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## Contemporary Indonesian film: spirits of reform and ghosts from the past

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**Contemporary Indonesian film:  
Spirits of Reform and ghosts from the past**

**Katinka van Heeren**



**Contemporary Indonesian film:  
Spirits of Reform and ghosts from the past**

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## **Introduction**



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## Introduction

The contemporary media shape identity; indeed many argue that they now exist close to the very core of identity production. In a transnational world typified by the global circulation of images, sounds, goods, and peoples, media spectatorship impacts completely on national identity, communal belonging, and political affiliations. By facilitating a mediated engagement with distant peoples, the media ‘deterritorialize’ the process of imagining communities. And while the media can destroy community and fashion solitude by turning spectators into atomized consumers or self-entertaining monads, they can also fashion community and alternative affiliations.

Ella Shohat (2003:74)

The audio-visual mediascape in post-Soeharto Indonesia is very dynamic; it is marked by a great variety in film formats, genres, and styles, and entrenched by a host of discussions and activities. All sorts of films can be found in cinemas, at cultural centres and in galleries, in cinema clubs at universities, and in other public or private places. Indonesian independent film productions, documentaries, auteur films, popular, and gay and lesbian films are just few examples of what is on display. National television is also animated by a great variety of programmes such as soaps, infotainment programmes, game shows, and reality shows. At first glance, many Indonesian films and television programmes make use of styles, genres, and formulas that are similar to those that can be found all over the world. Even so, all films and programmes which are produced, distributed, screened, or watched in Indonesia are part of a specific complex of discourses and mediation practices. This setting suggests particular ways of reading and understanding film texts. Consequently, notwithstanding the effects of globalization and transnational media flows, similar genres, styles, programmes, and formulas engage in representations and interpretations which tap into Indonesian imaginations of community and nation.

In *Virtual Geography*, a book about the media coverage of the First Gulf War, McKenzie Wark wrote about a staged media appearance by Saddam Hussein. Filmed with Western people whom he had taken hostage, Hussein gently ruffles the hair of one of them, a little boy. Wark asserts that in doing so Saddam Hussein was making use of, and performing, a well-known and widely accepted Iraqi generic style: to give the impression of ‘the noble and respected elder’. In the West, however, that same image had a totally different affect as it tapped into other ‘confounded and most cherished beliefs about genres of television and the kinds of stories they legitimately tell us’. Viewers in the West, brought up on ‘Orientalist’ media literacy, responded with disgust on seeing a vile Arab who harassed a little boy (Wark 1994:4). Wark comments on how people brought up in different cultural frames are geared to other ways of handling information, and have a repertoire of quite different stories with which to filter events. As he phrases it: ‘How could we claim to know what goes on at the

other interzones, in quite other spaces where different flows from different vectors meet quite other memories and experiences of everyday life?’ (ibid:19). In other words, how do we make an image of and imagine the other, and how do they make an image of and imagine themselves?

In any nation, the significance and possible interpretations of images and media texts are based on both discourses that circulate in society as well as mediation practices. In this book, I situate film as a social practice (Friedberg 1993; Stacey 1993; Staiger 1992; Turner 1992; Wasko 1994; Willeman 1994) within the shifting political and cultural frames of the Indonesian nation. Exploring historically emergent forms of representation and imagination of communities in the Indonesian audio-visual mediascape, I address the impact of discourses and film mediation practices on the production of collective identities and social realities. My account ranges from discussions on the ‘idealized Indonesian self in television discourses’ (Kitley 2000:12) and film (Sen 1994) under the New Order, to a topsy-turvy heated debate about the representation of the Indonesian nation and the daily lived reality of the people in film and on television in 2007.

‘Discourse’ is a prominent concept in this book. Along the lines of Norman Fairclough’s media discourse analysis, I use the term in two ways. On the one hand, I use it in the sense which is prevalent in language studies: ‘discourse as social action and interaction, people interacting together in real social situations’ (Fairclough 1995:16). On the other hand, I use discourse in the sense which is prevalent in post-structuralist social theory, as propounded by Foucault: ‘a discourse as a social construction of reality, a form of knowledge’ (Ibid.). Discourses appertain broadly to knowledge and knowledge construction. In a combination of these two senses, a discourse is the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view. For instance, the social practice of politics is signified differently in liberal, socialist, and Marxist political discourses (1995:18, 56). In addition, film mediation practices are defined here as the practices of film production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption.

There is no one-to-one meaning which clings onto media (McLuhan’s ‘the medium is the message’); rather, different, culturally imbued practices, mechanisms, and politics lie at the base of all meaning. This is not to say that politics and mechanisms of mediation practices are the key to how a text is read, for it is up to the audience ‘to decide whether to read the image in terms of ‘our’ frame of reference, or in the frame of what we know about the other’ (Wark 1994:5), and there are many other ways of reading from which to choose. Prevailing discourses and film mediation practices disclose competing forms of representation and the imagination of specific identities, as well as the construction of social realities. In my account of the construction of social realities, I draw on the Foucauldian idea that each society has its own regime or general politics of truth. This refers to the types of discourse that a particular society harbours and causes to function as true: which facts, narratives, myths, or representations are acknowledged to function as true in a society.

Central discourses, such as those about the ethical values of a nation, resound in

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discourses on film and permeate the discourse practices and narrative practices of film texts, television programmes, and soaps. Film discourse practices entail the merger of societies' discourses with mediation practices. In discourse practices, discourses are put into practice in the production, distribution, and consumption of film texts; in other words, discourses materialize in film texts. An example of a discourse practice is the production of historical films and documentaries and their mode of distribution. In Chapter Three, I show that the production of these genres represents prevailing concepts of historiography and the nation-state, and that their mode of distribution ties in with the endeavour to direct discourses on historiography. Film narrative practices are a component of discursive practices. They relate to the form and content of film texts. Narrative practices are about stories and the way in which these are told in audio-visual media within the context of power relations.

Power relations involve both the actual power of the state in controlling the mass media through censorship and broadcasting and press policies, and through the possession and control of private national and transnational media industries and institutions (see Abu-Lughod 1993; Croteau and Hoynes 1997; Dasgupta 2007; Harbord 2002; Hong 1998; Lull 1991; Shohat and Stam 1994, 2003). These elements coalesce to shape the form and content of domestic audio-visual products. Powerful though they are, the state and public and private media industries and networks are not alone in shaping the form and content of film; audiences and pressure groups are also important in defining these. Audiences can decide if they want to watch a film or not, and even though rating polls have been criticized for their inaccuracy, they guide advertisers who in turn influence private media industries.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, state censorship is not the only force which delineates the margins of the form and content of media productions. Pressure and protests from audiences, mass organizations, or communities of conviction can lead to self-censorship on the part of film-makers and the banning of films and television programmes. The form and content of audio-visual media in conjunction with the questions of power, authority, and access to resources impinge on what representations of the nation, communities, and social realities circulate in society.

Social truths or realities are not stable, but are constantly defined and re-defined in competing discourses. Fairclough argues that '[c]hanges in society and culture manifest themselves in all their tentativeness, incompleteness and contradictory nature in the heterogeneous and shifting discursive practices of the media' (1995:52). Particularly after the resignation of President Soeharto, the Indonesian mediascape has been marked by a high variety in discourses in which different communities compete for representations of the Indonesian nation and its social realities. Contemporary imagined community in Indonesia is pluralistic, diffuse, and not easily tied to place. It is formed around a range of social and cultural concerns, not simply political ones (Kitley 2002:211).

Benedict Anderson's idea of imagined communities (1983) is one of the key concepts in my research. Anderson pointed out the way in which new media technologies have contributed to nation formation by enabling imaginations of the nation as a sovereign and territorially bounded community. Anderson argued that with the rise of print media, the wide circulation of



newspapers and novels written in national languages induced readers to imagine themselves as being part of a vast community, one not based on face-to-face encounters between its members. Whilst the imagination of communities can be connected to consumption of media technologies and discourses, there are some reservations with regard to Anderson's notion of imagined communities. As Philip Kitley has said, the totalizing, unifying ideas which Anderson suggests, were an intrinsic part of post-colonial national communities, and are no longer appropriate to contemporary imagined communities (2002:211). These are far more pluralistic and diffuse, and often transcend boundaries of the nation.

In the last decade scholars have questioned the capacity of the nation-state in the post-colonial world to bind its citizens in the same way this was achieved in Western history (Meyer 2000; see also Bayart 1993; Chabal 1996; Mbembe 1992; Taussig 1997; Van der Veer 1994; Werbner 1996). In film and cultural studies, the crisis of the nation-state, which is central to current debates as well as to actual power struggles, led to a shift in focus towards transnational formations. Extensive circulation of transnational mass media and a growing access to these media through new technologies have led to an expansion in constructions of new shared worlds and in imaginations of distinct communities of sentiments, which are no longer confined by national borders (Appadurai 1996; Garnham 1993; Gillwald 1993; Shohat 2003; Sen 2003). In this context, the nation-state and national identity are no longer recognized as the privileged space and form for the imagination of communities.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, notwithstanding a globalizing world, the state is still important in shaping political realities (see Baumann 1996; Duara 1998, 2008; Shami 1998). Moreover, the state can be important in defining the shape of cinema. As Wimal Dissanayake has argued, cinema in Asian countries was closely allied to the nation-state for the simple reasons of economics and exercise of content control. In Asian cinemas, assistance from and co-ordination by the government was imperative as film corporations, script boards, training institutes, and censorship panels in Asia were mostly supported or supervised by the state (Dissanayake 1994:xiv). Krishna Sen stressed this point in relation to Indonesian cinema: 'At a time when the border zones of the Indonesian nation are being violently tested by ethnic, religious and regional differences, when in fact it has contracted in relinquishing the world's newest nation, East Timor, it may be foolhardy to speak at all of something called Indonesian cinema. But the institutional organization of films produced and consumed in Indonesia is such that it is impossible to discuss these except as 'national cinema' (Sen 2003:147).'

Now the tide has turned and in the past decade, at least in the case of Indonesia, it would be hard to speak of a 'national cinema'. Particularly after the stepping down of President Soeharto, several changes have occurred in the constitution of power relations and the discourses that define Indonesian cinema. The resignation of Soeharto on 21 May 1998 marked the commencement of the era of Reformation (*Era Reformasi*). The slogan *reformasi*, reform of Indonesian politics, economy, and legislation, reigned supreme. Before Soeharto decided on the wisdom of retirement, *reformasi* in politics had meant the demand for a new president, free general elections, the freedom to found political parties, and the annulment of

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five political acts from 1985 which lay at the core of the deficiencies in the formal political system. Economically, it demanded an end to crony-capitalism, monopolies and cartels, and the dominant role of the big conglomerates. *Reformasi* also called for a strong legislative power, a bureaucracy and judicial power which were not at the beg and call of the ruling elite, and an end to corruption, collusion, and nepotism (*korupsi*, *kolusi* and *nepotisme*, KKN) (Van Dijk 2001:114-5). After the fall of Soeharto, the bid to introduce reform affected every possible field and led to a negotiating and redefining of all kinds of issues.<sup>3</sup>

Besides being stirred by the euphoric atmosphere of Reform which induced a new found freedom of expression, opposed to the hegemonic narratives of the nation-state, an important part of the changes in Indonesian film mediation practices and discourses can be traced to the circulation of new audio-visual media. Many new activities and developments in post-Soeharto audio-visual media were made possible by the growing and widespread availability of such new technologies for film production and exhibition as digital video cameras, computer editing programmes, and digital video projectors. Digital video, for instance, presented 'the ability to construct and transform meanings and practices' (Ukadike 2003:128), which challenged the dominant cinematic practices and film culture. Both Indonesian film-maker Garin Nugroho and film-maker and academic Gotot Prakosa asserted that because of the new video technologies virtually everyone in Indonesia was given access to audio-visual media. In their opinion, the advance of new technologies has definitely shaped democratization processes in film production and creativity in Indonesian cinema ('Eforia film' 2001; Prakosa 2005:10-1).

Both political change and the 'democratization' of Indonesian cinema in the wake of new film technologies have given rise to discourses which have opposed the concept of national cinema '[to privilege] ideas of coherence and unity and stable cultural meanings associated with the uniqueness of a given nation' (Dissanayake 1994:xiii). Instead, post-Soeharto new and oppositional film mediation practices and discourses have supported the premise that in today's transnational world, national identities are transformed or substituted by those which transcend the purely national and are based on social, political, or religious sentiments. However, at the same time post-Soeharto practices and discourses have underscored that contemporary processes of imagining communities are increasingly accentuating local identities. Commenting on cultural production and transnational imaginary, Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake have called attention to the interplay between globalism and localism:

Postmodern cultural workers, on the verge of becoming 'symbolic engineers' and critical self-consciousness of global capital, stand at the cross-roads of an altered and more fractal terrain everywhere we guess at century's end: a new world space of cultural production and national representation is simultaneously becoming more *globalized* (unified around dynamics of capitalogic moving across borders) and more *localized* (fragmented into contestory enclaves of difference, coalition and resistance) in everyday texture and composition.

Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (1996:1)<sup>4</sup>

Elsewhere Dissanayake has proposed dealing with the dialectic of the local and global through an examination of the production of newer localities. That is, to focus on the production of the local and its constantly changing contours in response to the demands of the global. Dissanayake stated: 'How the symbolic forms and modalities of association of Western capitalism are transformed, localized, and legitimized in most countries in relation to their historical narratives and changing lifeworlds is at the heart of the discourse of localism' (2003:216-7). In discourses of localism, the simultaneous process of transnationalization and deterritorialization of consciousness does not primarily have to lead to new shared cultural imaginaries of transnational identities alone. Instead, it has an equal power to inform the founding of hybridized local ones. Furthermore, in the view of Arif Dirlik, the re-emergence of the local can be seen as a site of resistance and struggle for liberation:

It is the struggle for historical and political presence of groups suppressed or marginalized by modernization [...] that has dynamized this postmodern consciousness and has produced the contemporary notion of the local, which must be distinguished from 'traditional' localism if only because such struggles are themselves informed by the modernity that they reject. This is the local that has been worked over by modernity. It finds expression presently in the so-called 'politics of difference' that presupposes local differences (literally and metaphorically, with reference to social groups) both as a point of departure and as a goal of liberation.

Arif Dirlik (1996:35)

Although Wilson, Dissanayake, and Dirlik do not explicitly differentiate between the local and the national, Krishna Sen, with reference to Dirlik, has drawn attention to the difference between the two. She argued that a few years before the fall of Soeharto, local culture in Indonesia was mobilized in the cultural discourse to oppose the dominant rhetoric of national culture and nationhood propounded by the New Order state. In Indonesia, notions of localism as a figurative site of resistance were often not defined in opposition to transnational culture or globalism, but rather in terms of the political constellations within the nation (2003:147, 155-6). It is along these lines that I address Anderson's concept of imagined communities.

Treating film as part of a complex semiotic field which foregrounds formations of social identities and realities, I focus my account on three main themes. Firstly, I examine discourses on particular audio-visual media formats and genres that lend themselves to the imagination of identity and community formation. Secondly, I query the processes of empowerment which are entailed by the consumption of these media formats and genres. Thirdly, I explore the impact the circulation of particular genres and formats has on public debates.<sup>5</sup> Questions that will be addressed in this context include: How is one to characterize the Indonesian film industry before, during, and after the fall of Soeharto? How has the spirit of *Reformasi* altered Indonesian film mediation practices, and what was the significance of new technologies that were available around the same time? What representations of history were screened during

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the New Order, and to what extent did notions of ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ determine the critical discourses surrounding Indonesian media? What was the role of Islam in film mediation practices before, during, and after the Reform era? To what extent did secular and religious discourses clash in defining the moral bounds of mainstream film and television productions? In what way did such discourses shape social realities?

This book is divided into three parts, each of which consists of two chapters. The first chapters in the first two parts give an outline of New Order film discourses and practices. The chapters discussing the New Order era heavily rely on Krishna Sen’s research on Indonesian cinema (1994). In each case the chapters are followed by a second chapter, in which the developments, continuities and changes in these discourses and practices in post-Soeharto Indonesia are set out and discussed. In the third part, New Order and post-New Order developments are incorporated in both chapters.

The first part contains an analysis of film mediation practices; the second is about film discourse practices, while the third studies film narrative practices. Investigating film mediation practices, I dissect concrete practices of film production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption and describe the normative discourses about these practices. These discourses disclose a series of representations of divergent imagined communities. When I turn to film discourse practices, I concentrate on the use of narrative tropes, rhetorical strategies, and modes of film distribution and exhibition during the New Order and Reform era, which are connected to historiography. The choice to focus on historiography is founded on the general view that history is the essential basis of the narrative of nation-states. History provides the foundation for a nation’s unity and the state’s legitimacy to rule (see Anderson 1983, Hobsbawm 1983). Another reason for this focus on historiography is that film discourse practices under Soeharto rule that related to history were immersed in New Order politics and policies of national-myth-making and ideological production. In my exploration of film narrative practices, I study the composition of film narratives in the context of power relations. I examine to what extent the form and content of narratives depend on censorship, commerce, and ideological or political motives. The central point here is the impact these power relations have on debates and representations of realities and the moral bounds of the Indonesian nation and society.

In the first part I contrast New Order mainstream film mediation practices to post-Soeharto alternative, underground mediation practices. In this part I show that in discourses and film policies, different film formats and festivals have represented the imagination of different audiences and communities. In Chapter One, I discuss policies where the 16 mm format represented national lower class audiences and 35 mm film transnational middle-class audiences. I also analyse New Order film festivals and give details of particular representations of audiences and the nation, conventions and motives for film showings, as well as discourses about participation in these festivals. In Chapter Two, I examine the changes and continuities in post-Soeharto film mediation practices. I discuss new mediation practices and the rise

of new film genres and festivals. I demonstrate that in the post-Soeharto era discourses mainstream 35 mm film is connected to New Order domination and transnational identities. Conversely, alternative independent film which uses the digital video format is seen as an oppositional cinema, representing local identities. I furthermore discuss the emergence of film festivals during Reform, examining how these are connected to supranational identities. I end the second chapter with an analysis of the circulation of pirated films as an oppositional media practice.

In the second part, I extrapolate on the conception and use of particular discourse practices with a focus on specific *modes of engagement* in relation to discourses about history, historiography, and events in society. Modes of engagement consist of dominant representations or ways to address certain topics, which are part of the central discourses of a society. Modes of engagement reach beyond particular modes and styles of film production (Nichols 1991:22-23) in that they encompass the ways in which particular topics in society are represented across all kinds of media. In film, modes of engagement materialize in the use of particular generic features, narrative styles and conventions. I moreover trace through what kinds of discourse practices particular film genres reached Indonesian audiences, and investigate the practice of 'framing' film texts.

Chapter Three is devoted to the way in which the New Order state seized upon particular film genres in order to promote its own model of national history and identity, legitimizing its mandate to rule the nation. I give an account of discourses on the production of history, development and propaganda films and the particular modes of engagement into which these films tap in relation to historiography. Moving a step further, I examine the practice of screening these films as part of a special framework: a New Order memorial day. In Chapter Four, I reveal in what way dominant modes of engagement and generic conventions in film changed or continued to exist after the stepping down of President Soeharto. I discuss the production of counter-histories and the emergence of alternative genres and new practices of framing during Reform. One of the focal points in this chapter is the rise of Islam in the post-Soeharto mediascape. I address the founding of the new genre of Islamic film, and the interconnected formation of the Islamic film community, which sees itself as an oppositional, post-colonial cinema, based on Islamic ideology. Once again I tackle the practice of framing, and the growth of images of Islam in mainstream post-Soeharto audio-visual media, as part of the commercialization of the Islamic fasting month Ramadan.

The last part of this book is about narrative practices. I examine the circulation of popular genres and the composition of stories within film genres, such as the use of particular generic formulas, in connection to power relations. This leads me to address the margins of possible narratives and the basis of socio-political power relations. I sift through debates on particular narrative practices, testing to see how far they can go morally before they are obstructed by the boundaries set by the state and religious pressure groups. In this context, I address the tussling of realities constructed on competing worldviews and truth claims, and the role of real and imagined Islamic authority figures in delineating film narrative practices.

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Chapter Five considers the connection between film and television formats of horror, generic formulas, and imagined audiences and communities. On another level, the chapter seeks to explore how discourses about the formulas of horror films can be related to debates on what constitutes the modern Indonesian nation. In Chapter Six, I delve deeper into discourses on representations of modern Indonesian realities. I discuss recent debates about the moral bounds of narrative practices in the post-Soeharto Indonesian mediascape. I demonstrate in what way commerce and censorship, both from the state and the street, define the churning out of film texts. Then, I examine debates about which narrative practices are perceived to be fitting modes of representation of Indonesian society. These debates are related to divergent worldviews derived from religious and secular realities. They are part and parcel of a struggle about who and what shape and decide on national popular discourse and what realities are included in modern Indonesian society.



**Part One**  
**Film mediation practices**





# 1 New Order and surface

## Introduction

In the second week of May 1999, a little van toured around West Java hunting for a location to shoot the film *Provokator* (Provocateur). As it entered Cigosong, a village in the district of Majalengka, the vehicle was attacked by an angry mob. The van was attacked because the title of the film had been written in large letters on the van's windows, and members of the rural community thought that the team consisted of '*provokator*' – a label given to unknown forces which had been stirring up eruptions of violence in the country since the mid-1990s. To save themselves, the production team, led by the film's producer Sonny P. Sasono and its director Mardali Syarief, quickly wiped the word *provokator* off the van's windows. After this rather upsetting experience, Sonny decided to postpone the shooting of his movie until after the general elections of 1999, when, he hoped, emotions would be less volatile. He believed that after the elections the shooting of the film in Majalengka would present no difficulties. By a judicious payment his party had already secured the 'protection' of the local police force; it had arranged with local authorities that there would be no interference during the shooting of the film, and had obtained the support of one of the regents (*bupati*) of the district Cirebon to help provide facilities for shooting the film (ema 1999a). The decision to postpone the production of *Provokator* was the third hindrance the film encountered in its pre-production process; before production stopped completely four months later, it would be followed by even more.

In this chapter I explore different aspects of film mediation practices during the Soeharto era. In each section I take a particular example which illustrates the situations and conditions in which the different mediation practices took place. My first example is a discussion of the production process of *Provokator*. The pre-production of this film began a few months after President Soeharto had stepped down. Notwithstanding *Reformasi*, many rules, regulations, and conventions of New Order film production still appeared to prevail. The second section is an elaboration of some of the issues raised in the first section. I give an overview of New Order policies and normative discourses on mobile cinemas to provide some background details to film distribution and screening. In the third section, I give more details about particular imaginations and representations of audiences. I examine the practices, conventions, and motives for film exhibition, in conjunction with discourses about film consumption. The focal point are the film festivals which were acknowledged by the New Order.

### 1.1. Production: The attempt to produce *Provokator* the New Order way

About a year after the stepping down of President Soeharto the pre-production process of *Provokator* commenced. In April 1999, the new film production house PT. Mutiara Industri Perfilman Rakyat (Pearl People's Film Industry) planned to produce two films. PT. Mutiara was owned by Sonny Sasono, who was also head of the new mobile cinema organization *Himpunan Film Keliling Indonesia*, (Association of Indonesian Mobile Cinema, Hifki) and the National Committee of Concern for the National Film Industry (*Komite Peduli Perfilman Nasional*, KP2N). The films were meant to revive the film industry, which had been losing ground from the beginning of the 1990s. One of the films, entitled *Bonex*, was going to be about hooligans on a train, while the other, *Provokator*, was based on the issue of 'provocateurs' who had incited riots in various places in the past few years.

The story of *Provokator* is about a girl who has an illegitimate son by a man of Chinese descent. After the child is born he is handed over to a foster home, and when he grows up it appears that he is a very clever boy. Because of his intelligence he is sent to school abroad, but there he is taught to become a provocateur. No explanation of how this happened is given. When the boy returns to Indonesia he is constantly engaged in acts of provocation, and at some point in the film he will even rape his stepmother. It was estimated that the film would be finished in one month and then distributed to middle and lower class cinemas by the Indonesian Association of Movie Theatre Agents (*Himpunan Pengusaha Bioskop Indonesia*, HPBI) and Hifki (TON 1999). The production costs of the film were estimated to be around Rp. 13 billion (US\$ 928,571) (pur 1999a).

Sonny said his production house had deliberately set out to make a film about the inciters of chaos and riots in order to give the Indonesian public an insight to what was happening and aspects behind issues of provocation which were left unsaid. He believed that while it was public knowledge that all riots were deliberately staged, none of the reports in the written or electronic media made clear who the provocateurs actually were. The fictional film *Provokator* would provide a picture of the lives and backgrounds of real-life provocateurs, whose names would be concealed to avoid the protests of family members or NGOs. To ensure the film would be as real as possible, it was planned to insert stock shot material in the film of riots which occurred between 1997-1998 in Ambon, Sambas, Banyuwangi, Kupang and Ketapang, and the 'Semanggi tragedy' in Jakarta in which police and armed forces used excessive violence to combat students (ema 1999b).

The first hurdle in the production of *Provokator* was to obtain permission from the Guidance Council of Film and Video (*Pembinaan Film dan Rekaman Video*) of the Department of Information to register for production. The registration request was almost turned down, on the grounds that the film contained elements of the SARA law (an abbreviation of incitement of *Suku* (ethnic groups), *Agama* (religion), *Ras* (race), and *Antar-golongan* (class) differences for the purpose of creating violence). New Order censorship prohibited the mass media to address any of these subjects. With such a controversial theme, there were real fears that the

production of the film would result in protests and new riots. After a fortnight, when there had still been no answer from the Department of Information, Sasono submitted an assurance that the film would not contain anything which could give rise to anxiety (ema 1999b). When the Department of Information finally did grant permission to register the film for production, a new complicating factor presented itself: the Department of Information sent the Film Censor Board a memo requesting them to pay special attention to *Provokator* after production.

After the aforementioned third impediment, which postponed the film's production until after the 1999 elections, the next complication it encountered in the pre-production stage had to do with registration of the film crew, actors and actresses with official film organizations. The production team had decided to use a new approach: they would not draw on established actors and actresses to play in the film, but instead give new or aspiring stars recruited by the newly established Association of Film and Television Artists (*Himpunan Artis Film dan Televisi*, Hafti) an opportunity. At the film's *selamatan* (ceremonial meal, which in the context of film is commonly held at the beginning and end of production in order to pray for a successful outcome), the director Mardali Syarief frankly admitted that the production team had neglected to acquire any 'recommendation' of the Indonesian Film Producers' Union (*Persatuan Perusahaan Film Indonesia*, PPFi), the Union of Film and Television Employees (*Ikatan Karyawan Film dan Televisi*, KFT), or the Indonesian Film Artists' Union (*Persatuan Artis Film Indonesia*, Parfi) (ema 1999c). In the past, film producers had been required to work with members of these organizations, which entailed arranging payments for assistance at several stages of film mediation practices. Mardali's new approach appeared to have overstepped the mark. About two weeks later, aspiring actors and actresses who had signed on for the film complained that they were asked to pay a levy of Rp. 30,000 (US\$ 2.14) to the *Himpunan Artis Film dan Sinetron Indonesia* (Indonesian Film and 'Electronic Cinema' Association, Hafsi) for a membership card, and another Rp. 70,000 (US\$ 5.00) for the costs of training. Sonny, the producer of the film, acknowledged that it was mandatory for all aspiring actors to join Hafsi and obtain a membership card. However, his production house did not know anything about other charges and Sonny guessed that the Rp. 70,000 was part of a deal with the agency which managed the artists (ema 1999d; pur 1999b). The initial plan to start the shooting of *Provokator* on 10 July 1999 was postponed so that the actors and actresses could be registered. Another reason to postpone the shooting was that there were still some problems with fixing the location (ema 1999d).

Around a month later shooting had still not commenced as there was now a fifth hurdle to be faced. This time the delay in starting the shooting was caused by the subject of the film. Because the story touched on several political conflicts which had occurred in Indonesia, it was decided that direct permission from the army was needed if the movie were to be shot. The letter of permission from the headquarters of the Indonesian national army (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, henceforth TNI), for which the producer was still waiting on 30 August 1999, also allowed the use of 1200 fake firearms, which were barely distinguishable from the real weapons used by the army and police force. The fake firearms were going to be

used in a scene in which the police defuses the demonstrations by students in several areas of Jakarta, depicting amongst other unrests the Trisakti and Semanggi affairs: bloody interventions by police and armed forces against demonstrating students in 1998, resulting in severe casualties and loss of life by students in both incidents. To make these scenes as realistic as possible, miniature replicas of the Trisakti University and Semanggi Bridge were built on the terrain of a sugar factory in Majalengka, West Java ('Film *Provokator*.' 1999).

Another month later, on 25 September 1999, it was planned to start the production of *Provokator* in two weeks and screen the film on the private television channel TPI. By this time, it emerged that the theme of *Provokator* had somewhat changed and it would now be packed with social messages. Instead of showing the background of a perpetrator of riots, in broad lines *Provokator* was to portray how the violent behaviour of disaffected masses was destructive to the nation. It was hoped that the film would teach people not to be easily provoked to act destructively, and thereby harm the nation (ric 1999). Three weeks later it appeared there was a new obstacle for *Provokator* in its pre-production process: a lack of funding. Even though the United Nations Development Programme had provided Rp. 4.4 billion (US\$ 314,285) for the production of both of the films PT Mutiara Film wanted to produce, it turned out this was not enough. Whereas the film *Bonex* received extra financial support from the State Railway Company (*Perusahaan Jawatan Kereta Api*, PJKA), for which it had to change its initial story into one which celebrated the PJKA, *Provokator* was not able to obtain additional funding (ema 1999e). This latest problem in the pre-production process could not be overcome, and the attempt to produce *Provokator* stopped there.

Even though the endeavour to get the production of *Provokator* under way began about a year after the stepping down of President Soeharto, it transpired that virtually all New Order rules and practices in film production were still valid. The obstacles strewn in the path of the production team of *Provokator* at different stages in its pre-production offer an apt illustration of how film production under the New Order worked. The pre-production process of *Provokator* reveals several essential issues. Firstly, most of the hindrances the production team encountered relate to different aspects of official censorship, mainly pre-censorship, in film production. In her book on Indonesian cinema under the New Order, Krishna Sen noted that the role of the Film Censor Board (*Badan Sensor Film*, BSF) was only one part of the New Order censorship pertaining to domestic film (Sen 1994). Even before a film reached the censor board, it had first passed several stages of pre-censorship. For example, it was a common procedure under the New Order to refer a scenario on to other departments with responsibility for the issues and subjects contained in the film. Sen specifies that this worked as a discreet kind of censorship which affected fewer people and caused little open friction between the government department and those involved in the industry (Sen 1994:66).

The requirement that the approval of the Directorate of Film and Video of the Department of Information be obtained before the shooting of *Provokator* could start and the examination

of the screenplay of the film by the head quarters of the TNI are examples of such pre-censorship. Another example is the obligation for aspiring actors and actresses to join Hafsi or Hafti, if they want to have a role in the film. In 1976, six professional film organizations were officially endorsed as the only lawful organizations for particular functional sectors of cinema. Besides the Union of Film and Television Employees (*Ikatan Karyawan Film dan Televisi*, KFT) for all those employed in film production (technical, artistic, and unskilled staff of the film industry, excluding actors), these were: the Indonesian Film Artists' Union (*Persatuan Artis Film Indonesia*, Parfi) for actors; the Indonesian Film Producers' Union (*Persatuan Perusahaan Film Indonesia*, PPFII) for producers; the All Indonesian Association of Movie Theatre Companies (*Gabungan Perusahaan Bioskop Seluruh Indonesia*, GPBSI) for cinema owners; the Indonesian Association of Film Studios (*Gabungan Studio Film Indonesia*, Gasfi) for the half dozen studio owners; and for those working in subtitling, the Indonesian Association of Subtitlers (*Gabungan Subtitling Indonesia*, Gasi). Membership of the professional film organizations was compulsory for anyone who wished to work in the film industry, and no one could participate in film production without prior approval of the relevant functional organization (Sen 1994:56). Hafti, newly founded during *Reformasi*, instantly gained a reputation for applying the same procedures as Parfi during the New Order: aspiring actors and actresses were to make a payment in order to obtain a recommendation (pur 1999b).

Besides these formal bureaucratic hurdles, the outline of the pre-production of *Provokator* gives an indication of the widespread unauthorized practices in film production. I call these, in a literal translation of *praktek miring* (skewed practices), the 'cursive practices' of film mediation. The account of *Provokator* shows such straightforward cursive practices as the payment of unofficial contributions (*pungutan liar* or *pungli*) to parties which were either related to official institutions of film production or were part of unofficial yet institutionalized conventions. In the case of *Provokator* Sony hinted at the payment of *pungli* in his comment that he had secured safety from the local police in Majalengka. Another example of *pungli* is the ambiguous mandatory payment of a levy of RP. 70,000, beyond the accountability of the producer, for 'training costs' for actors and actresses participating. More examples of *pungli* and other stratagems in different New Order film mediation practices will follow in the next section of this chapter.

The outline of the production process of *Provokator* also gives an insight into the choices in film themes and into the common practice of revising scripts to satisfy censors or sponsors during a film's pre-production process. In his position as a film producer who was simultaneously head of the new mobile cinema organization Hifki, Sonny wanted to make two commercial films which would be distributed to middle-class and lower-class cinemas.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, these films should cater to the tastes of middle-class and lower-class audiences. In order to attract a large number of viewers from this audience segment, both *Provokator* and *Bonex* were to represent real life issues of provokers and riots, and hooligans. Probably to avoid any risk-taking, the themes were transformed into stereotypical stories, similar to the

stories found in popular films or television soaps that were produced in Indonesia during the New Order. Such themes as the illicit affair, rape scene, and the planned depiction of violence in *Provokator* had also been a mainstay of hundreds of films produced in Indonesia since the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> Another aspect of changes made in the film's initial story was the revision of the script in response to the wishes of either the authorities (censorship) or sponsors (financial backing). After examination by the headquarters of the TNI, the story of *Provokator* was altered from an account of 'who were responsible for issues of provocation preceding the resignation of Soeharto' to a social edification for the people warning 'how violent behavior of the angry masses damages the nation'. In the case of *Bonex*, the story was altered to please its sponsor, PJKA (ema 1999f).<sup>3</sup>

While in many aspects the story of the pre-production process of *Provokator* shows the working and legacy of the New Order system, conventions, and practices of film production, it also gives an inkling of insight into New Order mediation practices in relation to film distribution and exhibition. Both the establishment of the new mobile cinemas organization Hifki as well as Sonny's intention to distribute his films to middle-class and lower-class cinemas can be seen as attempts to tackle profound problems in film distribution and exhibition, the structure of which had been implemented during the New Order. These problems are inextricably linked to New Order business deals and political manoeuvring, which shaped both the organization of film distribution and exhibition, and normative discourses about different film media and formats, which will be discussed in more detail below.

## **1.2. Distribution and Exhibition: Trade and charade in cinemas and film formats**

Mobile cinemas, called *layar tancep* (literally 'screens stuck in the ground'), were open-air film screenings which usually operated in villages at the fringes of cities or in remote areas. People hired *layar tancep* to enliven all kinds of festivities, for example wedding parties or circumcision ceremonies. Because mobile cinemas were able to reach remote areas, they were also used to convey public service announcements or make known government political policies.

After the resignation of President Soeharto on 21 May 1998, Indonesia was intensely caught up in the spirit of *Reformasi*. Reform was either negotiated or forcibly implemented in every possible field. In this setting the make-up, and at times even the existence, of some of the professional film organizations was called into question. Depending on their records of internal disputes, some organizations were reformed by replacing the former top with new leaders. In other cases, organizations were divided into different alliances, mostly consisting of those supporting the old system opposed to those wanting to reform it. Hifki, the mobile film organization headed by Sonny Sasono, was an example of such a new division which was founded during Reform, forged in a crucible of internal disputes and personal interests. Hifki was a secession from the Association of Indonesian Mobile Cinema Screening Companies

(*Persatuan Pengusaha Pertunjukan Film Keliling Indonesia*, Perfiki), to which Sasono had been appointed the Secretary-General in 1996. The original mobile cinema organization was founded in 1974 and before 1993, when it was granted official recognition as one of the New Order professional film organizations, it was mostly disregarded by the state.

Despite many years of official disinterest, mobile cinema was an important part of the system of film distribution and exhibition in Indonesia, particularly given the share of film audiences which was reached by this medium. Krishna Sen mentioned a sample survey of thirteen provincial capitals in 1971, which showed that 11 per cent of those surveyed had seen films at mobile cinemas. It was estimated that by the late 1970s, mobile cinemas were regularly visiting at least 80 per cent of villages in Indonesia (Sen 1994:72). The mobile cinema organization Perfiki had branches and representatives in sixteen regions, mostly situated in Java. According to Perfiki data, in 1993 there were around 200 to 300 *layar tancep* companies with approximately 500 to 750 film units (car, screen, generator and projector). Many of the *layar tancep* companies had their own film copies, which were stored in depots. In 1993 the number of films owned by the companies was estimated to be around 40,000. There were all sorts and genres of domestic, Indian, Mandarin, and Hollywood films to choose from (Marjono 1993; My 1993; Sari 1993). Nevertheless, with *layar tancep* audiences, domestic films, in particular those with comedy and action as their themes, were most popular. Because of the setting in which *layar tancep* was operated and the taste of its audiences, it was perceived to be a medium most likely to appeal to lower-class and village people ('Menpen kukuhkan Perfiki.' 1993; Rianto 1993; Sari 1993).

The nature of lower-class and rural entertainment may be one of the reasons why mobile cinema had been mostly disregarded by the New Order state. Before 1993, there had been no concrete government policy for mobile cinema, nor was it ever inserted in the National Film Development Programme. In its operations, *layar tancep* dealt mostly with regional authorities, for example, obtaining permission to screen films, and pay levies and viewer taxes. Inevitably, before Perfiki was acknowledged as an official organization some rules and regulations for mobile cinema screening were enforced. For example, at the first Perfiki congress, organized in 1983, decisions were made about some organizational matters. Most of these arrangements related to market segmentation. One of these was that the GPBSI and, at that time, the Union of Exploiters of Mobile Movie Theatres (*Persatuan Pengusaha Bioskop Keliling*, Perbiki) agreed on an action radius for mobile cinemas. These were only allowed to operate in an area which was situated at least 5 km or more from the location of a movie theatre. It was stressed that mobile cinemas could screen only domestic films, a rule which had already been in force since 1974 ('PERFIKI.' 1994; Sen 1994:72). With one stroke of the pen, the market segment of mobile cinema was clearly defined: it was to cater to people in rural areas and viewers of domestic films ('Menpen kukuhkan Perfiki.' 1993).

In 1993, the same year in which the production of Indonesian films declined significantly, *layar tancep* was officially acknowledged by the state. It was said that the reason for authorizing Perfiki as its official organization was that the government was aware of its value



in facilitating the distribution of Indonesian films and purveying the Development messages of the government to remote areas. At the same time, the late recognition of *layar tancep* was closely linked to a new law on film issued in 1992. The State Policy Guidelines of the People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*, MPR) in particular played a role in the sudden burst of attention paid to mobile cinemas. This law enshrined the aspiration that the position of national film needed to be raised by means of establishing a 'cultural fence'. The MPR formulation of the 1992 Bill no. 8 on Film stated that a solid cultural fence was needed to diminish the danger of contagion by the spread of information technologies caused by globalization. It was planned to establish this cultural fence by building around 500 small cinemas screening exclusively domestic films, and spread these out over different remote areas. The idea was to use *layar tancep* as a starting point to reach 'blank spot areas' which had no cinemas. Perfiki was to be the facilitator for a chain of semi-permanent movie theatres, which would later be transformed into permanent theatres. The motivation behind this policy was the perception that village people were not ready to be confronted with foreign culture. Through the erection of the cultural fence they were to be shielded from foreign values and conduct, which could be transmitted by, for example, Hollywood films.

For pictures of mobile cinema see Disc One 1.2.

The idea to build 500 new cinemas in remote areas was launched at a time when hardly any domestic films were being produced, and 12.5 per cent of regional cinemas was forced to close their business (ibrs 1993). The most important cause of the downfall of the national film industry and the related closure of cinemas was the rise of private television stations which began in the late 1980s. Between 1988 and 1995, five new channels were permitted to broadcast alongside the state television channel TVRI.<sup>4</sup> Because of the uncertain censorship regulations for film production and the related unstable income, many film producers turned their backs on the production of films for the silver screen, and began producing films and soaps for television. Now Indonesian films could be watched on TV, and people did not need to leave their homes and pay to watch a film. Some producers who still produced films for the silver screen tried to attract audiences by making films which were liberally dosed with erotic and violent scenes, which could not possibly feature on television. However, confronted by an overall lack of film stock, many of the regional, middle and in particular lower-class theatres, whose audiences favoured domestic films, were not able to survive.

The already weak position of these cinemas was aggravated by the grip on film distribution and exhibition of the Subentra group, which possessed both the distribution rights of Hollywood films in Indonesia and a franchise of top-end movie theatres. Subentra was owned by President Soeharto's foster brother, Sudwikatmono. Through some crafty political manoeuvring, the group turned into the sole distribution channel for all imported films throughout Indonesia by the end of the 1980s (Sen 1994:62). Although this monopoly was established by means of crony capitalism, it was admittedly made possible because of the large investments of the Subentra group in a new type of luxurious cinemas, called

‘Sineplex’ (Cineplex).<sup>5</sup> Commencing in 1986, the Subentra group began to invest heavily in renovating older theatres into new style Cineplex cinemas called Cinema 21. By 1989 the franchise (generally known as the 21 Group) owned 10 per cent of the approximately 2500 screens in Indonesia, and a much larger proportion of the top quality theatres in major cities (Sen 1994:62).

Because of the international standard of the Cinema 21 movie theatres and the market position of the Group, in 1991 Subentra secured the exclusive distribution rights for films imported from the United States in Indonesia. The Motion Picture Association, MPA, which represented all such major Hollywood studios as MGM, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, Warner Brothers, Universal, United Artists and Disney, appointed three companies which were run under PT Subentra Nusantara as the sole distributors of major American film studios (Anwar 2002a; Sen 1994:64).<sup>6</sup> Consequently, three different constituents of the film industry – import, distribution and exhibition – ended up in the hands of one business syndicate. As the 21 Group controlled both the imports and distribution of American films and places for exhibition, they prioritized American films over other film productions at the Cinema 21 theatres.<sup>7</sup>

At a time when television definitely prevailed over domestic films in C-class cinemas, Hollywood ruled in A-class cinemas, and B-class cinemas were either turned into Cinema 21 theatres or filed for bankruptcy, the government planned to build 500 new theatres in remote areas. Alongside the goal of establishing a cultural fence, the motivation behind this plan to transform the semi-permanent theatres of Perfiki into permanent cinemas, was prompted by another reason. It was a concrete step towards applying article 28 of Bill No. 8 1992, in which it was stated that the screening of films could only take place in a building or place appointed as such.<sup>8</sup> The new rule was devised to increase control over the screening of films, in particular *layar tancep* which had acquired a reputation of causing upheaval during screenings. There were a number of reasons for such accusations. *Layar tancep* screenings were a magnet for all kinds of activities besides watching film, such as trade and small-scale gambling. Often around or after midnight some brawl erupted over gambling or the film being screened. Besides this, it was an open secret that at many mobile cinema screenings the rules for film screening as set out by the New Order government were simply ignored. For example, at *layar tancep* screenings often uncensored films or individually re-edited films, consisting of an amalgam of attractive scenes from different films were shown. Moreover, Hollywood and other imported films were on show, as were films which were still playing in regular cinemas.

The latter practice was called the ‘fast-track films’ (*film pelarian*).<sup>9</sup> It was a rule of film distribution under the New Order that *layar tancep* was the last in line to screen films. Films were first distributed to A-class cinemas of Subentra 21 in major cities, and a few weeks later to its cinemas in smaller cities and regional areas. After the popularity of the films and the quality of the copies had faded, these were then distributed to non-affiliated B-class cinemas, and later to the lower class C cinemas. Officially, the films would eventually trickle down to mobile cinemas. This was the theory, but in practice screenings at *layar tancep* frequently showed the newest films. Cinema owners, particularly the Subentra Group, complained

about substantial losses because of fast-tracked films. The plan to change mobile cinemas into permanent ones was drawn up with such practices in mind. It was much easier for the government to monitor film screenings in permanent cinemas than to try to control mobile cinemas in the field and force these to abide by its rules for film screening. Especially so since officials who were supposed to monitor such illegal practices were simply paid by film-operators to turn a blind eye.

By becoming an official organization, Perfiki hoped to acquire government protection against the demand for the payment of all sorts of unofficial contributions at *layar tancep* screenings. As an official film organization, it expected to be exempt from paying 'cigarette' money to, for example, members of the Department of Information, village heads, members of the police, and other official or unofficial parties who happened to turn up before, during, and after the event. It was a forlorn hope. As soon as Perfiki was given the status of an official film organization, it became part of a world of slogans and unpromising policies. Those *layar tancep* companies officially acknowledged were not only required to pay various official and semi-official levies to the bureaucracy, Perfiki members were also trapped in a maze of all sorts of new rules and regulations.

Besides the ambitious plan to transform mobile cinemas into a cultural fence of permanent movie theatres, a new policy was set up to regulate the distribution and screening of films by mobile cinemas. In 1983, the segmentation of the market for movie theatres and *layar tancep* was based on a division between cities and rural areas, and upper class and lower-class film audiences. In 1993 this division was expanded by linking the system of film distribution and exhibition to film formats. A new policy was launched in which mobile cinemas were no longer allowed to screen films of the 35 mm format. All *layar tancep* units were compelled to use the 16 mm film format, and units which used 35 mm equipment were given a period of three years to convert to 16 mm. Moreover, as part of the rhetoric of mobile cinema forming a cultural fence, it was once more stressed that members of Perfiki were permitted only to screen domestic films. Imported (read: Hollywood) films were linked up with movie theatres, which in practice meant primarily those affiliated to the 21 franchise.<sup>10</sup> The aim of having all units operate the 16 mm film format was really to prevent mobile cinemas from screening Hollywood or other imported films, which were generally distributed in the 35 mm format. The restricted allocation of local, 16 mm films to mobile cinemas would particularly benefit the grip on distribution and exhibition of mainly imported films of Subentra 21. In part for this reason, government policies on film distribution and exhibition were alleged to favour the business interests of Soeharto cronies.

The policy of linking formats to either imported or domestic films also exposed state views about identity formation. Between 1993 and 1998, the issues of identity formation and politics of representation surfaced in discourses which linked specific formats to particular spaces of exhibition. In the burgeoning discourses, different film formats began to represent different film genres and/or places of exhibition. Principally, in normative discourses about the new regulations the formats were linked to certain genres and places of exhibition and

particular imaginations of local audiences and communities. Top-end cinemas were associated with modern, urban, upper class to middle-class audiences. Mobile cinemas were associated with traditional, rural, lower class audiences. The mission to form an Indonesian cinematic cultural fence within whose boundaries only cultural-educational films designed to preserve Indonesian culture would be promoted, threw into sharp relief the division between the two different imagined audiences. Traditional, rural, lower-class audiences were perceived as not being 'ready' to watch and identify themselves with imported films containing depictions of foreign culture. As the 35 mm films consisted mainly of imported film productions from the United States, the format policy reinforced the divide by connecting or imagining domestic films as belonging to mobile cinemas, and foreign film productions to proper cinemas. The division between 16 mm and 35 mm film prescribed that audiences of either the one or the other format had access to a different source of representation and identification.

