle-class housewife that places men in the superior position in public, and parallels the fear of disorder. For that reason, Inul had to be subdued, her act had to be cleaned up. However, the attempt to control Inul occurred at the same time that the repressive state control à la the New Order was momentarily criticised and rejected.

As the political context has changed quite dramatically during reformasi, during which women's activism flourished, the public sphere opened, and state control waned, the attempt to control Inul's performances faced stringent resistance from those who relished the freedom of expression that was newly born from this change. For those who had experienced repression under Suharto's regime, such as some feminist activists had, the ban on Inul evoked memories of state violence against women. Residual feelings lingered and strengthened following the fall of the regime. In this light, the intervention against Inul's body and sexuality was seen in parallel with the New Order state's attempt to encroach upon women's lives.

The symbolisation of Inul as an iconic victim of repression is reminiscent of the similar suppression of members of Gerwani. In October 1965, arrests of people suspected of involvement with the G30S-PKI movement began. Many of these people were female members of Gerwani. Newspapers started to report on the 'confessions' of involvement of those accused women. As no legal proceedings were ever held for any of these cases, the newspapers held a public court. In order to legitimise this accusation, the New Order built a Pancasila Sakti Monument where, as Wieringa points strongly, "the full ideological weight of the way the New Order regime was built on the subordination of women and manipulation of sexual symbols becomes clear" (2002: 320).



Figure 8.12: Bronze mural at the Monumen Pancasila Sakti, Jakarta
(Personal document, taken 2 May 2012)

In the bronze mural that depicts the ‘events’ at Lubang Buaya, representations of members of Gerwani were made in accordance with the circulating, state-sponsored images of rebellious women. In Wieringa’s description:

To the left three women are standing. One of them is dressed in a sexual manner and argues arrogantly and defiantly with a man [...] Beside her two dancing women are arranged, one of whom wears a wreath of flowers representing the Dance of the Fragrant Flowers [...] Above the well one woman is portrayed leaning against a tree. She is clad in uniform trousers and a revealing top that exposes her full breasts. A knife hangs on her belt. Her posture again is defiant (2002: 320-1).

Although the cases of Inul and Gerwani are of different natures in many ways, there appears to be a continuous thread of regarding women as dangerous or as aggressors when they appear sexually confident.³⁷

A similar vein was evident during the controversy about Inul’s goyang. The closed meeting between Inul and Rhoma and a few other people represented the legal court proceedings that were never held for the Gerwani members. The

³⁷ Heryanto notes that Inul’s “subversive subaltern attributes” had been “stripped off” in the face of media industry (2008(b): 29).

newspapers reports announced that those women were guilty of the accusations. Similarly, Rhoma announced at a press conference that the crying Inul had repented and that everything had been restored to order, represented by the act of Inul's 'kissing' his hand. Just as the mural showed then General Suharto successfully taming 'dangerous' women, Rhoma showed that he had been successful in making Inul *bertaubat* (repent). The contrasting physical postures and gestures of Inul and Rhoma during the press conference almost perfectly capture the images in the Pancasila Sakti Monument mural where:

To the right, the scene is dominated by the overpowering figure of General Suharto. Under his left arm two women are standing, heads bowed and demure. One of them is carrying a baby. The figure of General Suharto has intervened and turned the defiant, seductive, dangerous and castrating women into symbols of obedience and motherhood (Wieringa 2002: 321).

Feminist groups saw the emphasis on women's repentance as repressive as it implied that women had behaved badly and men were there to correct them.

During reformasi, questions surfaced regarding the fabricated allegations of the involvement of Gerwani members in the torturing and killing of the generals. As these women now dare to speak up to refute the accusations, they demand restoration of their good names. They revealed that they were forced to make confessions and statements of their involvement in the incident (Wieringa 2002). The demand for the rectification of their names is based on the repositioning of them not as aggressors, but as victims, of Suharto's political scenario to gain power. This is possible as the discourse of victimhood strengthens in the aftermath of Suharto's resignation. In Inul's case, the 'rehabilitation' of her name was possible not only by her positioning as a victim, but was also symbolised by her transformation from low-class to high-class entertainer via the appropriation of high-class symbols of celebrities, such as fashion and lifestyle. Her transformation from victim to survivor involved the appropriation of these symbolic codes that are shared by the stakeholders in the entertainment industry.

Conclusion

Throughout the chapter I have attempted to show how Inul's transformation from aggressor to victim to survivor was heavily mediated by media presentations, both print and electronic. Her transformation from a dangdut singer-dancer in rural areas of East and Central Java into a symbol of aggression (for those who felt endangered by her) on national media was mediated by the relocation of her live goyang ngebor performances into audio-visual

recordings and television programmes. In the aftermath of Rhoma's open and stringent criticism against her *goyang ngebor*, the press conference that showed proud Rhoma and tearful Inul provided the perfect spectacle positioning Inul as a victim in the complex and intermingled battles between the centre and the periphery (c.f. Heryanto 2008(b)), seniors and juniors, piety and sinfulness, and men and women. Her reappearance on television and public stages after the dispute with Rhoma was driven not only by broad public sympathy for her, but also by the media industry and producers of popular entertainment. Her come-back programmes became celebrated spectacles that symbolised not only the freedom of expression, but also the power of the producers of entertainment industry. This transformation emerged, or was materialised, to serve the interests of the popular culture industry.

Following the explosion of media productions after the weakening of the New Order, media spectacles have developed with full force. As Kellner (2003: 4) argues: "Entertainment has always been a prime field of the spectacle, but in today's infotainment society, entertainment and spectacle have entered into the domain of economy, politics, society, and everyday life in important new ways". Looking at the mediatisation and visualisation of the controversy around Inul's *goyang* is one of the many ways to understand how media spectacle has been both a reminder and a catalyst of the large cultural shift and power struggle that began shortly before and quickly escalated after the resignation of Suharto. By contextualising the controversy over *goyang ngebor* in the heart of the contemporary Indonesian popular culture industry, in which the female body and sexuality are obsessively made the focus of attraction—together, but not without tension, with the shift toward a more religious, moralistic direction that favours women's submissiveness—the depreciation of potential female power embodied in and represented by Inul's images can be indicated.

The discursive transformation of the triad aggressor-victim-survivor cannot be disentangled from the public discourse during the reformasi era. The stamping of dangdut singers as erotic aggressors was not specific to Inul. However, never before had a condemnation of sexy female dangdut singers been followed by the positioning of, and public support for, those women as victims. This situation is particular to the period of reformasi when the public had access to media venues to convey their protests and opposition against any attempt of control by those claiming to hold authority. It is also in this vein, in my opinion, that the defense of Inul's right to articulate her artistic expression recalls the subversion of the ex-members of Gerwani and the *genjer-genjer* dance.

In the end, the public audience in a relatively state control-free area have the right to choose the kind of entertainment they want, and to decide or

contest if necessary to defend their choice. Inul, at the centre of the controversy, on the other hand, also made her own decision to determine which modes of support for her existence she would choose. As Inul chose to align herself with the popular culture industry, not only was her identity transformed from an aggressor to a victim then to a survivor through spectacular images, she also received substantial financial advantages. The economic interests, regardless of the use of the religious smokescreen, was something that did not explicitly appear in Rhoma Irama's objections against her, but were implicitly implied in every step of his attempt to close Inul's access to the dangdut industry.