However, the 1993 New Order format policy and ideas about preserving Indonesian identities and culture were a far cry from reality, given the advance of new media technologies. The policies and discourses were outdated first and foremost by the installation of parabola antennas, and secondly by the circulation of new video technologies. The situation was also undermined by the fact that along with New Order media policies on television, discourses about the preservation of Indonesian culture through the production and screening of domestic films were merely paying lip service to such ideals. Especially after the installation of parabola antennas, which began around 1983 and enabled people to receive overseas programmes, the discourse that lower class/village people should be protected against the pernicious influences of foreign culture could not be upheld. In many remote areas, in particular those which were faring well economically, parabola antennas were installed allowing people to receive uncensored foreign programmes including South-East Asian public broadcasts and such international operations as NBC, STAR, and CNN (Sen and Hill 2000:117). In 1993, when Perfiki was employed by the Center of Information of TNI to screen domestic, mainly propaganda, films in remote regions and villages in the Province East Timor, the units climbing the mountain tops of the most remote areas discovered that even there people could receive and watch foreign television shows without difficulty (Rianto 1993). The 21 Group also entered into fierce competition with television after the setting up of parabola antennas and by 1996 was forced to close some of its cinemas ('Kelompok 21.' 1996).

Another important influence greatly affecting the cinema business and making New Order discourses redundant, was the rise of video cassettes and, later, laser discs. Since the beginning of the 1990s, video rentals and video shops started mushrooming everywhere in Indonesia. At these outlets a wide variety of films was on offer, including films which never reached domestic television or cinemas. Importantly, many banned and uncensored films were also available in these formats. Consequently, in the endeavour to control the unruly mobile cinema through sweeping policies and discourses on media, film formats, and places of exhibition, the new video format emerged as a new 'uncontrollable' medium, unsettling everything all over again.

### 1.3. Exhibition and consumption: Film festivals as forums for national imaginations and representations

In the first and second sections I highlighted mediation practices in film production and distribution. Here, I turn to practices, conventions, and motives for film exhibition under the New Order. The focus lies on the organization and the system of selection and awarding of films at New Order film festivals. I look only at film festivals that were acknowledged by the state. During the New Order there also were unofficial film festivals and screenings organized beyond state authorization. The screenings of films under the banner of *sinema ngamen* (street act cinema), for example, and other alternative sites for film exhibition, are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

The first formal film festival of the New Order, the Indonesian Film Festival (*Festival Film Indonesia*, FFI) was organized in 1973. With the Asia Pacific Film Festival (*Festival Film Asia Pasifik*, FFAP), this was the most important film festival of the New Order bolstering the concerns of the government. In fact, two years before FFI, the film section of the Association of Indonesian Journalists (*Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia*, PWI) had already started a small-scale festival handing out awards for the best actors and actresses. Between 1973 and 1975 both the *Citra* (the Indonesian equivalent for the Oscar) of FFI, and PWI awards were handed out to winning contestants. But in 1975 the state requested PWI stop its event. The reason was that some of the awards for the same categories of FFI and PWI were given to different winners. Instead of allowing for different assessments at two different festivals, the government wished to limit the evaluation of these to an official (state) jury. Since then FFI always included a selection of journalists in its jury (Ardan 2004:27-8). After PWI stopped organizing its event in 1976, there was only one other officially acknowledged film festival during the New Order, which was, nevertheless, not allowed to call itself a festival. This festival, Forum Film Bandung, was held for the first time in 1988. It selected and handed out awards to both foreign and domestic films which were screened in cinemas in Bandung. Because the government did not permit the event to be called a festival in 1988 the founders changed the original name Festival Film Bandung to Forum Film Bandung.<sup>11</sup>

Until 1980, when the Department of Information took over, FFI was fully managed by the National Foundation of the Indonesian Film Festival (*Yayasan Nasional Festival Film Indonesia*, YFI). YFI was founded on 30 October 1972 by the Indonesian Film Producers' Union, PPFU, the Indonesian Film Artists' Union, Parfi, the Union of Film and Television Employees, KFT, and the Indonesian Association of Film Studios, Gasfi. Later, the All Indonesian Association of Movie Theatre Companies, GPBSI, also joined. In 1973, YFI was officially inaugurated by a decree of the Ministry of Information. The foundation was established in order to stimulate the growth of film, heighten the quality of Indonesian film productions, and strengthen the appreciation of Indonesian film both in Indonesia and abroad (Ardan 2004:79, 99). FFI was organized on an annual basis. Each year new members of the

jury were selected by the festival's organizing committee and appointed by the Minister of Information. Until 1986 the festival was organized in turn in one of the provincial capitals and the national capital in co-operation with local governments. As the organization was carried out in different cities across Indonesia, the organizational structure and scale of the FFI changed from year to year (Sen 1994:53). In addition, the management of the festival's organizing committee also rotated. Every year an executive of one of the film organizations which constituted YFI was appointed to lead a new organizing committee.

The organization of FFI was big showbiz. Particularly in the provincial capitals, the celebration of the FFI was a huge public event. Even though in every city the character of FFI was different, some standard elements were part of all festivals. One of these was that famous actors and actresses came over from Jakarta and drove around the cities in open jeeps, acknowledging the plaudits of thousands of people. Every year people also flocked out the evening before the ceremony to attend meet and greet sessions with some of the nominated artists (EDN/SF/DHF/XAR 2004; Sen 1994:52). However, regardless of the enormous appeal of FFI in the provinces, in 1988 it was decided to stop the rotation of the festival and confine it to Jakarta. In fact, even before this curtailment occurred FFI had featured in Jakarta more often than in other cities. Above all it was organized in the capital in the years in which the Indonesian elections took place. The decision to restrict the festival to the national capital in the future was partly prompted by the unpleasant reality that almost every year the organization of FFI in provincial capitals resulted in 'issues'. Most of these contretemps consisted of disputes and quarrels within, or between, different local officials in executive boards, organizing committees, and members of the jury. The different backgrounds and ambitions of the parties concerned with the organization of FFI clashed, causing a myriad of frictions. Quite apart from circumventing such problems, another reason for organizing the festival in Jakarta only was to stop the competition in the extravagance of the event in which the different provinces vied to outdo each other. In the provinces, the festival was perceived mainly as a display case in which the organizational skills, development, and assets of the different provinces could be exhibited. Over the years, this resulted in a huge explosion in the funding spent on hosting FFI. Even though the event was organized only in Jakarta since the late 1980s, it still reached different parts of Indonesia through the state television channel TVRI.

The system of awards at FFI developed over the years. As a different organizing committee and executive board organized the festival each year, nearly every year new rules were introduced. As Sen has suggested, the award system of FFI principally was part of a selective process which determined who participated in Indonesian film-making. She considers the festival award as representative of the values, ideas and interests of the urban intelligentsia under the New Order. In most cases films which were selected for nomination and won Citra were the same which had received positive reviews in elite national publications (Sen 1994:54-5). In her description of domestic films, Sen

addresses the general evaluations of films by these juries which reinforced certain New Order representations and imaginations of Indonesian society. Sen's remarks about the assessment of films by different FFI juries reveal the juries' support of three principal themes. In order of precedence, these were: the positive reception of films which juxtaposed 'science' against 'rural beliefs', in which science wins (Sen 1994:124); the remarkable success of films which focused on the mediating role of the middle class, standing between the high and mighty and the poor, particularly in favour with festival juries during the 1970s and much of the 1980s (Sen 1994:128); and, the juries' support for narratives about countering corruption and the restoration of femininity (Sen 1994:148). In contrast to these themes, FFI juries largely rejected films which tackled unconventional social commentaries (Sen 1994:121,124,127-8,148).<sup>12</sup>

In a nutshell, the evaluations of the films nominated and given awards at the FFI show that these reinforced representations of New Order norms about development (the victory of modern science over traditional beliefs), the valued position of middle classes, and mainstream gender constructions. A Citra was not an indication of the popularity of a film with the audiences. On the contrary, most audiences preferred watching popular action films, slapstick comedies, cheap dramas, teen flicks, horror and other sorts of films which hardly ever entered the FFI competition. Nevertheless, as a symbol of prestige the Citra was an important goal for film professionals, in particular those who wanted to go international. Inevitably films which won a Citra were likely to be followed by other films constructed on similar formulas (Sen 1994:54). This practice of copying certain formulas only served to strengthen the role of the FFI in reinforcing New Order values and ideas about representations and imaginations of Indonesian culture and society.

Although initially FFI was run by YFI, over the years the organization of the festival was increasingly absorbed into the matrix of New Order political considerations. In 1981-1982, official parties connected to the Department of Information were systematically involved in FFI events (Ardan 2004:79-81). The control of the Department of Information over the organization of the festival was gradually solidified under the auspices of Minister of Information Ali Murtopo (1978-1982). In 1978 at the FFI in Ujungpandang, Murtopo launched the first FFI motto coincident with New Order politics: 'Cinema as a powerful means of communication for the sake of national development'.<sup>13</sup> A year later, in 1979, at the FFI in Palembang, Sumatra, a new slogan was launched: 'We decree that the character of Indonesian film should be cultural educational'.<sup>14</sup> At the FFI in Surabaya in 1981, Murtopo voiced the new task of FFI as follows: 'Socialize and unite Indonesian cinema in national Development'.<sup>15</sup> Gradually the FFI was turned into an event that represented the state's considerations. Under the next Minister of Information, Harmoko (1983-1998), FFI was even more deeply allied to New Order political concerns. At the opening of the festival in Yogyakarta in 1984, the new motto for the FFI ran: 'Intensify the role of Indonesian cinema as a medium of communication and information in order to contribute to the success of the fourth *Pelita* (abbreviation of *Pembangunan Lima Tahun*; Five Year Development



Programmes of the state)<sup>16</sup> In the first year in which Harmoko was appointed Minister of Information the custom of transmitting the award ceremony of FFI as a live broadcast on TVRI was initiated to 'enable the entire nation to participate in that important event'.<sup>17</sup> Sen noted that some people perceived FFI as nothing more than publicity stunts for successive information ministers and provincial governors (Sen 1994:53).

In 1988, at the same time that it was decided to organize the festival only in Jakarta, a new executive board for the organization of FFI was installed. With great ceremony this new board was appointed for a period of five years, until 1994, but as mentioned earlier, from the beginning of the 1990s the production of Indonesian films strongly declined. As the remaining small number of film productions consisted mostly of popular, erotic, horror, slapstick, or action films, there was a huge lack of films which were considered suitable to enter the FFI competition. Given the lack in 'quality' films in 1992, FFI was shelved temporarily. At first the organization wanted to postpone the festival for a year. This was extended by another year, and then again by another year. Later the FFI of 1991 proved to have been the last organized under New Order rule. Only in 2004, about six years after the fall of President Soeharto, was the festival organized again. Instead, in connection with the run of film-makers to television, in 1992 the first television-film festival, *Festival Sinetron Indonesia*, was organized. This festival replaced FFI as a New Order forum for domestic film productions. Motivations for the awards presented to films at FSI were not much different to the assessments valid during the last years of the FFI. Both festivals had the mission to 'instruct the world of Indonesian film' and 'uplift the Indonesian people' by handing out awards to those films which endorsed New Order rhetoric, politics, and ideals. The only key difference between awards at FFI and FSI was the consideration that the medium of television reached broader audiences.<sup>18</sup>

Another important film festival held during the New Order was the transnational film festival FFAP. This Asian area festival was organized for the first time in Tokyo from 8 to 20 May 1954. At that juncture in time it was called the South-East Asian Film Festival. In 1957 the word 'South-East' was removed, and in 1983 the word 'Pacific' was added. FFAP was organized by the Federation of Motion Picture Producers in Asia, FPA. This federation was founded in Manila on 17-19 November 1953. Its founding fathers were Manual de Leon (Philippines), Masaichi Nagata (Japan), Run Shaw (Hong Kong) and two Indonesian film-makers, Usmar Ismail and Djamaluddin Malik (Ardan 2004:7; U-5 2001a). By 1994 FPA consisted of fourteen members; besides the Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong, and Indonesia, these were India, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand and Kuwait ('Festival Film Asia Pasifik.' 1994).

Twice Indonesia did not participate in the festival for political reasons. At the first South-East Asian Film Festival in Tokyo in 1954, Indonesia was not present because it could not produce a film for the event. At the time the Indonesian government had prohibited the Indonesian production company Perfini-Persari to complete a joint production with a Japanese company because of the frosty diplomatic relations between the two countries



(Ardan 2004:8). The second time Indonesia did not participate in the festival was in 1968. This time the reason was internal political affairs. As an after-effect of the alleged coup in 1965 and the ensuing chaotic political situation, no film could be produced to be presented at FFA (U-5 2001a).

Indonesia's request to organize the festival was turned down twice, in 1956 and 1960. It was not honored because of President Soekarno's contemporaneous political stance, this being his support of communism. If the organization of FFAP were to take place in Indonesia, this would mean that both South Korea, (Indonesia supported North Korea) and Taiwan (Indonesia supported China and refused to acknowledge Taiwan) would either decline or be unable to participate in the festival. In both instances the festival was organized on more neutral soil in Hong Kong (1956) and Manila (1960) respectively (Ardan 2004:22). The first time Indonesia organized FFAP was from 15 to 19 June 1970.<sup>19</sup> Until the fall of Soeharto Indonesia hosted FFAP five times in total. Besides in Jakarta, it was also organized in Yogyakarta and Denpasar.

Under the New Order FFAP was seen as a prestigious festival, and to a certain extent as a festival representing inter-Asian relations, connections, and diplomatic affairs. Indeed, particularly in the early years of the festival, both the choice which country was to organize the event, and the system of handing out awards was strongly linked to political considerations. Awards were regularly handed out to films of the host countries, and often every country had at least one award bestowed on it. Hence, in some Indonesian reviews about the festival FFAP was simply written off as a form of *festival arisan*: a regular social gathering in which its members contribute to and take turns at winning a collective sum of money.<sup>20</sup> An *arisan* film festival was seen as a party organized for the sole purpose of establishing and maintaining harmony among its participating members. Another element in FFAP was the very glamorous and sumptuous organization of the event. The host countries always did their utmost to entertain guest officials, artists, and film-makers as lavishly as possible. At most FFAP, shows were organized in which traditional dances of the host country were performed. Excursions and all sorts of other tourist attractions were also provided to promote the host countries. Sometimes the film screenings and the award ceremony at FFAP seemed to be of lesser importance than the fringe events.<sup>21</sup>

The prestige of having a film screened at FFAP and more importantly the winning of an award was highly valued by the Indonesian government. Apart from the relations, connections, and diplomatic affairs for which FFAP stood, it was also seen as a forum which spread ideal images of Indonesia to the outside world. Reaching audiences beyond the Indonesian nation, the films screened at FFAP were deemed to present images of what constituted Indonesian culture, people, and society. This resulted in the production of *film festival* (festival films), that is: films produced exclusively to compete in film festivals abroad. For example, and particularly because Indonesia was to host FFAP in 1995, the directors Garin Nugroho, and N. Riantiarno both received funding from the government to produce *film festival* to represent Indonesia. They made the films *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang* (The Moon Pierced by a Blade of

Grass, internationally distributed with the title: ‘and the Moon Dances’, 1994), and *Cemeng 2005 (The Last Prima Donna)* (Black 2005 (The Last Prima Donna), 1995) respectively, but neither of these films received an award.

As the FFAP formed a forum of representations and political relations between Asian nations and perhaps even more because it was labeled an *artisan* film festival, many film people in Indonesia shrugged it off as a second rate film festival compared to other international or regional film festivals. Others, in particular members of official film organizations and New Order departments related to film, rejected such assertions. They came up with different examples to prove that FFAP was not just an *artisan* festival, mentioning several instances in which Indonesia did not receive any awards. Apparently these examples were given to suggest that if FFAP was indeed a festival of diplomatic affairs, it would not be likely that Indonesia would have been passed over so often in receiving an award (IWN 1995, U-5 2001b).<sup>22</sup>

In sum, both at the domestic and transnational festivals, films which participated were perceived as representations of their nations’ cultures, and, in particular at FFAP, seen as representations of the participating states themselves. For this reason, in 1995 the New Order government supported the production of special ‘festival films’, so as to present ‘proper’ representations of Indonesia at the FFAP in Jakarta. In contrast, popular Indonesian films featuring action, sex, comedy, or horror, neither participated in the FFI nor the FFAP. Only films that provided authorized representations of Indonesian culture were submitted in the FFAP, and awarded with Citra at the FFI.

For pictures of festival jury and awards see Disc One 1.3

## Conclusion

The examination of the different stages of film production, distribution, and exhibition in this chapter yielded an outline of different aspects of New Order mediation practices. All the practices involved specific discourses and policies, which had in common that they pertained to both New Order national and transnational politics of representation and imagination, and to strategies designed to produce economic benefit. Besides the three main lines of inquiry – pre-censorship and other hurdles in the production process of films, the political and economic motivation to identify specific audiences and formats with specific film media, and the politics of representation at film festivals – two additional themes have run through this chapter. These were firstly, the magnitude of *praktek miring*: the semi-official or illegal ‘cursive practices’ in film mediation, and secondly, the importance of glamour in official film policies and festivals.

The substantial influence of cursive practices in Indonesian film mediation practices emerged most clearly in my account of the pre-production of the film *Provokator*, and in the section about *layar tancep*. The production process of *Provokator* revealed how the makers of *Provokator* juggled with deep-seated cursive practices and the semi-official rules of New

Order film mediation practices. The team could not escape the purchase of the certified recommendations and the need to obtain official status for its actors and actresses, but it was also obliged to secure covenants with 'third' parties, who may otherwise at some stage have obstructed the film's production. This entailed paying semi-official or unofficial (*pungli*) fees in order to get their 'recommendations' or 'protection'. Moreover, to satisfy the semi-official conventions of pre-censorship control, after having consulted members of the police and military the producers were compelled to change the film's storyline

The new politically and economically informed film distribution and exhibition policy of mobile cinemas too was principally created to try to control the widespread cursive practice of screening fast-track films and non-censored or self-engineered films at *layar tancep* screenings. It was believed that the format policy was the best instrument to control these illicit activities effectively. Another reason underlying the new policy was to respond to the emergence of parabola antennas and new video technologies which opened the doors to the circulation of video cassettes and laser discs. However, with the steady growth of free access to the new technologies and bogged down in the quagmire of conflicting state policies, the discourse about the need for the protection of Indonesian culture and the rural lower classes against effects of globalization proved to be nothing but a charade.

This example of window-dressing introduced the second additional theme in this chapter, exposing the importance of woolly rhetoric and the artificial facades in New Order film policy and formal mediation practices. The artifice consisted in part in the conflicting state policy of supporting on the one hand economic deals to import films and new media technologies, and on the other hand, of upholding the 1992 Film Law, one of the aims of which was to keep the masses safe from foreign influences and culture. Also at the film festivals which were acknowledged by the state, outward appearances reigned supreme. In 1988 the idea of organizing the Indonesian Film Festival in different provinces was discontinued because the event had deteriorated into a competition in extravagance in which the different provinces vied to outdo each other. The Asian Pacific Film Festival was also renowned for its very glamorous and sumptuous organization. From time to time the film screenings and the award ceremony at the festival seemed to be of lesser importance than the lavish feasts, excursions, and tourist attractions offered to promote the host countries. Perhaps the clearest articulation of the meaning of film festivals during the New Order was expressed in the notion *festival arisan*: a social get-together in which the focus was on harmonious relations, glamour, and fame, instead of film.

In all, the cursive practices and charade of official film policies were important ingredients in the complex of Indonesian film mediation practices. Charade, affectation, and glamour were the chosen vehicles for the ambitious propagation and representation of New Order values, state politics, and the idealized Indonesian nation. The cursive practices were their concrete complement.

## 2 *Reformasi* and underground

### Introduction

After May 1998, the bid to introduce reform was felt in every possible field. The spirit of Reform instigated a negotiating and redefining of all kinds of issues, and the term *reformasi* was pretty well ubiquitous. All sorts of groups and organizations were inspired to use the word in their names. Nor did it stop there. The popularity of the slogan cast a wider net and spread to advertisements in which everything was transformed into a product of reform: ‘reformation apartments’ were on sale; special reformation religious journeys to Mecca (*umroh reformasi*) were promoted, and special offers for office space were advertised as a Reformation Package (van Dijk 2001:208-9). Indonesian cinema was not immune to Reform and various changes inevitably occurred at that time. These changes ranged from new activities in film production to the emergence and recognition of new film genres and formats and the founding of new venues for distribution and exhibition. They also included the identification and naming of new film communities, the rise of new public fora, identifications of new audiences, and new topics in film discourses. Quite apart from the euphoric atmosphere of Reform which induced a new found freedom of expression, an important part of the changes in Indonesian film mediation practices and discourses can be attributed to the circulation of new audio-visual media technologies. Many of the new activities and developments in post-Soeharto film were enabled by the growing and wide availability of such new technologies for film production and exhibition as digital video cameras, computer-editing programmes, and digital video projectors. As did many new technologies, digital video challenged dominant cinematic practices and film culture.

In the first chapter I gave an account of mainstream New Order film mediation practices and discourses which disclosed the politics of representation and imagination of Indonesian communities. This chapter is its antithetical image and presents post-Soeharto alternative, underground, or as Gotot Prakosa has called them in English, ‘side-stream’ (Prakosa 2005:3) channels of film mediation practices and discourses. This is not to deny that these were present under the New Order. Alternative film productions and underground or side-stream modes of distribution and exhibition certainly did exist. In the 1980s, experimental short films shot with 8 mm video or 16 mm film cameras were produced under the banner of ‘street act cinema’ (*sinema ngamen*), and ‘guerilla film’ (*film guerilla*). Such films were taken from one district to another and screened on walls, or sometimes bed sheets, which explains one of the nicknames given the cinema movement: ‘drying [laundry] cinema’ (*sinema jemuran*) (Prakosa 1997:116-8).<sup>1</sup> Because this group existed outside mainstream channels for film production, distribution, and exhibition, it barely ever rated a mention in Indonesian media.

After the resignation of Soeharto, side-stream cinema cultures and practices had the chance to gain visibility. The rise of new alternative film genres and channels of distribution

and exhibition transformed discourses on representations and imaginations of Indonesian communities. Many discourses, which were connected to comparable concerns in Third Cinema theories, evolved around themes of domination and resistance in post-Soeharto film mediation practices and society. Third Cinema theories address discourses on political and economic domination, and the global distribution of power of neo-colonialist First Worlds over Third Worlds. In this chapter, I refer to Third Cinema on two different levels. In the first two sections, I refer to Third Cinema because comparable concerns were part of the post-Soeharto mediascape. In the third section, I broaden the analysis of discourses and use of Third Cinema theories. Here I connect discourses on representations of dominance and resistance to other post-Soeharto alternative channels of film distribution and consumption: side-stream film festivals and pirated Video Compact Discs – VCDs.

### **2.1. Reformation in film production: *Kuldesak* and *film independen*<sup>2</sup>**

Between 1999 and 2001, in the midst of the euphoric atmosphere of *Reformasi* and the seemingly limitless freedom of expression, film-making became very popular in Indonesia. In this section I focus on the emergence of the post-Soeharto film genre and movement of *film independen* (independent film), taking due account of the debates on its definition and circulation. Indonesian *film independen* should not be confused with the Euro-American meaning of ‘independent’ film, which stands for a movement which opposes the mainstream, mainly Hollywood, studio system.

The voice of an old man singing a song recalls the time of the struggle for Indonesian Independence, a song of pride, hope, and great expectations for the future. His singing is accompanied by the image of the Indonesian flag, the symbol of the nation’s pride and glory. Yet, the flag is not blowing bravely and proudly in the wind, but is flapping weakly around the flagpole, a symbol of the confusion and disappointment of so many in the unstable condition of Indonesia three years after President Soeharto resigned. This shot was the last scene of the short independent or ‘indie’ film *Kepada yang Terhormat Titik 2* (To the esteemed:). The film was produced by Dimas Jayasrana and Bastian, students at the Jenderal Soedirman University in the rural town of Purwokerto, Central Java. It had its premiere there on 18 January 2002. The film shows how the common people of Purwokerto perceived their municipality. It captured urban life, and deliberately added a gritty touch by showing an impression of the lives of street vendors, street children, and farmers. At the end of the film, an old peasant recounts that throughout his life those in power never spared a thought for the meagre livelihood of the farmers of Purwokerto.

For KYT: (special cut) see Disc One 2.1.

The production and screening of this film were two aspects of new developments in

Indonesian cinema which emerged at the beginning of *Reformasi*. The widespread availability of such new audio-visual technologies as digital video cameras and projectors, liberally dosed with the spirit of Reform which permeated into the Indonesian film scene, were the midwives who ushered in the genesis of a new film movement. This new movement incorporated an array of new activities in film mediation practices and discourses on the subject. One element was the introduction of the label of independence, which gave birth to the new genre of independent film. This genre became a model and banner for many young people in Indonesia to set out to make their own films. The scope of *film independen* transcended the production of independent films; it fostered the formation of a new community of *mafin* (an abbreviation of *mahluk film independen*, independent film creatures). These *mafin* established their own channels of film distribution and exhibition through independent film festivals. Looking beyond the temporal limitations of a festival, they created their own forums to exchange thoughts on the subject of film on the Internet and by arranging periodical meetings.

The incentive to undertake activities in the field of *film independen* really commenced with the production of the film *Kuldesak* ('Cul-de-sac': Dead-end street), an anthology of four short features about such problems of the middle class youth of the city of Jakarta as drugs, homosexuality, and the feeling of absolute desolation. *Kuldesak* was made by four young filmmakers who decided to produce it underground in 1996, breaking all the rules of film production of the New Order. The directors Mira Lesmana, Riri Riza, Rizal Mantovani, and Nan Achnas had a background in producing films, and series, documentary-soaps, or music video-clips for television. Inspired by the cheap independent film production *El-Mariachi* (1992) by Robert Rodriguez and his book on the film's production process, *Rebel without a Crew* (1996), they decided to take the plunge and jointly produce a film for the silver screen.

Between 1996 and 1998, the four produced *Kuldesak* behind closed doors. To save energy, time, and money, they abandoned the beaten track of New Order film production. To start with, they did not register the production plan of *Kuldesak* at the Film Board. Then, as the film's directors, they neither obtained the mandatory membership of the Union of Film and Television Employees, nor did they follow the conventional New Order system in which it was only possible to become a film director after having been an assistant film director five times. As *Kuldesak*'s producers, the four did not purchase association to the Indonesian Film Producers' Union. Finally, they did not have their amateur actors and actresses register as members of the Indonesian Film Artists' Union. Eschewing all the formal channels, the directors and production team paid for the production costs of *Kuldesak* themselves, and were helped by actors and crew who joined the project for free. To distribute the film, they applied for foreign film funding.

For 'The making of *Kuldesak*' see Disc One 2.1.

Unexpected changes in the political situation enabled *Kuldesak* to reach the screens of the cinemas throughout Indonesia in November 1998. Many rules and restrictions for film production and exhibition of the New Order succumbed to the process of *Reformasi* which was at its peak at that time, and were applied less strictly. Apart from a mandatory last-minute

registration with the Union of Film and Television Employees, the team was excused for not having registered at the official film organizations. Another hurdle was cleared when *Kuldesak* passed the censor board. However, despite the freer political climate, one of the most radical scenes of this film, two boys kissing in a bus, was censored. This appeared to be too revolutionary even for *Reformasi*. *Kuldesak* reached the theatres of Cinema 21, and was highly successful among young audiences. In different cities, queues at the ticket office stretched outside the cinema buildings. Touching on controversial issues and filmed in an MTV style, the film showed a departure from both films produced by the earlier generation of Indonesian film-makers and from the everyday *sinetron* (soaps) on television. The press labelled *Kuldesak* the first-ever Indonesian 'independent' film, and often highlighted its 'non-Indonesian' features.

For the trailer of *Kuldesak* see Disc One 2.1.

*Kuldesak*, made by four film-makers who 'just went for it', triggered a euphoric energy among other aspiring young Indonesians. In 1999 the Community of Independent Film (*Komunitas Film Independen*, or Konfiden) began to hold a series of 'travelling' film screenings (*film keliling*) and discussions in the bigger cities in Java. These were organized at cultural venues, educational institutions, and foreign cultural centres. The objective of the travelling screenings and discussions was to introduce the concept of independent film to a wider public. They were also a warm-up for the first Indonesian Independent Film and Video Festival (FFVII) held in Jakarta at the end of October 1999. This festival was designed to provide independent film-makers with a forum in which to screen their films. More ambitiously, it fostered a hope of reviving Indonesian film as a whole, an industry which virtually had died in the last decade of New Order rule. Besides organizing the annual FFVII between 1999 and 2002, Konfiden also published a monthly bulletin and commenced organizing workshops for film-making.

For a glance at Konfiden 1999 and 2000 see Disc One 2.1.

With the Jakarta-based Konfiden about to organize its third independent film and video festival in 2001, other parties in other cities (mainly in Java, but also in Sumatra, Sulawesi and Bali) had formed their own Indie film communities. These communities assumed the task of the organization of independent film festivals with discussions, workshops, and their own bulletins. Generally speaking, the independent films screened were rather unsophisticated and inexpert. The majority consisted of short films made by young people in their early twenties who had no real background in film-making. This did not prevent them from grasping the nettle of topics which were often thought-provoking. Many included maverick ideas and depicted issues in the daily lives of the young, their interests, and sense of humour. Sometimes the films (indirectly) revealed issues of cultural, social, and political criticism. Some examples of films which circulated at the Konfiden festival and other film festivals of the time are: *Revolusi Harapan* (Revolution of hope, 1997), by Nanang Istiabudi. This is a



surrealistic story about a gang of thugs who go out on command to kill and pull the teeth of artists, students, and others who are in any way critical.

For *Revolusi Harapan* see Disc One 2.1.

*Dunia Kami, Duniaku, Dunia Mereka* (Our world, my world, their world, 1999), by Adi Nugroho, which narrates the life of a transvestite in Yogyakarta, and *Kameng Gampoeng Nyang Keunong Geulawa* (The village goat takes the beating, 1999), by Aryo Danusiri, which is a chilling testament to the survivors of torture inflicted by the Indonesian Special Forces (Kopassus). It was filmed in Tiro, northern Aceh.

For an excerpt from the film see Disc Two 4.1.

These films were also screened at international film festivals and on other occasions.

As members of the various communities started to communicate on the Internet and visit each other's festivals, it did not take them long to begin to think about a coalition. About a hundred people from all over Indonesia, mainly film buffs and students from art academies and Muhammadiyah universities, came together in Yogyakarta for the National Indie Film Festival in late May and early June 2001. At the end, after much deliberation, they decided to form a national affiliation of independent film communities. The next step was to establish an Information Centre (ICE), which operated an Internet mailing list called Forum Film, co-ordinated from Yogyakarta. They also planned to hold a national meeting every two months. On 26 August 2001, during the Indie Film-maker Meeting held in Batu (a resort near Malang in East Java), the various communities tried to formulate a collective vision. They wanted to set up a programme to acquaint a broader public with the medium of film in general, and *film independen* in particular. After an all-night debate, three new ICE divisions were set up. Supplementing the earlier Forum Film mailing list, a web-site was to be co-ordinated from Malang, and an archive and a publication division were set up in Jakarta. The four ICE divisions would each remain autonomous bodies, standing for the same ideal but free to formulate their own policies.

The allotment of different divisions to different cities and their autonomy was a crucial issue during the debates. One reason the independent film movement adopted the form of a national alliance, in which the different communities remained 'independent' and retained an equal say, was the fear of domination by Jakarta. This was a legacy of New Order rule, when the Jakarta-based government officials and politics controlled the regions. Presumably not entirely coincidentally, at the same time that film communities were talking about independent divisions within a national alliance, on the political stage parties were engaged in fierce debates on a Bill which would give regional autonomy to the different provinces in Indonesia. Another spin-off of this reinforced commitment to regional autonomy in Post-Soeharto film was that many new independent films made concerted efforts to reflect the characteristics of their home region. The film-makers wanted to produce a movie which differed in every sense from a film that would have been produced in Jakarta – something imbued with local



pride and joy. For example, *Topeng Kekasih* (English title: 'Dearest Mask', 2000) by Hanung Bramantyo, is entirely in Javanese and revolves around the Oedipus Complex, while *Di Antara Masa Lalu dan Masa Sekarang* (Between the past and the present, 2001) by Eddie Cahyono shows the reflections of an old man about the guerrilla struggle for independence. Both films depicted a typically Yogyakarta atmosphere.

See *Topeng Kekasih* and DAMLDMS on Disc One 2.1.

Another example of a film that explicitly reflected local culture is *Peronika* (Veronica, 2004) directed by Bowo Leksono from Purbalingga. This film is about the bafflement of villagers with technologies which are mainly used in the city. All dialogues are in Banyumas dialect.

See *Peronika* on Disc One 2.1.

*Kepada yang terhormat titik 2* alluded to earlier creative manifestations of this stress on locality. Both the film's contents and its production and screening in Purwokerto epitomized the re-invigorated expression of local identities in Indonesian film and on the political stage.

By 2003 the euphoria of Reformation had passed its peak, and so had the *film indie* movement. Several ICE divisions had stopped operating because of a chronic lack of funding, the dim prospects for turning the coalition into an official organization, and internal private conflicts. These conflicts revolved around questions of leadership, disputes over what direction to take, clashing personalities, and, at times, envy and distrust. By 2003 it was increasingly unclear exactly what Indonesian independent film was supposed to stand for. For some, independent film meant just any film produced outside the New Order system of film production. To a few, it also meant that films had to be produced for motives which were far removed from the taint of commercialism. In their opinion commercial film was contaminated by the New Order politics of economic growth, and a derivative of its structures of crony capitalism.<sup>3</sup> They believed that, because the New Order had treated film as trade commodity, it had crippled the production of domestic films with the exception of cheap commercial films filled with sex, violence, or slapstick humour. In their eyes, the combination of film and commerce implied structures of New Order domination. Others believed that independent films tackled daring subjects, had innovative contents, and depicted free artistic expressions of film-makers. Yet others thought that independent film meant the production of low budget, technically inferior, (short) films, filmed by unskilled film-makers with a digital camera. Some people even thought the term stood for the production of films about the Indonesian struggle for Independence in 1945.

Another reason why the use of '*film independen*' had lost its appeal was that within the broader context of Indonesian film, the label was connected to too many different groups. Broadly speaking, these groups could be divided into two factions. In mainstream media the four directors of *Kuldesak* and nine other directors who produced music videos, soaps and documentaries for television, were said to represent independent film. In October 1999 these directors had formed a movement based on a manifesto called 'I-Sinema'. I-Sinema

was inspired by a movement of avant-garde Danish film-makers who in 1995 had drafted a manifesto called Dogme 95. The 'I' in 'I-Sinema' had different meanings – it stood for the word 'Indonesian', 'Independent', and also other terms like the English 'eye' or even 'I' (Sharpe 2002). The I-Sinema film-makers were not particularly bothered about whether they were called independent film-makers or not. The main point of I-Sinema was to find new ways to produce films for the silver screen in order to revive the Indonesian film industry. In the manifesto, the use of digital technology was mentioned specifically as a new tool allowing the film-makers the opportunity to work more freely and independently (Sharpe 2002).<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the label of 'independence' was used by members of the above mentioned different *film indie* communities across Indonesia. These communities consisted of amateur film-makers, the majority of them students, who tried to produce films on a shoestring budget, borrowing money and film equipment from friends and family. In these communities, there was plenty of discussion about what independent film really meant. In their opinion, in comparison with themselves the I-Sinema film-makers were well-established film directors who had easy access to film equipment, funding, and even the theatres of Cinema 21. Some members of the *indie* groups supposed that if the I-Sinema film-makers were seen as independent film-makers, everyone producing a film in Indonesia could be labelled independent, particularly since there was no real film industry to speak of anyway (personal communication in 2001 and 2002).

When in 2002 and 2003 the private television station SCTV began organizing an independent film festival competition, members of these more 'hardcore' *indie* film communities decided to drop the term. They were convinced that the label of independent film had now been hijacked by the commercial television industry, and therefore was not worth holding onto. Despite the wrangling, SCTV's Indonesian Independent Film Festival (*Festival Film Independen Indonesia*, FFII) was a big success. In the first year, 1071 short films were sent to the festival committee of which 836 qualified to enter competition. In the following year this number rose to 899 films (Prakosa 2005:81). The films were from all over Indonesia – places as far afield as Berau (a city on East Kalimantan), Banyuwangi (the outermost point of East Java), Mataram (a town on the island of Lombok), the island Batam, Sumatran cities Medan and Padang Panjang, as well as such smaller Javanese cities as Wonogiri and Cilacap. They were made by a variety of people ranging in age from nine to seventy. Amongst those who registered their films at the SCTV festivals were primary school students, bureaucrats, housewives, journalists, and police officers (Prakosa 2005:7-9). In particular after the SCTV festivals, the label 'independent film' often tended to fall by the wayside. As the term was overburdened with too many different definitions, and represented too many different groups of film-makers, the *indie* communities decided to forget about debates to find a single definition for *film independen*. They decided that no matter what format, formula, subject, or label was used to describe their movement, it was best just to focus on the goal of bringing domestic film back to the people of Indonesia.

The rise of the new Post-Soeharto film genre of *film independen* as well as the discourses and approaches surrounding it, produced new imaginations of Indonesian film and society. In the first place, new imaginations were inherent to the genre itself. In discourses, independent film mainly epitomized *Reformasi*, and implicitly was anti-New Order. The ideal independent film revealed this in all facets of film mediation practices –production, distribution, and screening – as well as in its contents. Secondly, in another departure from the beaten track, discourses on the new imaginations and representations of the genre were juxtaposed with different communities and groups of people in Indonesian society. It was indeed a genre linked to communities of film-makers, both the professional film-makers of I-Sinema and (amateur) film-makers of various *film indie* communities, all over Indonesia, but by no means exclusively so. *Film independen* represented any person with a camera who, for example, opted to send his or her film to the SCTV's FFIL. Hence, independent film both connoted different film communities and an extremely diverse group of 'common people' who made films. However, just as the term *reformasi*, which was commonly bandied about by everyone in all kinds of situations, it never clearly emerged exactly what *film independen* did represent.

Besides opening the door for the creation of new representations and imaginations of film in relation to either the genre or communities, some discourses about developments and activities in independent film disclosed the malaise stirred up in socio-political affairs. Much of this disquiet was a legacy of New Order rule: the fear of domination by Jakarta, which inspired the decision to found a *film indie* network that consisted of different autonomous divisions, was a persistent legacy of New Order politics. Such lingering apprehension insinuated itself into the debates about New Order legacies. It influenced discussions on the 'real' meaning of domestic independent film, and opinions about the 'hijacking' of the label *film independen* by the television industry. Some critics perceived a link between commercial film, New Order policies and control of media. The overall accusation was that New Order film policy had crippled the production of domestic films with the exception of cheap, commercial productions. Nor were complaints aired in such discourses restricted to New Order legacies; other debates on and activities in independent film were stimulated in contemporary politics. In the same period in which Parliament discussed a bill on the 'regional autonomy' of the different Indonesian provinces, various local film communities were defending their autonomy in the formation of a national *film indie* alliance and were highlighting local identity in the contents of their films. Finally, the breakdown of *film independen* may also be regarded as representative of developments in the socio-political sphere. Around 2003, when the hype about independent film began to fade, so too did the prospects and ideals of reformation in the political scene.

## 2.2 Distribution and exhibition of new media formats: ‘Local’ *Beth* versus ‘transnational’ *Jelangkung*

When the production and screening of *film independen* was at its height in 2001, discussions on film distribution and exhibition began to cover the problems of access of domestic films to the top-end cinemas of Cinema 21. These discussions were fuelled by the case of *Beth*, a domestic film scheduled for screening in one of the theatres of Cinema 21 at the end of November 2001. This did not eventuate as negotiations between the film’s director and bookers of Cinema 21 failed and the film was withdrawn from mainstream channels of film exhibition. Instead, it was distributed and screened through alternative networks set up by *film independen* communities. The failure of the film *Beth* to reach Cinema 21 theatres fuelled discussions about existing power structures in Indonesia in relation to film and local and national/transnational identities. Particularly in the discourses about *Beth* held at *film indie* meetings and on mailing lists on the Internet, the cinema network 21 was made to epitomize entrenched New Order structures. Allegedly, the network gave access only to those Indonesian film-makers or films which represented upper middle class transnational identities, meaning well-to-do people who can afford schooling at universities in Indonesia or abroad.

In this section I explore in what ways post-Soeharto cinema dealt with demands to refurbish the structures and conventions in film distribution, and to update technologies for film exhibition. To illustrate the discourses about domination and resistance in film connected to the idiosyncracies of local, national, and transnational Indonesian identities, I compare details of the film *Beth* (Aria Kusumadewa 2001) with those of another domestic film, *Jelangkung* (Rizal Mantovani 2001). The second film was a huge success in theatres belonging to the 21 Group.

Only a few months after the resignation of President Soeharto, Indonesian film productions began to reach the screens of Cinema 21. Most films were made by film-makers who had received their film education at the faculty of Film and Television at the Jakarta Art Institute (*Institut Kesenian Jakarta*, IKJ), but now others who mastered the technical aspects of film-making abroad also began to produce films for domestic audiences. In 2001 two digital films, made by semi-professional film-makers who had received film education in the United States, were screened in Cinema 21 in Pondok Indah, South Jakarta. Including these two productions, around ten domestic films were screened in Cinema 21 between 1998 and 2001. The growing number of domestic films, both in 35 mm and digital video format, which reached Indonesian top-end cinemas prompted discussions in national media on ‘the birth of a new generation of Indonesian film-makers’ and ‘the revival of Indonesian cinema’. Even though most films were art movies that were not enormously popular with a broad audience, the mere fact that they were produced and reached Indonesian cinemas seemed to offer a source of hope for the future of Indonesian film.

In October 2001 the film *Jelangkung* was released.<sup>5</sup> With the unexpected success of *Jelangkung* the future for Indonesian film in domestic cinemas seemed brighter than ever. *Jelangkung* was directed by music-video director Rizal Mantovani, and produced by soap actor and producer Jose Poernomo, who had recently founded his own production company Rexinema. The film was made purely with commercial objectives. The producers wanted to make a film which would simply entertain, and not in any way deal with any moral or social messages, or other, often incomprehensible, ‘heavy stuff’ (Agustin 2002; Sitorus 2001). *Jelangkung* was produced in two weeks and shot on digital video format. The story of the film is about a group of teenagers which sets out to trace ghosts based on legends of haunted places in Jakarta. The director and producer of *Jelangkung* were inspired by two popular American horror films: *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999) and *Fright Night* (Tom Holland, 1985). They used a combination of elements from these two films and translated this into an Indonesian setting using urban legends of Jakarta.

For a trailer of *Jelangkung* see Disc One 2.2.

*Jelangkung* was initially screened in only one of the movie theatres of Cinema 21 in Jakarta. This theatre in Pondok Indah Mall was the only theatre in which a video-projector could be operated. The theatre was also used for the preview of films or presentations and, as were other Cinema 21 theatres, it was equipped only with standard 35 mm projectors. For that reason, the producers themselves had to supply the video projector to screen the film. Because of word-of-mouth promotion which praised the film’s story and its musical score, as well as the gossip that a real ghost had slipped into the film during recording, *Jelangkung* became a real hit, initially among teenagers whose enthusiasm passed on to other categories of audiences. People were queuing for hours at the Pondok Indah box office to obtain tickets that were sold out in only a few minutes. Because the film was such a success, in December 2001 the producers decided to make copies of *Jelangkung* in Singapore, ‘blowing it up’ to the 35 mm format. This way the film could be screened in different cinemas. To illustrate the huge popularity of the film: at that time the costs of transferring digital film to 35 mm were approximately Rp. 400 million (US\$ 32,000), plus an extra amount of Rp. 13 million (US\$ 1,040) per copy. By February 2002, twenty-four Cinema 21 theatres all over Indonesia screened *Jelangkung* (Agustin 2002). In January 2002 *Jelangkung* attracted even more viewers than the just released *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (Chris Columbus, 2001), which was a worldwide success. The enormous success of the film attracted the attention of some American film companies, such as Miramax and Vertigo Entertainment, which wanted to preview the film and perhaps buy it to make an American version (‘Produser AS tertarik.’2002).

With both the rise in production of domestic films and their unproblematic distribution to prestigious cinemas it seemed that after the fall of Soeharto domestic film had met a more conducive environment. With the box office hit *Jelangkung*, film producers and journalists started to believe that Indonesian cinema had been successfully ‘reformed’,

but this optimistic idea was questioned by the case of *Beth*. *Beth*, a film directed by Aria Kusumadewa, was an independent production. The idea of producing the film was born out of nightly conversations of the director with artists, famous local actors, actresses, and other individuals from various backgrounds, hanging out at Bulungan in South Jakarta. This group, which called itself Security Post Community (*Komunitas Gardu*), wanted to make a film which criticized the contemporaneous Indonesian socio-political situation. The story of *Beth* is about a forbidden love between a boy and a general's daughter who meet each other again in a mental institution. But, the director argued, the film really is a comment on Indonesian society in which there is a thin line between sane and insane behaviour. In *Beth* the mental institution and its inhabitants form a representation of Indonesia in miniature, exposing characteristics of different members of Indonesian society. Here, no one is what he or she seems to be. The mad really are sane, the sane really are mad, and almost everyone can be bribed. The director, crew, actors and actresses financed the production of *Beth* themselves, but a lack of funding meant its completion took a few years. To save production costs *Beth*, as was *Jelangkung*, was shot on digital video.

For a trailer of *Beth* see Disc One 2.2.

It was planned to have the national premiere of *Beth* at the Jakarta International Film Festival (Jiffest) in October 2001. Jiffest was organized for the first time in November 1999, as a forum to screen both international and Indonesian films, which were not likely to enter mainstream channels of distribution and exhibition. After Jiffest, the film would be distributed to Cinema 21 in Jakarta, and thereafter to other cities in Indonesia via alternative networks. This was not to be, as the screening of *Beth* at Jiffest turned into a controversy. When the director discovered that the organizers of Jiffest paid a screening fee for some foreign films, he demanded the same treatment for his film. In a discussion between Aria and the organizing committee of Jiffest, it was explained that only some films which were entered in the festival received a screening fee. These were films that proved to be very successful abroad and were likely to attract large audiences at the festival. The committee assumed *Beth* could never compete with these films, and even considered its screening at the festival a complimentary promotion. Moreover, since Jiffest would require a digital video projector to screen it, the committee saw no need to pay extra for its screening. Frustrated, Aria felt that his film was not valued as much as foreign films and decided to withdraw *Beth* from screening at Jiffest. In the local mass media, he voiced the criticism that Jiffest favoured foreign films above domestic productions, and thereby showed contempt for Indonesian film.

Although the premiere of *Beth* at Jiffest did not happen, other options for screening the film were still open. A few days before *Beth* was withdrawn, a message had already been posted on the Internet stating that Aria was looking for partners outside Jakarta to screen his film. Soon after this posting various *film indie* communities from different regions showed their interest to collaborate with Aria. Besides these alternative offers, Aria had settled with the management of Cinema 21 that his film was going to be screened in the Pondok Indah

theatre at the end of November. But here the screening of *Beth* ran into another problem, leading to a second controversy. Riding the crest of its unexpected success *Jelangkung*, which had only been expected to last ten days at the most, was still being screened in the Pondok Indah theatre in November. As the Pondok Indah theatre was the only cinema where films in digital video format could be operated, the screening of *Beth* was initially postponed to the first week of December, and thereafter indefinitely.

This was a huge problem for Aria. He had to rent a digital video projector (LCD), at that time around Rp. 2.5 million (US\$ 200) for one day up to Rp. 6 million (US\$ 480) for seven days, and pay for film posters and other promotion material for screening at Cinema 21. To cover these costs, Aria needed sponsoring, but to obtain funding from a potential sponsor, he needed to know the exact screening schedule. Several times he tried to obtain a fixed schedule from the management of Cinema 21 but did not succeed. Instead, he was told that the policy of Cinema 21 did not permit for two Indonesian films to be screened at the same time. As long as *Jelangkung* was still popular, *Beth* would be put on hold. Faced with the uncertainty of the film's screening schedule, it was impossible for Aria to negotiate with sponsors. At the end of December 2001, out of sheer frustration and disappointment, he withdrew the proposed screening of *Beth* from Cinema 21. Instead, Aria decided to focus fully on distributing and screening the film via alternative channels.

The discord between Aria Kusumadewa and Cinema 21 erupted into a controversy in the Indonesian mass media. In entertainment and celebrity infotainment television programmes Aria and two of the leading actresses of *Beth*, Lola Amaria and Ine Febriyanti, spoke their minds about what they perceived to be the unfair treatment of Indonesian film by the management of Cinema 21. They supposed that the policy of Cinema 21 to not screen two Indonesian films at the same time was related to business deals on film distribution and exhibition between the Subentra 21 Group and the American Motion Picture Association. Hollywood films were scheduled months in advance and entered many different cinemas simultaneously, whereas Indonesian films had to line up to be screened one at the time. The case of *Beth* led to heated debates about the position of domestic film in Indonesian cinemas and even drew the attention of the non-governmental organization Media Watch, resulting in an investigation into an alleged monopoly on film distribution and exhibition in Indonesia by the 21 Group.<sup>6</sup> Tied to the accusations of nepotism, the theatre management of Cinema 21 blamed the failure to screen *Beth* in its theatres on problems of adaptation to new media technologies. With the exception of one Pondok Indah theatre, all other cinemas could operate the 35 mm film format only. As such, the case of *Beth* could basically be perceived as a problem of adjustment of conventional technologies of film exhibition to new film media and formats. The problem of adaptation of established cinemas to new audio-visual media technologies was not a problem of Cinema 21 alone. All over the world cinemas equipped with 35 mm projectors for film exhibition had difficulties in adapting to the new developments in film productions in digital video format. In most cases digital films were first transferred to 35 mm before they reached the screens of cinemas or film festivals. Nevertheless, discussions about *Beth's* failure to



reach Cinema 21 tended to overlook this point. Instead the discourse focused on issues raised before, such as the link between trade and power, structures of nepotism, and the domination of the Indonesian film industry by the middle classes.

The failure to distribute *Beth* through mainstream distribution channels was a particularly hot topic in discussions about film on the Internet and at gatherings of *film independen* communities. Here, many discussions again emphasized that there was an imperative need to set up a diverse and competitive system of film distribution and exhibition, free of business interests and state control. The growing appeal for alternative networks which would show a diversity of films in opposition to the unity on offer in Cinema 21 fuelled discussions about the potential of local film productions. As mentioned earlier, the idea was that local films could articulate free artistic expressions and specific local identities. Learning from the problem of distribution of *Beth*, members of *film indie* communities developed this idea further into the concept of the creation of regional cinemas (*sinema daerah*). In regional cinemas, the production of local films would challenge, what Yogyakarta film-maker Doni Kus called, 'the colonization of [film] aesthetics' ('*penjajahan estetis*') by Jakarta and the rest of the world. Kus' point was that regional cinema had the potential to be individual, original, and resistant to both Hollywood mass products imported into Indonesia, and commercial films and television soaps produced in the Jakarta-based film industry.<sup>7</sup> The potential rise of regional cinema was hoped to break with the policy of the 21 Group, which prioritized the screening of films in Jakarta before distributing these to the regions.

In discussions about the failure of *Beth* to reach Cinema 21, both in mass media and among *film indie* communities, the problem of adjustment to new technologies for film production and exhibition was hardly raised. The claim by Cinema 21 that the case of *Beth* arose from problems of adaptation to new media technologies was valid. Yet the discourse concentrated mainly on what Indonesian mainstream film mediation practices and alternative, independent ones represented. In the discussions the mainstream cinema network Cinema 21 epitomized entrenched structures of domination, related to national (New Order) and transnational (Hollywood) identities. These structures were set against alternative independent networks, which connoted local resistance. The juxtaposition of local against national and transnational identities is exemplified in the contrast between *Jelangkung* and *Beth*. *Jelangkung* stands for perceptions of power, commerce, elites, and a combination of transnational and national culture and identities. These features are pitched against *Beth*, which represents the discourses on a lack of power, idealism, and common people, which supposedly corresponds with local culture and identities.

The issues raised in discussions on *Beth* correspond with themes found in discourses of Third Cinema. The goal of Third Cinema was to raise questions about domination and resistance in 'non-Western' film cultures. The political disposition of economic domination, and concomitantly the global distribution of power of First over Third Worlds was an important aspect of its theories. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam identified forces of neo-colonial



globalization and domination by a group of powerful nation-states consisting basically of Western Europe, the US, and Japan. This domination, they argued, was economic ('the Group of Seven', IMF, the World Bank, GATT), political (the five veto-holding members of the UN Security Council), military (new 'unipolar' NATO), and techno-informational-cultural (Hollywood, UPI, Reuters, France Presse, CNN). Neo-colonial domination, Shohat and Stam asserted, was 'enforced through deteriorating terms of trade and the 'austerity programs' by which the World Bank and IMF, often with the self-serving complicity of Third-World elites, imposed rules that First-World countries would themselves never tolerate' (Shohat and Stam 1994:17). Challenging such hypocrisy, they addressed the unequal terms of exchange of global distribution of cultural productions, pointing out that the economic dependency of Third World countries made their cinemas vulnerable to neo-colonial pressures. Hollywood films which covered their costs in the domestic market could be profitably 'dumped' on Third World markets at very low prices. When dependent countries tried to strengthen their own film industries by setting up trade barriers for foreign films, First World countries could threaten retaliation in some other economic area such as the export or pricing of raw materials (Shohat and Stam 1994:30).

As did Third Cinema, the majority of discourses about *film independen*, and those about post-Soeharto film mediation practices during and after the case of *Beth*, addressed the position of nationally hegemonic dominant film practices and the modes of resistance open to minoritarian regional cinemas. Discussions about the position and treatment of non-commercial domestic film in the Indonesian mediascape (mainly in cinemas, but also at Jifest and on national television) and the need for oppositional regional cinemas and alternative distribution and exhibition networks, revealed the efforts made to shed the legacies of New Order hegemonic rule in film and society. Several discourses implied that the post-Soeharto mediascape was a post-neo-colonial setting. In film, the New Order was marked as an imperialist force in its own right, a part of a process of neo-colonization of hegemonic Western culture through the connections and business deals of Soeharto cronies with transnational media corporations.

In Indonesian studies, the idea of the New Order as neo-colonizer is not new. Benedict Anderson has said that the struggle for independence and the years which followed represented the defeat of the colonial state by a newly imagined nation. Soeharto's New Order, on the other hand, 'is best understood as the resurrection of the State [founded in Dutch colonialism] and its triumph vis-à-vis society and nation' (1990:109). Speaking of Third Cinema theories, Krishna Sen also treated the New Order as a neo-colonial force which disseminated national culture in the same way neo-imperialistic forces distributed global Western culture. Sen argues that under the New Order local or global culture, rather than hegemonic national culture could be perceived as modes of resistance (2003:156,163).

Sen felt that the globalist paradigm of Third Cinema theorizing did not quite capture the radical drives within Indonesian cinema. Instead, she argued, Indonesian cinema's radicalism needed to be defined in terms of the political constellations within the nation and could

not be read in any generalized way in relation to Hollywood, global culture, or capitalism (Sen 2003:147). There is more than a grain of truth in this, but in discourses on the case of *Beth*, Hollywood was equated with political constellations within the nation. Hollywood and concomitantly the domination of global culture was seen as one of the structures of New Order rule that supported crony capitalism. A tangible example of this was the involvement of Soeharto cronies in import and export deals with the US. The most glaring case in point was that Soeharto's foster brother Sudwikatmono, owner of Subentra 21, had secured the exclusive distribution and exhibition rights of the imported US films. Yet another such link occurred when Soeharto's business partner Bob Hassan was involved in a deal between Indonesia and the US at the beginning of the 1990s. In exchange for Indonesia importing Hollywood films, the US agreed to import batik and timber from Indonesia. In this light, the representation of *Beth* and its connection to alternative film cultures and side-stream, independent, or underground networks of film distribution and exhibition can be seen as part of Third Cinema discourses, which set minority oppositional cinemas against their counterparts of domination. In the post-Soeharto mediascape, the mediation practices of *film independen* as a movement of oppositional cinema were perceived to be a counterpoise to the enduring structures of the New Order and its incorporation of Hollywood/First World domination in Indonesian cinema. In post-Soeharto cinema, 'Third' as a denominator of opposition stood for local Indonesian film cultures and identities, whereas 'First' represented both hegemonic global and national culture.

The emphasis on the local as subversive or oppositional to national or global culture and identities in post-Soeharto cultural discourses, can be linked to Arif Dirlik's views about the re-emergence of the local as a site of resistance and struggle for liberation. While Dirlik (1996:35) notes that such struggles are informed by the modernity that groups suppressed or marginalized by modernization reject, the local *film indie* communities felt that they were neither suppressed by modernization, nor were they rejecting it. Instead, in step with movements of Third Cinema, the communities highlighted localism as a point of departure and goal of liberation which questioned and opposed the imbalanced access to national and transnational film distribution and exhibition networks.

### **2.3 Alternative sites of film consumption: Additional identifications and modes of resistance**

Besides mainstream Cinema 21 and complementary *film indie* networks for distribution and exhibition, there were more sites in the post-Soeharto mediascape in which both domestic and foreign films circulated. These sites were not mentioned in any of the discourses which linked mainstream film channels to New Order constellations of power and national and transnational identities, setting them in opposition to local identities connected to alternative channels of oppositional film mediation practices. In part, these other sites consisted of a

variety of new film festivals. Another alternative for film distribution and reception was based on a particular film format: the Video Compact Disc. Alongside television this format provided the easiest and, particularly in the form of pirated VCDs, an even wider access to film in post-Soeharto Indonesia. In this section I argue that the distinction between mainstream Cinema 21, as representative for the distribution of global Hollywood culture, and ‘side-stream’ or underground *film indie* networks representing local cultures, is far from clear-cut.

In the years following *Reformasi*, film festivals began to proliferate everywhere in Indonesia. Besides the movement of *film independen* with its various film screenings, discussions, workshops, and festivals, after 1999 other groups and communities also undertook the organization of film festivals. Some festivals with special themes saw the light of day only once, for example the 2002 Peace Film Festival (*Festival Film Perdamaian*), which screened domestic and international films about human rights issues. Other festivals were held annually. Most festivals emerged from communities which either drew on or claimed particular film genres or formats. Sometimes new genres were formed or co-opted – ‘Peace’ or ‘Gay and Lesbian’ films spring to mind – or concepts of existing genres were changed. Documentary film, which was equated with propaganda under the New Order, was now transformed into a genre which epitomized the advocacy of human rights issues and the deconstruction of New Order narratives on history and society. The various new film festivals catered for different imagined audiences and were connected to a new set of discourses, related to concerns in society or daily life.<sup>8</sup> Besides the specific choice for a film genre or format, another important feature of the new festivals was that nearly all of these combined the screening of domestic and foreign films.

The most important post-Soeharto festival on a national scale was the Jakarta International Film Festival Jiffest. Jiffest was organized for the first time from 20 to 28 November 1999, a month after the first independent film festival by Konfiden. Two women, the Indonesian producer and documentary film-maker Shanty Harmayn and the Franco-American festival organizer Natacha Devillers founded the festival to provide audiences with foreign films and art films which were hard to find in Indonesia. In his review on the first Jiffest, cultural critic Seno Gumira Adjidarma spoke of the rise of a new film generation and new film audiences (personal communication 2001). Over the years Jiffest grew into a big event which screened all sorts of classic, modern, short, and experimental films and documentaries, both from Indonesia and abroad. Alongside its annually changing theme, different workshops and discussions were also organized during the festival. After 2001 a section of Jiffest travelled throughout Indonesia to screen part of its film programme in cities across the country. In its fourth year, Jiffest expanded this section by having local film-makers in each city enter their films and screen these along with the regular programme.

Another new Jakarta-based film festival which was held annually and which also travelled to other cities was the Queer Film Festival (QFF). The QFF was organized for the first time by the ‘Q-munity’ in September 2002. Q-munity was a community which consisted

of gays and lesbians and other people with an interest in film and arts. The QFF was the first Indonesian film festival which covered the genres Gay, Lesbian, and Aids films. The festival was non-competitive and screened both international and domestic films. Beyond its core screenings, at the fringes of the festival there were discussions with film-makers, photo and painting exhibitions, and seminars about such topics as information on Aids. QFF tried to keep a low profile because various groups in Indonesia do not accept homosexuality. To reduce the focus on homosexuality, the committee strategically tied its festival to campaigns about Aids awareness and the dangers of free sex. Despite such manoeuvres, Q's director John Badalu regularly received threats from Muslim fundamentalists who tried to stop the event each year.

Other recurring film festivals, which were tied to either a certain format or a particular genre, were the Feast of Indonesian Cinema (*Pesta Sinema Indonesia*, PSI), the Documentary Film Festival (*Festival Film Dokumenter*, FFD), and Hello;fest. From 2001 to 2005 PSI was held each June in Purwokerto. It was organized by a group of students who formed a community called Youth Power, which was also active in the field of theatre, arts, and photography. The festival exclusively covered the screening of films which were produced in video format. These films consisted of domestic as well as foreign films. In 2005 the PSI added a 'one minute film'-competition for local Purwokerto film-makers to its programme. Since 2002, the documentary film community (*komunitas film dokumenter*) has organized FFD each year in December in Yogyakarta. This festival has screened both international and domestic documentaries, and organized a competition for documentaries produced by novice domestic film-makers. Besides the screening of documentary films, it has also organized workshops on documentary making and discussions. In 2005, FFD added a competition for Indonesian professional documentary film-makers to its programme. Hello;fest commenced in 2004 when it was organized by the film school Hello;Motion in Jakarta. It then focused on short and animation films. It began as a festival to screen the work of its students at the end of their four-month courses, but because many outsiders also wanted to participate in the festival it changed into an open forum. Besides the screening of films by students and outsiders, each year some domestic and foreign films are invited to compete for four awards, for which the viewers at the festival could vote (Ratna 2005).

For pictures of Q, FFD and PSI see Disc One 2.3.

Another alternative site of film distribution and consumption was connected to the networks of the VCD format. This format was preceded by video cassettes and laser discs (LD), and followed later by Digital Video/Versatile Discs (DVD). The distribution of these new film formats in Indonesia started in the mid-1980s under the New Order with the introduction of video players and cassettes onto the Indonesian film market. Instantly people, mainly from the middle classes, embraced this medium. In next to no time, video began to compete with cinemas and *layar tancep*. Many retired high-ranking military officers, who had often occupied a position in local offices of the Department of Information, set up mobile

video companies in provincial areas backed by the licenses they handed out themselves (Adityo 1996). At the beginning of the 1990s a new format, LD, was added to the distribution of video. In 1996 the LD format was increasingly replaced by VCD, which in 2000 was followed by the DVD format. However, in Indonesia DVDs did not immediately substitute the circulation of the much cheaper VCDs.

With the introduction of video, film piracy was launched with a vengeance on the Indonesian market. Pirated films were very popular. Beside their low price, about one-half to one-third of the price of original products, pirated films often circulated before the original film reached Indonesian cinemas. Unquestionably, part of their popularity was that pirated films were not censored ('Akan dicari.' 1997; cam/kris/2 1996; 'VCD hasil bajakan.' 1999). Compared to films in cinemas and the original products sold in shopping malls, which mainly consisted of the same Hollywood and local products, the variety obtainable in pirated films was more diverse. Pirated films included classic and art house films, Mandarin, Hong Kong, and Bollywood film productions, and to a large extent consisted of pornographic or semi-pornographic films. The piracy of films in video, LD, and later VCD and DVD format launched an extensive underground economy (F.Y. 1993). In August 1997, Wihadi Wiyanto, Secretary General of the Indonesian Video Recording Importers Association (*Asosiasi Importir Rekaman Video*, Asirevi), stated that 90 per cent of the VCDs circulating in Indonesia were illegal copies (Anspek/2.4 1997).

VCD was perceived as a medium and format which was accessible to all people. Even though the quality of VCD was second rate compared to videotapes and LD, it was cheap. Because of their price and quality, videotapes and LD were perceived as formats used by the middle classes (Nurhan and Theodore 1999a). In contrast, especially because of film piracy, even the poorest people could watch a VCD. Indeed pirated VCDs were even cheaper than their originals, but often of inferior quality. With the exception of fairly professional reproductions of a master copy, many pirated films had indistinct, blurred images and sound. Some of these pirated films were digital video recordings of films which were screened in cinemas or on videotape or LD at home. This was betrayed by the fact that movie theatre audiences could be heard commenting on the film; other nuisances that had been inadvertently recorded included people walking by the screen, kitchen noises, the crowing of a cock, or children playing in the background. Because of their inferior quality it was said that pirated VCDs had their own market segment, consisting mainly of the lower classes (Ien 1999). It was asserted that the number of pirated products circulating in rural areas was much higher than in cities (Ek-16 2000), but in my experience virtually everyone, rich and poor, nearly everywhere in the city or countryside consumed pirated VCDs.

Until 1997 pirated films were imported mainly through transnational underground networks which operated in Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. Until 1998 most pirated films sold in Indonesia were first distributed by sea from Singapore with a transit on the island of Batam. After transportation by boat from Batam the films were distributed overland to Medan, Jakarta, Semarang and Surabaya, and then to the rest of Indonesia. By 1998 not just

pirated films, mostly in VCD format, were imported through these networks; the technologies to produce them were also insinuating themselves via the networks. In November 1998, it was estimated there were approximately ten factories based in Jakarta, Semarang, and Surabaya producing pirated VCDs (Untung SP/J-2 1998). The production of illegal VCD copies soon expanded, eventually transforming into an export commodity for markets in Malaysia, Singapore, India, and the Philippines.<sup>9</sup> In the short space of a few years, film piracy was established as a substantial home industry business. In 2001, it was officially estimated that in Jakarta alone around one hundred copy machines were operating; however, in reality there were presumably many more (ema 2001a).

With the exception of pornographic films, pirated VCDs, both imported and domestically produced, were sold on the open market. The centre for pirated products in Indonesia was the Glodok area in Jakarta, but also in other cities and more rural towns pirated films were openly on offer in shops and stalls in shopping malls and on the streets. Similar to ordering a pizza, there were identical services by which pirated films could be ordered by phone (ric 1997). Even though the government lost an estimated amount of Rp. 5 billion (US\$ 400,000) per year in taxes, media piracy was big business in Indonesia.<sup>10</sup> Besides the vendors of the illegal film copies, those benefitting from this alternative film distribution and consumption site were producers, importers, and distributors of pirated films, not to mention the police, government officials, and Soeharto business cronies. In short, many businesses and members of official organizations and the bureaucracy in Indonesia were involved in the production or distribution of pirated VCDs. Between 1997 and 2003 at various times Indonesian media mentioned that producers, distributors, and importers of established media organizations were also involved in the trade in illegal copies. It was said, and sometimes proven, that factories which produced original VCDs simultaneously produced copies for the underground market (agi 2002; m6 2002; Nurhan and Theodore 1999b). Certified film import and distribution networks, as well as cinema workers and staff, were rumoured to be part of the pirated film network, passing on master copies to illegal copiers. In addition to companies, others who profited from the production and distribution of pirated VCDs were the 'rotten elements' (*oknum*) in the police forces and ruling elites. It was common knowledge that small-scale producers, distributors, and sales people regularly paid policemen a fee so as to continue their business undisturbed. Vendors of pirated VCDs were especially prone to handing out payments to pre-empt police raids, or at least to be warned prior to any police actions. Allegedly, large business empires in the illegal film industry were backed either by Soeharto cronies, high-ranking army officers, or legislative officials.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the fact that these goods were sold openly, piracy in Indonesia was officially illegal. Between 1993 and 1997 several new intellectual property laws and sanctions against offenders were approved in Parliament. In 1997 a law on intellectual property rights was passed. Offenders against this law could be sentenced to five years imprisonment or a payment of Rp. 50 million (US\$ 4,000) fine. In the same period sporadic raids were mounted by police forces, mainly in the Glodok area in Jakarta. These raids were primarily pro-forma

to show there was police action against piracy and as a reminder to vendors to continue to pay their 'safety fees' (*uang keamanan*). During these raids thousands of pirated films were confiscated, some of which were later publicly destroyed. Every few months in a ceremony attended by members of the Film Censor Board, police, and government officials, confiscated pirated films and cuts of censored films were run over by trucks or destroyed by fire. This sanctioned destruction was filmed and featured in news programmes on television and details were published in newspapers. In reality the ceremony was just as much fiction as the films themselves. Only a day after piracy raids took place, if not the same evening, the same number and variety of films was again on offer and it was business as usual.<sup>12</sup> Occasionally producers or distributors of pirated films were arrested. These culprits were mainly middlemen, who were back in business in no time after the payment of their bail.

Around 1998 the raids began to increase. By then, Indonesia had achieved the third position on the 'priority watch list' of the International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA), an industry lobby group from the US. The principal reason for the increase in police raids against film piracy were the conditions set for foreign aid and funding by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). To facilitate loans and foreign aid after the Asian monetary crisis in 1997, Indonesia had to agree to fifty stipulations drawn up by IMF.<sup>13</sup> One of these demanded that the Indonesian government seriously combat offenders against intellectual property rights.<sup>14</sup> However, even though the number of raids increased and concomitantly the number of films which were burned or run over by trucks at the broadcasted public ceremonies, the piracy industry in Indonesia, as in other Asian countries, in no way diminished. In 2003 the Motion Picture Association (MPA), the international division of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), launched an anti-piracy media campaign in eight countries in Asia. Besides Indonesia, the campaign covered South Korea, Chinese Taiwan, India, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand. MPA estimated that the US motion picture industry lost more than \$ 3 billion annually in potential worldwide revenue as a result of piracy. In 2002 six million DVDs, or 87 per cent of pirated DVDs the world over, were seized in Asia. Hence 2003 was declared the 'Anti-Piracy Action Year in Asia', with the tagline 'Nothing Beats the Real Thing: Say 'No' to Piracy' (Santosa 2003).

Both the post-Soeharto film festivals and networks of, mainly pirated, VCDs provided alternative sites of film distribution and consumption. Particularly the pirated VCDs gave wide access to all sorts of uncensored, mainstream and non-mainstream, domestic and foreign film productions. Furthermore, the different film festivals screened various films which never reached Indonesian television or cinemas. The discourses which linked local cultures to independent or 'side-stream' film and its distribution and exhibition networks, cannot be applied to the alternative sites without some difficulty. The first hurdle is that the post-Soeharto film festivals and VCD networks circulated both domestic and transnational films. As such, they did not represent either domestic or transnational culture, but a combination of both. Moreover, at the new film festivals identifications and issues of representations did not spring from global, national or local concerns or cultures. Instead, these were based on



particular film genres and film formats and the domestic and transnational discourses into which these genres and formats tied. Hence Q stood for discourses on gay-and-lesbian films and homosexuality both in Indonesia and abroad; FFD stood for discourses on the specificity of documentary film in Indonesia, as well as worldwide contemporary discourses on the genre; and PSI and Hello;fest were connected to discourses on the development, position, and implications of the video format in Indonesia and at other comparable festivals in the world. Jifest, which screened all genres and formats, in this sense was all-inclusive, but through its annual changing festival theme each year it related to a specific discourse.<sup>15</sup>

The second problem in defining post-Soeharto film festivals and VCD networks is that it is difficult to determine which distribution and consumption channels were mainstream, side-stream, or underground. The understanding of these notions is multifaceted, as it consists of networks of distribution and consumption of original VCDs and of pirated films. Which networks represented mainstream distribution channels, those of legal films because these were legal? Or conversely, the networks of pirated VCDs? Even though piracy was an illegal activity in Indonesia, pirated films were openly on sale everywhere. Strictly speaking, from the point of view of availability and market shares, pirated films with a share of 90 per cent against a mere 10 per cent of legal films, were more mainstream than their original counterpart. As such, the network and sales of original films could be perceived as a 'side-stream' channel of film distribution and consumption. Furthermore, because of the wide-ranging setup of home industries which produced pirated films, the vast transnational networks distributing them, the numerous vendors who sold these films all over Indonesia, and the substantial involvement of 'infiltrators' in official film production and distribution companies and organizations, police forces, and the judicial system, pirated VCDs could hardly be said to have constituted an underground economy; rather, they formed a parallel economy.

Looking at the film festivals the notion of mainstream versus side-stream sites of distribution and consumption is less complex in the sense that all festivals could be perceived as side-stream distribution channels because these were not initiated, supported, or run by the Indonesian state or film industry. However, on the basis of their visibility, or the amount of publicity they generated, some could be perceived as more 'side-stream' or underground than others. Instead of a division into mainstream, side-stream, or underground events, in this context it might be better to speak of events which were on or off the map. Or, to use the term of the former co-founder of Konfiden and film-maker and distributor Lulu Ratna, 'festivals below the radar'. This term refers to low profile festivals, as opposed to festivals which were easily detectable (Ratna 2005). In this context, Jifest was an on the map high-profile event which generated a wealth of national publicity. In comparison, Q, which remained low profile, could be perceived as a festival that was more distinctly non-establishment. PSI, which was not of any interest to the national media, was an off the map, below the radar, underground event.

The discourses about local forms of resistance to processes of transnational cinematic neo-imperialism cannot be simply applied to the alternative sites of post-Soeharto film



festivals and VCDs. Yet, on another level these alternative channels of film distribution and exhibition do represent tactics that resisted or evaded hegemonic structures of film circulation. In this context, the festivals can be connected to the organization of film festivals worldwide as forums for alternative, off-beat film productions. Undoubtedly, on another level the circulation of particularly pirated VCDs does represent tactics which resisted or evaded hegemonic structures of film circulation. The circulation of pirated VCDs can be seen as a form of resistance which Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (2004) call 'media jujitsu'.

As mentioned earlier, the political disposition of economic domination of First over Third Worlds and its concomitant global distribution of power, was an important aspect in Third Cinema theories.<sup>16</sup> Assessments of Third Cinema pointed to various film formulas which challenged First World domination of culture and esthetics. These included films and videos which eschewed formal conventions of dramatic realism and chose modes and strategies of alternative aesthetics rooted in non-realist, often non-Western, or para-Western cultural traditions. Among the range of modes and strategies were the carnivalesque, the anthropophagic, the magic realist, the reflexive modernist, and the resistant post-modernist. These featured other historical rhythms, other narrative structures, and other views of collective life (Shohat and Stam 2004:292).<sup>17</sup>

Shohat and Stam indicate that many of these modes and strategies appropriated existing discourses to their own ends. In this, Shohat and Stam argue, the power of dominant First World discourses was assumed only to deploy its force through a kind of artistic jujitsu against domination. As did the Brazilian anthropophagic movement, which 'called for an art that would devour European techniques the better to struggle against European domination', most alternative aesthetics revalorized what was seen as negative, and turned tactical weakness into strategic strength (Ibid:328). As mentioned above, Shohat and Stam call the appropriation of elements of dominant culture to redeploy them in the interests of oppositional praxis 'media jujitsu'.

The concept of media jujitsu can be extended to the distribution and consumption practices of pirated VCDs. Similar to strategies which appropriated dominant discourses and aesthetics only to transform these into a force against domination, the alternative site of distribution and consumption of pirated VCDs is one which incorporated First World cultural domination and supported the dissemination of its foreign hegemony, but simultaneously undermined it. Paradoxically, the networks of pirated VCDs represented the most accessible channels to hegemonic First World culture, while they simultaneously destabilized the disposition of First World economic domination. Pirated VCDs can be perceived as a form of resistance to both national control and structures of film: they evade state censorship and sidestep the lack of choice in films that are available via mainstream channels. These VCDs also resist the global economic domination and distribution of power of the West by undermining legal sales and copyrights. The format and its cursive mediation practices dispersed hegemonies of leading global and national audiovisual media networks.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

Discourses on post-Soeharto film mediation practices depended on reconstituted frames of reference. New media technologies and changes on the political scene led to new film practices, cultures, and imaginations of identities, but old practices, cultures, and identities were not entirely disposed of.

Ironically, the democratization process of audio-visual media launched by the advance in new technologies caused another divide in film formats, audiences, and communities. This time, instead of 16 mm film, the new digital video format was in conflict with Cinema 21's 35 mm format. Since the overwhelming interest in the affair surrounding *Beth*, Cinema 21 stopped screening films in digital format. These now had to be transferred to 35 mm before they could be shown in its cinemas. The new policy strengthened the impression that the network supported long-standing power structures, as it limited the number of domestic films to reach top-end cinemas. Only film-makers or producers who could pay for the production or blow-up of their film in the 35 mm format could be screened in Cinema 21. Consequently, film-makers with proficient business know-how and 'connections', or sufficient financial backing had an advantage.

Nevertheless, the film format alone was not the reason that not all domestic films reached the Indonesian top-end theatres. The duration, content, and style of the films had to comply with the criteria set by Cinema 21. Those who could not live up to these conditions had the old alternative of 'going international' and screening films at foreign film festivals. The new alternative was to 'go independent' and distribute and screen films via alternative networks, or to distribute them directly in VCD format.<sup>19</sup> The choice for old, new, established, or alternative channels of film distribution and exhibition was based not merely on practical considerations, but also on what these channels were perceived to represent in post-Soeharto Indonesia.

The distribution and consumption of film in VCD format undermined the aforementioned connotations of mainstream, 'side-stream', and underground film mediation practices. The specific conditions and socio-political implications of pirated VCDs challenged the hegemony and rules of dominant national and transnational media networks. The cursive mediation practices evaded film censorship and circumvented the lack of choice in films that were available through national mainstream channels. They moreover resisted global economic domination and power of the West by subverting legal sales and copyrights. However, the VCD circuit as an alternative site for film distribution and consumption did not weaken the position and influence of Indonesian elites. As before, they appropriated the networks and profited from piracy through the production, distribution, and sales of illegal films, or by having their share in 'security' levies. *Beth* and *film independen*, *Jelangkung* and Cinema 21, as well as post-Soeharto film festivals and (pirated) VCDs were all part of and shaped Indonesian film mediation practices and discourses on audio-visual media. They illustrate how alternative film cultures and the powers that be opposed and also used each other in the post-Soeharto mediascape.



**Part Two**  
**Film discourse practices**



### 3 Histories, heroes, and monumental frameworks

#### Introduction

From at least two vantage points, a connection can be made between film and historiography. The link between the two can be discussed either from the point of view of film history or by extrapolating on the use of film in representations of history. In this chapter, I focus on the production and distribution of specific film genres which can be accepted as major representations of concepts and inventions of history by the regime. The inventions and modes of engagement, that is, the dominant representations of discourses on history, are studied from both these perspectives. Each of these is utilized to give an insight into the mechanisms of certain film discourse practices employed by the New Order regime.

#### 3.1. Film history: New Order patronage of *film perjuangan* and *film pembangunan*

Historiography is as much about contemporaneous imaginations of society as it is about the past. In this section I discuss representations of Indonesian film history of the New Order and the film genres which represented its ideologies and discourses about the past. I have chosen to focus on two specific time-bound genres which typified New Order rule and historiography: *film perjuangan* (struggle [for Independence] film), which was actually created under the Old Order of President Soekarno, and *film pembangunan* (development films).

Film-maker, writer, and academic Trinh Minh-ha has argued that the color red symbolizes different things in different cultures (for instance: joy, anger, warmth, or impurity): ‘To say red, to show red, is already to open up vistas of disagreement. Not only because red conveys different meanings in different contexts, but also because red comes in many hues, saturations and brightnesses, and no two reds are alike’ (1993:190). Picking up on this theme, I study the context of such dominant modes of engagement as the use of heroes and authority figures in *perjuangan* and *pembangunan* films under the New Order. In addition, I analyse the creation of particular connotations of these aspects both in national and transnational political discourses. At the conclusion of this section I compare the traits of the *pembangunan* genre with those employed in films which were part of the political strategies of development of the United States in Iran in the 1950s.

The first *film perjuangan*, fictional films with plots which revolved around the struggle to win Indonesian Independence from Dutch colonial rule, were produced around 1954. The majority of these films recounted stories of Indonesian heroes fighting against the Dutch colonizers throughout the whole of the colonial period. Between 1958 and 1965 in particular, films extolling the struggle for Independence were produced in large numbers. This production

ran parallel to and supported Soekarno's national political rhetoric. In 1958 his call for a 'Return to the Rails of the Revolution', a slogan which involved the assertion that the 'right to wield governmental power [...] lay with those who led the Revolution', and the consequent availability of funding for films about the struggle for Independence strongly stimulated their production (Feith 1962:554 as quoted in Sen 1994:36).

Quite apart from the President's rhetoric, the broader political setting also exerted an enormous influence on film production and other aspects of the world of cinema. In the early 1960s, Indonesian cinema was caught up in the national polemics which divided Indonesia starkly into 'left' and 'right'. The thought behind this division can be traced to Soekarno's increasingly radical national politics. In 1957, relying on the support of the army he overthrew the multiparty democracy which had been established in Indonesia after 1949, replacing it with what he called 'Guided Democracy'.<sup>1</sup> In the following years, the government grew more authoritarian, more nationalistic, and more anti-Western. In a very intricate juggling act Soekarno tried to balance power between the Indonesian army, which had made enormous political and economic gains in the early years of Guided Democracy, and the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI), which could be counted on to provide a portion of Soekarno's mass support base. By 1959 PKI was 'the most energetic and militant supporter' of Soekarno's radical nationalist politics, which championed anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism (Mortimer 1974:79 as quoted in Sen 1994:28).

The nation was polarized into left and right. The left was connected to the Communist Party, which displayed a growing tendency to align itself with the President. The right was associated with a number of army, liberal, and Islamic parties which were enjoying growing support from the governments of Western capitalist nations, particularly the United States and Great Britain. Mirroring the politics of the time, film-makers were also divided into the left and the right. Leftist film-makers and members of cultural organizations affiliated with PKI especially tended to be actively engaged in linking film to national and nationalist politics. They saw their role as trying to articulate a cultural critique and model for a film culture of opposition to Hollywood cinema. Leftist film organizations and film-makers also vociferously supported the periodic bans which were imposed on films from Hollywood and Britain, as part of Soekarno's policies of Confrontation against what he perceived as the encroachment of Anglo-American power in Asia (Sen 2003:149-150).<sup>2</sup>

Krishna Sen has shown that in this setting, films about the revolution made by film-makers on either side of the divide articulated differences in constructing post-Independence imaginations of Indonesian society. She points out that the two most prominent film-makers of the time, Usmar Ismail and Bachtiar Siagian, produced different narratives about the revolution. In historical films set in the context of the revolutionary war, Usmar Ismail, who received his film education in the United States and could be associated with the right, focused on the private psychological world of his characters, who were without exception heroic fighters. In each of his films Ismail used a standard pattern in which the 'hero-villain' represented a 'good-evil' juxtaposition of the *pejuang* (revolutionary) versus the *penjajah* (the colonial rulers) (Sen

1994:45-6). Alternatively, leftist film-maker Bachtiar Siagian chose to explore the historical and social situation of his characters. He deviated from the common nationalist narrative formula in not representing 'us', the Indonesian nation, against 'them', the Dutch, but in focusing on a social revolution in which the struggle against foreigners included an attempt to identify and challenge the structure of repression within Indonesian society itself (Sen 1994:45).

President Soeharto and his New Order regime came to power after the coup of 30 September 1965. During that night six senior generals and, by mistake, one lower-ranking officer were killed. The New Order blamed PKI for staging the coup and with the coming to power of this regime, leftist film texts were erased. In the aftermath of the coup, films produced by leftist film-makers were banned or destroyed, and many alleged communist film-makers were killed or imprisoned. Simultaneously a total reversal of anti-imperialistic film policy was set in motion, and the ban on films from Hollywood and Britain was lifted. In New Order national film history, nationalist cinema and the *film perjuangan* films which contained stereotypical juxtapositions were assiduously cultivated. Usmar Ismail was transmogrified into a *tokoh* (prominent figure) in Indonesian cinema, and the films about the revolution which he had produced were held up as examples of what the basis of national cinema should be. Other kinds of film texts, such as those of Bachtiar Siagian and other 'leftist' film-makers, were consigned to oblivion.

Under the New Order, Usmar Ismail and his films about the revolution came to represent the basis of national cinema in Indonesian film history.<sup>3</sup> After 1965 he was hailed as the father of Indonesian cinema. Furthermore, the day on which the shooting of his film *Darah Dan Doa* (entitled 'The Long March' in English) commenced, 30 March 1950, was marked as the Day of National Film (*Hari Film Nasional*).<sup>4</sup>

For pictures of Usmar Ismail see Disc Two 3.1.

Usmar Ismail was appointed the father of Indonesian cinema for two reasons: on account of the subject matter of his films and because of his anti-leftist pro-Western position in the politics of the film industry in the 1960s. Usmar's political stance was particularly apparent in an article he wrote in 1970 called 'The Dark Era of National Film History'. In this article he placed the forces led by Lekra (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*, Institute of People's Culture, the key cultural mass organization affiliated to PKI) and PKI in opposition to the forces of democracy in the film world (Usmar Ismail 1983).<sup>5</sup> Sen mentions that the spirit and words of the title of that article have since been reproduced in almost every account of Indonesian film history under the New Order (Sen 1994:35).

Under this regime there were numerous plaudits for the revolution films produced by Usmar Ismail and he had many imitators creating the same type of *film perjuangan*. With a few exceptions, these New Order *perjuangan* films either consisted of narratives about heroes of (New Order) Indonesian history, or were based on folk stories about such fictitious heroes as Si Pitung and Jaka Sembung. Films of the latter type tended to feature stereotypical images of aggressive, bearded, red-headed, swearing Dutchmen. A phrase very often used by colonial rulers in these films was '*Gotvedomseg*' (Dutch for 'Goddamnit' pronounced in an Indonesian way).



For a few examples of 'Gotvedomseg' in Si Pitung Banteng Betawi see Disc Two 3.1.

As the background to the films about the fictitious heroes was also the struggle for Independence, many schoolchildren and Indonesians in general accepted these fictional tales as real historical accounts (Eddy 1993). The basic ingredient of all *perjuangan* films, whether those which survived the coup of 1965 or those produced under New Order rule, was that their themes were about heroes and heroism, as were those in the films by Usmar Ismail.

Whereas the foundation of Indonesian film history was represented by the production of *film perjuangan*, the New Order was represented by the genre of *film pembangunan* (development films). Films in this genre epitomized the political strategy and vision of the New Order government, which was based on the encouragement of economic development and modernization. Particularly during Ali Murtopo's term of office as Minister of Information (1978-1983), the Film Council (Dewan Film) stimulated the idea that films should portray 'the struggle of scientists, technocrats, and others to improve the prestige of the nation' (Sen 1994:120). Once again in the New Order *pembangunan* films the focal points were heroes; but now the protagonists were heroes of development who came to the village to teach the local, traditional people how to become modern, to trust the national government, and distrust the villain, usually represented by local, traditional, spiritual leaders or shamans (Sen 1994:120-2). These propagandist *pembangunan* films particularly were screened by mobile cinemas going from one village to another.

Both in their content and in the practice of their distribution, films in this genre ran parallel with the course adopted in the promotion of films and development policies of the United States Information Agency (USIA) in the early 1950s. In 1953 the agency was assigned the task of producing and distributing a massive number of political and 'pedagogical' films to so-called Third World countries. Set in the rivalry of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the distribution of these films was part of the official development policy of the US government. Linked to the Point 4 Development Programme which was launched by President Truman in 1949, this policy was implemented to 'win the hearts and minds of the non-Communist world' (Naficy 2003:192). In August 1953 Truman initiated USIA policy contrived to:

[t]ell people throughout the world the truth about official aims and acts of the U.S., to expose and counter hostile efforts to distort those aims and acts to present a broad and accurate *picture* of the life and culture of American people.

(Naficy 1984:190)<sup>6</sup>

As a consequence, specific countries in the Third World, primarily those thought to be susceptible to communist ideology, were subjected to an enhanced marketing campaign, which included the distribution of American films and documentaries (Naficy 2003:192).

Iranian film-maker Hamid Naficy wrote that in Iran this meant that American-made films were shown to schoolchildren and rural populations using mobile film vans, as well as being presented to the general public in commercial cinemas.

The USIA films which Naficy had to watch and review when he was a schoolboy show a remarkable resemblance to New Order development films. Naficy states that USIA films used a certain formula: 'The world of the village is shown to be disturbed by a disease, such as tuberculosis or dysentery, but soon stability and calm is restored thanks to an external agent' (Naficy 2003:193). Furthermore, Naficy puts forward: 'The diegesis of these films was peopled with a central character (usually a young boy such as Said who suffers from tuberculosis), and a central authority figure (such as Doctor Khoshqadam) who treats him' (Ibid.). Both the restoration of order and the central role of an (external) authority figure are identical to the New Order development films. Sen has remarked that: 'In serious films dealing with social issues [...] the solution to rural anarchy comes from outsiders who are professionals' (Sen 1994:121). Under the New Order, the restoration of order was a fundamental part of development and other films. As Sen argues, almost every film produced during the New Order followed the same pattern. They depicted a situation in which order was overturned, requiring the combat of disorder, followed by a restoration of order at the end of the film (Sen 1994:159, Sen and Hill 2000:146). In short, they were cast in the same mold as the USIA films. In films such as *Desa di Kaki Bukit* (Village at the Foot of the Hill, Asrul Sani, 1972), *Dr. Siti Pertiwi Kembali ke Desa* (Dr Siti Pertiwi Returns to the Village, Ami Prijono, 1979), and *Joe Turun ke Desa* (Joe Comes Back to the Village, Chaerul Umam, 1989) such external authority figures as doctors and engineers safeguard village life from harm.<sup>7</sup>

Parallel to the political discourse and stance of the United States government in the promotion of USIA policy films in the early 1950s, the modes of engagement of *film pembangunan* of the post-1965 New Order government can be linked to the political discourses and policies which were dominated by anti-communism and pro-development ideologies. It is very likely that USIA policy also was implemented in Indonesia in the 1950s. Presumably the production and distribution of *Gelora Pembangunan* films, mostly documentaries and newsreels about successes in development screened in cinemas and shown in villages by mobile cinema units under the auspices of the National Film Company (*Perusahaan Film Nasional*, PFN) were stimulated by USIA policy. The financial aid and assistance granted by America in the 1950s to help establish the Indonesian film industry was conceivably also part of USIA strategies. Krishna Sen mentions that under the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA) programme, in 1950 the PFN received US\$ 500,000 from the American government for new film equipment. In addition, the US government paid for ten experts to be stationed in Indonesia for six years to oversee the implementation of the scheme. Moreover, a number of Indonesians working in cinema were sent to the US to train in various aspects of film-making under the Colombo Plan and TCA (Sen 1994:25).

Besides Usmar Ismail, such other film professionals as Asrul Sani (poet, intellectual and film director), Jayakusuma (academic and expert on traditional theatre), Nya Abbas

Acup, Wahyu Sihombing (both film directors), and Soemardjono (highly respected senior film editor) who had all received their education in American academic and professional institutions too, and were also committed to anti-leftist pro-Western film politics, held some of the key positions in film schools and professional cinematic bodies after 1965 (Sen 1994:38). However, I was not able to find any data which explicitly mention USIA involvement in supporting the Indonesian film industry, the training of film-makers, or production and distribution of propaganda development films. Still, if the same kind of film texts were produced, inspired by the same kind of political discourses and policies, it would seem fair to draw the conclusion that *film pembangunan* must have been produced for similar reasons.

Naficy argues that the US policy of technological transfer and development aid was based on the perception of ‘underdevelopment’ as a threat to the homogenization of the world in the interests of creating global markets founded on Western consumerist ideology (Naficy 2003:193). Naficy described how the majority of the chief authorities in the USIA films dispensing well-being and prosperity were Point 4 development agents and physicians. He argues that: ‘[These] figures invoked and legitimized by proxy the power, knowledge, competence, authority, and, indeed, the right of both the Iranian government (by whom they were employed) and the entire Western economic and industrial apparatus (which trained and sponsored them) to solve indigenous local problems’ (Naficy 2003:194). The heroes of *film perjuangan* and particularly the authority figures in *film pembangunan* of the New Order were used in the same way and endorsed the same ideology. They legitimized and supported New Order rule and its development policies, driven by the desire to become part of the modern globalized (capitalist) consumerist world.

### **3.2. Film and historiography: Promotion and representations of New Order history**

As well as promoting its development policy through film, the regime used propaganda films to present its version of national history. Both the production and distribution of films which contained propaganda messages had been part of the mediascape ever since the medium of film entered Indonesia. First under Dutch colonial rule (1900-1942) and later under the Japanese occupation (1942-1945), various propaganda films were produced for the edification of national and transnational audiences. After Indonesian Independence in the 1950s, the State Film Corporation (*Perusahaan Film Negara*, PFN) began to produce short propaganda films. These films were generally designated Zeal for Development Films (*Film Gelora Pembangunan*), and were intended to arouse enthusiasm for modernization among the Indonesian rural masses (Prakosa 1997:184).<sup>8</sup> These films, and later under the New Order other films produced by different government institutions, tended to be crammed with messages about the benefits of development. They also included instructional films that showed how the development policies of the different government departments should be implemented (Prakosa 1997:185).

*Gelora Pembangunan* films and instructional films that encouraged development were shown either at mobile cinema screenings or in cinemas before the feature film was screened. In the 1980s, the films also began to be broadcast on the state television channel TVRI. Most of these films were labelled documentaries. As they overtly promoted government doctrines, the genre of documentaries was equated with propaganda (Prakosa 1997:190, 198). The films were all much of a muchness. Nearly all documentaries opened with the image of an aeroplane, followed by a map which set out the compass bearings, the plane landing in some remote area, and the image of native people doing their local dance to welcome the plane and the visitors it had brought (Garin Nugroho, personal communication in 2003). The object of the documentary was to depict the success of some development project or the exoticism of the preferably remote area, or a combination of both. All was accompanied by a voice-over, using a particular documentary pitch, with some 'cheery' music typically associated with this type of film in the background. Gotot Prakosa claims any viewers charmed by the New Order documentaries were few and far between. They were simply too predictably boring. Consequently, as this unpalatable fact dawned, a more sophisticated approach was embarked on and propaganda messages were wrapped up in drama fiction narratives. In 1983 the majority of development instruction and propaganda films used drama to get the messages across (Prakosa 1997:194).

Around the same time at which drama documentaries (docudrama) or fiction films were being used to spread New Order propaganda, there was a heightened interest in producing films about Indonesian history. In 1978 Brigadier General Dwipayana, the chief presidential image-builder, was installed as head of the Centre for State Film Production (*Pusat Produksi Film Negara*, PPFN, the former PFN). After 1965, PPFN had produced only a trickle of newsreels and documentaries. It had been reduced to operating mainly as a film-processing studio. Resurrected under Dwipayana's supervision, the state-run production company was given new tasks and resources (Sen 1994:66). Obsessed by ideas about the need to educate the young in their national history because of an imminent shift of generations, Dwipayana was committed to big budget feature films about New Order history and the heroic role of the head of state. In 1979 the production of films which represented key narratives of New Order history commenced.

Krishna Sen and David Hill (2000:11) have noted that: 'Explicitly in film and television the New Order defined the media as vehicles for the creation of a 'national culture' that would allow uncontested implementation of its development policies and more generally its authoritarian rule'. Next to this creation of a 'national culture', film also was an instrument to portray and strengthen the 'national fiction' (Anderson 1983) of the regime. The New Order based its legitimacy to rule on certain key narratives which were rooted in a constructed past. These key narratives developed into a 'national fiction' which shaped the depiction and imaginations of the nation. The most insistent of these narratives were based on three historical events. Under the New Order, these events were referred to as though they were film titles themselves: the *Serangan Umum* ('General Attack'; the six-hour penetration of

Yogyakarta by the Indonesian forces on 1 March 1949 led by Soeharto); the Peristiwa G30S/PKI ('The Incident of the 30 September Movement/Indonesian Communist Party'); and Supersemar, the acronym for *Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret* (11 March Instruction), which placed the mandate to rule Indonesia firmly in Soeharto's hands in 1966.<sup>9</sup>

A film was made featuring each of these three 'highlights' of history. These were intended to represent, pass on, and sanction the New Order version of the said historical events. The General Attack was actually represented twice. The first film about this event was produced in 1979. *Janur Kuning* (Yellow Coconut Frond, Alam Surawijaya) focuses on Soeharto as the historical and narrative hero. The second film was produced in 1982. *Serangan Fajar* (The Dawn Attack, Arifin C. Noer) is also about the General Attack, but not only about Soeharto. The film has three interlinked stories – 'the aristocratic family', 'the poor family', and the 'war of Independence' – and depicts Soeharto in a more symbolic role.<sup>10</sup> Both films were big-budget productions. The first was funded by revenues from the President himself, and even though not acknowledged officially, from the state oil company Pertamina. The second film was produced by PPFN (Sen 1994:90, 97), which also produced the film *Djakarta 1966* (Arifin C. Noer, 1982), about the signing of the instruction of 11 March 1966. *Djakarta 1966* concentrated on the chronological structure of this event (Kristanto 2005:227). However, soon after its premiere the film was taken out of circulation and today it appears impossible to retrieve the film in the archive of the Haji Usmar Ismail Film Center (*Pusat Perfilman Haji Usmar Ismail*, PPHUI) in Jakarta. Presumably the reasons for its vanishing act were some very positive reviews of the film praising the representation of President Soekarno, its storyline focusing on the lives of two fictitious students and not on particular *tokoh*, and the nuanced depiction of good and bad (Arifin 1989; Anirun 1989).

The most important historical narrative and film of the New Order regime was about the coup of 1965. The film *Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (Eradication of the Treason of the 30 September Movement/Indonesian Communist Party, Arifin C Noer, 1982), 271 minutes long, is a docudrama which followed exactly the details of the official New Order history of the events surrounding the coup (Kristanto 2005:231). The account of the 1965 coup was extremely relevant to the way in which the country was ruled under Soeharto. In her book *History in uniform* about the central role of the Indonesian military in the production of official history, Katharine McGregor has argued that: 'The official version of the coup attempt was used to define Indonesian core values, including a commitment to religion and morality' (McGregor 2007:109). The New Order version stated that PKI and it alone was the mastermind behind the coup and was therefore totally culpable. New Order official history, as it was printed in history books and taught in schools, suggested that after the Madiun Affair in 1948, in which PKI had rebelled against the central government, the Communist Party insidiously built up its strength. Over the years, the party infiltrated and indoctrinated leftist and Communist members of the military forces and directed the latter to rebel against the legitimate authority (Sulistiyo 1997:55-6).<sup>11</sup> Plans were made to overthrow the government of President Soekarno and install PKI in power. On the night of

30 September 1965 a group of young army officers under the leadership of Colonel Untung, aided and abetted by members of PKI, abducted six senior generals and one lower-ranking officer, and brutally slaughtered them. Chaos followed, but order was restored when troops under the control of Major-General Soeharto captured Untung and crushed the communist leadership (Mackie and MacIntyre 1994:10).

The urgent need for the restoration of 'peace and order' in the wake of events of 1965-1966 was the imperative factor cited to validate the repressive rule of the Soeharto regime. Passed over in silence in New Order history, but providing the very basis of its rule, was the purging and subsequent mass slaughter of presumed communists and leftist-orientated individuals which was unleashed by the coup of 1965. The post-G30S terror campaign of 1965-1966 is estimated to have led to the massacre of between 500,000 and one million people. Another half a million people were imprisoned without trial, many for more than a decade. The New Order diligently fuelled the fear of a possible recurrence of the chaos which had proved so destructive in the aftermath of the coup. PKI was accused of being a seething source of evil, opposed to the state ideology Pancasila, and was subsequently demonized in the mass media.<sup>12</sup> Accusations of being a communist had repercussions on whole families, a contagion passing on from one generation to the next. To the very end of Soeharto's rule Indonesian people were repeatedly warned about the persistent 'latent danger of communism'. When forces opposed the New Order government they were invariably accused of espousing communist ideologies. The fear of a recurrence of the events of 1965-1966 and of the harsh repercussions which befell anyone accused of being a communist, was a powerful tool wielded to achieve the precious order so desired by the New Order.<sup>13</sup>

The film *Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G30S PKI* was produced by PPFN. Its production commenced in 1982 and it was finished two years later. The film, with the revealing initial title *Sejarah Orde Baru* (History of the New Order, SOB), was based on the work of the military historian Nugroho Notosusanto. In 1981, when plans were made for the production of the film, the head of PPFN Dwipayana believed such a film could only be made under close government supervision (Sen 1994:82). *G30S/PKI* was produced to present the 'historical facts' behind the coup. In a speech which President Soeharto delivered to the Parliament of the Fourth Development government in 1984 before the compulsory screening of the film, he stated that the purpose behind the making of *G30S/PKI* was to inform the people, particularly the younger generation, about the dark side of Indonesian history, urging them to exercise vigilance so as to ensure that such an incident would never happen again (Atmowiloto 1986:6). Dwipayana supported the President's standpoint and argued that now that the older echelon of army officers and bureaucrats had been replaced by a younger generation, it was essential that those who were infants at the time of the coup in 1965 be informed of the 'facts' about 'the viciousness of PKI'. He believed that by watching the film they would not err into and be seduced by communist ideologies (Ibid:5).

Dwipayana was not alone in his idea. Within a few months of its release, many government officials and bureaucrats began the task of organizing mandatory screenings for members of



the Indonesian Army (ABRI), government officials and bureaucrats, and schoolchildren. The New Order government never actually initiated these first screenings formally. However, it was not very long before the film was being used officially as a vehicle to transmit the New Order's representation of the past. In 1984, *G30S/PKI* was made part of a compulsory screening programme in schools and government departments around 30 September. Moreover, it was also made part of the curriculum of the 'Education in the History of the Struggle of the Nation' (*Pendidikan Sejarah Perjuangan Bangsa*, PSPB) for history classes in schools. In this guise it was screened in 'P4 Pancasila', state ideology indoctrination courses which were also obligatory for university students and civil servants.<sup>14</sup> To date, the film is the single most screened, and presumably most-watched of all Indonesian films (Kristanto 2005:231; Sen and Hill 2000:148). A crucial aspect of the distribution and exhibition of *G30S/PKI* was the government's ceaseless propaganda that the film depicted historical *facts*, and showed the one and only true version of the events surrounding the 1965 coup.

Under New Order rule, no other films which dealt directly with the 1965 coup were produced. As the film *G30S/PKI* was already there to represent the historical facts of the coup, all other films which might present other versions of the subject were precluded. There were only three other films which were set in the context of the struggle against communism. The first of these, *Operasi X* (Operation X), was produced in 1968 by the 'devoutly Islamic and anti-communist' Misbach Yusa Biran (Kristanto 2005:73; Sen 1994:81). The second, *Penumpasan Sisa-sisa PKI Blitar Selatan (Operasi Trisula)* (Extermination of the Remnants of PKI of South Blitar (Operation Trisula), BZ Kadaryono), was produced by PPFN in 1986. It dealt with the capture of communists in East Java in 1965-1966 and was presented in the form of a docudrama. As the plot of the film was so startlingly black and white, completely devoid of any nuances, it was perceived to be pure, unadulterated propaganda (Kristanto 2005:290).<sup>15</sup> The third film, a television soap with the title *Terjebak* (Trapped), directed by Dedi Setiadi, was produced in 1996. The soap's production was initiated by the 1996 Committee of the 'Day of Commemoration of the Sacred Pancasila', which also supplied the outline of the screenplay. Its theme was the riots which flared up after state troops attacked the office of the political opposition party Indonesian Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*, PDI) on 27 July 1996 and it unashamedly represented the members of this party as part of 'current communist activities' (bud 1996; Iwan 1996).<sup>16</sup>

Above I mentioned the important role of heroes and authority figures in *film perjuangan* and *film pembangunan*. Furthermore, I alluded to the stress on the restoration of order as an inevitable ingredient in all New Order films. New Order history films shared both these traits. Obviously, in films about the highlights of New Order history the hero was Soeharto. The head of state was represented as both the hero of the struggle for independence and of the 1965 coup. Importantly, the films emphasized that after the coming to power of the New Order after 1965 order was restored in the nation. Another recurrent feature in New Order films which dealt with history was the juxtaposition of all sources of 'evil' against 'good', which was associated with Islam. In many films set in the past, both those dealing with New

Order historiography and in fictional historical tales, the protagonists were pious men or women. To give an example, both *G30S/PKI* and *Operasi Trisula* contain a scene in which brutal men (communists) violently storm into a Mosque and the house of pious Muslims respectively. There they attack innocent people who are praying, and trample on the Quran. These antagonists are depicted clearly showing contempt for Islam.

For the beginning of *G30S/PKI* and an excerpt from *Operasi Trisula* see Disc Two 3.2.

In other scenes in both films there is no doubt that the good are religious. In *Operasi Trisula* all protagonists are adherents of Islam as indeed they are in the film *G30S/PKI*. However, the latter is more subtle in that it also highlights the Christian background of General Pandjaitan. In the scenes in the film which feature Pandjaitan and his family at home, Western classical music (which many Indonesians may assume to be ‘Church music’) is played. The camera also captures crosses on the wall. Likewise, in New Order films which were set in the past and based on fictional heroes, Islam was depicted as the nurturing source of the good which defeats all evil. For example, the films about Betawi (native Jakarta) folk legend Si Pitung and comic book character Jaka Sembung, which were produced in the 1980s, refer to Islam as an aid to overcoming problems.<sup>17</sup>

For an excerpt from Si Pitung Banteng Betawi see Disc Two 3.2.

The opposition between evil communism and good Islam in the historical films was part of the political discourses of the regime. Communists were accused of not believing in God, and generally speaking atheism was equated with communism. In *History in uniform* McGregor suggested that the manner in which the bodies of Army generals and lieutenant were dumped in the well at *Lubang Buaya* was particularly offensive to followers of Islam. Moreover she mentioned that in the first published Army version of the coup attempt it was noted that the coup had failed first and foremost because of ‘the hands of God’ (2007:69-70). However, McGregor pointed out that particularly in New Order historiography of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Islam, mainly in its radical form, was also represented as a threat to the Pancasila and national stability. Only by the late 1980s concessions were made to support the promotion and practice of Islam as a religion, as opposed to political Islam. At that time President Soeharto had re-evaluated the Muslim vote after the implementation of the ‘sole foundation’ (*asas tunggal*) legislation – which required all organizations to make Pancasila their sole basis – and had made a move towards embracing Islam personally (Liddle 1996:614). Accordingly, in New Order representations in film, but also in museums and textbooks, followers of such ‘extremist’ and political Islamic groups as *Darul Islam* (House of Islam), who strove for an Islamic State after Independence, were presented as ‘crazed bandits devoid of religious feelings’ (Heider 1991:105) rather than as Muslims who used the religious teachings properly (McGregor 2007:187, 191-2).<sup>18</sup>

The use of religion (mostly Islam) as the source of good in films was also part of a new code of ethics for film-making, which was launched by the Film Council (*Dewan Film*



*Nasional*, DFN) in 1981. One of the instructions in this Ethical Code was that ‘Dialogue, scenes, visualization, and conflicts between the protagonist and antagonist in the story have to focus on devotion to and the glorification of the One and Only God.’<sup>19</sup> New Order historical films represented the past with modes of engagement which stressed heroism and contrasted the sources of evil with religion. Hence, it may come as no surprise that, as mentioned in the first section, some believed that films about the fictional characters Pitung and Jaka Sembung, which applied similar narrative devices, represented real-life national heroes. In Chapter Five and Six, I shall examine ideas and representations of heroes, reality, and religion in film in more detail.

### 3.3. ‘Film in the framework of’: *G30S/PKI* and Hapsak

The ways in which audiences read films do not necessarily coincide with the intention of filmmakers.<sup>20</sup> Presumably to safeguard and drive home one particular reading of (propaganda) films as much as possible, under the New Order these films were subjected to the practice of ‘framing’. The films were screened in the ‘framework’ (*dalam rangka*) of a particular event or (special) occasion. In 1997 the writer and scholar Umar Kayam launched the notion ‘art in the framework of’ (*kesenian dalam rangka*). In his article Kayam pointed out the practices of neo-feudalism which were rooted in such different fields of Indonesian society as politics, business, bureaucracy, education, and the arts. Referring to the latter, Kayam argued: ‘In the field of the arts, these are constructed with reference to the supremacy of the authority in power and within a colossal presentation of ‘art in the framework of’ the ritualization of the nation’ (Kayam 1997).<sup>21</sup> Kayam’s phrase ‘art in the framework of’ can be easily transferred to the convention of screening ‘films in the framework of’: the practice of positioning and framing films in a specific context among other things to influence their assessment by their audience. New Order history films in particular lent themselves to screening in specific frameworks connected to national celebrations and commemorations of historical events. On national holidays, or on other particular occasions of collective remembrance, these films featured on television, in cinemas, and at mobile cinema screenings. This linking of films to the commemorations or celebrations of historical events was one element in a strategy to furnish and empower the New Order’s ‘invention’ of the past (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

In this section, I analyse the ‘frames’ and practice of ‘framing’ films connected to the concept of ‘film in the framework of’. My analysis covers the most extreme example of the practice of framing a film under the New Order: the role of the film *G30S/PKI* as part of the annual celebration, and media event, of the ‘Day of Commemoration of the Sacred Pancasila’ (*Hari Peringatan Kesaktian Pancasila*, henceforth Hapsak). I use the term ‘media event’ as it was coined by Dayan and Katz (1992). However, in contrast to Dayan and Katz, who discussed live events in democratic nations (1992:22), the media events of the New Order had a totalitarian background. Therefore some traits in the media events which Dayan and Katz postulated will be alien to Hapsak.<sup>22</sup>

The production of films to promote key narratives of the history of the New Order alone was not enough. To reach the goal of consolidating the New Order version of history, the films about the 1949 General Attack on Yogyakarta and the Incident of G30S/PKI were also assimilated into celebrations of collective remembrance. One exception was the film about the 11 March Instruction, which was denied the same treatment and status as the other films. As mentioned earlier, soon after production *Djakarta 1966* somehow disappeared. The first special screening of the film *Janur Kuning* was held on 1 March 1980, in the context of the commemoration of the General Attack. Ten days later, on 11 March, the film was presented to the public as part of the celebration of the 11 March Instruction. Until the mid-1980s, every 1 March *Janur Kuning* was shown on television to commemorate and pass on New Order images of national history. Thereafter the more successful film *Serangan Fajar* replaced *Janur Kuning*. Because of the more modest role of Soeharto, audiences perceived *Serangan Fajar* to be less blatant propaganda. *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* was also connected to the commemoration of a historical event: the coup of 1965. Every year from the mid-1980s until 1997 the film was broadcast simultaneously on all national television channels on the evening of 30 September as part of the annual commemoration and celebration of Hapsak on 1 October.

*G30S/PKI* was screened for the first time on the Indonesian state television channel TVRI in the framework of Hapsak on 30 September 1985. After the advent of private television stations in 1993, all commercial broadcasters participated without exception. The simultaneous screenings became part of the ritual of Hapsak as a national holiday of the New Order. Ever since 1967, every year early in the morning on 1 October a military ceremony was held at the Monumen Pancasila Sakti (Sacred Pancasila Monument). The ceremony was broadcast live on television, and rerun a couple of times during the day.<sup>23</sup> The Pancasila monument was built in Jakarta in 1973 near Lubang Buaya (Crocodile Hole), the dry well in which the bodies of the murdered Generals were found. A marble column was constructed around the well-head, and at some distance from the well stands the Pancasila monument. It consists of a huge stone shrine with a bronze relief of the New Order version of events as they took place on the night of 30 September 1965. Embellishing the top of the shrine are statues of the murdered generals and officer in a defiant stance, with the national symbol of the mythical eagle-like bird Garuda bearing a plaque with the five symbols of Pancasila on its chest in the background. There is another plaque which reads that 'We the Generals perished to defend the honour of the sacred Pancasila'. Furthermore, an old wooden school building, the place where according to New Order history the abducted generals were tortured and mutilated by members of PKI, has been made into a museum with a diorama. On display are human size puppets of the abducted Generals, tied to chairs and bleeding as they are tortured by male and female 'communists'. In the background an audiocassette plays sound fragments of the film *G30S/PKI*.

Every October 1 the field around Lubang Buaya would be filled with representatives of the military and groups of schoolchildren who were lined up in regimented fashion. At the

back of the ranks of the military and schoolchildren, enormous placards bearing the images of the murdered Generals were erected. Under the trees near the old school building, an orchestra consisting of around 200 children drawn from both primary and high school played the national anthem and other songs extolling bravery and urging remembrance. The guests invited to attend the ceremony were the President, military officials, members of Parliament, foreign diplomats, and relatives of the murdered generals.

The broadcast of Hapsak invariably followed the same pattern. Before the ceremony commenced, either a studio discussion was held or such old archive material as newsreel footage was shown while a voice-over recounted the New Order account of the events; sometimes there was a combination of both. Every time this account began by enumerating particular events leading to the 1965 coup, and then passed on to the coup itself and the heroic deeds of Major-General Soeharto. It always ended with a warning about the ever-present latent danger of those who sympathized with communist ideologies. Thereupon the studio switched over to Lubang Buaya to show the arrival of the President and Vice-President and their wives. Each year the composition of the ceremony consisted of two parts, beginning with a solemn service of observance and ending with a livelier commemorative component. The former commenced with the arrival of the President who advanced to a podium where, once he had taken up his position, a colonel asked for his permission to begin the service. After that, the national anthem was played and the President, as master of ceremonies, authorized the beginning of the observance by ordering the participants to bow their heads. Following a minute's silence the national anthem was played again, after which another component of the service began. In this section, four documents – the text of the Pancasila, the first lines of the National Constitution of 1945, the Ikrar (pledge, or charter to honour and defend the Pancasila), and a prayer – were read by Parliamentary ministers. The Ikrar document was signed as proof that the ceremony had taken place that year. The documents were handed over by high school students, two boys and two girls, dressed in uniforms resembling those worn by the navy, who would march to the officials, hand over the documents, and then march back to their places in military fashion. The service was closed by order of the President and was concluded by playing the national anthem.

In the second part of Hapsak the President, Vice-President, and their wives, followed by foreign diplomats, paid a visit to the well, the monument, and the old school building-cum-museum. This completed, the President shook the hands of the wives and relatives of the murdered Generals. Finally, at the end of the ceremony he listened to the orchestra of school children. Often the President would shake the hand of the conductor and pat the soloist (a small boy either singing or playing violin) who had just performed the touching melody 'Gugur Bunga di Taman Bakti' (Fallen Flowers in the Garden of Devotion, composed by Ismail Marzuki) on the shoulder. As the President left Lubang Buaya the orchestra played an upbeat song paying tribute to bravery. In this second part of the ceremony every year the television commentator could be heard to repeat the same 'mantras' as the President and his company were filmed walking from one site to another. These mantras began by mentioning

various treacheries perpetrated by communists, starting with the rebellion against the Central government in Madiun in 1948, up to the coup of 1965. Then he or she summed up the content of the pledge which stated that those who attended the ceremony (and watched the television programme) were aware of the coup perpetrated against the legitimate government attempted by PKI and its 30 September Movement. It ushered in 'a national tragedy culminating in the vicious and inhumane death of the heroes of the Revolution'.<sup>24</sup> This national tragedy had been allowed to occur as the result of a lack of caution about the actions of PKI, which had deliberately deceived a part of the Indonesian people in its attempts to eradicate Pancasila and its denial of the oneness of the Indonesian nation. In conclusion, the commentator warned that the Indonesian people should remain vigilant to the latent danger of communism. In the meantime, as a background to the voice of the commentator, the orchestra of schoolchildren could be heard playing national songs of remembrance and bravery.

For an excerpt from Hapsak 1995 see Disc Two 3.3.

Both the outline and gist of the media event Hapsak and the screening of the film *G30SPKI* as part of the commemoration of the 1965 coup were components in a conscious device to refurbish collective memories.<sup>25</sup> Dayan and Katz argued that media events can be perceived as electronic monuments (1992:211-212), and this label can also be applied to the film *G30S/PKI*. As an annual rite commemorating the 1965 coup it served to buttress the power bases of the New Order regime. The four elements which formed the nucleus of the Hapsak media event were: the frequent screening of the same newsreel images before the Hapsak commemoration would begin; the standard use of specific nationalist songs; the repeated citation of certain 'mantras' and the seemingly endless reiteration by the commentator that the account consisted of historical 'facts'; and the emphasis on the 'latent danger of communists'. The event was to ensure that history would be remembered in a particular way, thereby propagating and fertilizing New Order representations of Indonesian history. However, these elements were also responsive to contemporaneous political needs. In an article about the basis for and changing context of commemoration of Hapsak, McGregor points out the subtle changes of the meaning of the day during the course of the New Order. She shows how over time the day became an occasion on which such new enemies of the regime as extremist Islam and other possible political threats to the regime, labelled 'atheists', were defined in response to changing political circumstances (McGregor 2002).<sup>26</sup>

The film *G30S/PKI* as an electronic or audio-visual monument to the New Order was founded to create and bolster collective memories. Initially it was used to serve as a 'medium of memory' which transferred 'sets of images' of a social understanding of events, represented as memory (Watson 1994:8); later it was transformed into a monument. It can be accepted as a monument of the New Order not least because of the status it achieved and the position it assumed as part of official discourses and strategies advocating a certain version of history. This bestowed on it an enormously influential

position in Indonesian collective memory. In 2001, the senior journalist and founder of Tempo magazine Goenawan Mohammad quoted a survey which showed that more than 80 per cent of the respondents believed that the film presented a factual account of the event (Lloyd and Smith, 2001:131).<sup>27</sup> The film was made widely known through the mechanisms of its distribution and exhibition as an essential part of Hapsak, as well as through the extensive compulsory screening programmes mentioned earlier.

In contrast to the Pancasila monument, which was physically confined to Lubang Buaya, Hapsak and the film *G30S/PKI* were not bound to a place, but were mobile. Hapsak, and the screening of *G30S/PKI* on the eve of Hapsak, travelled to its audiences; if the television happened to be turned on, the event entered the space of Indonesian households through its simultaneous broadcast on all national television channels. But, in contradistinction to Hapsak, the film *G30S/PKI* was not restricted to television alone. Every 30 September it was and could be attended in Indonesian cinemas across the country, in which the film was screened as part of the history curriculum, making it obligatory viewing for schoolchildren. *G30S/PKI* even travelled abroad where it was screened at Indonesian embassies as part of the state-constructed P4 Pancasila training course for Indonesian students and bureaucrats (Buana-R 1985; BY 1985; DI/4 1985).

The films *Janur Kuning* and *Serangan Fajar* can also be interpreted as mobile audio-visual cultural monuments of the New Order. Both films represented historical key narratives of the regime and were accorded a treatment comparable to the film *G30S/PKI*. They were screened on 1 March in the framework of the commemoration of the General Attack, or at other celebrations or occasions connected to Indonesian Independence. In the case of *Janur Kuning* (1979) and *Serangan Fajar* (1982), the audio-visual monuments were produced even before the physically constructed version of the historical incident was founded: the monument dedicated to the General Attack, the Monumen Yogya Kembali (Return of Yogyakarta Monument), was built as late as 1985. However, because the films were never made a component in a compulsory screening programme in the scope of *G30S/PKI*, they never achieved the monumentality accorded that film.

The linking of New Order films about history to events which commemorate the past is an example of the use of film 'in the framework of'. In its connection to Hapsak the film *G30S/PKI* offers an extreme example of this practice. Besides the New Order history films, there were other films also screened in particular frameworks. These frameworks were not necessarily connected to national holidays or celebrations of the past or of the state, even though they were often used in this fashion.<sup>28</sup> In the case of the New Order history films, the rhetoric of framing was fashioned to provide a two-pronged thrust: to give a form and context to the way the films were intended to be read, and to make these films part of or, alternatively, to turn the watching of these films into a rite of commemoration.

## Conclusion

Certain genres emerge in certain times and reflect contemporaneous socio-political inclinations. This phenomenon can be found in the production of particular film genres and the traits they exhibit, the discourses about these genres and their meanings, and the position they are assigned in discourses and in national film history. In early discussions about the new genre of independent film in the autumn of 1998, confusion arose about how to understand this *Reformasi* genre. Because of its name, it was sometimes thought that the themes of *film independen* were drawn from the struggle for Indonesian independence, just as were the familiar *film perjuangan*. *Film perjuangan*, *film pembangunan*, and docudrama/propaganda documentaries were important film genres of the New Order. These genres reflected its rule and rhetoric, and were linked from the perspective of film history to New Order discursive practices. The genres acquired a meaning idiosyncratic to the way in which they were used during the Soeharto regime.

The New Order regime made use of film to secure and propagate its version of national history. It is no coincidence that a film was made on each of the three key narratives of history on which the New Order regime based its legitimacy to rule the nation. The most important of these historical narratives and films was inspired by the account of the coup of 1965 upheld by the regime. With the passing of the years and as an inescapable part of compulsory film screenings and the practice of Hapsak, the film *Penghianatan G30S/PKI* was slowly but surely turned into an audio-visual monument of the New Order. The joint practices of promoting and framing gave *G30S/PKI* an almost mythical position in Indonesian popular collective memory.

An analysis of the conventions in text production and consumption of New Order history and development films exposes the socio-political climate of the time. These genres contained parallel modes of engagement of the New Order version of the past and of its concomitant ideologies. History and development films invariably contained the same actors (heroes, authority figures), and themes (restoration of order, 'good' Islam combatting its selected source of evil (communism), and claims to represent factual reality). These features mirrored the dominant discourses on how to characterize society under New Order rule. I hasten to stress that the dominant narratives and generic conventions of heroes and authority figures, claims to factual reality, and the restoration of order are not restricted to either Indonesia as a nation or the New Order alone. On average, worldwide film texts feature heroes, the victory of good over evil, and a restoration of order. In performing this function, documentaries and films present truth claims in many different contexts. However, as Trinh Minh-ha (1993:195) has argued, there is no absolute elucidation of the significations and symbols of the colour red. The value it is attributed varies between one culture and another and also proliferates within the confines of each culture.

Likewise, the film genres and films which were representative of New Order historiography and its ideologies delineated the dominant socio-political discourses of the regime.

They reveal the ideal espoused by the regime of how the past and present in Indonesian society should be represented or imagined. In this account, an important element was found in the socio-political context of New Order rule and how this resembled the political climate in Iran in the 1950s. Both countries espoused an anti-communist sentiment and exhibited virtually identical films promoted by USIA film policies.<sup>29</sup> The logical corollary is that the production of film texts and the promotion of certain genres can be seen as part of a political discourse, outlook, and policy which involved, but simultaneously transcended, Indonesian boundaries. Another element which addressed the context of New Order politics was the unrelenting promotion and advocacy of the head of state (mainly in the film *G30S/PKI*) as a hero and an authority figure, who restored order after the 1965 coup, protected Indonesia against communism, and was therefore entitled to rule the nation. Examining discourse practices at the intersection of text production and consumption, the account of the convention of screening films in the framework of a particular event or occasion also opened a window to New Order political affairs. The examples of New Order historical films, and particularly the connection of *G30S/PKI* to the media event Hapsak, leave no doubt about the way the films, and indeed the past, should be read and remembered. To screen the films as part of rites of commemoration was to assign a uniform shade of red to historiography.

## 4 Post-colonial histories, common people, and commercial frameworks

### Introduction

The New Order can be construed as a neo-imperialist or neo-colonialist regime (Anderson 1990, Sen 2003). Particularly in the period immediately after the resignation of President Soeharto, discussions began to emerge in the world of film which addressed concepts of post-colonialism in cinema. This chapter examines a variety of post-colonial discourses and discourse practices in film after the eclipse of the New Order. The guiding theme is Fairclough's premise that all ongoing changes in society and culture are expressed in the media's diverse and conflicting shifts in discursive practices (1995:52). I analyse the way in which, after the stepping down of President Soeharto, new post-colonial discourses and imaginations of society were reflected in film discourse practices. I explore the emergence of alternative genres and try to pinpoint the continuations in particular modes of engagement, the dominant representations of topics which are part of the central discourses in a society, and the practice of framing films, which continued to survive during *Reformasi*. As argued by Fairclough, the discursive practices of an unsettled society are on average variable and unstable, while the discursive practices of a conservative and established society are unitary and conventional (Ibid:65). Using this argument, I will examine variations and continuities in representations of Indonesian history and society during the upsetting yet exciting times of Reform.

### 4.1. Counter-history: Changes and continuities in Post-Soeharto modes of engagement

In the euphoric atmosphere of Reform that prevailed after the resignation of President Soeharto, in all kinds of fields attempts were enthusiastically made to adapt to changes in the socio-political conditions of the Indonesian nation or to set them in motion. Some debates addressed the problem of New Order historiography and the need to 'set history straight' ('*meluruskan sejarah*').<sup>1</sup> Hence dominant representations of New Order film history also came under fire. In addition to questioning the highlights in film history, several debates concentrated on New Order propaganda historical films. The contents and compulsory screening of the film *Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* in particular were targeted.

The excitement of Reform and the concomitant sudden freedom of expression generated new developments in discursive practices which inevitably involved the contents and mediation of films. Different film-makers, both professional and amateur, began to produce films in order to present new versions of history and society. In next to no time, there was a rise in the production of documentaries. A large number of the new documentaries told



alternative or counter-histories to those unfolded under the New Order. Generally speaking, these documentaries tended to focus on the victims of Soeharto rule. Those who had suffered were given a platform to tell their stories about the atrocities committed under the New Order. Several non-governmental organizations, both foreign and domestic, aided in producing and funding these documentaries. The film *Kameng Gampoeng nyang Keunong Geulawa* (The village goat takes the beating, Aryo Danusiri 1999), for example, was supported by the Indonesian Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy Elsham, and his film *Penyair Negeri Linge* (The poet of Linge homeland, 2000) by the Ford Foundation.

For an excerpt from the documentary *Kameng Gampoeng nyang Keunong Geulawa* (Aryo Danusiri 1999) see Disc Two 4.1.

The film *Perempuan di Wilayah Konflik* (Women in conflict zones, Gadis Arivia 2002) was produced by the Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan, *Lahir di Aceh* (Born in Aceh, Ariani Djalal 2003) was produced by the Tifa Foundation and Offstream Production, *Pena Pena Patah* (Broken pens, Sarjev Faozan, 2002) was produced by the Coalition of NGO's on Human Rights in Aceh, and *Kado Buat Rakyat Indonesia* (A present for the Indonesian People, Daniel Indra Kusuma 2003) was supported by the Centre for Democracy and Social Justice, and the Indonesia Centre for Reform and Social Emancipation.

Besides documentaries, a few fiction films based on true stories of human rights violations were also produced. For example, the docu-drama *Puisi tak Terkuburkan* (English title *A Poet*, Garin Nugroho, 1999) was about Ibrahim Kadir, a traditional poet from the village of Takengon in Aceh, who in 1965 was accused of being a Communist activist. He was imprisoned for twenty-two days and witnessed a variety of cruel executions. *Marsinah* (directed by Slamet Rahardjo, 2002) was about the murder of a woman factory worker by the authorities in East Java in May 1993. *Kutunggu di Sudut Semanggi* (I'll be waiting at the corner of Semanggi, Lukmantoro 2004) was based on the Semanggi tragedy of November 1998. Many counter-history film and documentary productions circulated at independent film screenings and film festivals both in Indonesia and abroad. Some even reached Indonesian cinemas, but hardly any of these films were ever screened on Indonesian television, enabling them to attract the same attention and reach enjoyed by the New Order history films in the past.

The new documentaries and their screening at film festivals and other venues gradually set in motion a shift in the meaning of the genre. From being a propaganda instrument under the New Order, documentary was transformed into a genre which gave a 'voice to the voiceless'. Nevertheless, the notion that the documentary genre almost invariably contained propaganda lingered on for quite some time. The legacy of the New Order connotations of this genre was apparent in the choice different film-makers made to produce either a documentary or fiction film after the collapse of the New Order regime. If the objective was to make a claim that the contents of the film represented facts based on reality, some film-makers preferred to make a fiction film. To cite one example, in 2000 the Muhammadiyah University in Malang

(UMM) wanted to produce a film which would give an account of the propagation of Islam in Indonesia. This film was to be based on authentic historical evidence obtained from sources collected by the Muhammadiyah. The principal of the university, Mahadjir Effendi, said they had decided to make a fiction film instead of a documentary 'to avoid the practices of manipulation, as had been done in the historical documentary *G30S/PKI*'. In his opinion a fiction film was not only easier to digest, it was also more 'objective' (FM/B-2 2000).

Although there was a discernible rise in documentaries which countered New Order propaganda and historiography, particularly in the first years of Reform many new productions employed structures, styles and formulas which did not deviate greatly from New Order propaganda and history films. In this section I begin with an example of two post-Soeharto documentaries which in certain audio or visual features either refer to or repeat particular styles and narrative traits found in the film *G30S/PKI* and also in the Hapsak ceremony. This description is followed by an analysis of the repetition of old styles and narrative traits in new and counter-propaganda documentaries in a broader context.

Bill Nichols postulates that the use of certain styles and modes of production in documentaries defines concepts of historical representation. He argues that such modes of documentary production as 'expository', 'observational', 'interactive' and 'reflexive' function in the same fashion as genres, in that they are ways of characterizing films by their likeness to rather than their differences from one another. But instead of co-existing as different types of imaginary worlds (science fiction, westerns, melodrama), modes represent different concepts of historical representation. Nichols claims that different modes may co-exist at any moment in time and can be transposed across different periods and national cinemas. The creation of a new mode is the result of challenge and contestation elicited by a previous mode (1991:22-3). As Nichols links modes of documentary production to the identification of concepts of historical representation, this presupposes that the appearance of new modes also challenges previous models of historical representation. Nichols' argument about modes of production applies equally to modes of engagement. However, in early post-Soeharto documentaries specific New Order modes of engagement were repeated, even though the purpose of the films was to edit and re-edit collective memory. This section contains an outline and analysis of this process, bearing in mind that the reproduction of New Order audio-visual styles, structures, and narratives in post-Soeharto documentary productions may also simply relate to the widespread practice of '*jiplak-menjiplak*' (the replication, imitation, or blatant copying) of film formulas.

The post-Soeharto documentary *Mass Grave* (2001, Lexi Rambadeta) addresses an aspect of Indonesian history which was passed over in silence under New Order rule. The film is about the exhumation in Central Java in 2001 of a mass grave containing the remains of massacred alleged PKI members in the mountains of Wonosobo sometime in 1965-1966. In its opening scenes, *Mass Grave* instantly recalls the visualization of New Order documentaries and the film *Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI*. This similarity is particularly striking in

the composition of the last fifteen minutes of the film. The closing scenes of *G30S/PKI* are devoted to the retrieval of the bodies of the slain generals from the dry well of Lubang Buaya. Soon after the scene begins it shows the image of the tops of the trees clustered around the well shot from a low angle. Then from a top angle the camera zooms in on the well from which the decomposing bodies of the generals are taken out one by one. Thereupon, the camera moves back filming the bystanders. The position of the bystanders, among them the actor playing the role of Major General Soeharto, was a detailed reconstruction from the historical archive material of the event. On screen a text appears alerting the audience that the voice which they are about to hear is the authentic recorded live speech of Soeharto obtained from archive material. At the same time the speech begins to be broadcast in the background, the soundtrack of 'Gugur Bunga di Taman Bakti' (which was composed during the presidency of Soekarno to pay respect to national heroes who had fallen in the struggle for independence) begins to play. At that point, the original colour image of *G30S/PKI* is replaced by black and white archive material. In the minutes that follow the film continues with cross-cutting shots of the re-enacted drama, copying the archive material of the incident in detail, with real footage of the occasion in black and white.

For an excerpt from the closing scenes of *G30S/PKI* see Disc Two 4.1.

The film ends with archive material of the state funeral of the generals and the authentic live speech delivered by General Nasution in 1965, in which he recalls the sacred tasks of the Armed Forces as defenders of the freedom, the people, and the highest authorities of the nation. He asserts his belief that the slain generals are national heroes who paid the ultimate price and that the living members of the Armed Forces should continue to uphold these values. In both the dramatized version, which is filmed in colour, and in the historical black and white footage material some shots of photo and film cameras are included in order to emphasize that these cameras captured and recorded the event to which the viewers bear witness.<sup>2</sup> Using to the fullest advantage the cross-cutting of fictional film with historical audio and visual archive material in the last fifteen minutes, *G30S/PKI* emphasized it was not merely a representation of the past, but a representation of the facts: 'the true story'.

The documentary *Mass Grave* reproduced the structure and some of the visual aspects of Hapsak and the last fifteen minutes of *G30S/PKI*. However, the human remains exhumed could not have been more different: not those of the generals at Lubang Buaya but those of the people killed in massacres in 1965 in Central Java. Just as in the film *G30S/PKI*, after its opening scene, which shows a map of the location, *Mass Grave* begins with the depiction of the tops of the trees encircling the mass grave in Wonosobo. Then the camera zooms in on the exhumation of the skulls and bones of people who perished in the bloody aftermath of the 1965 coup. After this opening sequence, the documentary introduces black and white archive material images. This time it is not the set-up of the scene itself, but the insertion of old stock footage and newsreel images which remind the viewer of New Order documentaries. The same material was televised each year under the New Order before the Hapsak ceremony commenced to

illustrate the story of the historical events which occurred in 1965.

For an excerpt from *Mass Grave* see Disc Two 4.1.

The visual structure and style of the opening scenes of *Mass Grave* revived and repeated images which easily could have been part of the collective memories of Indonesians who lived through the New Order. I am thinking especially of the image of the retrieval of the decomposing bodies of the murdered generals from a dry well at the end of *G30S/PKI*. This image was now replaced by the dry bones of the victims from the mass grave in Wonosobo, brought to the surface one by one. Importantly, in *Mass Grave* old stock footage and newsreel images, familiar to many, were used again, but this time provided with a new narration exposing the atrocities committed at the founding of the New Order.

The second example of a post-Soeharto documentary which reproduces particular emblems of the film *G30S/PKI* and the Hapsak ceremony is Tino Saroengallo's 1998 documentary *Student Movement in Indonesia*. It depicts demonstrations and rallies and the ensuing violent clashes between student activists and the Indonesian army in Jakarta in 1998. The documentary recounts the incidents at the Trisakti University and at the Semanggi flyover in which students were shot dead. In this documentary an important audio motif of *G30S/PKI* and the Hapsak ceremony, the song 'Gugur Bunga di Taman Bakti', appears and is commented on. In *G30S/PKI*, 'Gugur Bunga' is used as a theme song at the end. In the last fifteen minutes the soundtrack of the song is heard as though from a great distance at the moment the bodies of the generals are retrieved. The song can be heard more loudly in the background to the live speeches of Soeharto and Nasution. 'Gugur Bunga' was a leitmotif during the Hapsak ceremony, in which it featured over and over again. Often the song was played exactly at the moment when the President either headed for the children's orchestra or when he was standing in front of it. The song also often featured in the background to the newsreel and stock footage material broadcast before the Hapsak ceremony commenced. In *Student Movement*, students sang the song to commemorate the Trisakti incident: on 12 May 1998, the army killed four students of the Trisakti University in Jakarta. In the documentary, a voice-over comments that the students and the army were singing the same songs of bravery and nationalism.

For an excerpt from the film see Disc Two 4.1.

The reproduction of certain audio and visual structures or emblems from the film *G30S/PKI* and the Hapsak ceremony can be seen as quotations of important New Order electronic monuments which tell new histories. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam suggest that: 'The same filmic images and sounds provoke distinct reverberations in different communities' (1994:353). To paraphrase Shohat and Stam, in post-Soeharto Indonesian communities, some filmic images and sounds evoked specific reverberations. Quotations of audio and visual aspects of the film *G30S/PKI* and the Hapsak media event might have acted as an instant trigger to the subtexts of these themes, which relate to conceptions of heroism and nationalism.

Although this was not necessarily the intention of the directors of the films, the

examples demonstrate a juxtaposition of old images and new narrations, and new images and old narrations.<sup>3</sup> The altered use of emblems which were part of memory sites of the New Order now abstracted from their source functioned as a device which re-structured national history and public memory. At viewings of *Mass Grave* in Jakarta in 2002 and 2003, audiences commented that the film instantly brought to mind images of the decomposing bodies of the generals in the epic G30S/PKI. In their theory of media events, Dayan and Katz postulate that the collective memory in a society is edited and re-edited by quoting from earlier events (1992:211). These Indonesian documentaries, in which specific monumental images and sounds were used in a different context, are examples of such a process. In the case of *Mass Grave*, the same mode of visual representation was employed to tell a reversal of the authorized story: that of the victims of the New Order.<sup>4</sup> In the documentary *Student Movement*, the melody 'Gugur Bunga di Taman Bakti' was quoted to usher in new national heroes: the Trisakti students who were killed by the Indonesian Army.

The emphasis on victims and newly created heroes in two very disparate documentaries can be used to illustrate preoccupations with certain modes of representation in a majority of documentaries which were produced after the end of Soeharto rule. In the first few years of Reform, many new and 'counter-propaganda' films and documentaries were employed to provide a forum for victims and shape new heroes to displace the old, hackneyed ones. Apart from the documentary *Student Movement* in which 'Gugur Bunga' was used to define the heroes of Reformation, the reproduction of the conventional narrative trait of heroism in New Order propaganda and historical films was significant. In December 2003, the organizing committee of the Indonesian Documentary Film Festival (*Festival Film Dokumenter*, FFD) in Yogyakarta allowed me to watch all fifty or so films which were to participate in the FFD competition that year. Watching these films, it struck me that a substantial part of the documentaries followed a New Order or *Gelora Pembangunan*-dictated style. As mentioned in Chapter Three, this kind of documentary begins with a map and a voice-over which, assuming a particular documentary narration pitch, gives precise information about the setting or location of the film. In the meantime, some sort of unrelated entertaining 'cheery' music score plays in the background. Most of the films I saw which began in this fashion could be fast-forwarded to just a few minutes before the end. There indisputably the hero of the story emerged. Depending on the subject of the documentary, all the main characters – the housewife, the person collecting the garbage, or the man cutting trees for a living – were positioned as heroes, fulfilling the ordinary day-to-day 'heroic' deeds of common people.

The overt *Gelora Pembangunan* type of documentaries stood no chance of selection in the competition. Instead, the festival committee chose films which were either shot in a 'Discovery' or 'National Geographic' channel style, or entries which exhibited more original modes of documentary production. In 2004 and 2005 most documentaries which entered the FFD competition had discarded the styles and contents of the New Order. By this time they were not much different to those featuring in international documentary film festivals worldwide.<sup>5</sup>

The trait in post-Soeharto documentaries which continued to depict heroes has to be seen as a legacy of the New Order, in the sense that it conveyed a partial extension of its text conventions. It put forward a particular understanding of the modes used in the representation of documentaries which were formed under Soeharto rule.<sup>6</sup> The parallel trend in the new documentary productions, which now stressed the victims of the regime, was part of the same discourse; only the point of view was turned around one-hundred-and-eighty degrees.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, there was also an important innovation in both the post-Soeharto documentaries on victims of New Order rule and those which featured new heroes. Their chosen focus was the common people: victims, students, housewives, or people collecting garbage. These documentaries revealed a shift from the 'voice of authority' to the 'voice of the voiceless' and they substituted *tokoh* for ordinary people. The emphasis on narrative traits of victims and newly found heroism in the early post-Soeharto documentaries initially showed that dominant discourses and narrative structures of New Order historiography were being reproduced.

#### 4.2. Post-colonial histories and identities; *film Islami*

Representations of Islam and Muslim participation in Indonesian audio-visual media both increased significantly after the resignation of President Soeharto. The rise of Islamic film production companies and the empowerment of Islamic film communities required that new practices of Islamic self-representation be found. One group of young Islamic film-makers in particular shaped new discourses on the position and representations of Islam in Indonesian and transnational audio-visual media. This new film movement explicitly referred to the post-colonial discourses deriving from Third Cinema theories. Moreover, their discourses indicated affiliations with communities worldwide. In this section I look at the emergence post-Soeharto of the genre *film Islami* (Islamic film) and its attempt to present counter-histories in film. I emphasize the rise of Islamic film as part of a film movement which wanted to tell its own post-colonial histories and stories in an authentic 'Indonesian' fashion.

Film and Islam were not easily united. Under the New Order, *ulama* (Muslim religious teachers or leaders) discussed the issue of film officially for the first time in 1983. In the same year the film *Sunan Kalijaga* (Sofyan Sharna) was produced. The film was based on the legend of Sunan Kalijaga, the first of the nine holy men, *wali sanga*, who are believed to have disseminated the teachings of Islam in Java. In conjunction with the production of *Sunan Kalijaga*, a dialogue about film was organized between *ulama* from the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian Ulama Council, MUI) and film journalists. In newspapers it was said that most *ulama* believed it was unfitting to watch a film in a cinema, which was associated with indecent films and such improper behaviour as secretly kissing in the dark on a date (Bintang 1983; Jasin 1985). The aim of the dialogue was to explore to what extent film could be used as a form of Islamic preaching or *dakwah* (Islamic religious intensification

activities)<sup>8</sup>, and to find a way to combine the traditional mediation of oral preaching with the visual aspects of film. As some subjects may not be visualized in Islam, questions were raised about how religious teachings should be presented, and in what way certain concrete religious principles could be represented in filmic symbols. However, most of the discussion concentrated on the film *Titian Serambut Dibelah Tujuh* (English title 'The Narrow Bridge', Chairul Umam 1982), which was screened before the discussion in order to give the *ulama* an idea of what an Islamic film could be like ('Ulama dan pers diskusikan.' 1983).

About a year and a half after the initial formal discussion the first 'official' Indonesian Islamic mission film was produced. The fiction film with the title *Sembilan Wali* ('Nine saints', Djun Saptohadi, 1985) was based on various legends and folk-tales about the *wali sanga* which circulated in Indonesia.

For an excerpt from *Sembilan Wali* see Disc Two 4.2.

Following closely in the footsteps of *Sembilan Wali* came another 'nine-saints film'. Once again this film, which bore the title *Sunan Kalijaga & Syeh Sitijenar* (Sofyan Sharna, 1985), was about Sunan Kalijaga and his dealings with an apostate. The premiere of this film was watched by 250 *ulama*, who had gathered in Jakarta to attend the third national MUI meeting from 20 to 23 July 1985. Although in earlier times, many *ulama* had believed that watching films was *haram* (proscribed), this time those who were interviewed were by and large approving. Nevertheless, they did not miss the opportunity to stress that particularly films which contained any slightly sexual scenes, such as nudity or unmarried men and women socializing together, were still prohibited. Perhaps because of the lack of titillating scenes, the film *Sunan Kalijaga & Syeh Sitijenar* proved not to be particularly enthralling: many *ulama* fell asleep while watching it. When their opinion about the film was asked, most of them could not comment because they had missed part or nearly all of it (Jasin 1985).

From 1989, discussions about the connection of film and Islam began to find their way into newspapers and magazines. The link between the two was also the subject of a variety of conferences and gatherings. In these discussions various questions were addressed: How should the production of 'entertaining' *dakwah* films be tackled? How could these be made to function as an alternative to oral preaching traditions? Was it possible to find a formula for a film with religious themes which would be acceptable to all parties? What role could be assumed by *ulama* or other religious authority figures in the production of films? There was a tacit agreement that the involvement of religious authorities was essential to pre-empt errors which could easily ignite the spark of protest. Should they merely act as consultants with the task of ensuring that everything which had to do with religion in film was represented in 'the right way'? Or should their involvement be deeper? Should *ulama* also invent or propose ideas for films, indeed even become actors themselves, in order to attract an audience (5.16/2.4 1993; Cahyono 1989; KV/32 1990; Mahmud, Nashir and Suryanto 1990)? Apart from these questions, most of which addressed the content of Islamic films, the bulk of the discussions about film and Islam was motivated by the perceived need for the production of Islamic films



in modern Indonesia (Ant/2.4 1993; Mahmud, Nashir and Suryanto 1990). Between 1994 and 1996, Islamic intellectuals stressed that in the present era of information and globalization it was extremely important to set up some resistance to the influx of films from overseas. They were convinced these films promoted nothing but secularism, sex, and violence (Arief 1996). If the Indonesian community were to produce Islamic films, Indonesians, of whom the majority were adherents of Islam, would be offered a lifeline by which to hold onto their own culture.

Indonesian films did not escape criticism unscathed. Quite apart from 'hot' film productions, various films which the general public called 'Islamic mission films' were also frowned upon. Islamic scholars were concerned that broader audiences might become confused and believe that Indonesian horror and mystery films were actually *dakwah* films. Viewers indeed thought this type of films contained elements of religious propagation because of the frequent *deus ex machina* role accorded authority figures who were generally religious teachers, or other Islamic symbols which were introduced to restore order at the end of such films. In addition to horror films, other films which *ulama* considered to depict controversial scenes were also perceived as Islamic mission films. Among them were several films which featured the famous actor and *dangdut* (popular music) star Rhoma Irama. General audiences were quick to interpret these as promoting Islam, because both in and outside the film world Rhoma Irama presented himself as a pious Muslim who brought faith to the people. The Islamic scholars thought otherwise, saying that Irama's films tended to feature too many 'hot scenes' to deserve the epithet of *dakwah* films.<sup>9</sup>

For an excerpt from Satria Bergitar, which stars Rhoma Irama, see Disc Two 4.2.

Alongside discussions about the need for more Islamic film productions, there was a call for the establishment of Islamic film production companies. In 1996, Islamic organizations such as the mass organization Muhammadiyah took steps to found production houses furnished with all the equipment needed for film production (AU/D-3 1996). The zeal to establish Muslim film production companies was due to the victory of religious organizations in a political argument with the government. In May 1996 the government had issued a draft for new legislation on broadcasting which, among other regulations, prohibited the founding of private broadcasting organizations based on religious principles. After a vigorous discussion, fierce protests, and tough negotiations, the religious organizations won their case. On 18 June 1996, the incumbent Minister of Information, Hartono, announced that religious groups would be allowed to found broadcasting organizations. This victory gave a strong incentive to go ahead with the setting up of Islamic film production companies (45. 1996; ant 1996; Ant/2.1 1996; Haryanto, Wijanta, and Tjiauw 1996; 'Lima lembaga keagamaan.' 1996; 'Menpen.' 1996).

As well as the plans and efforts to found production companies, strenuous attempts were made to empower young Muslims in audio-visual media. In 1993, at a seminar in Cirebon about the role of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in the era of industrialization, film-maker Eros Djarot stated that *pesantren* possessed great potential in helping to shape



an Islamic art and film industry. He argued that *santri* (Islamic scholars) should not keep themselves aloof from the world of art and cinema. Instead of feeling downhearted watching non-Islamic films, *santri* should produce films themselves (Ant/2.4 1993). In 1997, generated by the fear of a tidal wave of films from overseas and the annoyance aroused by incorrect, stereotypical representations of Islam in Indonesian films, workshops and discussions were organized in Islamic schools, universities, and organizations. These were set up to convince principals of Islamic schools and universities and heads of Islamic organizations that their students and members should become involved in film production and train to become skilled at it (Ant/2.6 1997; ian/rid 1997).<sup>10</sup>

After the resignation of President Soeharto, the developments of the past few years in conjunction with the climate of Reform led to a significant rise in activities which combined film with Islam. The number of professional production houses for Islamic films grew, and some Islamic organizations supported film production training courses for Muslims. Taking the bit between their teeth, different Islamic organizations participated in the organization of Islamic film screenings and discussions about audio-visual media. In addition to the cinema clubs of mainly Muhammadiyah universities many newly established Islamic film communities embraced these activities enthusiastically. Among the new communities were M-Screen Indonesia (Muslim Screen Indonesia), Muslim Movie Education (MME), Fu:n Community (based on the Arabic word *al funnuun*, which means art), and the Salman Film-maker Club, a film community connected to the Salman Mosque, which is part of the Technical University of Bandung. Such communities were composed mostly of young amateur and professional film-makers, Islamic students, and members of youth branches of established Islamic communities and organizations. A number, such as the Fu:n Community, also involved artists from the Jakarta Art Institute, Teater Kanvas, and Teater Bening, members of the non-governmental organization Mer-C, and Forum Lingkar Pena. The film crew affiliated to the Muhammadiyah production house PT Media Cipta Utama and some activists of other organizations also participated.<sup>11</sup> The communities led by young Muslim students and film-makers showed a marked tendency to discuss motivations for the production of Islamic films and shape the rules and regulations required to govern this undertaking. Discussions waxed on subjects such as the way in which women should be depicted in Islamic films; the need to take breaks for prayer during the shooting of films; and whether or not Islamic films could be consumed by men and women in the same space at the same time.

For pictures of the casting process and a discussion of *film Islami* see Disc Two 4.2.

To strengthen the Islamic film movement, a national association of Islamic film communities was founded in July 2003. The Morality Audio Visual Network (MAV-Net) consisted of representatives from six film communities and institutions: the Fu:n Community, M-Screen, Kammi, Rohis Mimazah, IKJ, MQTV Bandung, and a representative from the Pesantren Darunnajah.<sup>12</sup> At the basis of this network lay the debates mentioned earlier about the need to resist the hegemony of foreign films and to strengthen the position of Islam in

mainstream Indonesian audio-visual media. In the opinion of MAV-Net members, domestic 'Islamic' films and soaps, which after the fall of Soeharto were mainly screened on television during the Islamic fasting month Ramadan, had nothing to do with Islam. They argued that the access to 'real' Islamic films in Indonesia was restricted to pirated VCDs.<sup>13</sup> In a manifesto MAV-Net underlined that it was extremely important to fight the film and television industry by producing films which were based on Islamic 'visual ethics'.<sup>14</sup> While the exact delineation of these Islamic visual ethics was still being debated, some main principles were set out in a pamphlet written by *Ustaz* (term of address for an Islamic teacher) Ahmed Sarwat from the Centre of *Syariah* (Islamic Law) Consultation. In this pamphlet, Ahmed writes that a film is only truly Islamic if Islam is the guideline in all the film mediation practices. He gives examples of the use of Islamic principles from the production of an Islamic film (the producer, actors, and crew all have to be (devout) Muslims), to distribution (sponsors must produce *halal* goods), up to exhibition and consumption (the screening time should not be during hours of prayer and cinemas should provide for a division between male and female audiences) (Sarwat 2003).

In the MAV-Net manifesto, the need for the production of films based on Islamic visual ethics was germane to an early theory of Third Cinema put forward by Teshome Gabriel. In 1985, Gabriel created a model which distinguished three phases of development in Third World national cinemas: the first phase of national cinemas in the Third World was characterized by the mimicry of Hollywood film productions; the second phase encompassed appropriations from traditional cultural products in both form and content (films about exotic traditional cultures); the third marked the engagement in a critical reassessment of traditional cultures, and the use of Third World film-makers' own film languages, consisting of their original images, representations, and imaginations of society (Gabriel 1985:355-69). This third phase often featured guerrilla sentiments and the deconstructions of conventional Euro-centric film themes and representations of First and Third Worlds.<sup>15</sup> While Gabriel's model did not cover the huge production of Indonesian films which combined elements of Hong Kong action films, Indian and Latin American melodrama, plus all types of B films from the US and elsewhere, the MAV-Net manifesto still used it to account for the need for Islamic films based on Islamic visual ethics. Islamic film was to constitute an authentic Indonesian and oppositional cinema which countered both the flow of films from the West and the allegedly corrupted commercial mainstream Indonesian cinema.

The founding of this oppositional cinema was not exclusively influenced by ideas about the position of Muslims in Indonesian domestic media and society. In 1999 discourses had emerged which extended ideas about the representation and position of Muslims to transnational media and world politics. Some Islamic scholars and television reviewers even argued that the distribution and exhibition of films and television series from the US and other imported entertainment in Indonesia was a carefully planned mission by the West to destroy Islamic religious principles.<sup>16</sup> They believed that this mission was part of a strategy launched by Zionist Jews to control representations of the world. In these discourses, it

was claimed that in the US Jews controlled 80 per cent of the Hollywood film industry and consequently strove to control and misrepresent the facts of world history, seizing the opportunity to undermine Islamic religious principles (bea 1999).<sup>17</sup>

Influenced by the same kinds of ideas, the communities affiliated to the MAV-Net network announced they were committed to countering the ‘colonization of mainstream media by Zionists, imperialists, capitalists, and communists’. They saw themselves as part of an Islamic *umat* (religious community) which transcended the borders of Indonesia. Therefore, besides presenting an alternative cinema and defying the misleading representations of Islam on a national level, the goal of the *film Islami* movement was also to contribute to and increase the number of truthful representations of Islam worldwide. In forming a network which supported transnational Islamic film mediation practices they were not hasty but strove to convert gradually the position of Western culture and ideologies, and their representations of history, in mainstream film mediation channels worldwide.

### 4.3. Film in the framework of Ramadan

In the early years of Reform the mechanism of screening films in a certain framework or relating them to a particular context persisted, in spite of the flow of discourses on reformation and changes in conventional film mediation practices. The perception that there was a need to screen films as part of a specific occasion was highly conspicuous in post-Soeharto debates about the commemoration of Hapsak. Although discussions raged about the discontinuation of the propaganda film *G30S/PKI* as part of the media event, the screening of a film on 30 September was not questioned.<sup>18</sup> Also no controversy existed about the convention of relaying a film simultaneously on all television channels (‘Bukan Sekedar Kenangan.’ 1998; Nin/D-12 1998; SJ 1998a). In this section I investigate the practice of screening films in the framework of a certain event during and after *Reformasi*. I first return briefly to the discourses engendered by the screening of historical films and documentaries in the framework of Hapsak, after which I move on to examine new commemorative and other events. As the focal point of my argument, I have chosen to concentrate on ‘Islamic’ television programmes shown as part of the Islamic fasting month Ramadan.

On 1 October 1998, the commemoration of Hapsak was carried out in the conventional manner; the only omission was the screening of *G30S/PKI* as part of it. The official reason given for not screening the film was that it was damaged. However, it also was said that the screening of *G30S/PKI* was discontinued because after twelve consecutive years of screening, television viewers must be bored watching it over and over again (JP/10 1998; ric 1998a; SJ 1998b). There were also some voices which suggested that *G30S/PKI* was not consonant with the new era of Reform because the film was too much inclined to make ‘make a cult of a certain person’ (*pengkultusan seseorang*), and to take the shape of a ‘certain

individual's personal monument' ('*monumen pribadi seseorang*') (45. 1998; Nin/D-12 1998; SJ 1998c). There was a general feeling that the viewers needed something new instead. Hence, on 29 and 30 September 1998, *G30S/PKI* was replaced by a television drama with the title *Bukan Sekadar Kenangan* (*Not Just a Memory*, BSK). It was stressed that unlike *G30S/PKI*, BSK did not represent any personal monument but was about common people. In a new guise – above all a love story – the intention was still to convey the traditional message warning of the latent danger of communism. Moreover, BSK, just as *G30S/PKI*, was screened simultaneously on all television channels. Diverging from the former practice, however, it was agreed that *G30S/PKI* would not be replaced by one single film. The solution to this would be that a new film would be produced each year (ric 1998b; SJ 1998c; Yad/Man/R-3 1998). This idea never materialized. In subsequent years, and particularly under the presidency of Megawati Soekarnoputri (2001–2004), the Hapsak ceremony lost much of its credence. The Soekarno family had never accepted the official New Order version about the termination of Soekarno's presidency, making way for the legitimate succession of Soeharto, the version celebrated in the Hapsak ceremony. Since Megawati's presidency, the ceremony has not been broadcast on television in its entirety but only in fragments inserted in daily news programmes.

As well as the initial endeavour to screen a film as part of the Hapsak media event, there was also an attempt to create new commemorative and other more general events and relate these to specific film screenings. Either films were specifically produced and screened for certain events, or efforts were made to fit a film into an event. An example of the latter practice was apparent in the frequent changes of the title of the documentary *Student Movement* to fit different film screenings. Under its original title *The Army Forced Them to Be Violent*, since 1998 the documentary had been shown on campuses in Indonesia and at different film festivals abroad. However, at the instigation of the Indonesian Censorship Institute its title was changed before it was certified to enter Indonesian cinemas. Notwithstanding *Reformasi* it was still unacceptable to be too critical of the Indonesian army in films. Consequently the title was changed to the neutral *The Student Movement in Indonesia*, by which name it was screened in the top-end cinemas of the 21 Group in August 2002. In November of that year the documentary could again be seen Indonesian cinemas. It was deemed perfectly suitable for the commemoration of the 'first Semanggi tragedy' (*Tragedi Semanggi I*) which had occurred on 13 November 1998. On that day, demonstrating students and a hapless bystander died after being fired upon by the Indonesian military near the Semanggi flyover in Jakarta, and approximately 239 people were injured. On 13 November 2002, exactly four years after the incident, the documentary *Student Movement* was screened in eight cinemas belonging to the 21 Group to commemorate the incident (Ati 2002). To suit the occasion of its re-release the title was first changed to: *Empat Tahun Tragedi Semanggi I* (Four Years [after the] First Semanggi tragedy) (Ati 2002; wy 2002).

The showing of films as part of a specific event or occasion in post-Soeharto Indonesia is comparable to the broadcasting of 'Islamic' programmes on television during Ramadan.

During the Islamic fasting month, the normal pattern of film programming on television is interrupted. Television stations are suddenly flooded with Islamic programmes, and regular programmes which contain elements of violence, sex, and mysticism, are rescheduled. As soon as Ramadan is over all programmes which may be construed to have ill effects on people return, and their Islamic counterparts disappear again (see also afa/ghu 1996). While the celebration of Ramadan on television during the New Order tended to be a rather modest affair, in post-Soeharto Indonesia it turned into booming business. In an interview with the film director Ali Sahab in 2003, he commented that during the launch of private television ten years earlier, Ramadan had not yet been commercialized. At that time Christmas was an even greater show than Ramadan. Sahab claimed that in due course the religious atmosphere had disappeared from Ramadan television programmes. He commented that the fasting month had been turned into a spectacle in which only entertainment counted ('Ali Sahab.' 2003).

Signs of the development which was to transform Islam into a lucrative television business first began to emerge in 1999. Private television stations began to compete for a share of the advertisements in Ramadan programming, which grew by about 15 per cent during the Islamic fasting month (akh 1999; rad/dmm 2000). The number of advertisements increased as some special products, among them *sarung*, *halal* food products and soap, were advertised only during Ramadan. In 2001 there was a particularly marked rise in the business and profits of Ramadan programming on television. In that year, several newspaper articles referred to the fierce competition between private television stations to grab a share of advertisements, for which there were significant price increases in the Islamic fasting month.<sup>19</sup> Although competition between the television stations increased, at that juncture there was hardly any change in the formulas of Ramadan programmes, either compared to what had been broadcast during the fasting month in previous years or to regular programming. Implementing the laws of the market place and making a conscious attempt to copy tried and tested formulas, various television programmes were rerun in Ramadan. The questions in conventional quiz shows concentrated on matters of religion, and several soaps which revolved around the problems of people, psychological or practical, and the way in which religion could help to solve them were launched. Nevertheless, despite a change in outward appearances – protagonists were dressed in Islamic clothes – and a change in prime time – to one hour before sunrise (*sahur*) and the breaking of the fast at sunset (*maghrib*) – quiz shows still focused on entertainment and soaps sold melodrama. Apart from these kinds of shows, Ramadan programmes in tune with a worldwide television trend of the past few years were produced. This trend had been marked by a mushrooming of infotainment and gossip programmes about the lives of artists and the 'rich and famous', clustered under the portmanteau word 'celebrities'. The only difference in the domestic infotainment shows produced during Ramadan was that female artists and presenters covered their heads and that some religious messages were inserted in the intervals. Often these Ramadan messages were delivered by an Islamic authority figure, for example a *kyai* or an *ustad*, who had been invited to be a guest star (agi/nun 2002; nun/agi 2002).

In 2002, this propensity to include a religious authority figure began to be a feature in all sorts of Ramadan programmes. Standing out among them was the *kyai* and businessman Abdullah Gymnastiar, commonly known as AA Gym, who turned up almost everywhere. He featured in no less than nine television shows which were divided over five private television stations.<sup>20</sup> AA Gym owned the television production company *Manajemen Qolbu Televisi* (Management of the Heart Television, MQTV) and produced and sold his own programmes.

For a profile of programmes produced by MQTV see Disc Two 4.3.

Other popular Islamic authority figures who appeared on national television that year were ‘*Dai Sejuta Umat*’ (‘Islamic Preacher for the Millions’) Zainuddin, Lutfiah Sungkar, a popular ‘*Betawi*’ (Jakarta-style) *kyai*, who had the gift of being a spellbinding speaker and was also the leader of the political party *Partai Bintang Reformasi* (Star of the Reformation Party), and famous actor and *dangdut* singer Rhoma Irama (‘Ramadhan.’ 2002). In 2003 the number of Ramadan programmes increased yet again. In their bid to compete with one another, the programmes varied from (sequels to) Islamic soaps, quiz shows to Ramadan programmes which were interspersed with elements of comedy, music, or *wayang* (play with leather or wooden puppets). There were also live broadcasts of the preaching of Islamic leaders from mosques in different cities. In pride of place though was the increasing trend of featuring popular Islamic leaders in television programmes. AA Gym was by far the most popular. Advertisers of special Ramadan products fought with each other to fill the advertising slots around his programmes (‘AA Gym di televisi.’ 2003; m2/dw/reh/et 2003), but other such prominent Islamic leaders and personalities as Quraish Sihab and Arifin Ilham also appeared on various shows.

For pictures of Ramadan programmes see Disc Two 4.3.

The way in which AA Gym surfaced on almost every television channel during Ramadan can be attributed to his credibility as an Islamic expert at that time, but the widespread media trend which focused on artists, the rich and famous, and popular people (the celebrity circuit) cannot be discounted in seeking a reason for his success. Just as regular programming which featured popular artists, comedians, and other celebrities, famous *kyai* were used to woo advertisers and attract as many viewers as possible. In 2003, an article in the newspaper *Bisnis Indonesia* mentioned that the fashion for featuring Islamic leaders on television during Ramadan had led to the birth of the category of ‘*kyai* artists’. The article suggested that the ‘camera face’ of *kyai* artists was very important in reaching the masses, and not necessarily for the sake of *dakwah*; such personalities were also a draw for advertisers in the lucrative business of Ramadan programming (am 2003).

Others were less enthusiastic about the direction which was being taken. Several Islamic leaders and some television reviewers criticized what they regarded as the commercialization of Islam. In 2004, the Indonesian Ulama Council, which had tried to steer the contents of Ramadan programmes since 2001 by handing out a yearly award for ‘Best National Ramadan

Television Programme', remonstrated about what it saw as the trend in which television during Ramadan was being 'degraded to mere entertainment' (Cdr-o 2004). Noted television reviewers, among them Akhmod Seku and Indra Tranggono, joined the chorus of disapproval of the use of Islam in the Ramadan programmes, castigating these programmes as nothing more than a 'formality'. Their criticism was based on the argument that these programmes were devoid of any real substance and for that very reason could be seen as examples of Umar Kayam's notion of performing arts 'in the framework of' (Seku 2002; Tranggono 2004).<sup>21</sup> Aulia Muhammad also wrote that he experienced a sense of vacuity as he watched television during Ramadan. In his article, he connected this sense of emptiness to Henry Lefebvre's analysis of meaninglessness about which he had read in Dick Hebdige's book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979:117). Aulia criticized the Ramadan programmes for their blatant focus on the outward appearance of famous artists and the depiction of 'seasonal repentance', or as he expressed it 'the selling of tears'. Each year during Ramadan celebrities donned a recognizably Muslim costume and, in an orgy of self-abasement, burst into tears on entertainment shows, begging forgiveness for the scandals in which they had been involved. Aulia's objections were based on Baudrillard's conception of the loss of the intrinsic meaning of seasonal changes and differentiations in 'consumer society' – a society in which consumption forms the total be-all and end-all of everyday life (Baudrillard 1998:110, 193). In other words: the celebrities during Ramadan merely '[spoke] with their clothes'. The clothes reflected the seasonally dictated lifestyles and temporary identity assumed during the fasting month. In Aulia's opinion, celebrities dressed up and acted the roles required by the sentiment evoked by Ramadan because they believed that the television audiences expected it of them. Aulia argued that the annual circus surrounding Ramadan reflected 'the real post-modern face of television as a sea of illusion, imaginary world, and hyper-reality, which should not be believed' (Muhammad 2004).

These discourses on the commercialization and void-ness of meaning of Ramadan television soaps, series, and programmes demonstrate a new development in the convention of screening films in the framework of a certain event. The previous use of a framework during the New Order to direct the reading of a film at least in part was discarded. Rather than directing the meaning or reading of a film, the framework itself had now become the focal point. Television programming during Ramadan was not really concerned with the quintessence of Islam or the fasting month. As Aulia has suggested, much of it was about the 'hyper-reality' of television which presents a superficial, imaginary world. Moreover, in turning *kyai*, *ulama*, and other Islamic authorities into artists and making such people part of a prefabricated routine, their position in Ramadan programmes reduced them to being on par with celebrities. Religious authorities during the fasting month were merely performing their parts in the television spectacle called Ramadan.<sup>22</sup>



## Conclusion

After the stepping down of President Soeharto, new post-colonial discourses and imaginations of society were reflected in both the discourse practices of text production and in the conventions of framing films at the level of text consumption. The new found freedom of expression offered by the socio-political situation of Reform induced several tentative, incomplete and contradictory changes in the shifting discursive practices of the media (Fairclough 1995:52).

The first tentative and incomplete changes and some continuity could be discerned in the modes of engagement in post-Soeharto documentaries. Such documentaries as *Mass Grave* and *Student Movement* exhibited a substitution of new narrations for old images, and new images for old narrations. Nevertheless, as well as most of the documentaries produced in the first few years after the fall of Soeharto, they used the same modes of engagement of New Order representations of history and society in film. In their narrative traits, most documentaries followed either the New Order/USAI development film formulas, or what may be designated the Usmar Ismail mode of heroism. The difference in the post-Soeharto documentaries was that the viewpoint was anti-New Order. A majority of the documentaries focused on newly created heroes or on victims of Soeharto's rule, but there also was a change in the discourse. The heroes of the post-Soeharto documentaries were not authority figures, but victims and common people.

The changes in discourse practices relating to continuations of the convention to screen films in the framework of a certain event were contradictory. In the context of the screening of 'Islamic' television films and programmes during Ramadan, these contradictions were to some extent related to discourses of the *film Islami* movement founded in 2003. Paradoxically, at the same time an association of *film Islami* groups was founded to promote Islamic visual ethics for film, Indonesian commercial television turned the screening of soaps and programmes which contained features of Islam into a booming business. A survey of the discourses about media representations of Islam during Ramadan shows that in contrast to the idea of Islamic visual ethics, which inserted Islam into all aspects of film mediation practices, the television shows during Ramadan merely availed themselves of their outer shell. Behind the superficial appearances of Islam, these programmes were actually devoid of any religious meaning. The spirit of the Ramadan soaps and programmes was stifled by the framework in which they were screened.

In Islamic discourses, the programming of Islamic soaps and other series in the framework of Ramadan was perceived as nothing more than a commodity at the disposal of the television industry. Also on other occasions, the use of frameworks can be connected to commercial motives. Films were often screened in the framework of certain events as a ploy to sell more tickets. Conceivably, the change of the title of Tino Saroengallo's documentary *Student Movement* to fit the commemoration of the 'first Semanggi tragedy' was based on commercial premises too. By re-releasing the documentary under another title, it was



anticipated it would attract more viewers. I have argued that as an instrument employed by the New Order, one important function of a framework was to direct the reading of film and television productions. But in the post-Soeharto mediascape, it should rather be seen as a tool to make these productions more saleable.

The shallowness, the temporal identities, and the ‘hyper’ reality of the Ramadan programmes and soaps were all decidedly antithetical to discourses which urged the need for truthful self-representation and Islamic visual ethics. The lack of authenticity spawned by this backdoor commercialism was also in contrast to the emphasis on ‘getting history straight’, and the stated bid for ‘true’ and ‘real’ representations of history and society. Moreover, when the Ramadan programmes and the post-Soeharto documentaries are compared, the stress on the allure of celebrities in the former stands out starkly in contrast to the focus on common people in the majority of post-Soeharto documentaries.

The focus on both reality and common people and celebrities – both secular and religious – was not limited to Indonesia; it was a phenomenon that could be observed in global media trends. In the case of reality and the common people, there were two readily identifiable shifts: from an emphasis on the voice of authority to the voice of the voiceless and ordinary people in the production of post-Soeharto documentaries, and a marked tendency on television to broadcast programmes which featured the man in the street. The stress on factual reality and common people began as part of the discourses which questioned New Order historiography and its imposition on society. In the first few years of Reform numerous talk-shows on television addressed these issues. Over time people became fed up with these shows. Corresponding to transnational trends in television, the initially overriding truth and reality in these rather serious talk-shows was replaced by the production of all sorts of light entertainment reality shows which featured common people. In the same vein, the focus on celebrities in Ramadan programmes was part of a worldwide trend on television which showed popular infotainment and gossip programmes about the rich and famous. Hence, while television was crammed with reality shows which featured ordinary people, it was also flooded with an overload of celebrities. The stress on celebrities in programmes broadcast during the fasting month even resulted in the birth of celebrity *kyai*. This invention of the celebrity *kyai* corresponds with another global television trend: a new religious format evolving around charismatic media personalities.<sup>23</sup>

In 2004, ‘Islamic’ soaps and series managed to escape the framework, and were subsequently screened outside the confines of Ramadan. However, they were still made for commercial motives and they still contained prefabricated televised representations of Islam. The focal point of these soaps was that they were based on true stories. They were spiced up with such elements of mystery as supernatural occurrences. They contained scenes in which people indulged in paroxysms of tearful repentance. An important component was the major role assigned to heroes in the guise of Islamic authority figures, *kyai* celebrities, or sometimes personalities who combined these two traits. In the next two chapters I look more closely at reality shows, true stories, and representations of Islam outside of the framework of Ramadan.

**Part Three**  
**Film narrative practices**



## 5 The *kyai* and hyperreal ghosts: Narrative practices of horror, commerce, and censorship<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In recent years there have been several publications about horror films and the connotations of horror in different societies in which it is thought to serve as a field for the dramatization of cultural and universal nightmares. Scholars have written about horror film being an outlet which exposes social taboos or as a channel for political critique. Sometimes in their discussions they have related the use of horror to theories about the role of carnival in certain societies.<sup>2</sup> It is not the intention here to discuss the Indonesian horror genre in audio-visual media from any of these perspectives. The prime focus of this discussion will be on horror as a form of imagining and as a technical means of 're-presenting' elements of what constitutes the nation (Anderson 1983).

In this chapter, I concentrate on forms of imagination and representation through the Indonesian horror genre. I examine the position these forms of imagination assume in the context of film narrative practices and debates on what kind of representations of society are acceptable in Indonesian audio-visual media. On one level, I consider horror from the perspective of film genres, and certain formats or formulas within such genres. On this level, horror is a forum for identity formation. Benedict Anderson turned to the basic structure of two forms of imagining, namely the novel and the newspaper, which 'provided the technical means for "re-presenting" the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation' (1983:30). Building on this idea, I investigate discourses about Indonesian films which identify and imagine certain communities through the horror genre. In what way are audiences, communities and classes identified and constructed around horror film? How is the character of horror film and its audiences determined by particular film formats (film versus television) or formulas? How have these identifications changed after the fall of President Soeharto in May 1998?

On another level, the chapter moves beyond the concept of imaginations and identifications between small-scale communities and genres. In this part I reflect on discourses about film formulas within the horror genre which are indicative of developments and problems in the search for a representative image of what constitutes the modern Indonesian nation. I explore discourses about tolerable modes of representation of the supernatural in film and television and as part of modern Indonesian society. The principal concern is the relationship between discourses about the genre and modes of representation weighed against socio-political strategies and commercial interests.

### 5.1. Horror films under the New Order: Comedy, sex, and religion

The horror genre has a long history in Indonesian media culture and it is found in writing, in radio and television programmes, as well as in cinema. The first horror film in Indonesian cinema was produced by The Teng Cun in 1934 and had the title *Doea Siloeman Oeler Poeti en Item* (The transmogrifications of two serpents: one black, one white).<sup>3</sup> Since this pioneering effort, Indonesian horror films have been screened in cinemas, mobile cinemas, and on television in varying numbers. During the 1950s and 1960s horror films were pushed into the background as, at the time, there was a great interest in producing films which featured the Indonesian Revolution and the struggle to wrest Independence from Dutch colonial rule (1945-1949). Only at the beginning of the 1970s were horror films starting to be produced again (Kristanto 1995).

Since the film *Ratu Ular* (Snake queen, 1972), the number of horror films screened in Indonesian cinemas increased. In fact horror films were about the only kind of films still produced after 1993 when the Indonesian cinema collapsed. But it was not until after May 1998 that a revival of horror film production began. After 1993, most top end cinemas screened mainly imported US films, while home-produced Indonesian films that tended to feature the erotic and horror genres were shown in lower class cinemas throughout the country. Newspaper articles in 1993 and 1994 mention horror films as representative of the Indonesian film industry, and indeed associate the Indonesian film industry with horror films just as the US has westerns, China kung fu films, Japan films about ninjas and samurais, and India, love stories with a liberal dose of singing and dancing.<sup>4</sup> Indonesian cultural commentators have tried to explain the appeal of horror films by stating that the genre is closely related to the psyche of the Indonesian people and is generally inherent in Eastern culture, which they assume to be synonymous with mysticism and the occurrence of supernatural beings and events. These explanations were based on the assumption that every region and ethnic group in Indonesia had its own superstitious beliefs and mystery tales recounting supernatural events. Some film producers even thought that horror stories formed a characteristic cultural asset of Indonesian culture. They were convinced that this feature should be exploited in films for both the Indonesian and the foreign market.<sup>5</sup>

The horror genre in Indonesian film has its own format and peculiarities. Horror films are also labelled *film mistik* (mystical films) or *film klenik* (superstitious films). Generally speaking, anything can happen in these films, and the story does not necessarily have to make sense. Apart from these generalizations, some main features can be detected.<sup>6</sup> Karl Heider (1991) noted that horror films were the most common type of film in Indonesia at the beginning of the 1990s. He delineated the productions of Indonesian horror cinema as films set in the present but resembling the Indonesian legend film genre, which were dramatizations of traditional legends or folktales. It is true that, just as the legend genre, horror films often draw their inspiration from traditional Indonesian folk beliefs, above all those about supernatural powers. Heider also points out the use of 'horribly humorous' scenes as a distinctive aspect

of Indonesian horror films. As an example, he remarks upon the recurring scenes in which supernatural monsters attack their victims. In his viewing experience in Indonesian cinemas this raised uproars of laughter from the audiences (1991:44). Indeed, the element of humour or comedy is a frequent component of the horror genre. Another example of a frequently used comic scene is when someone mistakes a ghost for a real person and vice versa (Suyono and Arjanto 2003). A prototypical Indonesian horror film from the 1970s is usually set in a village and revolves around the quest for *ilmu* (spiritual knowledge) or *ilmu gaib* (supernatural powers). An inherent part of such supernatural powers or black magic is that they always have some inherent weakness (*pantangan* or 'taboo'), a prohibited action or certain spell by which the powers can be undone. The best way to break the spell cast by magical powers is by reciting a verse from the Quran, but other, more peculiar *pantangan*, such as eating more than three portions of sate (Suyono and Arjanto 2003:71) or encountering a monkey (Kristanto 1995:145), have also been used in horror films.

Besides supernatural powers and humour, there are two other distinct features of Indonesian horror films, namely their use of sex and the appearance of religious symbols or of religious leaders as protagonists.<sup>7</sup> The use of sex emerged in the 1970s and was used to titillate the audience. By the 1980s and 1990s, the extravagant use of erotic elements which debased them to the level of smut and kitsch had become the main ingredient of such films. The central themes of these 'horror-sex' films were men having an affair, *tante girang* (literarily 'merry aunt'; a pushy woman of loose morals), rape, and promiscuity. The use of sex was not confined to horror but was part of a wider trend of Indonesian films from the 1970s, capitalizing on its selling power.<sup>8</sup> However, particularly in horror films was sex made fairly explicit.

The second classic feature of horror films, the use of religious symbols and a *deus ex machina* in the form of a religious leader, a *kyai* (teacher of Islam), clergyman, or Hindu priest who is able to overcome all evil at the end of the film, emerged as a typical element in the 1980s (Suyono and Arjanto 2003:72). The protagonist in horror films since the 1980s has mainly been a *kyai* or an *ulama* (Muslim religious teacher or leader); if not one of these, then some other religious figures with Islamic connections. But there is also one instance in which a Roman Catholic Priest conquers a Dutch ghost which is haunting an old colonial house in the film *Ranjang Setan* ('Satan's bed', 1986). In the 1981 movie *Mistik (Punahnya Rahasia Ilmu Iblis Leak)* (Mystic (the vanishing of the secret devilish knowledge of the evil spirit)), for which Bali is the setting, the hero is a Hindu priest who defeats evil.

For an example of the *kyai* coming to the rescue see *Santet II* on Disc Three 5.1.

The central role of a religious figure in horror films is a perceptible effect of the Ethical Code of Film Production in Indonesia, which was drawn up in 1981 by the Dewan Film Nasional (henceforth Film Council) under the Minister of Information, General Ali Murtopo (1978-1983). The Ethical Code was based on censorship guidelines for the *Badan Sensor Film* (Film Censor Board, henceforth BSF) laid down in a ministerial decree in 1977. In

1980, the BSF drew up its own further guidelines for censorship in the BSF Ethical Code (*Kode Etik Badan Sensor Film*). These guidelines were elaborated in the Film Council's Code of Ethics (*Kode Etik Produksi Film Nasional*) and issued in 1981 (Sen 1994:69).

The Code of Ethics of the Film Council was modelled by eight commissions, including the commission for 'film and national morality' (*film dan moral bangsa*), the commission of 'film and the awareness of national discipline' (*film dan kesadaran disiplin nasional*), and the commission for 'film in its relation to devotion towards the One and Only God' (*film dalam hubungannya ketakwaan terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*). The last-mentioned commission recommended that all filmic aspects had to lead to devotion and the praise of God. It also demanded that '[t]he storyline ought to be composed in such a way that it gives the audience the impression that what is bad will definitely be made to endure the consequences of its actions and suffer; that what is good will surely receive a reward and happiness.'<sup>9</sup> Consequently most films made under the New Order in the 1980s and 1990s followed a predictable pattern of good versus bad in which the good always triumphed (Suyono and Arjanto 2003:72).<sup>10</sup>

Even though there was never an official prescription that a religious figure had to be the hero of horror films, many producers of such films today have the impression that during the New Order a *kyai* was a figure inalienable from horror movies. Ali Tien, ex-producer of the production company Cancer Mas, suggests that by 1981 BSF had sanctioned that horror films should fulfill a religious mission. Likewise, in the experience of Ferry Angriawan of Virgo Putra Film, a horror film in the 1980s which did not feature a *kyai* at the end of the story would be banned from being screened. Hence, in his opinion, a *kyai* would in many instances appear where his sudden intrusion did not make any sense in the story. According to producer Budiati Abiyoga, who used to be on the jury of the Indonesian Film Festival under the New Order, the outline of the Code of Ethics led to a tendency to use religion for religion's sake. As an example, she recalls the depiction of a Quranic verse with the added phrase: 'This is not approved of by the Quran,' straight after a sex scene (Suyono and Arjanto 2003:72).

The catalogue of Indonesian films produced between 1926 and 1995 (Kristanto 1995) shows that horror films had already begun to use religious symbols as early as the 1970s and many *kyai* regularly turned up in horror films from 1978 onwards. The use of religious heroes in horror films before the 1980s led Krishna Sen to describe the guidelines of the Code of Ethics as representing 'no more than a setting out of practices already in operation in the censorship system' (Sen 1994:53). The idea that directors today believe it was a prerequisite to feature a *kyai* in horror films may indeed offer a clue to the way film censorship under the New Order worked. As Sen suggests, there were relatively few cases of film censorship under the New Order in which BSF intervened directly by excising sections of a film or banning films altogether. Prescriptions issued by such other film institutions as production companies, professional film organizations, film schools and festivals shaped which films would be produced and as such worked as a system of self-censorship (Sen 1994:50-51). The detailed censorship regulations which had been made public by 1980 contributed to the increase in self-censorship in the film industry (Sen 1994:70). Possibly because the use of a

*kyai* in horror films was a successful formula resorted to to prevent a film from being banned, many film-makers did not take recourse to other formulas with no proven success. Although films which used *kyais* prevailed, not all horror films since the 1980s in the film catalogue mention the role of religious figures. Other formulas were also possible. For example, some horror films were based on traditional legends or placed in a mystical setting did not feature a religious figure.<sup>11</sup>

Be that as it may, after the implementation of the Code of Ethics in 1981, many horror films did use religious leaders and symbols because of the perceived need to include them. Such an inclusion was well worthwhile, for these films would pass the Board of Censors even though they might show all that God had forbidden. Under the influence of the combined commercial interests of the film producers and government film regulations, under the New Order a bizarre situation developed in which the horror film genre was simultaneously equated with sex and with religious propagation (*dakwah*), the latter predominantly represented through the use of Islamic symbols and Islamic religious leaders as the heroes of horror stories.

## 5.2. Horror films for television: New narratives and debates on their bounds

Besides horror films produced for the silver screen, television was another format which showed horror and mystical films during the New Order. At the beginning of the 1990s, when there was a sudden rise in the number of commercial television stations, many film directors who used to produce films for the cinemas crossed over into television production. Even before the production of mystical television films began around 1995, many old horror films were aired on television. Both domestic and imported US horror films were usually shown on Thursday night, referred to in Indonesia as 'Friday eve' (*malam Jumat*). Friday is a religious day for Muslims and at noon Muslim men should perform communal prayers in the mosque. The significance of this day will be discussed later.

In 1995-1996, the private television station RCTI began to produce and screen the *sinetron misteri* (mystery series) *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (The sweetie of Ancol bridge). Later this was followed by the *sinetron komedi misteri* (comedy mystery television series) *Jin dan Jun* (Jin and Jun). Because of the success of these programmes, other television stations soon followed suit. During a very short time, these were few in number. This probably had to do with the fact that then Minister of Information Harmoko 'recommended' reducing the screening of Indonesian mystery series in 1996 – a recommendation which, strikingly, did not seem to apply to foreign products of the same genre (pur 1996). Despite Harmoko's recommendation a year later in July 1997, every private television station had its own Indonesian mystery series. RCTI added two series similar to *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* and *Jin dan Jun* to their programme: *Kembalinya Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (The return of the sweetie of Ancol bridge) and *Tuyul dan Mbak Yul* (Tuyul and Miss Yul), and a mystery



series based on a Javanese folk legend, *Misteri Sinden* (The singer mystery). Other private television stations didn't drag their heels and quickly produced their own mystery series: *Hantu Sok Usil* (The fidgety ghost) and *Janda Kembang* (The virgin widow), both of the folk-legend type on SCTV, *Dua Dunia* (Two worlds) on Indosiar, and *Misteri* (Mystery), recounting peoples' stories of encountering the supernatural, on Anteve (Pudjiastuti and Bredana 1997).

Unlike the screening of Indonesian horror films in cinemas which passed virtually unnoticed apart from some protests decrying erotic film posters, there were fierce debates about horror films on television and the mystery television series. These debates began in 1994 when the Head of the First Commission of Parliament (*Ketua Komisi I DPR*), Aisyah Amini, criticized the Department of Information for permitting television stations to screen horror films as a matter of routine on *malam Jumat*. Her argument was that broadcasting these productions at that specific time of the week 'gives that evening a bad image' (*membuat image jelek tentang malam itu*). She was worried that it would cause people to regard that evening as one full of fear, whereas it should actually be a very virtuous point of time in the week [for Muslims] (sm 1994). The debate about the screening of mystical films on *malam Jumat* and the possible harm to the 'image' of Friday continued until 1995 and was the probable motivation behind the edict issued by the Minister of Information concerning the reduction in the screening of horror and mystery films on television around 1996.<sup>12</sup> Another discussion in 1994 was about the need to re-censor horror films, primarily those which were produced for the cinema, before these were screened on television. In the words of Harmoko, this was essential 'because the characteristics of television viewers are different from [those who attend] cinemas' (*Sebab, karakteristik penonton televisi lain dengan bioskop*) (sm 1994).

Yet another debate, launched in 1995 but only becoming an issue in 1996/1997, revolved around the prevailing idea that mystical films would lead Indonesian people astray from reality and set them apart from modern life. The anti-campaign was run largely by the government aided and abetted by individuals and Islamic groups who saw mystical films as an obstacle to Indonesia becoming a modern, pious nation. They declared that mystery films were devoid of any educational value and therefore might harm the mental and spiritual development of the people. Generally speaking, the popularity of mystery films was inversely proportioned to the dominant discourse of the New Order, with its constant reiterations about the 'development' of Indonesia into a modern nation. It was feared that mystery films would fuel superstition and the belief of Indonesian people in the supernatural; this would thwart development. Moreover, some Muslim groups and authorities had great difficulty coming to terms with the idea that these series would show concepts contrary to religious teachings. The complaints raised were that these series depicted a realm outside reality, were far from rational, and were devoid of any educational value (5.29/2.4 1998; Ant/2.6 1995; Gus 1997; pur 1996; roh 1997; Suryapati 1997).

Interestingly, in the debates about mystery films on television it transpired that the main

problem was not the mystical itself. Several articles made the point that this was an enduring part of Indonesian culture, and the existence of mystics and belief in supernatural powers in Indonesian society was not denied. All kinds of shamanism, superstition, mystical objects, ghosts and a seemingly endless number of other supernatural creatures were cited as an undeniable part of the beliefs and culture of Indonesian peoples (Hasim 1997; Gus 1997; Nuridin 1997; Pudjiastuti and Bredana 1997; Suryati 1996; Yad/R3 1997). To a great extent Indonesian horror films built on that foundation, and even those who protested against horror films often professed a belief in ghosts, *jin*, *tuyul*, and other supernatural beings.<sup>13</sup> Yet, there was a particular narrative allotted to the supernatural in which it could operate. In horror films set during the New Order, which was ruled by policies of development, there was no space for the supernatural. In legends of the past, or under the guidance of a religious authority who would step in and restore order at the end of the film, however, the supernatural was tolerated. Similarly, newspaper articles which voiced complaints about mystery films did not really get too vociferous about films of the legendary or folk-story type. Their objections to mystery films and television series applied to those films and series which diverged from the sanctioned modes of addressing the issue or that were felt to be out of kilter with leading state and Muslim discourses. Hence, heated debates about mystery films in newspaper articles from February 1995 to April 1998 were about defining ‘authorized’ narrative practices for the supernatural or mystical.

Most debates in articles from September 1996 to April 1998 were about the mystery television series which had adopted a new formula. This required a new definition and demarcation of the supernatural and the rational. The mystery series, *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol*, was based on an urban legend of Jakarta about a female ghost but set in the present. The series *Jin dan Jun* was about a girl called Jun, who finds a *jin* (genie) in a bottle who becomes her friend. *Tuyul dan Mbak Yul* was about a girl who befriends a *tuyul* (a spirit which obtains wealth for its human master); it bore a very strong resemblance to *Jin dan Jun*. None of these three series depicted the familiar horror legend type, nor did they feature a *kyai* as rescuer. In *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* a ghost, Mariam, settles the scores with evil. She helps murder victims to take revenge, haunt, and kill their murderer in retribution. The series of the *jin* and *tuyul* type, which had a mystery comedy format, solved problems with humour.<sup>14</sup> Initially the majority of those with objections to these new series were groups and persons with Muslim backgrounds. Later their ranks were joined by government ministers, psychologists, and others who can loosely be styled ‘authorities’. *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* and, in particular, the series about *jin* and *tuyul* were considered problematic as they were thought to pose an indirect challenge to religious (Islamic) and state discourses on the sanctioned forms of imagining the supernatural and reality.

Among those with Muslim backgrounds the difficulty lay not so much in the fact that the series did not feature a *kyai* to step in and make the denouement. On various occasions Muslims had protested against a perceived misuse of Quranic verses in mystery films – simply as a spell to exorcise ghosts – rather than representing these as an intrinsic part of a code of

belief. They were also greatly upset by the unrealistic depiction of *kyai* in horror films, which accorded the religious teachers supernatural powers and had them tossing around balls of fire. It was a problem of negotiating and demarcating representations of the fictitious and the real, on the basis of 'facts' emanating from competing worldviews.

The debate about narrative practices and the bounds of representing the supernatural and the rational in television series was launched in 1996 when the chairman of the Indonesian Council of Muslim Leaders, Hasan Basri, stated that *Jin dan Jun* and *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* indirectly disputed religious teachings ('Ketua MUI.'1996). While Basri did not go into the specific details of his objections to mystery series, Imam Tantowi, film director and screenplay writer, did. Tantowi stated he did not object to mystery films, as long as the content or message these films wanted to convey did not contravene religious teachings or mislead the viewers. It was on these grounds that Tantowi did not approve of *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol*: the series was about a female ghost and, in Islam, there are no such things as ghosts. However, as someone with a minority<sup>15</sup> viewpoint amongst those protesting about new horror formulas, Tantowi did not have a problem with *Jin dan Jun*. Even though he had seen it only once, he did not think its content strayed too far from Islamic teachings in which the existence of *jin* is acknowledged.<sup>16</sup> He said that he assumed the film-makers had consulted a Muslim *jin* first (Suryati 1996).<sup>17</sup>

His opinion was one of a few voiced and it was only gradually that the *jin* and *tuyul* series specifically emerged as the subject of a heated debate. In an article in the newspaper *Pikiran Rakyat*, Abdul Hasim wrote about the return of the mystical to Indonesian television in a new format. He said that, unlike earlier in horror films, in this new format, the *jin* and *tuyul* were no longer presented as frightening creatures, but were 'kind friendly, and often very close to human beings and their everyday lives' (Hasim 1997). This atypical representation of *jin* and *tuyul* was perceived as problematic. Besides the fear that such series would reinforce people's belief in *jin* and *tuyul* (Gus 1997; pur/asa 1997), the greatest objection expressed in most articles was that these were either not in accordance to the perception of *jin* as people commonly knew it (roh 1997), or not in harmony with Islamic teachings (pur/asa 1997). Hence, in some articles it was denied that the appearance of *jin* and *tuyul* in mystery television series was part of Indonesian culture and allegations were made that these had been borrowed from fairytales from India (pur/asa 1997) or were attempts to imitate films from Hong Kong (Suryati 1998). Refuting the allegations that the mystery series were based on Indian fairytales Raam Punjabi, owner of the very successful production house Multivision Plus which produced some of the most popular programmes on Indonesian television including *Tuyul dan Mbak Yul*, stated that the *tuyul* in his series was closely modelled on descriptions of *tuyul* in old Indonesian folk tales (nda 1997). Punjabi, who is of Indian descent, has often been criticized by those who claim that his soaps do not represent Indonesian culture and are only the purveyors of dreams.

In February 1998, Minister of Information Hartono instructed the Film Censor Institute

to ban films and television series with *jin* or *tuyul* as a theme.<sup>18</sup> His stated reason was that these were not didactic. Hartono felt that if a story in a television series presented the goodness or kindness of a *jin*, this did not accord with reality/the truth: 'Honestly, I've never seen a *jin*. So how can we tell if there are good *jin*. Please do not cause a rift in our nation by purveying items which are at odds with religion. Do not teach the people to see something that does not exist' (5.29/2.4 1998).<sup>19</sup> The former Director-General of Radio Television and Film, Alex Leo Zulkarnaen, was also disturbed by false representations of *jin* in television series. In an interview in which his comments were sought about the increase in number of the members of the Film Censor Institute specifically to censor mystery films, he made the remark: 'Can you imagine producing television series with a *jin* as the main character, going so far as to have the *jin* called Uncle Jin or Auntie Jin. They [all parties involved in the production and screening of television series] go overboard selling dreams' ('Mantan Dirjen RTF,' 1998).<sup>20</sup>

Despite the ban on the *jin*-type mystery comedies in February, they were still being screened in March 1998, with *Jin dan Jun* the most popular. When asked about the actions taken by the Department of Information to end the screening of such series, the director of Pembinaan Film (Institution for Film Cultivation) answered that a letter had been sent to all private television stations requesting them to obey broadcasting regulations to reduce the number of films with superstitious themes (pur 1998). However, before this could occur, *Reformasi*, the bid for change in every possible field after thirty years of New Order rule, emerged with the stepping down of President Soeharto in May 1998.

### 5.3. Horror films for cinema and television: Developments of *Reformasi*

During and after *Reformasi* the world of film was overwhelmed by a host of new developments. Under the presidency of B.J. Habibie (1998-1999), a process of democratization of the media was set in motion. During the presidency of Abdurahman Wahid (1999-2001) the Ministry of Information was officially abolished, but the Film Censor Institution continued to exert its function, even though its position was called into question. As discussed in Chapters Two and Four, the euphoria and disorder of *Reformasi* gave rise to new film genres and also redefined the use and substance of film discourse and narrative practices. The spirit of Reformation did not leave the genres of horror films and mystery television series unscathed. Two distinct changes were introduced for horror films: newly released horror films often ignored the old formula of the film genre, and from 2001 they were being screened in top-end cinemas.

The first horror film produced for the cinemas after the fall of Soeharto, *Jelangkung*, included both these changes. In October 2001 this film, which was shot on digital video camera and directed by the young film-maker Rizal Mantovani, was shown in major cinemas in Jakarta. The story, based on urban legends in Jakarta, was totally different from New Order horror films. Shot in the music-video style and with a soundtrack of popular music, the film tells the story of a group of teenagers who set out on an adventure to look for ghosts

in haunted places in and around Jakarta. On a camping trip to a little village, Angker Batu in the hills of West Java, one of them conjures up a ghost by using a *jelangkung* (a doll made out of a coconut shell and some wooden sticks used as a medium to invite spirits to descend), as a result of which the whole group is haunted. Nowhere in the film does a *kyai* appear, nor are any other religious symbols apparent. Moreover, the film does not have a mystical setting and, even though it is about legends, these are filmed as part of reality and the lives and beliefs of teenagers in Jakarta. After its success in Jakarta, *Jelangkung* was screened in cinemas throughout the country; it was the box office hit of 2001, reaching 1.3 million viewers. After *Jelangkung*, more horror films, the bulk of them produced by young film-makers, were released and screened in top-end cinemas: *Titik Hitam* (Black point, November 2002), *Satu Nyawa dalam Denting Lonceng Kecil* (One soul in a little tinkling bell, November 2002), *Peti Mati (The Coffin)* (February 2003), *Jelangkung's* sequel *Tusuk Jelangkung* (Demon's spike, March 2003), and *The Soul* (November 2003). None of these films made any pretence about inserting religious elements and, apart from *Peti Mati* which was set in the 1960s, the films were situated in the present.

This seems to provide evidence that during *Reformasi*, the Code of Ethics for film production was abandoned. Horror films for cinemas were being produced in a new style and their formulas were more varied. The appearance of a *kyai* was no longer perceived as obligatory. Moreover, most films which reached the top-end cinemas depicted the mysterious in the present, as part of modern life. Did this signify the end for the '*kyai*' then? It did not. In cinemas, the *kyai* was still found where he had always been since the 1980s – in the lower class theatres, primarily in the outskirts and *kampung* areas of the city and in rural areas. Even though most contemporary Indonesian horror films used new styles and formats, there was also a horror film released in November 2002 which still adhered to the old New Order format of horror films. *Kafir (Satanic)* (Infidel (Satanic)), was inspired by a true story which occurred among the people of Cigugur in West Java during the fight for Independence in 1945. Through flashbacks, it tells the story of a shaman who is obsessed by the idea of becoming a *wali* (holy man) after he has gone in search of spiritual knowledge (*ilmu*) and has become an apprentice to a mysterious, allegedly immortal man on a mountain. Moving to a small village with his wife and son, he sets up a practice as a healer there. But as the story advances, he becomes involved in black magic practices and after he has been killed, the earth refuses to receive his body.<sup>21</sup> In *Kafir (Satanic)* as in old New Order horror films, an Islamic authority figure comes to the rescue by restoring peace and order. Film critic Joko Anwar writes: 'Watching the latest release of locally made horror flick, *Kafir* (Unbeliever), the joy of watching such campy horror movies in the '80s would certainly come back to the audience's mind' (Anwar 2002b). He mentions that *Kafir* was made by an 'old-time film director,' while other recently released horror films had been the work of new talents (Anwar 2002c). In contrast to *Jelangkung* and other films made by young film-makers, *Kafir (Satanic)* was released in lower class cinemas. Its producer, Chand Parwez, claims the film was very popular, especially in rural areas (Anugerah 2003).

Apart from the *kyai's* enduring presence and popularity in old horror movies mostly found

in rural areas, after the fall of Soeharto he also appears in a new mystery television format. Due to the momentum of *Reformasi* the February 1998 decree, which enforced the reduction of the screening of the *jin* and *tuyul* series, never came into force. A year later, in March 1999, when questions were asked about the continuation of mystery series on television, it was said that people needed entertainment and that it would be better not to ban these series until there was more political stability (mam 1999). By 2001, the screening of horror films and mystery series on television had increased considerably. Initially, re-runs of old horror films and mystery television series were screened, but gradually the production of new series and television films ensued (cp 2001) and, at the end of 2001, a new formula of mystery series for television had emerged. At the root of this new formula lay the re-instatement of religious authorities in the form of *kyai*, *ulama*, or simply people with authority speaking on behalf of Islam. When a new television series *Kismis* (an abbreviation of *kisah misteri*, mystery tales) was screened by the private television station RCTI in 2001, it launched a new formula in the mystery genre called ‘*infotainment horor*’ (horror infotainment) which would eventually lead to the return of the religious figure. Inspired by the huge success of *Jelangkung*, *Kismis* was based on the reconstruction of existing legends and stories about ghosts and haunted sites in Indonesia (m07/m08/cp 2002).

*Kismis* follows the formula in which the programme host, a model (Caroline Zachri), interviews people who have had a blood-curdling experience (*peristiwa seram*). After the interview, the stories of the informants are visualized in a semi-documentary style reconstruction. For example, a couple of young men happened to be walking home late at night after having played cards. Along the way, they saw a beautiful woman to whom they are attracted. But as they draw nearer, her face suddenly transforms into a hideous apparition. Rumours abounded that the well they had just passed by was haunted. In the first year of the series, the programme was 24 minutes long and included three separate accounts by three sets of informants. Screened on Thursday evenings at 22:00, its slot was filled with commercials and it proved popular with television viewers (the first couple of episodes had a rating of about 7 to 9 per cent according to the AC Nielsen survey) (Anugerah 2002; m07/m08/cp 2002).

In the wake of *Kismis*’ success, similar programmes soon followed suit. In 2002 there were three: *Percaya Nggak Percaya* (Believe it or not) and *O Seraam* (O scaary!), which were screened by Anteve, and *Dunia Lain* (Another world), which was broadcast on Thursday evening by Trans TV. The series *Percaya Nggak Percaya* greatly resembled *Kismis* in that it was also about true ghost stories and legends, and was presented by a model (Arzeti Bilbina). Some episodes of *Kismis* and *Percaya Nggak Percaya* dealt with the same subject, such as the story of a haunted house in Pondok Indah, South Jakarta, but in *Percaya Nggak Percaya*, the presenter did not interview informants herself but just introduced excerpts of mystery stories. These mystery stories were told to a reporter who went on location accompanied by an informant and an eyewitness. As proof of the authenticity of the story in *Percaya Nggak Percaya*, the reporter was accompanied by a supernatural expert/practitioner (*praktisi*



*supernatural*). This person would say what he ‘saw’ at the haunted site, and at times transmit (that is ‘speak on behalf of’) the wishes of the ghosts or other creatures at a certain location. The inclusion of strange occurrences in a part of the programme was a standard part of the series. A foggy image or shadow or perhaps some eerie sounds would appear on the television screen, and a narrator (either a voice-over or the reporter on location) would then say: ‘That was not simulated, but is actually happening’ (*itu bukan rekayasa, tetapi kejadian sesungguhnya*) (cp 2002).

Taking a slightly different tack to *Kismis* and *Percaya Nggak Percaya*, Antevé’s second series *O Seraam* recounted various ghost stories based on people’s own experiences. This horror infotainment programme was interactive and people could phone in and recount the uncanny events they had personally experienced. This programme also included a quiz about a ghost story (cp 2002). The third new horror infotainment, *Dunia Lain* (2002), had a host (Harry Pantja) who challenged people to stay overnight at haunted locations. They were then asked to narrate their experiences the next day. One episode entitled *Hantu Kuburan Cina* (Ghost of the Chinese Graveyard, broadcast on 19/09/2002) begins with a man accounting how he regularly desecrates Chinese graves when digging up the riches rumoured to be buried inside. Once when he was engaged in this nefarious pursuit, a ghost suddenly appeared. In the next segment of the programme, someone was dared to stay overnight at the grave where the ghost had been seen. The camera then filmed that person remaining at the grave all night long, and recorded all movements. After sunrise, the reporter returned and asked the person about what he had experienced (cp 2002). As in *Percaya Nggak Percaya*, during the recording eerie sounds could be heard and images which were said to be authentic appeared on screen.

For an example of *Dunia Lain* see Disc Three 5.3.

Even though they still much resembled one another, the various horror infotainment programmes made strenuous efforts to find diverse forms to transmit authentic experiences of the supernatural as facts and part and parcel of the daily lived reality of Indonesian people. The key word reiterated in the depiction of the supernatural in the horror infotainment series was ‘real’.<sup>22</sup> All series were based on true stories (*kisah nyata*), and what was recorded or reconstructed was claimed to be authentic and not fabricated (*bukan rekayasa*). Although in 2002 in the authentication of the supernatural experiences the stories of eyewitnesses and the help of a paranormal or supernatural expert was sufficient, by 2003 religious authority, through the participation of a *kyai* or an *ulama*, was once again favoured as an essential part of horror infotainment programmes.

It was in this year that the number of horror infotainment series markedly increased. Besides the above-mentioned programmes on RCTI, Antevé, and Trans TV, other television stations now also broadcast their own horror infotainment series. To compete with this, in January 2003 *Kismis* came up with a new segment of thirteen half-hour episodes called *Kismis: Arwah Penasaran* (Mystery tales: lost souls). Again the series was about true stories,

but this time the focus was restricted to the category of ghost stories giving accounts of the wandering souls of people who had died by suicide or had been murdered, consequently leaving behind their unresolved problems on earth. The director of the new series CC Febriono claimed that *Kismis: Arwah Penasaran* was different from the other mystery series which had recently swamped the television stations. Its scope extended far beyond exploiting the scare factor of the stories of lost souls, as the programmes of other television stations did; it would also find a solution at the end of the story. Publicity contained such sentences as: 'For example, to help the lost soul enter the Hereafter in peace the mediation of a *kyai* is required.' 'And indeed a good solution is still to ask Allah for help.'<sup>23</sup> An example of *Kismis: Arwah Penasaran* screened on 05/01/03 was the story of Eriya, a girl from Kampung Asem, Cililitan, East Jakarta, who was murdered when she was six months pregnant. She was found with her throat slit open, her head nearly severed from her trunk. Her soul wandered through the area in search of the person who killed her and people from the village often encountered her ghost. All was well after an *ustaz* had prayed for her. She was then able to return to her world (*kembali ke alamnya*) in peace (Anugerah 2003).

By June 2003 the producer of *Percaya Nggak Percaya* felt that his programme also required the prestigious assistance of a religious co-star. Initially the series had consisted of several parts and now it was thought best just to maintain the *Cerita Misteri* section about people who had experienced a supernatural event. As a new development, it would no longer merely give a 'news coverage of mysteries' (*liputan berita seputar misteri*), but would also involve the participation of an Islamic paranormal medium, who would lead prayers and beseech permission and guidance from Allah before location shooting commenced. The participation of a paranormal medium on location as well as a break at sunset to observe the sunset prayer (*sholat Maghrib*) would be a hard and fast rule. It was felt that this would ensure that the production of the series would not encounter any hindrance from the spirits which it may have disturbed (Tim 2003).

The most extreme example of a marriage between horror realities and symbols of Islamic authorization was the horror reality-show *Pemburu Hantu* (Ghosthunters), which hit the screens in early 2004. In this programme ghosts were caught 'live' on screen. The concept of *Pemburu Hantu* was based on the Hollywood blockbuster *Ghostbusters* (Ivan Reitman, 1984), a film about a team of men hunting down and catching ghosts. In *Pemburu Hantu* this theme was applied in real life. People at home could call the television programme to report ghostly apparitions or some haunted place. The *Pemburu Hantu* team would then set out to investigate the place and, should they indeed be present, capture the ghosts or other supernatural beings and cleanse the place and its surroundings of 'negative energies'. After the ghosts were captured a sticker was glued on a wall with the image of a ghost and the words 'under observation' (*dalam pengawasan*). If the ghosts had not re-appeared after a few weeks, this sticker was replaced by another sticker showing the image of a ghost crossed out and bearing the words 'free of ghosts' (*bebas hantu*). The slogans associated with the programme sounded like commercials for a detergent: 'Ghosthunters, the supreme solution



for overcoming ghosts!’ (*Pemburu Hantu solusi jitu atasi hantu!*) and ‘Ghosthunters: contact us, we’ll come, and we’ll cleanse [the place]!’ (*Pemburu Hantu; hubungi kami, kami datang, kami bersihkan!*).

The *Pemburu Hantu* team consisted of four persons: the supernatural expert (a *dukun kejawen* or Javanese magic specialist) Pak Hariry Mak, the *Ustaz* (Islamic authority figure) Aziz Hidayatullah, a young *kejawen/santri* (Javanese mystic/Islamic scholar) Ki Gusti Candra Putih, and a painter who drew portraits of the beings with his eyes covered. During the programmes the team prayed and invoked God’s help several times before, during, and after the ghost hunt. Its members also asked for the ‘interactive prayers’ (*doa interaktif*) of the viewers at home, beseeching God’s support (*doa restu*) to ensure that the mission would be brought to a safe conclusion. When their mission was accomplished at the end of the programme in a final comment *Ustaz* Aziz confirmed the existence of supernatural beings and explained that this also is acknowledged in Islam, for their existence is described in the Quran.<sup>24</sup>

For an excerpt from *Pemburu Hantu* see Disc Three 5.3.

The participation of religious leaders in *Kismis: Arwah Penasaran*, the observance of religious rituals in *Percaya Nggak Percaya*, and the emphasis on the authorization of Islam and the power of prayer in the hyper-real *Pemburu Hantu* series are all reminiscent of the effects set in motion by the Code of Ethics guidelines. During the New Order, a *kyai* figured prominently as the appropriate authority figure or expert to restore order in horror films which dealt with public taboos as a means to evade censorship. While many New Order censorship regulations and guidelines for film production became obsolete during *Reformasi*, within a few years the *kyai* resurfaced to deal with supernatural issues, or to speak on behalf of ghosts and other supernatural creatures, in a new formula for the mystery television series.

Now a subtle difference had crept in. The re-instated participation of religious figures in post-Soeharto mystery television series implied a discourse about the supernatural which diverged from those which circulated during the New Order. In addition to the rise in reality TV, the socio-political climate of *Reformasi* set in motion a questioning of past dominant discourses of New Order rule. To unravel the authoritarian dogmas of the New Order, a widespread call for ‘facts’, ‘truth’, and ‘authenticity’ resounded. The search for post-Soeharto versions of the facts, realities, and truths of Indonesian society also impinged on mystery television programmes. Moreover there were commercial grounds for such a call: reality shows cashed in on people’s beliefs in the supernatural. In this setting everything claimed to be true in horror infotainment programmes needed proof that it was real and not caused by mere camera tricks or special effects. For example, a senior lecturer in criminology at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta, Prof. Dr. Tb Ronny Rahman Nitibaskara, proposed that in order to refute the idea that whatever occurred in the mystery programmes was fictitious, these programmes should be subjected to an analysis by an assembly of *ulama* and experts from different disciplines (bwo 2003).

Hence, the use of religious and other authorities in the new formulas devised for the

mystery television genre during *Reformasi* functioned to authenticate what was shown on television as real. The tendency to define and authenticate the mysterious as part of present-day reality shifted the previous New Order boundaries which had determined where the real and supernatural in Indonesian society should be placed, understood, and exploited. In that sense the *kyai* in horror reality shows after *Reformasi* challenged those discourses which rejected the mysterious as part of modern Indonesian society, marking possible new forms of imagining contemporary society. Nevertheless, the participation of religious leaders and the observance of religious rituals were presumably also re-instated to ward off anticipated objections by mainly Islamic groups which may have felt disturbed, had the mysterious been allowed to hover undefined and uncontrolled. As such, the presence of a *kyai* combined with an Islamic medium and religious observance on set as an integral part of these programmes was intended to permit and legitimize the new themes in horror infotainment. Reminiscent of the old practices of evading censorship under the New Order, the use of these religious figures and symbols can once again be perceived as a safeguard that enabled producers to show everything which might be construed as problematic and still get away with it.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I examined the Indonesian horror genre as a forum for the representation of constituents of the nation and the formation of national identity. I showed that the genre itself, as well as certain formats and formulas employed in it, represented and imagined specific audiences and communities. New Order discourses about horror films produced for the cinema argued that the genre represented first the Indonesian film industry and Indonesian peoples, who, as part of Eastern culture, were close to mysticism. Second, horror films were seen as a genre for the lower classes and rural communities because the films were screened mostly in rural or lower class cinemas. Third, because of the *deus ex machina* formula employing the intervention of a *kyai*, horror film was gradually equated with *film dakwah* and Islamic communities. When horror films were produced for another format, television, and reached broader Indonesian audiences, other connotations began to arise. The emphasis shifted to different ways of imaging and imagining the supernatural and rational in Indonesian society and raised the discourses about the horror genre to another level.

From this fresh perspective, discourses about the horror genre sought to find acceptable forms of representing the supernatural on Indonesian television without interfering with New Order conceptions of how to image and imagine the modern Indonesian nation. Mystical films or television series faced opposition if they did not reflect certain sanctioned formulas and dominant discourses about development and the rational – or reality based on Islamic teaching – of how to imagine the supernatural in New Order society. For example, in 1998 Minister of Information Hartono proscribed these series so as not to ‘cause a rift in our nation with items which contest religion’. Fierce debates about mystery films argued about

the definition of acceptable modes of representation of the supernatural and reality.

*Reformasi* implied changes in both senses. The first shift occurred in the link between certain film formats and formulas and certain imagined audiences or communities. Changes in horror film formulas altered the specific association of horror with the lower class, rural, and Islamic communities. Several horror films produced for the cinema demonstrated a new freedom of expression at work among film-makers. In many cases the changes heralded the exit of the *kyai*. Also, a number of new Indonesian horror films were now screened in top end cinemas, signalling that horror was no longer a genre confined to the lower classes only.

The second change could be found in the discourses of how to imagine the supernatural as part of Indonesian society. During *Reformasi* television began to produce new formulas of horror programmes. Within a few years new horror 'reality shows' or infotainment programmes had emerged. These presented the supernatural as part of the everyday life of Indonesians. Such programmes contested the New Order discourses which had defined the mysterious as a realm outside reality. However, even though horror reality shows altered discourses about the supernatural, in due course old modes of representing the mysterious emerged again in some of the new television formulas. Personified by the *kyai*, past representations regained ground in an altered discourse. The *kyai* was an unrivaled asset in the exploitation of the supernatural in Indonesian audio-visual media. He increased the realism of horror reality shows and warded off censorship at the same time. I further explore the combination of commerce, censorship, and Islam in post-Soeharto media in the next chapter.

## 6 The celebrity *kyai* and phantoms of the past: Tussling with the bounds of Indonesian moralities, realities, and popularities

### Introduction

After two weeks of controversy on 21 August 2004 the teen flick *Buruan Cium Gue!* (Kiss me quick!, Findo Purwono) was withdrawn from Indonesian cinemas. The film had passed the censors but after its release it had elicited strong protests from the famous *dai* (preacher), public figure, and businessman Abdullah Gymnastiar. Without actually having seen the film, basing his views simply on its title, AA Gym believed that it would encourage illicit premarital sex amongst teenagers. It did not take him long to round up support in Islamic governmental and mass organizations. After two weeks of loud protests from these groups the film was banned from cinemas. The producer, Raam Punjabi, retracted it so as 'not to destabilize the nation any further'.

Muslim protests stirred up by putatively inappropriate films were nothing new. Both under New Order rule and during *Reformasi*, films were banned, withdrawn from circulation, not publicly screened, or even not produced in anticipation of Muslim protests. Nevertheless, there were subtle changes in the socio-political environment from under the New Order to after Soeharto rule had ended. One significant difference was that during *Reformasi*, in response to the rise of freedom of expression in all sorts of fields, Muslim protests were expressed more loudly. Furthermore, in the freer atmosphere of Reform, images of Islam gradually achieved greater exposure in the Indonesian media. In the context of protests in the name of Islam, between 2003 and 2007 such outcries particularly attracted substantial media attention. It was not just film which elicited protests; music and dance performances and visual arts also drew the ire from some Muslim groups. In 2003 the uproar around *Buruan Cium Gue!* was preceded by a controversy about the famous *dangdut* singer and dancer Inul Daratista. Pious Islamic veteran *dangdut* singer and film star Rhoma Irama expressed his disgust with Inul's sexy dance movements. His objections to Inul's dances launched a heated debate about whether or not her provocative hip rotations could be defined as an act of pornography and be forbidden on the grounds of religious moral values. In 2005 another two cases which attracted ample media attention involved the militant Islamic organization Islamic Defenders Front (*Front Pembela Islam*, FPI).<sup>1</sup> Since its formation in August 1998, the FPI had invariably been depicted in the Indonesian media as a fanatical Muslim group which would not shy away from violence to make its point. The first case which involved a protest from the FPI in 2005 had to do with the use of the Arabic calligraphic symbol for Allah on the cover of the album *Laskar Cinta* (Love army) of the rock band Dewa 19. FPI also objected to a television performance by the band because during the show dancers trod on the calligraphic symbol which was painted on the studio floor. FPI accused Dewa 19 of

blasphemy, reported the band to the Jakarta city police, and demanded a public apology. The second case which made the limelight was occasioned by FPI protests against a photograph on display at the 2005 CP Biennale art exhibition in Jakarta. It depicted a nude Adam and Eve. FPI repudiated this photograph on the grounds that it was pornographic and consequently reported photographer Davy Linggar, art curator of the Biennale Agus Suwage, as well as 'Adam', who was personified by popular television actor Anjasmara, and 'Eve', the well-known model Isabella, to the Jakarta police. In February 2006 the four were cited suspects who allegedly had displayed obscene art which affronted certain religious groups (Suryana 2006).

The growth in Muslim protests against films, music performances, and works of art in post-Soeharto Indonesia was linked to discourses about the position of Islam in the Indonesian public sphere and its role in the politics of Reform. This issue was a very old one, which dated back to pre-independence days. Then the discourses centred on the position of Islam in the Indonesian Constitution. The burning question was whether the new Indonesian nation-state should separate state and religion or, alternatively, adopt the document known as the Jakarta Charter (*Piagam Jakarta*). This charter paved the way for the state to implement Islamic law among Muslims. The Jakarta Charter was rejected and in its stead the *Pancasila* was adopted as the state ideology on 22 June 1945. *Reformasi* and the concomitant bid it brought to change society reopened the debate on whether the Indonesian nation should be ruled on the basis of Islamic principles. Although in the period between 1998 and 2007 the general feeling was still that Islam should not be part of the Indonesian Constitution, in the public sphere and in regional politics Islamic values were gradually gaining ground. In particular, the law on regional autonomy, officially promulgated on 1 January 2001, strengthened the position of Islamic rule as part of regional regulations (*peraturan daerah*, Perda).<sup>2</sup> Between 2001 and 2005 the regional governments in Aceh, Tangerang, Cianjur, Padang, and South Sulawesi all implemented regulations based on Islamic law. Furthermore, in 2006 an important debate took place which involved questions about the position of Islam in ruling the nation. The majority of these discourses occurred in the context of the proposal for the drafting of a new law which would regulate public morality and boost the endeavour to ban pornography from the public domain. Under the presidency of Habibie (1998-1999), rightwing Muslim parties had proposed a new law on pornography. In 2006 their efforts bore fruit in the Anti-Pornography and Porno Action Bill (*Rancangan Undang Undang Anti Pornografi dan Pornoaksi*, RUU APP). Among the aims the law hoped to achieve was to ban kissing in public, sensual dances, and the depiction of sexual activity in literature, paintings, photographs, and recordings (Suryana 2006).<sup>3</sup> Ideas about the implementation of Islamic values in the framework of the bill led to vehement protests from both non-Islamic and moderate Islamic groups. In the words of Muhamad Ali, lecturer at the State Islamic University in Jakarta, the controversy between the proponents of the bill and its critics exposed 'the fault lines of a cultural war between the conservatives and the liberals, with the silent majority in the middle' (Ali 2007).

Next to the wider exposure and increased intensity of Muslim protests against films, performances, and visual arts, another difference between New Order Indonesia and Reform

was that Islamic features became more frequent in audio-visual media after the fall of President Soeharto. To some extent this could be attributed to the growing number of Islamic groups and organizations which had begun to use audio-visual media as a tool for religious propagation and self-representation. As discussed in Chapter Four, this had led to the founding of the new film genre and movement of *film Islami*. The ideas and representations of Islam which the Islamic film movement had in mind with *film Islami* did not reach the Indonesian mass media. Instead, as discussed in Chapter Five, horror reality shows produced by commercial television stations were associated in an increasing degree with religious propagation. In 2004, this trend of Islamic authority figures appearing on television increased yet again. A new television genre called 'religious soaps' (*sinetron religius*) emerged. Although initially confined to the fasting month Ramadan, these soaps which had an outwardly Islamic appearance, were screened on television even after this time. Gradually, images of Islam had managed to evade this framework, but the new religious series were still haunted by ghosts and, generally speaking, the stories still leaned heavily on tearful repentance. As was the case in the horror reality shows, the religious soaps were imbued with elements of mystery, namely supernatural occurrences, and also reiterated the claim that they were based on true stories. Moreover, as did films and series of the horror genre, the religious soaps accorded a major role to heroes in the form of Islamic authority figures. *Kyai*, *ustaz*, *ulama*, or *dai* appeared in the soap itself, or celebrity *kyai* gave an introduction before the programme started and also brought it to a close. So, even though Islamic films had broken free of the framework of Ramadan, most works featuring Islam on television were a far cry from the envisaged *film Islami*.

The proliferation of images of Islam on television and the wider exposure of Islamic groups in their efforts to regulate film media, music, and art, could not but influence narrative practices in film and television. This chapter is an attempt to discover the way in which Islam was implicated in defining the bounds of post-Soeharto film and television narratives. In both the first and third sections I address a case in which the banner of Islam was used in attempts to direct film narrative practices by means of assessments by the censor. In the interval of the second section I discuss post-Soeharto television narrative practices.

### 6.1. The ban on *Kiss Me Quick!*: The *kyai*, the foreigner, and Indonesia's morality

On 5 August 2004, the film *Buruan Cium Gue!* was released in top end cinemas of the Cinema 21 group in fifteen different cities. The film followed the average formula of 'ABG' (*Anak Baru Gedhe*; teenager) television soaps. It featured a simple love story about a young couple, Ardi and Desi, who are each other's first love. The girl, Desi, comes from a rich family. The boy, Ardi, is a poor orphan who works hard after school to pay for his education. Even though they have been dating for two years, Ardi has never kissed Desi on her lips. Ardi, who is an adherent of 'old-fashioned' principles, does not want to kiss his girlfriend before it is

the right time to do so. Desi, on the other hand, dreams of being kissed by him. Most of her girlfriends at school have already been kissed. On a radio programme about ‘the first kiss’, Desi lies about her first kiss experience and it is this lie that stirs up a tempest of troubles. Because Ardi has never kissed her he wonders when and by whom Desi was kissed. After a plethora of misunderstandings all the problems are solved. In the end Ardi and Desi enjoy their first kiss.

*Buruan Cium Gue!* was produced by the ‘king’ of television soaps, Raam Punjabi. Since the beginning of the 1990s his production house Multivision Plus has been very successful in producing popular entertainment for Indonesian television. The film *Buruan Cium Gue!* strongly resembled the formula of Punjabi’s soaps, and it also featured actors and actresses who played in one of his popular soaps *Anak Baru Gedhe* (Teenagers). This soap had been launched two years earlier on the Indonesian private television station RCTI. In an interview, Punjabi mentioned that he had wanted to produce a version of the television series for the big screen, because: ‘There are things which actually do happen amongst teenagers but can not be shown in soaps; these are exposed in *Buruan Cium Gue!*’ (CP 2004).<sup>4</sup>

Only three days after its release the film sparked a big controversy. On 8 August 2004 the then very popular *dai* Abdullah Gymnastiar raised objections to the film. He did so in his bimonthly sermon on Sunday, which was broadcast live from the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta on the private television channel SCTV, in a homily called *Indahnya Kebersamaan* (The beauty of togetherness).

For an example of his sermons in the *Istiqlal Mosque* see Disc Three 6.1.

AA Gym was convinced that the film *Buruan Cium Gue!*, contained pornographic elements, a conclusion which he extrapolated from its title alone, inspiring him to attack the film in his sermon. He said *Buruan Cium Gue!* was dangerous as it would encourage premarital sex among teenagers. Gym said that according to Islamic doctrine it was a sin for a man and woman who were not married even to touch each other, let alone kiss. Not only did such a kiss run counter to Islamic doctrine, it was one sure step on the road to premarital sex. Pursuing this theme, AA Gym asserted that the title of the film might as well be changed to ‘*Buruan Berzinah*’ (‘Hurry up Let’s Fornicate’).

Soon after his televised sermon, AA Gym won the support from the Indonesian Ulama Council MUI, and several Islamic mass organizations. Some of these mass organizations initiated protests against the film, demanding it be banned. The president of MUI, Amidhan, asserted that the film was not at all suitable to be screened in Indonesia. He too considered the title of the film to be an insuperable hurdle. It implied ‘porno action’ (*porno aksi*, meaning porn-related acts). Moreover, he believed that scenes of premarital kissing in the film formed an infringement of the morality and culture of the Indonesian nation. Such a film, he said, destroyed the morality of the nation. Therefore it should be banned. Amidhan argued that the film could be construed as an insult to religion. He felt personally offended that the film unfolds the tale of how an initially deeply pious boy discards his religious moral values at its



end and succumbs to kissing his girlfriend before marrying her (Yordenaya 2004a).

Presumably stimulated by the support of MUI and the mass organizations, AA Gym began a tour around the city in efforts to gauge the popularity of *Buruan Cium Gue!* among film audiences. On Friday 13 August in an interview before his visit to some film theatres, he laid heavy emphasis on the fact that he did not intend to watch the film personally. He reiterated that the title alone made it palpably clear that it ran counter to basic religious values and posed a serious danger to the younger generation of Indonesians. AA Gym declared that his sole purpose was to visit the cinemas to check on the popularity of the film. Precisely because of the controversy he had stirred up, the cinemas which screened *Buruan Cium Gue!* were packed. Many in the audience simply wanted to see what all the fuss was about and were curious about the risqué scenes. The majority came away disappointed after watching the film. It was an ordinary Indonesian soap or teen flick and there was nothing special to see.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, AA Gym and his supporters continued their mission of protest against the film. Five days after his visits to cinemas, AA Gym and his associates set out to call on the Film Censor Institute. On 18 August they paid a visit to the head of the institute, Titie Said, in order to interrogate her about the institute allowing the film's general circulation in cinemas. In answer to Gym's questions, Titie Said explained that the kissing scene in *Buruan Cium Gue!* had abided by the censor institute rules. It was believed that the scene portrayed a part of daily-lived reality of contemporary Indonesian youth. Moreover, Titie argued, before the making of *Buruan Cium Gue!* several other Indonesian films which had passed the censor had already contained kissing scenes. She explained that the title reproduced the trendy language used among teenagers. Despite her neutral explanation, after the visit by AA Gym, Titie Said commented in an interview that she believed that Gym's call on the censor institute was a sign that the institute had made a wrong decision. However, she stated, as the film had already passed the censorship procedures the institute was not entitled to withdraw it from cinemas (Yordenaya 2004b).

Surprisingly, four days later it was. On 21 August 2004, after a fortnight of controversy, the film was withdrawn from the cinemas. The institute, with the agreement of Punjabi's Multivision Plus, had decided to bow to the pressure of the public rejection of the film. The Film Censor Institute withdrew its approval of the film on the grounds that it had 'disrupted public order'. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism issued a letter revoking the distribution of the film and Multivision asked cinemas to stop screening it (Unidjaja 2004). The film copies were sent back to the production company, and it was decided that *Buruan Cium Gue!* would be re-released later that year after some editing and under another title. Raam Punjabi told the press that when undertaking the revision of the film, besides the censor institute he would also involve religious leaders in the production process. Punjabi regretted that *Buruan Cium Gue!* had been banned but believed that it was more important that the nation had not been divided over it ('Mana yang perlu.' 2004). Punjabi clearly stressed he had not retracted his film because of its content. The film, he stated, showed nothing but the factual lives of middle class young people in Indonesian society.



For an impression of BCG! and statements by Punjabi see Disc Three 6.1.

The controversy did not stop there. In their turn groups of journalists, intellectuals, film-makers, writers, artists and other public figures began to protest the banning of the film. The protest raised by these groups articulated a fear of the implementation of a new form of censorship on the basis of religious moral grounds. In the newspaper *The Jakarta Post* cultural critic Zoso wrote that he was afraid that censorship on the basis of religion would be the first step on the path to political repression and curbs on the freedom of expression. He recalled that the Indonesian media had already experienced such restrictions under Soeharto rule and nobody wanted it to go back there. Zoso emphasized that religion should not become an instrument of harassment (Zoso 2004). Others also probed the question of the role of religious pressure in the banning of *Buruan Cium Gue!*.<sup>6</sup> On 25 August the cultural centre Utan Kayu produced a petition signed by film-makers, intellectuals, artists and other public figures. This petition addressed three points. Its first point was that the withdrawal of the film was an annihilation of the freedom of expression and could be seen as an anti-democratic action at odds with human rights. Its second objection was that religious authorities and symbols (in this case Islamic) should not be brought into the public sphere, but be reserved to the private sphere. The third objection raised was that this ban on a work of art was perceived as moralistic, dogmatic, old-fashioned and not representative of the religious/Islamic community in Indonesia as a whole (Gaban 2004).

Ignoring such criticisms, Islamic pressure groups continued to stage protests against films and television programmes. Members of the Alliance of People against Pornographic Acts (*Aliansi Masyarakat Anti Porno-aksi*, AMAP) complained about the programmes *Cowok Cowok Keren* (Handsome guys) on RCTI, *Nah Ini Dia* (Nah here he/she/it is) on SCTV, and *Layar Tancep* (Mobile cinema) on Lativi. In their view, these programmes were merely a vehicle for selling sex. Even though every one of the series had passed the censor, as far as AMAP was concerned they exceeded the boundaries of what was acceptable in the Indonesian media ('Mana yang perlu.'2004). In this atmosphere, producers of films which might possibly elicit protests tried to pre-empt objections usually by claiming that their films just represented reality. One of these films was *Virgin* (Hanny Saputra 2004), which was released not long after *Buruan Cium Gue!* The film, which was noticeably inspired by the US films *Thirteen* (directed by Catherine Hardwick 2003) and *Coyote Ugly* (directed by David McNally 2000), was said to depict daily life in contemporary Indonesia. In a television programme about 'the making of *Virgin*', producer Chand Parwez stressed that the film showed what was actually happening in Indonesian society. According to Parwez, *Virgin*, which depicts teenage girls clubbing, using drugs, drinking alcohol, and selling their bodies to men to pay for trendy clothes and gadgets, was produced 'to inform and warn parents'. Parents, he said, should watch the film together with their children in order to make themselves aware of the dangers inherent in contemporary city life and, thus armed, teach the children right from wrong.

For fragments from 'the making of *Virgin*' and Parwez's statements see Disc Three 6.1.

At the same time as discourses and protests about the moral value of *Buruan Cium Gue!* and similar films were being staged, an anti-pornography law was drafted.<sup>7</sup> In 2006 discussion of the bill led to a huge controversy which according to lecturer Muhammad Ali was best understood in the context of a struggle about a fitting definition of the public morality of the Indonesian nation-state (Ali 2006). Until 2006 any serious discussion of the law had mainly been conspicuous by its absence. The law was proposed under the presidency of Habibie and was brought up again a few times during the presidencies of Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri. In 2003 new interest in an anti-pornography law was aroused by the enormous upheaval across the country caused by the erotic dance movements of the *dangdut* singer Inul Daratista. The hip gyrations of the rising star were compared to the working of a drill giving her the title ‘queen of the drill dance’ (*ratu ngebor*). Inul’s dance aroused the ire of celebrity, film star, and ‘king of *dangdut*’, Rhoma Irama. A devout Muslim, Rhoma Irama declared that Inul’s drill dance posed a threat to the morality of the country and that such ‘porno-action’ – he was the one who launched the term – should be banned from the public domain. The row between Inul and Rhoma Irama received wide exposure in the Indonesian mass media and divided Indonesia into pro and contra Inul camps (Barendregt 2006; Sushartami forthcoming). It did not take long for the controversy to enter the forum of social and political discourse and set off discourses on public morality. Some were captivated by Inul’s dance movements and viewed these as a form of art. Others were loud in their condemnation as they believed it downgraded the nation’s morality. The discourses on Inul’s drill dance as an expression of porno-action prompted some rightwing Islamic groups in the House of Representatives to push for the speedy enforcement of a law against pornography and porno-action. However it was to be another two years before the Anti-Pornography Bill was discussed intensively in 2005.<sup>8</sup>

The case of *Buruan Cium Gue!* widened the scope of earlier discussions about the role of the government and Islamic values in the regulation of public morality. In an article posted on the Indonesian mailing list Layarkata, Farid Gaban, a journalist on *Kantor Berita Pena Indonesia*, wrote that the protests against *Buruan Cium Gue!* went far beyond this film. Farid interpreted these as a symptom of the Indonesian public being fed up with the existing trend in Indonesian mass media, which were completely dominated by mystery programmes, an obsession with private lives and the scandals surrounding celebrities, and vulgar criminal news programmes (Gaban 2004). In the same vein, in 2005 commenting on the controversy around the Anti-Pornography Bill, Muhammad Ali suggested that the drafters and supporters of the bill thought that the moral values in Indonesian society were being degraded by the rise of freedom of expression. Thinking particularly of the increase in pornographic materials in tabloids, art shows, literature, and films, Ali argued that such people saw these developments as a massive threat. Religious leaders and pressure groups, Ali believed, needed the bill as they found themselves powerless to impose their worldviews without a legal basis (Ali 2005).<sup>9</sup>

While some believed that freedom of expression had gone too far and blemished the

Indonesian nation, others embraced it as part of the open and democratic society Indonesia had become during Reform. As mentioned earlier, some feared that religion would provide the new grounds by which the freedom of expression in Indonesian society would be restricted. Such commentators as Zoso compared the role of AA Gym and Islamic groups which had elicited the ban of *Buruan Cium Gue!* with ‘the tyrannical authority’ exercised by the Department of Information during the New Order (Zoso 2004). Gaban likewise expressed the fear that the case of *Buruan Cium Gue!* would lead to a new renunciation of freedom of expression. He was worried that the petition launched by Utan Kayu would trigger a polarization in which AA Gym would be supported by such groups as FPI, the Indonesian Council of Defenders of the [Islamic] Faith (*Majelis Mujahiddin*, MMI), components of the Party of Liberation (*Hizbut Tahrir*, an international Sunni pan-Islamist political party), or the political Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, PKS), which would fight back the hard way. Gaban was afraid that if that happened, the government would respond by reducing freedom of expression drastically (Gaban 2004).

Nevertheless, in the views of some others, among them noted psychologist Sartono Mukadis, comparing the ban on *Buruan Cium Gue!* to the limitations imposed on the freedom of expression during the New Order was inaccurate. Mukadis was adamant that the protests of one person backed by a number of groups could not be compared to the rigid control exercised by institutions which was systematized under the New Order. He was not at all convinced that the case of *Buruan Cium Gue!* reflected the birth of a new system which would curb the freedom of expression on the basis of religion because, he argued, when Rhoma Irama spoke on behalf of religion in his attempts to stop Inul from performing, he had failed to achieve his purpose (Mukadis 2004). In an analogous comparison, Jujur Prananto went a step further. He did not see the cases of *Buruan Cium Gue!* or Inul as matters which were connected to the question of whether Islam was at the basis of new censorship regulation in Indonesia. Instead, he saw both cases as evidence that control over the nation was in the hands of those people who wielded great influence. In the era of Reform, Prananto argued, power was in the hands of the most popular celebrities: at the time being Inul Daratista and AA Gym (Prananto 2004). Even so, Inul owed her victory over Rhoma Irama not only to her popularity, but also to the fact that she was supported by prominent Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, a 30-million-strong Muslim organization) figures such as former President of Indonesia Abdurrahman Wahid and Ahmad Mustofa Bisri (Islamic leader and teacher as well as painter and poet, well-known as Gus Mus).

Prananto did address two valid points. Firstly, it was true that in post-Soeharto Indonesia celebrities did dominate in the mass media and secondly, the use of religion as grounds to control censorship was not irrefutable. The victory of AA Gym and religious groups in the case of *Buruan Cium Gue!* was based not purely on religion. It was a mixture of stardom, popularity, and religion, all ranged on the side of the popular real-life *kyai*-celebrity AA Gym, which turned the case into a non-contest for Raam Punjabi, the film’s producer. The latter was of Indian descent and therefore open to accusations of being a ‘foreigner’ and ‘capitalist’

promoting non-Indonesian secular realities. As said, the withdrawal of a film in response to Muslim protests was not something new. Under the New Order there had also been some cases in which Islam was used as the grounds to ban or retract films. The next section gives a broader overview of the role of Islamic authorities and mass organizations and the fear of Muslim protests in film production, exhibition, censorship, and self-censorship during the New Order and Reform.

## 6.2. Censorship from the street: The authority of religion

Under the New Order influential censorship of the media was based on the principle of SARA (an abbreviation of *Suku* (ethnic groups), *Agama* (religion), *Ras* (race), and *Antar-golongan* (class)). The mass media were not permitted to cover these subjects in any critical way as there was a fear that this would destabilize the nation. Besides the guidelines for SARA, rules and regulations were drawn up specifically for film administered by the Film Censor Board (*Badan Sensor Film*, BSF; after 1992 Film Censor Institute, *Lembaga Sensor Film*, LSF). The members of the Film Censor Institute consisted of representatives of the government, the legal fraternity, the army, film producers, and several religious organizations, among them the Indonesian Ulama Council, the Nahdlatul Ulama, the Muhammadiyah, the Council of Churches in Indonesia (Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia, DGI), the Bishops' Conference of Indonesia (Konferensi Wali Gereja Indonesia, KWI), and the Hinduism Society (Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia) ('LSF diminta.' 1995). Both domestic films and imported products had to pass the board of censors before they could be released in cinemas, on television, or distributed in the format of video cassettes, VCD, and DVD. As mentioned in Chapters Two and Five, next to the official censorship regulations laid down in Indonesian Film Legislation, a special Ethical Code for Film Production was created in 1981.<sup>10</sup> However, despite the involvement of a special commission for administering religious principles in the creation of the Ethical Code for film production and the co-operation of representatives of religious mass organizations in the censorship system, from time to time there were protests about films, which were led by religious, mainly Islamic, communities and (mass) organizations. These protests interfered directly in censorship proceedings, or were raised to demand the withdrawal of films which had already been released by the board. Such protests were apparently random though: not all films which may conceivably have been rejected on the grounds of religious sentiments raised objections, and at times protests were elicited by films which contained nothing that could be construed as contrary to religious teachings.

Between 1993 and 1997 such groups as Communication Forum of Dakwah Institutions (Forum Komunikasi Lembaga Dakwah, FKLD), the Association of Islamic Students (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, HMI), the Indonesian Committee for Solidarity in the Islamic World (Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam, KISDI), and branches of MUI in different provinces of Indonesia all lodged protests about films.<sup>11</sup> The greatest objection was

to what were interpreted as 'pornographic' images in Indonesian films. Ever since the 1970s various Indonesian films had toyed with an impression of female nudity and sex. Members of Muslim organizations in particular feared that these films would have a bad influence on the young generation and lead them to stray from religion. The films were deemed to be unacceptable from the point of view of religion and to oppose the essence of Indonesian cultures and traditions. Anwar Sanusi from the Institution for the Study and Development of Islamic Dakwah (Lembaga Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Dakwah Islam, LPPDI) and Ahmad Suaidy and Husein Umar, respectively head of and spokesperson for the FKLD, said that Indonesia was a pious nation (hht 1993; Sanusi 1993; spw 1994). Even though the majority of those protesting about films were members of Muslim groups, leaders of other religious groups upheld the same ideas about pornography. They also argued that films which contained nudity or sex should be forbidden: 'The sentiments of the Islamic community are also those of the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Hindu and Buddhist communities' (U-1 1996).

Alongside regular protests about the circulation of both legal and illegal pornographic films and videos or the qualms voiced about sexy film posters, which mainly tended to be lodged during the fasting month Ramadan, under the New Order there were three particular cases in which protests about films sparked heated controversy.<sup>12</sup> In all three cases, Muslim protests interfered in the work of the film censor. Twice the controversy involved imported films from the US. The first of these was *True Lies* (James Cameron, 1994), which was perceived to be an insult to Muslims as they were represented as terrorists. Even though *True Lies* had passed the censor institute, Muslim groups demanded it to be withdrawn from circulation. The upshot was that its popularity soared and it was transformed into an item very much in demand in pirated videos sales. The second film which upset Muslim sensibilities was *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), which never reached Indonesian cinemas. Before they had even watched the film, some Muslim groups were convinced that it contained Jewish propaganda and protested against its release in Indonesia. In order not to incite Muslim protests any more than were already aroused, but also because it did not get permission from the film-maker to cut any scenes, the censor institute decided not to release the film ('Schindler's List.' 1994). Again this film proved a popular item which was widely available in piracy networks. A third controversial case involving efforts to override state censorship by Muslim groups was sparked by the Indonesian film production *Pembalasan Ratu Laut Selatan* (Revenge of the queen of the southern sea, Tjut Djalil, 1988). This film was a horror story about a legendary goddess who harbours a snake in her vagina which bites off the vital organs of men who have sex with her. *Pembalasan Ratu Laut Selatan* had passed the Film Censor Board but after its release Islamic organizations raised a hue and cry about the film's content. The organizations objected to the pornographic theme of the film and singled out particular scenes for especially hard criticism. Because of the uproar caused by these protests after a few days the film was withdrawn from cinemas.

During and after *Reformasi* a huge wave of new developments in the world of film came

about. Just as various groups and film-makers were experimenting with testing the boundaries of Reformation's new freedom of expression, some Islamic groups were gauging the extent to which they could have their say in the restriction of these liberties.<sup>13</sup> Such Islamic groups as the Paramilitary Unit of Indonesian People Against Piracy and Pornography (Laskar Masyarakat Anti Pembajakan dan Pornografi Indonesia, MAPPI), a special force consisting of some 750 people, [the majority of whom were part of the *banser* (paramilitary wing) of NU], FPI, and PKS, organized themselves to win victories over what they considered amoral, anti-Islamic film products. MAPPI instigated raids to halt the selling of pirated or banned films, which involved demolishing stalls of street vendors.<sup>14</sup> FPI mainly confined itself to threats. Television stations and organizers of film festivals, for example, were left in no doubt that their offices or cinemas would no longer be safe if the screening of certain films was to go ahead.<sup>15</sup>

Besides curbing the distribution of films, in post-Soeharto Indonesia at times fear of protests from Islamic groups also hindered the production process. In 2001 film director Garin Nugroho planned to make a film *Izinkan Aku Menciummu Sekali Saja* (Let me kiss you just once) about a young boy in a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), who dreams of kissing a beautiful Chinese girl whom he happens to see walking by every day. However, after protests from *pesantren* representatives the producer retracted funding for the production of the film (Wardhana 2001b). Garin relocated the setting to Papua where Roman Catholics are in the majority. In 2003 the film was released under the title *Aku Ingin Menciummu Sekali Saja* (I want to kiss you just once).<sup>16</sup> Garin Nugroho found himself contending not just with protests from Muslim groups. In 2005 during the pre-production of his film *Sinta Obong* (The burning of Sinta), the Indonesian Hindu's Women Movement (Gerakan Perempuan Hindu Indonesia, GPHMI) repudiated the film because it believed the screenplay was offensive to the Goddess Sinta and the true story of the Ramayana. GPHMI also stressed that even though Hinduism was a minority religion in Indonesia the nation should be aware that 1 billion Hindus believed in the *Ramayana*. Moreover, they declared, Bali, Hinduism, and its symbols and sacred books should neither be attacked by bombs (referring to terrorist attacks that were committed in the name of Islam in 2002 and 2005), nor treated with contempt (*pelecehan*) ('Film Sinta Obong.' 2005). In the end Garin produced the film after judiciously changing the title to the more comprehensive *Opera Jawa* (Javanese opera, 2006).

In addition to these examples, generally speaking between 1999 and 2004 the religious protests, the majority of them launched by Muslim groups, were not markedly different from those staged under the New Order. In the outcry raised about film and VCD and DVD productions most protests addressed 'amoral' films depicting what was interpreted as pornography as well as female nudity. On television in particular Latin-American telenovelas and such American series as *Baywatch*, *Melrose Place*, and *VIP* were considered to be incompatible with Islamic values, which were often cited as forming the basis of Indonesian culture and civilization. As a sop to accommodate members of the Islamic community, programmes which may have been construed as offensive were put on hold during the Islamic



fasting month. But as soon as Ramadan was over, they simply resurfaced (Ant/ksp 2001; asa 2000; yus 2002). Again, notwithstanding the various examples which may be adduced, it must be stressed that religious protests about films were sporadic and did not cover all films which might have incited controversy from a religious moralist point of view. For example, a kissing scene in the teen flick *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta* (What's up with Love, Rudi Soedjarwo 2002), and a kiss by a gay couple in *Arisan* (Gathering, Nia Dinata 2003) were passed over without a murmur of dissent.

After the ban on *Buruan Cium Gue!* and protests about various television programmes by AMAP at the end of August 2004, discourses began to address the need for the involvement of religious authorities in film and television production. Because of the controversy aroused by *Buruan Cium Gue!*, both the strengthening of the role and representation of Islamic authority figures in the Film Censor Institute and a revision of censorship rules in the near future, including the assessment of film titles, was on the cards ('Mana yang perlu.' 2004): Some favoured the involvement of Islamic authority figures, not as any official part of the state system but in the form of pre-censorship or self-censorship in the production process. In early August 2003, a year before the controversy about *Buruan Cium Gue!* erupted, a representative of film professionals in the Film Censor Institute, Tatiek Malyati Ws, had already put in a request for stronger self-censorship on the part of film producers and television stations. Moreover, she had called on the leaders of the nation, parents, and religious authorities to be pro-active in lodging complaints against pornographic films and participating in censorship ('Sensor segera.' 2003).<sup>17</sup> In the controversy which blew up around *Buruan Cium Gue!*, it seems her ideas were implemented. Besides pro-active protests leading to a ban on a film, king of soaps Raam Punjabi announced that he intended to involve religious leaders in the revision of *Buruan Cium Gue!* ('Mana yang perlu.' 2004). It is difficult to obtain any specific clarification of the ways and extent Raam Punjabi proceeded in honouring this promise and involve Islamic authorities in his film and television productions. But after the ban on *Buruan Cium Gue!* religious soaps began to mushroom on television, and were no longer confined to the framework of Ramadan.

The boom in production of religious soaps commenced in February 2004 when the private television station TPI began to broadcast the series *Rahasia Ilahi* (God's Secret).<sup>18</sup> The series was based on true stories of people who had experienced the wonders of God, accounts of which were published in the magazines *Hidayah* (God's guidance) and *Allah Maha Besar* (God is great). *Rahasia Ilahi* was hosted by *Ustaz* Arifin Ilham, a young, fairly popular *dai*. Television viewers loved the series and it brought TPI to the number one spot in AC Nielsen ratings with a share of 15.8 per cent. Sensing a successful formula other television stations were quick to follow suit with similar programmes.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the majority of the series which drew their stories from among the common people, there were some religious soaps which were based on stories from old Islamic sources. These sources, mainly *hadits*

(traditional collection of stories relating to words or deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, the chief source of guidance for understanding religious questions), were adapted to a present-day setting. To name one, TPI's *Takdir Ilahi* (God's divine decree) used *hadits* taken from Bukhari and Muslim which were inserted in the books *Mi'ah qishshah wa qishshah fi anis al-shalihin wa samir al-muttaqin* (One hundred tales and the tale of the righteous), written by Muhammad Amin Al-Jundi Al Muttaqin, and *Madarij al-salikin* (The path of the mystic traveler) written by Ibnu Qayyim Al-Jauziah.<sup>20</sup> In advertisements, TPI took pains to highlight that *Takdir Ilahi* was an 'actualization of occurrences which had happened once in the time of the Messenger of God' (Ruslani 2005).<sup>21</sup>

The above-mentioned religious television series featured both supernatural occurrences and an Islamic authority figure. A *kyai*, *ustaz*, *ulama*, or *dai* appeared at the beginning or the end of the series, either to introduce and explain the programme, or to play a role in the story itself. For example, the young *Ustaz* Jeffry al-Buchory, who was very popular among teenagers, hosted the programme *Azab Ilahi* (God's Wrath, Lativi). Each episode of *Astaghfirullah* ((May God Forgive Me! also an exclamation to be used when shocked by immoral behaviour, SCTV) featured an *ustaz* in its storyline, and the series *Takdir Ilahi* always ended with pronouncements by *Ustaz* Ali Mustafa Yaqub from MUI. Mustafa not only explained the *hadits* on which the series was based to round off the programme, he also supervised every stage of production. In his summing up, Mustafa presented a disquisition on the solution by which the evil forces which had exerted a baneful influence on the main character could be exorcised. The director of the series, Chairul Umam, emphasized that in the series the *ustaz* used the Islamic *ruqyah* method, a sanctioned instrument to expel evil, consisting of prayers which are consonant with the *syariat* (Islamic Law). As most of the religious series either contained elements of mystery or the intrusion of supernatural occurrences, the mission of the authority figures was to link these specifically to religious teachings. The producer of *Takdir Ilahi*, Dondy Sudjono, and Chairul Umam explained that the appearance of Islamic authority figures in their series was to ensure that proper information was disseminated about how to deal with the supernatural. Without the explanations provided by Islamic authority figures, people might not read the series correctly, and there was the lurking danger that these series would only feed people's superstitions (Kalim and Fadjar 2005).

For excerpts from some religious series see Disc Three 6.2.

In fact, the religious programmes did not differ greatly from regular television horror programmes. Cultural critic Taufiqurrahman described the contents of the religious series as:

[...] regular soap operas with God's name attached to their title [which] carry a formulaic story line in which sinners of all kinds, from corrupt state officials and gamblers to a misbehaving son, will be punished by God with a very painful death, ranging from literally being burnt in hell, eaten by flesh-eating worms to being swallowed alive by the earth. By the drama's end, after a noisy commercial break, a preacher will appear on screen to give a sermon about what



sinners will face in the afterlife in return for their misdemeanors and will remind viewers not to commit sinful acts

(Taufiqurrahman 2005)

Moreover, Taufiqurrahman pointed out, as time passed some religious soaps deteriorated into campy horror shows featuring 'devout religious leaders [who] become engaged in Armageddon-like battles against demons (portrayed with red skin and two horns on their heads) and ghosts of all kinds' (Ibid.).

Only a few 'Islamic' soaps did not contain elements of mystery or supernatural occurrences. The actor and film producer Deddy Mizwar, who had produced and directed the Islamic film *Kiamat Sudah Dekat* (Judgment Day Is Nigh, 2003) and played a role in its soap version, regarded the religion-inspired series as a mere extension of the horror and mystery programmes. In his opinion, the only difference was that these programmes now were packaged as if they were about Islam. The soaps, he argued, actually just repeated the success of mystery films in Indonesian cinema in the 1970s. This was the reason Deddy claimed that '[...] our nation now has stepped back again to the 1970s' (Fitrianto 2005).<sup>22</sup> Despite the dubious quality of the majority of religious programmes, MUI embraced them wholeheartedly. In 2005 its secretary-general, Din Syamsudin, was quoted by the weekly *Gatra* as saying that there had been an internal discussion about the possibility of handing out awards to television channels which ran religious series (Taufiqurrahman 2005).<sup>23</sup> Ismail Yusanto, spokesperson of the Hizbut Tahrir, also believed that the religious shows breathed a breath of fresh air into TV programming (Ibid).

### **6.3. The Post-Soeharto dispute over censorship: Spirits of Reform and ghosts from the past**

With the twin phenomena of the growing fear of Muslim protests taking control of the film industry and the rise of religious soaps, it is fair to say that Islam increasingly directed narrative practices of post-Soeharto film. Along the lines of the earlier controversy about the Anti-Pornography Bill in January 2007, the juxtaposition of religious sentiments supporting conservative forces in society against those defending more liberal views also affected the world of film. At the end of December 2006 a new film movement, the Indonesian Film Society (*Masyarakat Film Indonesia*, MFI), was founded. MFI represented a group of film professionals who wanted to initiate a belated reform of the old power structures in the film industry. It soon found itself in opposition to an old New Order film institution, the Film Censor Institute (LSF). In the disagreement between the two, LSF found support from its former opponent, the militant Islamic organization FPI. The commitment of FPI to the Film Censor Institute and its opposition to MFI represented the wider conflict between conservative

and liberal forces in the contest to rule the nation, and it bolstered public allegations that Islamic pressure groups were being put to use in a game of power play manipulated by the state.

The controversy was sparked off by the tremendous upheaval about the awards which were handed out at the Indonesian Film Festival at the end of December 2006. After the fall of Soeharto, the production of films had grown because of the rise of mainly independent film-makers. In 2004 the state responded by reviving the Indonesian Film Festival (FFI). FFI, which in 1992 had been held for the last time, was organized by a committee chosen by the National Film Assessment Board (Badan Pertimbangan Perfilman Nasional, BP2N). Since 1992 the BP2N had been the umbrella organization of all official New Order film organizations. As discussed in Chapter One and Two, notwithstanding Reform and the dismantling of the Department of Information under the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid, the New Order organizational system pertaining to film and its mediation practices had not been dislodged. Between 2004 and 2006, FFI, which was composed mainly of long-established figures in the film industry, handed out awards for best film and television productions. As an institution FFI can hardly be said to have represented contemporaneous developments in the film industry. In inner circles of young film professionals who had emerged during Reform FFI was criticized for being a bureaucratic body run in the spirit of the New Order. There was deep suspicion that FFI sidelined new talent in the industry and favoured the old guard and, much like New Order *'arisan'* film festivals, preferred to present awards to all participants rather than truly evaluating films (Sasono 2007). In 2006 the accumulated disappointment with FFI among young film-makers exploded into a huge controversy.

On 3 January 2007, twenty-two film-makers, actors, and professionals, mainly of the younger generation, symbolically returned the Citra trophies awarded to them between 2004 and 2006.

For pictures of the return of Citras see Disc Three 6.3.

They protested about the jury's choice at the FFI 2006 to grant the award of Best Film to *Ekskul* (An abbreviation of *Ekstra Kurikuler* (Extra Curricular), Nayato, 2006), and the refusal of the jury to explain the selection process. The film *Ekskul*, produced by soap opera production house Indika Entertainment, was a campy high school drama barely distinguishable from run-of-the-mill Indonesian soaps. It was inspired by the Emmy-award winning American television film *Bang Bang You're Dead* (Guy Ferland, 2002). Based on a true story, *Ekskul* recounts the tale of a student who takes his schoolmates hostage at gunpoint. In terms of the number of votes it received at FFI, the movie outdid the films *Berbagi Suami* (internationally distributed under the title *Love for Share*, Nia Dinata, 2006), a film dealing with problems of polygamy, and *Denias: Senandung Di Atas Awan* (Denias: singing above the clouds, John de Rantau, 2006), which was about a Papua farmer's son who pursues his dream to go to a real school. Both were widely acclaimed by film critics and film-makers alike (Taufiqurrahman 2007). The surprise victory of *Ekskul* unleashed a storm of discontent

among film professionals of the *film indie* generation and beyond frustrated with the hide-bound Indonesian film industry.

Between 24 and 29 December 2006, around forty film professionals founded the new film movement MFI. About 200 people, among them directors, producers, actors and actresses, film crew members, festival organizers, curators, journalists, members of film communities and organizations, and others who wanted to see changes in the Indonesian film industry, supported the movement. MFI used the protest against the FFI award of Best Film to *Ekskul* as the point of departure from which to criticize and call for changes in the official system in the Indonesian film industry.<sup>24</sup> In an interview film producer and chairman of the Jakarta International Film Festival and member of MFI Shanty Harmayn stated that: 'We use this moment to call for changes to the system in our film industry. That is our main agenda' (Hari 2007). In a petition addressed to the State Minister of Culture and Tourism, the President, leaders of BP2N and other film-related organizations, and the House of Representatives on education and culture, MFI insisted that the organization of the 2006 FFI withdraw the award for Best Film and give a public explanation of the selection process that the jury followed. MFI also petitioned for the temporary disbanding of FFI as well as the shutting down of all old film organizations and institutions and replacing these with new, more democratic and more transparent equivalents. Turning to the legal side of things, MFI called for a revision of the 1992 Film Law and for a fundamental change in the rules and implementation of film censorship, as it was convinced that film should be regulated by a system of age classification instead of the present one based on censorship. MFI vowed that if these demands were ignored its members would boycott future state-organized festivals and structurally reject all activities organized by the government in the name of the Indonesian Film Industry.<sup>25</sup>

The controversy around the 2006 FFI exposed the tensions straining the relationship between the surviving New Order film institutions and the fresh sentiments pervading the industry espoused by newly emerging film-makers in the era of *Reformasi*. In 2006, the same system, institutions, and people as had been in place under the New Order still officially ran the film industry. Now, under the supervision of the Department of Culture and Tourism, old hands, mostly retired film professionals, were in charge of the BP2N film organizations. Although Reform had led to new press legislation and a new broadcast law, the film industry was still regulated by legislation dating back to 1992. As mentioned in Chapter Two, after the production of *Kuldesak* in practice film-makers had not abided by all the rules and regulations of the New Order film law. Most film-makers whose talents emerged during and after Reform no longer bothered to observe all the stages of film mediation scrupulously set out by the New Order, and did not subscribe to any of the official film organizations authorized by BP2N. The only New Order film institution which still carried considerable weight was LSF. When producers chose to distribute their films through official channels for film exhibition, such as cinemas or through legal VCD or DVD productions, they were required to hand in a film copy to the censor institute beforehand.

The state censor institute was notorious for both its ultra-conservatism and its

arbitrariness. The criteria for censorship imposed by the board were extremely blurred.<sup>26</sup> The main explanation given for the decisions made by the state censor institute was fear of social unrest, which meant it was highly receptive to protests from religious groups, bureaucrats, and people in powerful positions.<sup>27</sup> Although many believed that censorship in Indonesia was redundant given the widespread availability of pirated VCDs and DVDs and the Internet, the censor institute director Titie Said claimed that without censorship there would be ‘more damage to society’ (Diani 2005). Commenting on censorship Titie said that: ‘It’s not undemocratic, we’re not against artistic freedom. But there is a bigger interest here, that of the nation’ (Ibid). The gist of the protest launched by MFI against FFI was that the latter was representative of both the state film system and state support for specific narrative practices and that the time had come to revise the New Order 1992 Film Law, the film institutions, and particularly the *modus operandi* of the Film Censor Institute.

For an example of LSF versus film-maker Nia Dinata see excerpt from *Perempuan: Kisah dalam Guntingan* (Women: in the cut) Disc Three 6.3

MFI encountered both support for and opposition to its ideas. Activists and practitioners who wanted to change film legislation, members of the Film and Television Employees – Association of Indonesian Cineasts (*Karyawan Film Television – Asosiasi Sineas Indonesia*, KFT-ASI), and even the cinema network Cinema 21 supported MFI (Imanda 2007; Sinaro 2007). Its challenge rocked most old film organizations, which sensed that their power was being contested and which preferred to hold onto the status quo.<sup>28</sup> Religious communities were also far from happy with the idea of reforming the film industry. Some conservative groups were particularly worried about the appeal to change the working method of the film censor board. They interpreted this as a call to repeal film censorship altogether, and accused film-makers of wanting to disband film censorship in order to be free to produce pornographic films (Imanda 2007).

In the middle of all this commotion, FPI decided to show its support for film censorship. On 17 January 2007 an FPI delegation visited the LSF office and was given a tour which included an explanation of the work of the institute. After the tour, the leader of the delegation and Secretary General of FPI, *Ustaz* Jafar Sidik, stated that FPI would join and monitor the work of LSF and protect it in view of the threat posed by some groups which wanted to disband it (tw 2007). Sidik was convinced that the censor institute was desperately needed. He said that: ‘The Film Censor Institute must stay. Look at what is screened on television and in cinemas, it has been censored but is still outrageous. It would be even worse if there were no censor. In our position as a mass organization we are going to monitor this institution, and simultaneously broaden the work terrain of FPI’ (Hadysusanto 2007; tw 2007).<sup>29</sup> Sidik planned to hold conversations with members of the House of Representatives and the government to prepare for launching a plea for the intensification and broadening of film censor criteria. He was in no doubt that films now screened in cinemas and on television contaminated the religious values and morality of the Indonesian nation. In particular Sidik would have liked to add a ban on showing elements of mysticism to the existing criteria (Lasykar5 2007). In response to the visit of the FPI delegation

Titie Said commented that she had explained to FPI that the board censored films on the basis of criteria drawn from religion, politics, culture, and public order: 'LSF [was] a guardian of the nation's morality, protecting it from bad influences, just as [did] FPI' (Lasykar5 2007).

The involvement of the Islamic pressure group FPI in supporting the LSF and opposing the MFI petition revealed two separate issues. The case can be seen as representative of the wider conflict between conservative and liberal forces in their jockeying to gain the upper hand in ruling the nation. MFI's call for changes to the system in the film industry represented another bid to reform Indonesian society. LSF and FPI both represented the groups which were determined to hold onto the status quo and by doing so protect the nation's morality. Secondly, the MFI versus LSF and FPI case provides a good example of discourses on the deployment of Islamic pressure groups by the state in its bid to cling on to power. Media watcher Veven Wardhana suggested that belief was rife that the Film Censor Institute itself had actually invited FPI. Wardhana intimates that the motive prompting the board to invite the Islamic mass organization was to provide a justification and legitimization for the existence of the institute. Wardhana speculated that in all probability during the tour and the concomitant explanation of the working methods of the Film Censor Institute, the FPI delegation was deliberately shown sensual and violent film scenes which had been banned by the board with a view to eliciting a response from FPI insisting that censorship was crucial. Wardhana pins his arguments on the fact that through the statements made by the FPI delegation before the invited press, LSF ensured that it had secured its authority on the basis of popular support.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to Veven Wardhana, film-maker and festival organizer Dimas Jayasrana also believed that FPI was used as a strategic partner by the Film Censor Institute. Just as Wardhana, Dimas suggested FPI was manipulated by the board to substantiate the fact that it had 'the voice of the people' (*suara masyarakat*), which supported the existence of the institute and its censorship decisions. Dimas stated that this alliance, in which FPI reinforced the position of the state-sponsored LSF, extended beyond the bounds of film. He was convinced that it was just one more example of the broader power play instituted by the state. As he sees it, in contemporary Indonesia Islam was used as a commodity and political tool either to perpetuate or alternatively to seize power. As did the Film Censor Institute, the state manipulated FPI and other militant Islamic organizations to assist it in its efforts to preserve the status quo and consolidate its own power. Dimas pointed out that the government had never intervened to quell any of the aggressive protests launched by FPI or any other militant Islamic groups. In fact, he asserted, these groups had been fostered by the state to make sure that the atmosphere remained unstable and chaotic, which in turn supplies the state with a *raison d'être*. He was convinced that Indonesian politics were still built on generating fear of the recurrence of political, social, and economic instability. Fear of militant Islam has now replaced the fear of communism so as to legitimate strict state control of society. If necessary the fear for militant Islam would give leeway to the state to seize all power if this were deemed essential to national security.<sup>31</sup> Such other film professionals as directors Aria Kusumadewa and Tino Saroengalo as well as film critic Ekky Imanjaya have supported this point of view.<sup>32</sup> Pursuing this line of argument and taking account of the wider notion of the state,

the support of Islamic groups for the state film censor institute has been perceived as an example of the way in which Islam was used as a device to control Indonesian society.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

In both post-Soeharto audio-visual media and Indonesian politics there has been a perceptible growth in representations of Islam. However, the fact that Islam has been garnering a large amount of publicity does not mean that it has actually gained in terms of political clout. Instead, Islam is but one part of a complex discourse about the organization, principles, and representation of the post-Soeharto Indonesian nation. The two specific cases of *Buruan Cium Gue!* and of MFI versus LSF/FPI have revealed debates about what social norms, religious beliefs, and realities are acceptable in narrative practices in post-Soeharto Indonesian audio-visual media. These debates have certainly been tied into the endeavours by some Islamic groups to implement national moral codes on the basis of the application of Islamic principles in society. Moreover, they have revealed the divide between conservative and liberal forces in their efforts to rule the nation to the full light of day.

In presenting a historiography of modern nationalism in East Asia, the historian Prasenjit Duara has called attention to the different 'nation views' which nationalism in each nation encompasses. As Duara argues, nationalism as an ideology and politics are neither uniform nor monolithic. Such different groups as political parties, women, workers, farmers, the majorities as well as the minorities in a nation-state have different conceptions of the nation, for which Duara has coined the term 'nation views'. Different nation views moreover compete to define the 'authentic' history and traditions – regimes of authenticity – of the people of a nation-state. Generally speaking it is the state which directs and determines which regimes of authenticity will form the foundation of the nation. However, at many points non-state movements and the force of their ideas test and transform the structure of the regimes of authenticity and the nation-state (Duara 2008). The debate about filmic moral bounds that I described above can be seen as part of a process in which multiple nationalisms test the structure of the nation. To the film-makers who joined MFI, democratic rights-based individualism and freedom of expression overrule moral bounds determined by religious nation views. To the religious groups, Islam represents the basis of the Indonesian nation and identity, and this foundation should direct the content of domestic film and television. Secular images and representations are discarded and shrugged off as influences of foreign culture and propaganda.

Muhamad Ali's reading of the controversy about the pornography Bill, which took place in the interval between the *Buruan Cium Gue!* furore and the MFI versus LSF/FPI clash, offers a constructive analysis of the context in which these different nation views surfaced. Ali has suggested that the anti-pornography controversy is best understood in the context of power relations. In his opinion the controversy reveals a power struggle about the definition of what forms a morally upright society in the context of the Indonesian nation-state. The

struggle about what constitutes public morality, he argues, addresses the questions of what views, practices, and traditions should be maintained in Indonesian society, and which should be discontinued. It also sheds light on the matter of how to deal with religious beliefs and social norms and how to relate these to the state. Ali thinks that this power struggle has been greatly influenced by the fact that the post-Soeharto definition of an Indonesian nation-state has never been formulated in unequivocal terms. He says that: ‘Within the context of an ambiguous definition of an Indonesian nation-state, pressure groups continuously want to move the pendulum toward a nation based on religious dogma’ (Ali 2007).

With their roots in different ‘regimes of authenticity’, the opposition of secular and religious groups in the two cases of *Buruan Cium Gue!* and MFI versus LSF/FPI also exposed the divide between the secular and religious conceptions of daily reality. In a Foucauldian sense – each society causes certain types of discourse to function as true – the claim by Raam Punjabi that his film merely represented social reality as opposed to AA Gym’s argument that it encouraged immoral behaviour at odds with Indonesian religious values and culture, exposed a power struggle over the ‘true’ representations of Indonesian realities. Nevertheless, the fact that AA Gym won the controversy over *Buruan Cium Gue!* cannot be perceived as a victory of religious authority over secular Indonesian nation views and realities. Instead, as such cultural commentators as Prananto have put forward, it was a victory of stardom: the most popular celebrity of the moment rules the nation, in this case the widely celebrated celebrity-*kyai* AA Gym.

In the struggle to define the representations and realities of contemporary Indonesian society to a large extent Islam as a religion has taken centre stage in the debates. Islam was increasingly transformed into a commodity; not only as part of the framework of Ramadan, as discussed in Chapter Four, but also in the new television genre of religious soaps, which proved just as adept at using the outward appearances of Islam to attract viewers. Ironically, and in a way similar to the narrative practices employed to address Islam under the New Order, religious soaps have waved the banner of Islam to depict all sorts of controversial social norms or realities and still escape unscathed. In other words, television producers have juggled with images of Islam to sell their productions and to safeguard these from protests. In the same vein, Islam has been progressively used as a political tool. The government, political parties, and mass organizations have not hesitated to invoke the spectre of Islam in their play for power. Moreover, according to some film-makers the state has fuelled a fear of domination by extremist Islam to guard the status quo.

The cases of *Buruan Cium Gue!*, LSF and FPI versus MFI, and ‘religious soaps’ show how Islam has been used by Indonesian film and television producers as well as groups active in the socio-political field to acquire assets and power. In this context, the rise of Islam in the post-Soeharto audio-visual media and in Indonesian society can be understood as a tactic employed by different parties to use this religion as an instrument to try to have it their way.

## **Conclusion**





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## Conclusion

Celebrities, ghosts, heroes, preachers, common people, and victims: stories about these groups or individuals are likely to appear frequently in contemporary Indonesian audio-visual media. The content, style, and formulas of these narratives, to be found in Indonesian horror and history films, documentaries, infotainment, quiz shows, or reality TV programmes, are not unique. All over the world gossip shows feature and discuss celebrities. Films worldwide are about fictional or real heroes. Preachers in the United States, Brazil, and Egypt have their own programmes and talk shows. Horror films thrive in Hollywood, Africa, and Asia. Common people are the focus of various national and transnational reality TV programmes and quiz shows. Everywhere victims are seen in fiction films, documentaries, and daily news programmes. However, as McKenzie Wark (1994) and Trinh Minh-ha (1993) have argued, people brought up in different cultural frames have a repertoire of quite different stories with which they read the genres or the content of audio-visual media. The form and content of audio-visual media and the configuration of power relations and access to media resources impinge on the discourses about representations of the nation, communities, and social realities that circulate in society.

In my analysis of Indonesian film, discursive, and mediation practices three interconnected key issues have surfaced, which construe the daily experiences and engagement of Indonesians with audio-visual media. First, the organization and understanding of power relations in Indonesian audio-visual media that lie at the basis of identifications of communities connected to film formats and genres. Second, the identities that were associated with these communities which were local, national, or transnational. Third, debates about the moral bounds of representations in different film genres and formats which have brought to light divergent constructions of Indonesian social and daily-lived realities.

At the start, I discussed the organization of the power relations which formed the basis of mediation practices of Indonesian audio-visual media. The organization of power relations covered official state rules, regulations, and censorship, as well as officially permitted ownership of public and private media industries and networks. Illicit practices, which transcended film policies and media ownership endorsed by the state, were also part of these power relations. *Praktek miring* (literally ‘cursive practices’), in the form of the payment of *pungli* (unofficial contributions) before and during mobile cinema screenings, and ‘arrangements’ about other informal levies at the different stages of film mediation practices have been equally relevant to the organization and composition of Indonesian cinema. Moreover, the distinction between official and unofficial practices or policies has often been blurred. For example, unofficial levies were frequently paid to state officials or members of armed forces or police to ensure a film could be produced or, in the case of networks of pirated films, to keep these safe from raids.

Under the New Order, a substantial part of the ownership of public and private audio-

visual media industries and networks was in the hands of the Soeharto family and its business cronies. State policies and normative discourses on film and television were primarily motivated by endeavours to secure New Order politics and business interests. That is not to say that these policies were always effective: discourses and policies sometimes clashed. For example, the political campaign to form a cultural fence of mobile cinemas to protect local culture against contamination by globalization, was in stark contrast to the economic business deal of Subentra as sole distributor of Hollywood films, or the operation of networks of pirated films. Both Cinema 21 and pirated films disseminated images of foreign cultures nationwide. Particularly in the last years of the Soeharto regime, film piracy industries and networks began to claim a substantial share of film reproduction and distribution.

The Soeharto administration made obsessive efforts to control the mass media. In its attitude to film censorship, the New Order was notorious for its authoritarian stance. The Film Censor Board cut or banned films. Compulsory membership of professional film organizations, which covered all film mediation practices, strongly affected pre-censorship of films. Decrees issued by the censor board, and later the Ethical Code for film production, heavily influenced the form and content of films produced under the New Order. These set the bounds and therefore held the potential for breaching topics and themes for film-makers. For example, the Ethical Code lay at the basis of the formula to feature symbols of Islam in horror films. Film-makers discovered that this formula allowed them to show a plethora of matters which otherwise were likely to be banned by the censor board. The structure of power relations shaped the output, form, and content of audio-visual media, and impinged on the identifications and affiliations of communities. In fact, identifications and affiliations of communities were constituted as part of, or in response to, the organization of media power relations.

In my analysis of community formation and its imaginations, my second line of enquiry, I have chosen to focus on discourses on, and policies determining, particular formats and genres of audio-visual media. I have shown that film policy and normative discourses on film formats and genres led to imaginings of local, national, and transnational identities. These kinds of representations and imaginations were not restricted to national political and economic power relations; the influence of transnational trade and politics also duly motivated the discourses and policies on genres and formats.

Under the New Order, imaginations of local, national, and transnational identities varied according to the different normative discourses and shifting political and economic interests of the regime. New Order national identity politics and policies were directed by national and transnational economic interests, and created imaginations of film audiences who were tied to particular film formats. Rural, lower class communities were connected to domestic 16 mm film. These communities were contrasted with cosmopolitan urban middle classes, which consumed Hollywood films produced in the 35 mm format in the top-end cinemas of the 21 Group. Various factors were at play in the formation of these imagined audiences. Certainly the goal of New Order identity politics was to safeguard local and national culture

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and identity. Hence the campaign was launched to build a cultural fence of mobile cinemas which were required to screen domestic films in 16 mm format. At the same time, the government policy of tying mobile cinemas to the 16 mm format also was calculated to stop the circulation of bootleg Hollywood films through this channel. This would help protect the 21 Group, which had procured the sole distribution rights of Hollywood film, from loss in income. From this perspective, the identification of different classes of audiences that were connected to different film formats as well as channels of distribution and exhibition, was just an element of national and transnational trade policies. It was thought that cleverly denying mobile cinemas the 35 mm film format would appease both Soeharto crony and US business relations.

Debates about the horror genre in the last years of Soeharto's rule were part of normative discourses on national culture and social identities, but were also motivated by economic considerations. Some viewed horror and mysticism as an appropriate expression of Indonesian or 'Eastern' culture, which they inherently associated with mysticism and supernatural things. Along these lines, and never losing sight of the financial aspects, some film producers asserted that the horror genre was a characteristic cultural asset, which could be exploited in film for domestic and foreign markets. With a nod to Indonesian identities and culture, cultural commentators saw the genre as representative of the Indonesian film industry, just as the US has its Westerns, China its Kung Fu films, Japan its films about Ninjas and Samurais, and India its love stories enlivened by song and dance. On top of this, the general public perceived horror films as representing Islam. As mentioned earlier, Islamic symbols and religious leaders recurrently featured as the heroes of New Order horror films because film-makers believed that the Ethical Code for Film Production demanded it. The upshot was that the genre was equated with *dakwah* (Islamic religious intensification). This still left outstanding problems to be solved, not least that horror films induced debates on representations of the supernatural in society. Views on this diverged depending on the media involved, namely television versus cinema and their audiences.

The different representations of local, national, and transnational identities at official New Order film festivals were also profoundly influenced by the political and economic concerns of the regime. The Indonesian Film Festival was involved in the *local* politics of representation and promotion of the provinces, as well as in state determination to spread the message of development and images of authorized *national* Indonesian culture. These same considerations also reflected the need to represent national culture in so-called 'festival films'. Festival films were perceived to represent the Indonesian nation at the national film festival and abroad at international film festivals. Furthermore, the choice for participation, or not, at international film festivals, such as the Asian Pacific Film Festival, and the making of awards to films, were largely based on *transnational* political considerations.

New Order discourse practices also revealed the influence of United States Information Agency (USIA) on film policies and transnational politics. Concerns of USIA policy materialized in topics, generic conventions, and narrative traits in films which were

representative of the New Order regime: heroes, the blessings of modernization, and the opposition of 'evil' communism versus 'good' Islam in New Order history, development, and propaganda films. The attention to these subjects tied into an anti-communist political discourse, which was part of transnational Cold War politics.

Changes in the socio-political field, propelled by the resignation of President Soeharto and aided by the increasing availability of new audio-visual media technologies, reconfigured earlier power relations. First, the bid for reform led to a reassessment of the media ownership by Soeharto relatives and business cronies. For example, Monopoly Watch lodged a lawsuit against Subentra 21, accusing the cinema group of forming a cartel for film distribution and exhibition, and of having been involved in collusion and nepotism. Second, reinforcing this effect, the wide availability and use of the 'democratic' medium of digital video led to the rise of independent film productions and festivals, which did not abide by the strict rules and regulations for film production, distribution, and exhibition as set by the New Order. Gay and lesbian films and human rights documentaries circulated at such alternative, underground, film distribution and exhibition networks as independent film festivals. Moreover, the production of films in the relatively cheap Video Compact Disc format, compared to video-cassettes, Laser Discs and later Digital Video Discs, led to an expansive growth in pirated film productions and networks. Film piracy and unofficial film productions and festivals reduced state control over film censorship and also undercut the already weakened monopoly on film production, distribution, and exhibition of New Order authorized media industries.

The empowerment of new film communities was a powerful motor in altering the use of film genres and their representations. Old genres were reformed. For example, documentaries were transformed into a genre which gave a voice to the victims of the regime and represented common people as the new heroes. New genres such as independent and Islamic film were founded. Particularly those groups which were connected to the new film genres of independent and Islamic film launched discourses which altered the imaginations of local, national, and transnational identities. Among independent and Islamic film communities concerns about domination and resistance in film mediation practices were put into a relationship with Third Cinema theories. The community of Islamic film explicitly emphasized the association of Islamic film with movements of Third Cinema. Both Islamic and independent film communities defined themselves as oppositional cinemas which addressed the issues of political and economic domination and the global distribution of power of neo-colonial forces in audio-visual media. As oppositional cinema movements, they not only defied Hollywood; they also opposed national mainstream film and television productions.

In the discourses of the film communities, the post-Soeharto mediascape was seen as a post-neo-colonial site. Mainstream channels of film distribution and exhibition were identified as a legacy of New Order hegemonic mediation practices designed to promote New Order politics, business interests, and power relations. These interests and power relations were seen as an ineluctable appendage of the neo-imperialistic forces of global capitalism, which

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led to the commercialization of culture. As highlighted in the case of *Beth*, communities of independent film linked the concept of national cinema to a domination of Indonesian culture. They felt that national cinema was immersed in New Order identity politics, which construed a single national identity at the expense of local ones. Also it was linked to the regime's economic involvement in networks of transnational capitalism. In the independent film communities' endeavour to counter these power relations, they saw themselves as representative of an oppositional local cinema which was inclusive of alternative local cultures and identities. The communities of Islamic film also strongly identified their genre with opposition to neo-imperialism and structures of power in domestic and transnational commercial audio-visual media. However, in contrast to the independent film-makers, the communities of Islamic film perceived their genre to be representative of national cinema. In their eyes, Islamic film formed the true representation of uncorrupted national Indonesian culture, as the majority of Indonesians were adherents of Islam.

Despite both movements' opposition to mainstream media, in the post-Soeharto mediascape commercial television soon hijacked the genre of independent film and usurped images of Islam. Three years after the rise of the independent film genre, the private television station SCTV opened a contest for independent film productions. The television programme was very successful in that it attracted many contestants, but it ushered in the decay of the independent film movement. Films produced by the movement of Islamic film never reached the public eye. In contrast, after the fall of Soeharto private television stations, which the Islamic film movement asserted were driven by foreign capitalism, annexed images of Islam. For the main part images of Islam appeared on television in the framework of the Islamic fasting month Ramadan. Due to their commercial success, in the course of time programmes that featured Islam were also screened outside that framework. The Islamic programmes on television had nothing to do with the genre of Islamic film, which was created by Islamic film communities. Islamic television programmes were primarily about outward appearances. Most programmes followed the same formula of mainstream popular soaps, quizzes, and talk shows, clad in Islamic attire.

Other forms of opposition which defied both state and global control of audio-visual media survived longer. Alternative channels of distribution and consumption, such as film festivals founded after May 1998, and pirated VCDs, effectively challenged state authority and domination of the audio-visual media. The way in which these alternative channels operated may be seen as a variant on Third Cinema tactics of 'media jujitsu' in film aesthetics (Shohat and Stam 1994). The circulation of pirated films particularly functioned as a form of opposition, which appropriated and simultaneously resisted the flow and domination of both national and transnational audio-visual media in the Indonesian mediascape.

Apart from the discourses on national and local identity as expressed by the independent and Islamic film communities, the alternative or underground film festivals and VCD distribution networks showed no clear distinction between local and transnational culture and identities. Both the post-Soeharto film festivals and networks of, mainly pirated, VCDs

gave wide access to all sorts of uncensored, mainstream and non-mainstream, domestic and foreign film productions. Moreover, at the new film festivals, identifications and issues of representations were no longer based on concerns of global, national, or local power relations or domination of culture; instead, people sought their authentication in particular film genres and film formats and the domestic and transnational discourses which these genres and formats tied into. Hence, the gay and lesbian film festival Q stood for discourses on gay and lesbian films and homosexuality both in Indonesia and abroad. The Documentary Film Festival represented discourses on the specificity of documentary film in Indonesia and abroad. The Feast of Indonesian Cinema and Hello;fest were connected to discourses on the development, position, and implications of the video format in Indonesia and at other comparable festivals in the world. Jiffest, which screened all genres and formats, each year addressed another specific film discourse in its festival theme.

Also the film communities which emphasized the representation of local or national identity in their opposition to national and transnational hegemonic mainstream media were not tied to these identities alone; they too engaged in supranational forums of identity formation and community affiliation. First, the communities of independent film identified themselves with international movements of independent and alternative film. I-Sinema was inspired by the Danish Dogme '95, and the production of *Kuldesak*, the first Indonesian 'independent' film ever, was modelled on American Robert Rodriguez' *Rebel without a Crew*. Moreover, the film also greatly resembled American independent film-maker Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. Second, as mentioned above, the members of the community of Islamic film explicitly defined themselves as a film movement which was part of Third World oppositional cinemas. Over and above this, the members asserted they belonged to the worldwide *umat* of Islam. They founded the Islamic film genre to challenge what they considered to be universal misrepresentations of Islam in transnational media.

The emphasis on local or national identities of the independent and Islamic film communities is, as Arif Dirlik has put forward in another context, part of a 'politics of difference', which produces a modern notion of the local (1996:35). The film communities presented the literal and metaphorical local differences – or in the case of Islamic film, national ones – as their identities in the contemporary international mediatized world. This modern local or national identity constituted, in the words of Dirlik, 'the local that has been worked over by modernity' (Ibid). Importantly, this transcended notions of local or national boundaries. Wimal Dissanayake (2003:222) emphasizes that where the local and the global meet, processes of 'transnationalization and deterritorialization of consciousness' are likely to occur. This in turn results in the coming into existence of 'new communitarian cultural imaginaries'. Dissanayake states this does not imply that community in its traditional sense no longer exists; rather, he points to the rise of 'more decentered, contested, and hybridized forms of community'. In the realm of the independent and Islamic communities, modern local or national identity was not confined to notions of the local or national attributed to the Indonesian nation. Rather, the conception of the local was part of a supranational affiliation of

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localism, but one which opposed global hegemonic mainstream media networks worldwide.

Besides power relations and the production of collective identities, the third key issue in my analysis of the Indonesian mediascape refers to the impact of media discourses and practices on constructions of Indonesian social and daily-lived realities. This issue surfaced mainly in film discourse practices and narrative practices.

Looking at film discourse practices and their effect on constructions of social realities, I raised some pertinent points. First, both the New Order modes of engagement in history and development films as well as the practice of screening films in a particular framework were endeavours to promote and implant state historiography and politics on national identity and economic development. New Order development films and documentaries tried to influence and educate the Indonesian public. The general brief of these films was to promote the need for development and modernization, while representing a perfect image of modern Indonesian culture. Second, the media event Hapsak and the film *Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* were imperative in the state project to mould collective memories and representations of history in society, and to define Indonesian core values, including morality and religion. Initially, the media event helped shaping the perception that communism was the source of all evil in Indonesian society. Communists, or anyone who was accused of being one, were barred from the Indonesian public sphere. As time passed, the Hapsak commemoration became an occasion on which such new enemies of the regime as extremist Islam and other adversaries who were simply labelled 'atheists' were defined according to changing political circumstances.

In addition to film discourse practices, the use of particular film narrative practices has also influenced constructions of society and daily-lived realities. Normative discourses on narrative practices represented different views on reality. In debates on the use of certain formulas within the horror genre, the discourses disclosed a contention about whether or not the supernatural in Indonesia was part of modern life and daily reality. What representations of reality and modern times were possible in Indonesian society, and where should the moral lines be drawn? To some, the supernatural was seen as part of modern Indonesian society and daily life. To others, it was not part of national culture and reality, or it was confined to Indonesia's imaginations of the past only.

During Reform, a euphoric atmosphere of liberation encompassed all domains of Indonesian society. The New Order was now considered by many to have been neo-colonial, and with its demise all forms of expression suddenly seemed possible. New, post-colonial discourses and imaginations of society surfaced in post-Soeharto film discourse and narrative practices. In particular, documentary and independent film-makers engaged in attempts to present counter histories to New Order official versions. They started to redefine and re-edit collective memories and search for new narratives and representations of history and society in film. Initially, this led not so much to changes in the prefabricated modes of engagement, as to shifts in focus. Hence, the focus on *tokoh* (prominent figures) as the heroes in New



Order history and propaganda films, shifted to common people and victims as the new heroes in post-Soeharto mediations. Later, new narratives appeared which often were influenced by transnational trends in documentary, independent, and mainstream film-making. The practice of screening films in a specific framework continued. In one of the frameworks, Ramadan, a new hero emerged in the form of the artist *kyai* or celebrity *kyai*. In due course, the celebrity *kyai* extended their territories and also appeared in newfound reality TV programmes. Moreover, particularly in the new reality TV programmes, representations of ‘the truth’ addressed in New Order propaganda films were transformed into new representations of ‘reality’.

The changes in narratives and representations of society in film and television led to discourses on representations of social realities and their moral bounds. These discourses revealed an increase in the prominence of Islam in the Indonesian public sphere. Moreover, in conjunction with changes in Indonesian socio-politics, the organization of power relations in official and unofficial censorship altered. In post-Soeharto Indonesia censorship from the street displayed a growing tendency to override official state censorship. Muslim groups now stood out as they took part in street protests, targeting not just film, but also music and dance performances and the visual arts. Muslim protests about films did not suddenly emerge out of nowhere. To an extent these protests could be said to have also influenced film censorship and narrative practices during the New Order. However, after the fall of Soeharto, Muslim protests drew greater media attention and were expressed more loudly. The rise of Islam in the public sphere exposed tensions between secularism and religion over media resources, access, management, and audio-visual representations of society.

In particular the cases of AA Gym and *Buruan Cium Gue!* and MFI versus LSF/FPI showed there was a gap in representations of society between commercial film-makers and filmmakers and persons who joined MFI, against groups and individuals who based their platform on religious conviction. Both groups wanted to define the bounds of narrative practices in film. They espoused fairly diametrically opposed ‘nation views’ (Duara 2008) or imaginations of what was part of Indonesian society and daily reality. In claims of what was part of Indonesian culture and society and what not, both groups put forward and defended different filmic representations. These representations encompassed cosmopolitan secular and global consumerist lifestyles and cultures, juxtaposing the realities of religious and so-called ‘Eastern’ values, lifestyles and cultures.

Before the cases of *Buruan Cium Gue!* and MFI versus LSF with the backing of FPI, the differing views of Indonesian society entertained by secular and religious groups had already surfaced in discussions held by the Islamic film movement and independent film communities on the formation of oppositional cinemas. Both groups shared many viewpoints in that they criticized New Order and national and transnational commercial film mediation practices. However, the movements of Islamic and independent film adhered to different worldviews. The imaginations and claims to specific worldviews were derived from different positions in national and transnational contexts. Members of the independent film

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communities were mainly concerned with a total freedom of expression and representation in film. They endorsed the values of universal human rights, individuality, and democracy. Claims by Islamic groups about how to image and imagine Indonesian society were related to particular conceptualizations of Islamic identities in the Indonesian nation and internationally. They felt that both nationally and globally, Islam was not simply underrepresented; it was misrepresented. In their opinion, worldwide there were hardly any film and television productions which endorsed Islamic views. In contrast, the representations of secular thought which were disseminated in film productions from the West, as well as from China, India, and Latin America spread all over the globe. Some Islamic communities feared that the hegemony of national and transnational media, in which the US and Hollywood played such a preponderant role, was part of a scheme to conquer the world by spreading either secular or Jewish propaganda, or a combination of the two. To the communities of Islamic film, Indonesian culture and Eastern values both had their roots deep in Islam. Consequently, representations of social realities in film should be based on religious teachings.

The contemporary dialectic of different worldviews, ideologies, and identities of secular and religious groups in the Indonesian mediascape are part and parcel of a universal development marked by the resurgence of religion in the public sphere.<sup>1</sup> Rosalind Hackett, a scholar of comparative religion, has emphasized that in today's mass mediated world, religion forms a new primacy of identity politics. She analyses the contemporary resurgence of religion in the public sphere as '[...] the drive to claim recognition for, and the possibilities for implementation of, religious ideas, values, practices, and institutions in the governance of nation states and the lives of their citizens' (Hackett 2005:63). Moreover, she asserts that: 'Against the backdrop of the forces of democratization, mediatization, and the global market, religious groups are compelled to justify their existence to state and consumers alike' (Hackett 2005:76).

In Indonesia Islamic identity was often explicitly connected to state nationalism and policies. In the discourses on whether or not the supernatural was part of Indonesian society under New Order rule, several Islamic groups had supported the state vision that Indonesia was to be or become a modern and developed nation. Hence, they endorsed the supernatural only if it were imagined in a framework of the past, or else it should be discarded as foreign culture. After the fall of Soeharto, a number of Islamic groups came out on the side of the state again, in their backing of state censorship and the existence of the Film Censor Institute. Religious studies scholar Peter van der Veer has linked the rise of religious movements in India to debates on and identifications of national identities. He argues that religious movements can best be designated as 'religious nationalisms', because many of them 'articulate discourse on the religious community with discourse on the nation' (Van der Veer 1997:195). In the opinion of some Indonesian Islamic communities, Islam is what lies at the foundation of the Indonesian nation-state.

However, even though the majority of Indonesians are Muslims, as a group they are a minority in both media ownership or in the production of successful films and television

programmes. Instead national and transnational commercial media and their relationship with consumer culture have dictated the Indonesian mediascape. The opposition of religious and secular media ownership was represented by Indonesian Islamic authority figure and celebrity *kyai* AA Gym versus the king of soaps Raam Punjabi. AA Gym had built up a very successful business emporium selling Islamic television programmes and soaps, VCDs, religious text messages for mobile telephones, books, audiocassettes, and other merchandizing at his headquarters in Bandung. Gym and his Bandung-based media emporium stood for local culture, leadership, and identity. Raam Punjabi is also a very successful businessman. He owns one of the most profitable Indonesian television production houses in Jakarta and in the past has produced extremely popular soaps. However, Punjabi in the eyes of many represents foreign culture, domination, and identity.

Taking Duara's concept of 'regimes of authenticity' and viewing the situation in a Foucauldian sense, in that each society has its regime and general politics of truth, the juxtaposition of AA Gym and Raam Punjabi also represents two different views on Indonesian society and its realities. Raam Punjabi stands for global consumer culture and secular realities, whereas AA Gym advocates that consumerism and freedom of expression should be controlled and restricted by religious norms. In the case of *Buruan Cium Gue!*, AA Gym believed that only religious norms should define 'authentic' Indonesian realities and the narrative practices in film and other media. Conversely, in their attempt to resist the religious bounds for audio-visual media, film producers have explicitly stressed that their film narratives are representative of Indonesia's daily realities. Raam Punjabi is not alone; Chand Parwez, who produced the film *Virgin*, and the producers of horror reality shows have all stated that their films and programmes simply represent the reality of and the true stories circulating in contemporary Indonesian society.

In view of the emergence of the hyper-real reality television programmes and their representations of Islam, the references to social realities by Islamic groups in debates about representations of Indonesian society has become enormously complicated. Particularly in the context of representations of reality and the moral bounds set by Islamic groups, reality television has undermined both. As Wimal Dissanayake has postulated, social values, social practices, the cultural imaginary, and notions of identity and citizenship in cinema are increasingly defined in terms of consumption and the power of the market: 'As such identity is becoming a function of commodity consumption and not the other way around' (1993:222). While Muslim protests about certain domestic films were founded on the argument that their narrative practices did not represent Indonesian culture, values, and realities, commercial television co-opted Islam in reality ghost shows and religious soaps. Despite the fact that many Muslims do not support this representation, in post-Soeharto television productions horror once more has been inextricably linked to Islam. This occurred first in the popular ghost reality-shows, and later in 'reality-based' religious soaps, in which Islamic authority figures and hyper-real *kyai* celebrities appeared as the heroes of the hour who defeated ghosts

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and evil forces. The call for moral bounds by Muslim groups has contrasted starkly with the lack of bounds in the reality-based programmes and soaps, which have featured Islam in a seething brew of all sorts of evil and ghosts. Again the role of Muslim authority figures as well as outward appearances of Islam has proved a winning formula in attempts to screen all kinds of dubious matters and get away with it. Strikingly, the resurrection of ghosts in hyper-real Indonesian horror reality-shows and religious soaps reveals a very literal example of Jean Baudrillard's apprehension of the contemporary loss of history and reality in film. In his view: 'Photography and cinema contributed in large part to the secularization of history, to fixing it in its visible, 'objective' form at the expense of the myths that once traversed it. Today cinema can place all its talent, all its technology in the service of reanimating what itself contributed to liquidating. It only resurrects ghosts, and it itself is lost therein' (Baudrillard 1994:48).

In all, my analysis about what narrative practices have been possible and permissible in the post-Soeharto Indonesian audio-visual media has tied into a struggle over who and what shape and decide on national popular discourse and the realities of imaginations of society's daily-lived practices. It has highlighted the relationship between mass media, religion, and politics in the construction of post-colonial power relations, and exposed the endeavour to re-shape narratives of the regimes of authenticity and nation-state and open up new historical possibilities.



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Arisan (2003) directed by Nia Dinata.  
Bad Wolves (2005) directed by Richard Buntario.  
Bangungnya Nyai Roro Kidul (1985) directed by Sisworo Gautama.  
Berbagi Suami (2006) directed by Nia Dinata.  
Beth (2001) directed by Aria Kusumadewa.  
Bukan Isteri Pilihannya (1981) directed by Eduart P. Sirait.  
Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang (1994) directed by Garin Nugroho.  
Buruan Cium Gue! [Satu Kecupan] (2004) directed by Findo Purwono.  
Cemeng 2005 (The Last Prima Donna) (1995) directed by N. Riantiarno.  
Cinta Dalam Sepotong Roti (1991) directed by Garin Nugroho.  
Coyote Ugly (2000) directed by David McNally.  
Darah Dan Doa (1950) directed by Usmar Ismail.  
Death of a Nation (1994) directed by John Pilger.  
Denias: Senandung Di Atas Awan (2006) directed by John de Rantau.  
Desa di Kaki Bukit (1972) directed by Asrul Sani.  
Detik-detik Revolusi (1959) directed by Alam Surawidjaja.  
Detik Terakhir (2005) directed by Nanang Istiabudi.  
Di Antara Masa Lalu dan Masa Sekarang (2001) directed by Eddie Cahyono.  
Djakarta 1966 (1982) directed by Arifin C. Noer.  
Doea Siloeman Oeler Poeti en Item (1934) directed by The Teng Cun.  
Dr. Siti Pertivi Kembali ke Desa (1979) directed by Ami Prijono.  
Dunia kami, Duniaku, Dunia Mereka (1999) directed by Adi Nugroho.  
Ekskul (2006) directed by Nayato.  
El-Mariachi (1992) directed by Robert Rodriguez.  
Enam Jam Di Yogya (1951) directed by Usmar Ismail.  
Fatahillah (1996) directed by Imam Tantowi, Chaerul Umam.  
Fright Night (1985) directed by Tom Holland.  
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (2001) directed by Chris Columbus.  
Jaka Sembung Sang Penakluk (1981) directed by Sisworo Gautama.  
Janur Kuning (1979) directed by Alam Surawijaya.  
Jelangkung (2001) directed by Rizal Mantovani.  
Joe Turun ke Desa (1989) directed by Chaerul Umam.  
Kado Buat Rakyat Indonesia (2003) directed by Daniel Indra Kusuma.  
Kadosh (1999) directed by Amos Gitai.  
Kafir (Satanic) (2002) directed by Mardali Syarief.  
Kameng Gampoeng Nyang Keunong Geulawa (1999) directed by Aryo Danusiri.  
Kepada yang Terhormat Titik 2 (2002) directed by Dimas Jayasrana.

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Kereta Api Terakhir (1981) directed by Mochtar Soemodimedjo.  
Kiamat Sudah Dekat (2003) directed by Deddy Mizwar.  
Kisah Cinta Nyi Blorong (1989) directed by Norman Benny.  
Kuldesak (1997) directed by Mira Lesmana, Riri Riza, Rizal Mantovani, Nan Achnas.  
Kutunggu di Sudut Semanggi (2004) directed by Lukmantoro.  
Lahir di Aceh (2003) directed by Ariani Djalal.  
Lebak Membara (1982) directed by Imam Tantowi.  
Marsinah (2002) directed by Slamet Rahardjo.  
Mass Grave (2001) directed by Lexy Rambadeta.  
Mistik (Punahnya Rahasia Ilmu Iblis Leak) (1981) directed by Tjut Djalil.  
Novel Tanpa Huruf R (2003) directed by Aria Kusumadewa.  
Opera Jawa (2006) directed by Garin Nugroho.  
Operasi X (1968) directed by Misbach Yusa Biran.  
Pena Pena Patah (2002) directed by Sarjev Faozan.  
Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI (1982) directed by Arifin C Noer.  
Penumpasan Sisa-sisa PKI Blitar Selatan (Operasi Trisula) (1986) directed by BZ Kadaryono.  
Pembalasan Ratu Laut Selatan (1988) directed by Tjut Djalil.  
Penyair Negeri Linge (2000) directed by Aryo Danusiri.  
Perawan di Sektor Selatan (1971) directed by Alam Surawidjaja.  
Perempuan di Wilayah Konflik (2002) directed by Gadis Arivia.  
Perempuan: Kisah Dalam Guntingan (2007) directed by Ucu Agustin.  
Peronika (2004) directed by Bowo Leksono.  
Peti Mati (The Coffin) (2003) directed by Mardali Syarief.  
Puisi tak terkuburkan (1999) directed by Garin Nugroho.  
Putri Kunti' anak (1988) directed by Atok Suharto.  
Ramadhan dan Ramona (1992) directed by Chaerul Umam.  
Ranjang Setan (1986) directed by Tjut Djalil.  
Ratu Ular (1972) directed by Lilik Sudjio.  
Rembulan dan Matahari (1979) directed by Slamet Rahardjo.  
Revolusi Harapan (1997) directed by Nanang Istiabudi.  
Satria Bergitar (1983) directed by Nurhadie Irawan.  
Satu Nyawa dalam Denting Lonceng Kecil (2002) directed by Abiprasidi.  
Saur Sepuh (Satria Madangkara) (1988) directed by Imam Tantowi.  
Schindler's List (1993) directed by Steven Spielberg.  
Sembilan Wali (1985) directed by Djun Saptohadi.  
Serangan Fajar (1982) directed by Arifin C. Noer.  
Si Pitung Beraksi Kembali (1981) directed by Lie Soen Bok.  
Soerabaia 45 (1990) directed by Imam Tantowi.  
Student Movement in Indonesia (1998) directed by Tino Saroengallo.  
Sunan Kalijaga (1983) directed by Sofyan Sharna.

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Sunan Kalijaga & Syeh Siti Jenar (1985) directed by Sofyan Sharna.  
Titian Serambut Dibelah Tujuh (1982) directed by Chairul Umam.  
Titik Hitam (2002) directed by Sentot Sahid.  
The Blair Witch Project (1999) directed by Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sánchez.  
The Soul (2003) directed by Nayato Fio Nuala.  
Thirteen (2003) directed by Catherine Hardwick.  
Topeng Kekasih (2000) directed by Hanung Bramantyo.  
True Lies (1994) directed by James Cameron.  
Tusuk Jelangkung (2003) directed by Dimas Djayadiningrat.  
Virgin (2004) directed by Hanny Saputra.

### **Television films**

Bang Bang You're Dead (2002) directed by Guy Ferland.  
Terjebak (1996) directed by Dedi Setiadi.

### **Television series**

Anak Baru Gedhe (RCTI)  
Astaghfirullah (SCTV)  
Azab Ilahi (Lativi)  
Baywatch (RCTI, first broadcast on NBC: United States of America)  
Beverly Hills 90210 (RCTI, first broadcast on Fox: United States of America)  
Ceramah Ramadhan (Trans TV)  
Cowok Cowok Keren (RCTI)  
Dua Dunia (Indosiar)  
Dunia Lain (Trans TV)  
Esmeralda (SCTV, first broadcast on Televisa: Mexico)  
Gema Ramadhan (SCTV)  
Gema Takdir (SCTV)  
Hantu Sok Usil (SCTV)  
Hidayah (Trans TV)  
Indahnya Kebersamaan (SCTV)  
Insyaf (Trans TV)  
Janda Kembang (SCTV)  
Jin dan Jun (RCTI)  
Kembalinya Si Manis Jembatan Ancol (RCTI)  
Kisah2 Teladan (Indosiar)  
Kismis (RCTI)  
Kismis: Arwah Penasaran (RCTI)

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Layar Tancep (Lativi)  
Manajemen Qulbu Spesial Ramadhan (RCTI)  
Melrose Place (SCTV, first broadcast on Fox Network: United States of America)  
Membuka Pintu Langit (SCTV)  
Misteri (Anteve)  
Misteri Sinden (RCTI)  
Nah Ini Dia (SCTV)  
O Seraam (Anteve)  
Pedang Keadilan (Indosiar)  
Pemburu Hantu (Lativi)  
Percaya Nggak Percaya (Anteve)  
Rahasia Ilahi (TPI)  
Sambut Ramadhan (SCTV)  
Sebuah Kesaksian (Lativi)  
Sentuhan Qolbu Ramadhan (TPI)  
Si Manis Jembatan Ancol (RCTI)  
Takdir Ilahi (TPI)  
Taubat (Trans TV)  
Tuyul dan Mbak Yul (RCTI)  
VIP (RCTI, American syndicated television series)



## Notes



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## Notes

### Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Ien Ang, amongst others has argued that the rating institutions do not really measure the 'audience' but create and manage an image of it to bind advertisers (1991, 1992). For more on the corporate practice of 'audience measurement' and its pitfalls see Ang (Ibid.).

<sup>2</sup> See Birgit Meyer's research project on 'Modern mass media, religion and the imagination of communities: different postcolonial trajectories in West Africa, Brazil, and India' (2000-2006). This project investigated the shift from the nation-state as the privileged space for the imagination of identity to the genesis of new publics in a pluralist public sphere in which the role and place of the state is called into question, and in which religion often plays a crucial role.

<sup>3</sup> For more details about *Reformasi* see for example Kees van Dijk 2000, Donald Emmerson (ed.) 1999, Henk Schulte Nordholt and Irwan Abdullah (eds.) 2002, Kevin H. O'Rourke 2003, Hanneman Samuel and Henk Schulte Nordholt 2004, and Henk Schulte Nordholt and Ireen Hoogenboom (eds.) 2006.

<sup>4</sup> For a more sustained discussion of these issues see Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (eds.) (1996).

<sup>5</sup> My analysis of these three elements was inspired by Birgit Meyer's approach in her PIONIER research programme 'Modern mass media, religion and the imagination of communities' which is specified in her research proposal to the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). Available online at URL: <<http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/media-religion/>>. (Last accessed on 26 April 2008).

### 1 New Order and surface

<sup>1</sup> Hifki was a post-Soeharto organization for mobile cinemas, competing with the official organization for mobile cinemas, Perfiki, established in 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Another element in the story of the film, which is that the boy who turns into a bad guy was of Chinese descent, is related not only to customary type casting in film scripts, it is also closely bound up with a particular stereotypical image of Chinese in Indonesian society. The industrious Chinese population, although small in number, is mainly involved in the money and trading segments of the local economy. By virtue of their success in these areas and because some powerful Chinese businessmen were linked to Soeharto crony capitalism, Chinese Indonesians have unwittingly created a negative image of themselves with the majority of Indonesian population.

<sup>3</sup> For details on financing and sponsoring of film production during the New Order see



Sen 1994:41, 65.

<sup>4</sup> For more details on the privatization of Indonesian television see Sen and Hill 2000:111-3.

<sup>5</sup> For details about the founding of a monopoly in film distribution by Subentra see Sen 1994:58-62.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the economic and political background of the Subentra monopoly, see Sen 1994:62-5.

<sup>7</sup> In 1992 the stronghold of Hollywood films in Indonesian cinemas was reinforced by a trade deal with the US in which the number of American film imports was increased in return for an extension of Indonesian textile exports to the US (Sen 1994:157).

<sup>8</sup> 'Pertunjukan film hanya dapat dilakukan dalam gedung atau tempat yang dipertunjukan bagi pertunjukan film.'

<sup>9</sup> See Firman Syah 1997, and Adityo 1997.

<sup>10</sup> In an interview Hidayat Effendi of Perfiki emphasized that the 500 new small cinemas were not to compete with top-end cinemas. These were meant to become the partners of the top-end cinemas in serving the market segment of lower-class audiences only. Effendi believed that it was a good idea if, as soon as mobile cinemas were turned into permanent ones, Perfiki were to copy the arrangement of film distribution and exhibition of the 21 Group with as its focus the market for domestic films ('Perfiki harus jadi.' 1993).

<sup>11</sup> For more details on Forum Film Bandung see SM Ardan 2004:156-166.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Sen's account of the rejection by the FFI jury of the corroboration of Javanese mysticism in the film *Rembulan dan Matahari* (The moon and the sun, Slamet Rahardjo, 1979) (Sen 1994:124-8). For an example of FFI jury's endorsement of mainstream gender constructions see its evaluation of *Bukan Isteri Pilihannya* (Not the wife of his choice, Eduart P. Sirait, 1981) (Ibid:148). For more on the content of films that won Citra between 1973 and 1992 see Seno Gumira Adjidarma 2000.

<sup>13</sup> 'Perfilman sebagai sarana komunikasi yang ampuh demi pembangunan nasional'.

<sup>14</sup> 'Kultural edukatif kita jadikan watak film Indonesia'.

<sup>15</sup> 'Memasyarakatkan dan memanunggalakan perfilman Indonesia dalam pembangunan nasional'.

<sup>16</sup> See document FFI 1978-1982 – Deppen/1983: 'Meningkatkan peranan film Indonesia sebagai sarana komunikasi dan informasi dalam ikut mensukseskan Pelita IV'.

<sup>17</sup> See document FFI 1985-1990 – Deppen/1991: 'memungkinkan peristiwa penting itu dapat diikuti oleh seluruh bangsa'

<sup>18</sup> For more on Indonesian television see Philip Kitley 2000, Klarijn Loven 2008, and Veven Wardhana 2001a.

<sup>19</sup> At the time, Ali Sadikin, the Governor of Jakarta linked the festival to the anniversary of the national capital on 22 June. In June 1975, Sadikin sponsored FFAP a second time, again in the framework of the anniversary of Jakarta (Ardan 2004:28).

<sup>20</sup> See for example IWN 1995; SK 1995; U-5 2001b; Susanti 2001.

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<sup>21</sup> See agi 2001a and agi/sra 2002.

<sup>22</sup> An informative article covering some elements of both FFAP and FFI is a report by film journalist Rosihan Anwar of the 37<sup>th</sup> FFAP in Seoul in 1992. Anwar mentions the involvement of political issues at the festival. This covered both the question of whether or not Moscow should be accepted as a member of the festival, and the politically informed choice of Seoul handing out the award for Best Film to Taiwan. Taiwan felt offended by South Korea as the latter had diplomatic relations with Beijing. Furthermore, as the Indonesian film *Cinta Dalam Sepotong Roti* (Love in a slice of bread, 1991) by Garin Nugroho won an award for best new director at FFAP, Anwar recalls the process how the film was chosen as Best Film during the FFI of 1991. *Cinta Dalam Sepotong Roti* won a Citra only after heated debates among the jury members. Much of the controversy arose from the question of whether the rules of the Department of Information, or the guidelines written down in the ministerial order of the standing committee, should prevail. After this account, Anwar comments on the FFAP film market. He briefly mentions that the festival programme is so much packed with visits to tourist sights that the delegates, including those who want to buy and sell films, were hardly able to watch any films. He ends his report with the remark that FFAP was defunct and a festival devoid of any significance (Anwar 1999:204-18). Two other informative articles about FFAP are Anwar's reports of 1988 and 1994. The first reveals the large extent to which FFAP functions as a tool for (tourist) promotion of the country hosting the festival (Ibid:124-9). The 1994 report exposes transnational politics at the 39<sup>th</sup> FFAP in Sydney. During the award ceremony the representative to New Zealand raises the issue of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, much to the dismay of the Indonesian delegation (Ibid:232-6).

## 2 *Reformasi and underground*

<sup>1</sup> For more on *sinema ngamen* and 'side-stream' film see Gotot Prakosa 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Part of Section One was published in *Inside Indonesia* 2002.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Gotot Prakosa 2001:3-4, and Chapter One pages 20-1.

<sup>4</sup> For more details on I-Sinema see the article by Joanne Sharpe 2002.

<sup>5</sup> A *jelangkung* is a doll made out of a coconut shell and some wooden sticks used as a medium to invite spirits to take possession of it.

<sup>6</sup> Set off by these discussions in July 2002 Media Watch came up with a report which noted nine violations of the Indonesian anti-monopoly law of 1999 by the 21 Group. Media Watch filed a complaint with the Business Competition Supervisory Agency (*Komisi Pengawas Persaingan Usaha, KPPU*) alleging unfair business practices by Subentra 21. The case was taken to court. In April 2003 the verdict handed down was that there was neither proof of monopoly nor unfair business practices by the 21 Group.

<sup>7</sup> The edict about 'the colonization of aesthetics' by the Jakarta-based Indonesian film

industry was presented at a *film indie* meeting in Yogyakarta in December 2001. At that meeting local film-makers were talking about founding a Yogyakarta film industry. This industry was to be supported by the local government and the Sultan of Yogyakarta, and would be called Mataram film.

<sup>8</sup> At SCTV's FFII in 2002 and 2003 Gotot Prakosa noticed that the main themes of films at various film festivals including that of SCTV were: love, drugs, *togel* (abbreviation of *toto gelap*: illegal lottery), dreaming or daydreaming, and homosexuality (2005:83).

<sup>9</sup> Tim SP wrote an article about a syndicate of film piracy consisting of Glodok (North Jakarta), Singapore and Batam mafia (2000).

<sup>10</sup> This amount was estimated in May 1998 (Syah 1998). In 2003 the head of Indonesian Intellectual Property (*Karya Cipta Indonesia*) Rinto Harahap stated that each year the state lost Rp. 1.4 trillion (US\$ 116,666,666: at the time 1 US\$ was approximately Rp.12,000) on pirated music cassettes and VCDs (A-92/C-16 2003). By 2007 this amount rose to Rp. 2.5 trillion (US\$ 263,157,894: note that 1 US\$ was then valued at around Rp.9,500) (Hadysusanto 2008).

<sup>11</sup> See for example 'Kisruh penerbitan stiker.' 1999 and pur/wid/mam 1999.

<sup>12</sup> See for example man 2001; SA/Yad/R3 1998; 'VCD bajakan.' 2000.

<sup>13</sup> See also Kees van Dijk 2001:82, 104.

<sup>14</sup> It was not the first time the Indonesian government and entertainment industry was pressured to take action against piracy. For example, in 1987 the US had restricted trade in other Indonesian business sectors because of music piracy.

<sup>15</sup> For example, the main theme of Jiffest in 2000 was 'Issues on Contemporary Islamic Culture', in 2001 it sounded: 'Indonesian Identity Seen Through Film', 2002 focused on 'Multiculturalism: Celebrating Diversity', and Jiffest 2003 was about 'Understanding Change'.

<sup>16</sup> Shohat and Stam remarked that the global cultural situation was not as one-sided as presented in media-imperialism theories of the 1970s, but was in fact considerably more interactive. In their argument they mention that it was not the case that an active First World forced its products onto a passive Third World. Global mass culture did not replace local cultures but co-existed with them, or was itself marked by a 'local' accent. For a similar argument, see Grewal and Kaplan's introduction to *Scattered Hegemonies* 1994. There was a growing number of Third-World countries (Mexico, Brazil, India, and Egypt) which dominated their own markets and even became cultural exporters. Furthermore, they argued, a distinction should be made between the ownership and control of the media, which is an issue of political economy, and the specifically cultural issue of the implications of this domination for the people on the receiving end (Shohat and Stam 1994:31).

<sup>17</sup> See for a complete description of these modes and strategies and their implications Shohat and Stam 1994:292-337.

<sup>18</sup> For concepts on contemporary 'dispersed' and 'scattered' hegemonies in global-local

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cultural relations see Arjun Appadurai 1990, and the introduction by Grewal and Kaplan in *Scattered Hegemonies* 1994.

<sup>19</sup> For details about an increase in distribution of domestic films in the VCD format in the last years of New Order rule see JB Kristanto 2005:xiii-xiv.

### 3 Histories, heroes, and monumental frameworks

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on Soekarno's rule see Legge 1972.

<sup>2</sup> See for more details on these organizations and protests against American films and Soekarno anti-imperialistic film policy Sen 1994:29-35.

<sup>3</sup> For more about characteristic traits and narratives of Usmar Ismail's films see Sen 1994:21-2, 38-41.

<sup>4</sup> There were some dissenting voices, above all that of R.M Soetarto who was representing the Indonesian government when the Japanese studio Nippon Eiga Sha was handed over to the Republic of Indonesia on 6 October 1945. This was the day that he wished to see commemorated.

<sup>5</sup> The article 'Sejarah Hitam Perfilman Nasional' was published on 6 October 1970 in the newspaper *Sinar Harapan* under the pseudonym S.M. Ameh.

<sup>6</sup> Emphasis added by Naficy.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed description of *Dr. Siti Pertiwi Kembali ke Desa*, (Dr Siti Pertiwi returns to the village) a New Order propaganda film for promoting the government rural health scheme, its education programme by sending out urban volunteer workers as set out in the Second Five Year plan, and the transmigration programme see Sen 1994:121-4.

<sup>8</sup> I think the production and distribution of these *Gelora Pembangunan* films in the 1950s was instigated by USIA policy. Writing about USIA films in Iran, Naficy says that these encompassed films from the United States dubbed in Persian/Farsi, as well as newsreels created specifically for the Iranian market. These newsreels dealt with the US Point 4 Programme, military and development programmes, activities of the royal family, earthquakes, a variety of human interest stories from the US, as well as programmes about improving primitive health, nutrition, and agricultural methods (Naficy 2003:192).

<sup>9</sup> Birgit Meyer drew my attention to the fact that references to historical events in Indonesia were presented as if they were the titles of films.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed description of the films see Sen 1994:90, 97.

<sup>11</sup> There were at least five versions of who was behind the coup. For more details see Hermawan Sulistiyo (1997:55-69).

<sup>12</sup> The Pancasila is the five-principle Indonesian state ideology implemented after Indonesian independence. The five principles are: 1) Belief in the One Almighty God (*Ketuhanan Maha Esa*), 2) Just and Civilized Humanity (*Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab*), 3) The Unity of Indonesia (*Persatuan Indonesia*), 4) Democracy guided by the

consensus of deliberations amongst representatives (*Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebijaksanaan dalam permusyawaratan/perwakilan*), 5.) Social justice for all Indonesian people (*Keadilan social bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia*).

<sup>13</sup> For more on New Order historiography and the implication of the military in its construction of the past see Katharine McGregor 2007.

<sup>14</sup> From 1980 under the New Order students and civil servants had been compelled to follow a mandatory state-sponsored indoctrination course in the state ideology *Pancasila* (see endnote 12). These sessions were known as P4, short for courses in *Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila* (Directives for Instilling and Implementing *Pancasila*).

<sup>15</sup> The closing scene of the film addresses propaganda for development so blatantly that it is almost farcical. By employing the same ‘cheery’ music score which was generally used in propaganda documentaries and the inescapable voice-over, this scene rips the film out of its historical context and places it in the rhetoric of the New Order present.

See for the development propaganda excerpt from *Operasi Trisula* Disc Two 3.1.

<sup>16</sup> For more about the production of *Terjebak* see Veven Wardhana 2001:363-370.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, the description of the films *Jaka Sembung Sang Penkluk* (Jaka Sembung the conqueror, Sisworo Gautama, 1981) and *Si Pitung Beraksi Kembali* (Pitung strikes again, Lie Soen Bok, 1981) in Kristanto 2005:217, 224.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the political background and representations of the threat of extreme Islam and Islamic terrorism see McGregor 2007:176-193.

<sup>19</sup> Dialog, adegan, visualisasi, dan konflik-konflik antara protagonis dan antagonis dalam alur cerita seharusnya menuju ke arah ketakwaan dan pengagungan terhadap Tuhan YME.

<sup>20</sup> See for example theories about the practice of ‘reading against the grain’ which emerged in the 1970s feminist, gay and lesbian readings of Hollywood cinema. In these readings the Hollywood films which were made from a heterosexual perspective were decoded from the perspective of different sexualities. Since then a great deal of research has been expended on the discrepancies in ideas between those who produce films and those who consume them. For example, Umberto Eco put forward the theory that the audiences possess a power of selectivity to exposure, perception and interpretation to reshape texts to fit the audience needs (Eco 1989). For other research on alternative or oppositional readings and freedom of audience perceptions of texts see Ang 1991, 1996; Lang and Lang 1983; Jhally and Lewis 1992; Liebes and Katz 1990, Livingstone 1991; Real 1982. For theories about the encoding and decoding of texts see Hall 1980, Morley 1980, Radway 1984.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Di bidang kesenian, kesenian dibina dalam acuan [sic] kejayaan sistem kekuasaan dan dalam pementasan kolosal ‘kesenian dalam rangka’ ritualisasi negara.’

<sup>22</sup> For example, the concept that media events and their narration are in *competition* [my italics] with the writing of history in defining the contents of collective memory should, in the case of Hapsak, be read as being *in conjunction* with the writing of (New

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Order) history enacted (Dayan and Katz 1992:211). I use the term to connect the screening of the film *G30S/PKI* to a ‘preplanned’ mediatized event which highlights ‘some central value or some aspect of collective memory’, and ‘is broadcast live on television’ (Ibid: ix, 5-9).

<sup>23</sup> Until 2001 the Hapsak ceremony was broadcast on television. Since then it was only inserted in small segments in the daily news programmes. Under the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001), and particularly under the presidency of Megawati Soekarnoputri (2001-2004) the commemoration was downplayed. In 2000 the government changed the name Sacred Pancasila Day to the Commemorative Day for the Betrayal of Pancasila (*Peringatan Hari Pengkhianatan (terhadap) Pancasila*). In that same year Megawati, who as vice-president served as inspector of the ceremony due to the President’s absence, did not carry out the second part of the ceremony in which President Soeharto customarily had visited the diorama, the preserved well and the Pancasila monument. When Megawati was Indonesia’s President herself in 2002 and 2003 she did not attend. Nevertheless, it continued to be held. Since Susilo Bambang Yudoyono was sworn in as President in 2004 the Hapsak ceremony has been restored. At least until October 2008, the President presided over the ceremony as usual.

<sup>24</sup> The phrases ‘*kejam dan keji*’ (brutal and vicious) and ‘*di luar batas-batas peri kemanusiaan*’ (beyond the bounds of human dignity) were repeatedly used when referring to communists.

<sup>25</sup> For more on collective memory and monuments see Lasswell 1979, Mosse 1980, and Nora 1984.

<sup>26</sup> McGregor demonstrates that Hapsak initially served just as a means to reaffirm the army’s claim to have led the nation in a righteous victory over communism. In the early 1980s, the meaning of the day expanded to include threats to Pancasila from Islam as well as communism. Over time, the commemoration became a means to redefine the label ‘communist’ and apply it to any opposition. Finally, in the 1990s, Hapsak acquired an increasingly religious nature. By then the day had become more a celebration of opposition to atheism than an affirmation of the Pancasila itself (McGregor 2002:66).

<sup>27</sup> ‘kejadian-kejadian yang digambarkan dalam film tersebut adalah benar-benar terjadi’.

<sup>28</sup> To give a few examples of films that were made for certain events, or certain events of which the screening of films was an important part from 1993 to 1997: In 1993 the films *Janur Kuning*, *Detik-detik Proklamasi* ([original title *Detik-detik Revolusi*] 1959, Alam Surawidjaja), *Lebak Membara* (1982, Imam Tantowi), *Operasi Trisula* and *Kereta Api Terakhir* (1981, Mochtar Soemodimedjo) featured ‘in the framework of’ the Day of Heroes (*Hari Pahlawan*) on 10 November, and in 1994 on National Film Day (*Hari Film Nasional*) (‘Jambore film.’ 1993). In 1994 the film *Saur Sepuh (Satria Madangkara)* (1988, Imam Tantowi) was screened ‘in the framework of’ information about transmigration, to stress the importance of ‘unity and integrity’ (Rel/BL 1994). Also in 1994, to counter the film *Death of a Nation* by John Pilger, which is an account of human rights violations by the Indonesian state in East Timor, the Indonesian version presenting the ‘true historical

facts' about East Timor was produced ('Pemerintah akan buat.' 1994). It was planned to screen this 'counter-propaganda' film in July 1995 'in the framework' of the Day of the Integration of East Timor (*Hari Integrasi Daerah TimTim*), and again in August 'in the framework of' the Commemoration of 50 Years of Indonesian Independence (*Peringatan 50 Tahun Indonesia Merdeka*) ('Kalangan DPRD Timtim.' 1995). Elsewhere during the commemoration of the golden jubilee of Indonesian various films were screened among them *Janur Kuning*, *Serangan Fajar*, *Soerabaia 45* (1990, Imam Tantowi), *Perawan di Sektor Selatan* (1971, Alam Surawidjaja), and *Enam Jam Di Yogya* (1951, Usmar Ismail) (it 1995). In 1996 a 'personal audio-visual monument' to 'Ibu Tien' (Mother Tien), the then recently deceased wife of President Soeharto, entered production with the title *Mother's Enduring Love* (*Kasih Ibu Selamanya*) (Handiman 1996; 'Ibu Tien.' 1996). Furthermore in 1996 the television soap *Pedang Keadilan* (Sword of Justice) was produced and screened in the framework of the golden jubilee of the Indonesian police force. The soap featured six police officers and 'horrific killing scenes' in an effort to teach offenders against the law a lesson ('Enam anggota Polri.' 1996). One final example, between 1996-1997 the film *Fatahillah* (1997, Imam Tantowi and Chaerul Umam), recounting the founding of Jakarta, was produced as part of a project of the Governor of Jakarta to be screened on 22 June 1997 in the framework of the 470th birthday of the capital (su/it 1996).

<sup>29</sup> McGregor has pointed to similar anti-communist discourses in the politicized militaries of Brazil and Burma (2007:220). Moreover, she argues that in such communist states as the People's Republic of China and the former USSR, overtly political educational content also upheld the deeds of heroes and strongly emphasized martial patriotic themes (Ibid:37).

#### 4 Post-colonial histories, common people, and commercial frameworks

<sup>1</sup> For more on the debates on the need to 'straighten history' see Schulte Nordholt 2004:11-2.

<sup>2</sup> I want to say thank you to Patricia Spyer and P. M. Laksono who brought this use of cameras in the film to my attention.

<sup>3</sup> In April 2007 when I asked Lexy Rambadeta whether he had *G30S/PKI* in mind when producing *Mass Grave* he answered that the film had not crossed his mind for a minute. He had looked at more 'universal' modes of documentary production like those used by the Australian television commission ABC. The editor of *Mass Grave*, Laurensius 'Goeng' Wijayanto, whom I met in December 2005 remarked that the film *G30S/PKI* was in his thoughts all the time he was working on *Mass Grave*, but this could not have directly influenced content or style of the film since Goeng had simply followed Lexy's script and instructions.

<sup>4</sup> Besides digging up the dead of New Order rule *Mass Grave* contested the narratives of evil communists versus good Islam. The documentary shows a group of angry Muslim men who



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violently try to prevent the reburial of victims of 1965 in the village's graveyard.

<sup>5</sup> For a database of contemporary Indonesian documentaries see: <http://www.in-docs.com/index.cfm>. In-docs was founded in 2002 by *Yayasan Masyarakat Mandiri Film Indonesia* (Society of Indonesian Films, YMMFI), the founder and organizer of the Jakarta International Film Festival. Through In-docs, YMMFI promotes and encourages the production and development of documentary films by Indonesians. In-docs organizes a series of such programmes as discussions about documentaries, film screenings, and workshops for documentary production. In-docs is supported by the Ford Foundation, Hivos, and the Open Society Institute. For more on FFD see its website at URL: <<http://www.komunitas-dokumenter.org/index.php>>. (Last accessed on 26 April 2008).

<sup>6</sup> For more on the structure of documentaries in relation to (generic) text conventions and parallels with other texts, as well as the use of certain styles in relation to institutional discourse see Nichols 1991:18-23.

<sup>7</sup> For more about the stress on victims in audio-visual and other media after the resignation of Soeharto, see Wiwik Sushartami's research on the victimization of women in post-Soeharto Indonesian media (forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> On the rise and context of *dakwah* in Indonesia, see Henk Schulte Nordholt 2008:165-176.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the film *Satria Bergitar* ('The knight with a guitar', Nurhadie Irawan, 1983) shows scantily dressed females. There is also a scene set in the bedroom featuring the antagonist and his spouse. Even though they just talk it was deemed inappropriate to have a scene set in a bedroom.

<sup>10</sup> Cinema Clubs at Muhammadiyah universities for example provided video cameras and other material to train students in film production (personal communication with Chaerul Umam 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Teater Kanvas is an Islamic theatre group founded by Zack Sorga, a graduate of the Jakarta Arts Institute. The theatre group consists only of men. Teater Bening is a theatre group which consists of women only. Mer C is an Islamic non-governmental organization which offers humanitarian aid. It was founded by Jose Rizal while he studied at the University of Indonesia. Forum Lingkar Pena is a group of Islamic writers.

<sup>12</sup> Also the Islamic boarding school Daarut Tauhid, AA Gym's Manejemen Qolbu Television and Manejemen Qolbu Cooperation, the Islamic women's magazine UMMI, Islamic youth from the Sunda Kelapa Mosque, and the magazine *Aku Anak Saleh* (I am a pious child) were mentioned as having joined the MAV-Net. Moreover, the MAV-Net worked together with such professionals in the field of audio-visual media as film directors Riri Riza, Chaerul Umam, Marissa Haque, Syaeful Wathon, Slamet Rahardjo Djarot, and Islamic artists such as Igo Ilham, Syamsudin Noor Moenadi, Rizal Basri, Moh.Ariansyah, Effendy Doyta, Zack Sorga, and others.

<sup>13</sup> These VCDs consisted of feature films, documentaries, and television series from Cairo, England and Australia. But also films about Taliban training camps or Czech warfare



which were on sale were considered Islamic films (Khaironi/dgg 2002).

<sup>14</sup> When I spoke to Agres Setiawan in March 2007 he said that his opinion had changed and that his view about the need to counter commercialism and transnationalism had become less radical.

<sup>15</sup> Sen argues that in Indonesian cinema under the presidency of Soekarno Gabriel's third phase was represented by leftist film-makers who were opposed to imperialist Hollywood films. She states that when the New Order came to power the third phase of cinema in Indonesia was erased (1994:46-7). Hence, the only cinemas surviving under the New Order were Gabriel's first phase copies of Hollywood films, and second phase films which showed exotic images of traditional Indonesian cultures.

<sup>16</sup> For a broader discussion of the emergence of these discourses in Indonesian society, see Henk Schulte Nordholt 2008:170-1.

<sup>17</sup> For example, the series *Melrose Place* and *Beverly Hills 90210* by 'Jewish producer' Aaron Spelling were seen to promote free sex and profoundly non-Islamic lifestyles.

<sup>18</sup> The continuation of the ceremony and the commemoration of Hapsak were also not questioned. However, in 2000 historian Taufik Abdullah criticized the sacredness of the *Pancasila* and its holiday because in the aftermath of the day being commemorated many people were killed and imprisoned and Pancasila was used to rule out all other ideologies, principles or beliefs (McGregor 2007:107). See also endnotes Chapter Three no. 26.

<sup>19</sup> See for example agi 2001b; agi/ign 2001; arn/cp 2001; ema 2001b; eri 2001; 'Program Ramadhan.' 2001.

<sup>20</sup> On the television station RCTI, AA Gym featured in *Manajemen Qulbu Spesial Ramadhan*; on SCTV in *Membuka Pintu Langit, Gema Ramadhan, Sambut Ramadhan*, and *Gema Takdir*; on Indosiar in *Kisah2 Teladan* (a children's program); on Trans TV in *Ceramah Ramadhan AA Gym*, and on TPI, in *Sentuhan Qolbu Ramadhan* ('Serba AA Gym.' 2002; 'Ramadhan di TV.' 2002).

<sup>21</sup> See also interviews with Veven Wardhana in agi/nun 2002 and Kusumaputra 2002 and remarks by film director Ali Sahab ('Ali Sahab.' 2003).

<sup>22</sup> For an example of the blurring of boundaries between religious observances and entertainment on television in the context of Ramadan in Egypt see Armbrust 2006. Also Abu-Lughod has mentioned the rise in production and popularity of big-budget religious and religious-historical series on Egyptian television during Ramadan at the end of the 1990s (2002:127). Additionally, for more details on television programming during Ramadan in Syria see Christmann 1996 and Salamandra 1998. For examples of the commodification of Christian religion in the sphere of entertainment in the United States see Moore 2004 and Forbes and Mahan 2000, and in Ghana see Meyer 2004 and 2007.

<sup>23</sup> See Egypte (Bayat 2002), Ghana (De Witte 2003), Israel (Lehman and Siebzeher 2006), Mali (Schulz 2006), and Turkey (Öncü 2006).

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## 5 The *kyai* and hyperreal ghosts: Narrative practices of horror, commerce, and censorship

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this chapter was published in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2007.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Noël Carroll 1990, Paul Coates 1991, and Steven Schneider 2003. About horror film in Indonesia in relation to politics see Stephen Gladwin 2003. On the subject of carnival and film as deconstruction of political and aesthetic representations see Ella Shohat and Robert Stam 1994:274, and on the subject of carnival in film as a form of anti-canonical resistance 1994:302-6. For horror films related to Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque see Barbara Creed 1995.

<sup>3</sup> A *siluman* (present-day Indonesian spelling) is a human being who has assumed a theriomorphic guise for nefarious purposes.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Joko P. 1994; w-04 1993.

<sup>5</sup> See Joko P. 1994; T-9 1993; w-04 1993. This point was also made by Hasim 1997 and by Suyono and Arjanto 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Both Indonesian and foreign critics of Indonesian horror films have commented that the storylines often are hard understand. See for example [www.iluminatedlantern.com](http://www.iluminatedlantern.com), and [www.dvdmaniacs.net](http://www.dvdmaniacs.net) in relation to remarks about Indonesian horror films abroad.

<sup>7</sup> These features are not specified in relation to film genres by Heider, though he does mention the use of sex in Indonesian films in relation to narrative conventions under the heading of 'sexuality' (1991:67-9).

<sup>8</sup> Heider remarks that sex in Indonesian cinema was either downplayed or presented as sadism. He observed that in Indonesian films, sex itself is rape (1991:66).

<sup>9</sup> Jalan cerita disusun sedemikian rupa sehingga menimbulkan kesan kepada penonton bahwa yang jahat itu pasti akan menerima/menanggung akibatnya dan menderita, dan yang baik itu pasti menerima ganjaran dan kebahagiaan.

<sup>10</sup> Another pattern of New Order films was that a film evolved from a depiction of a situation of order to a downslide to disorder after which at the end order was restored (Heider 1994:34-8; Sen and Hill 2000:138, 143-6).

<sup>11</sup> For example, *Bangunnya Nyai Roro Kidul* (The awakening of Nyai Roro Kidul, 1985) *Putri Kunti'anak* (The witch's daughter, 1988), *Pembalasan Ratu Laut Selatan* (Revenge of the queen of the South Sea, 1988), *Kisah Cinta Nyi Blorong* (The love story of Nyi Blorong, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> See for example sef 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Examples of this can be found in the following discussion about mystery television series.

<sup>14</sup> Thanks to Dimas Jayasrana for giving me useful information and comments about these series.

<sup>15</sup> Many viewers of the series, probably the real majority, apparently had no objections.

<sup>16</sup> In Islam the existence of the jinn was completely accepted as it is to this day.

Muslims believe that jinns are ethereal or fiery bodies, intelligent, imperceptible, with the capacity to assume different forms and capable of performing heavy labour. Their relationship to Iblis or Shaitans (the Devil or devils) in general is obscure. In Sura xviii.50 Iblis is said to be of the jinn; but Sura ii.34 implies that he was one of the angels. As a consequence great confusion and many legends and hypotheses have come into being (Gibb and Kramers 1974).

<sup>17</sup> Literally: 'So, it seems it has not strayed too far from religious teachings because possibly they talked to a Muslim jinn first' ('Jadi, rasanya, tidak terlalu menyimpang jauh dari kaidah agama, karena mungkin mereka telah berdialog terlebih dahulu dengan jin muslim'). This also relates to the point about people raising objections to mystery films and at the same time emphasizing their belief in supernatural issues.

<sup>18</sup> 'Terus terang, saya tidak pernah melihat jin. Lalu bagaimana kita bisa bercerita bahwa jin ada yang baik. Tolong bangsa kita jangan diasah dengan hal-hal yang bertentangan dengan agama. Jangan mendidik masyarakat untuk melihat sesuatu yang tidak ada.'

<sup>19</sup> In 1992 the BSF had changed its name into Film Censor Institute: *Lembaga Sensor Film*, LSF.

<sup>20</sup> 'Masak bikin sinetron yang tokohnya jin, sampai jin-jinnya dipanggil Om Jin atau Tante Jin. Mereka itu menjual mimpi terlalu berlebihan.'

<sup>21</sup> In 2003, the producer and director had to defend their statement that they had based the film on a true story from Cigugur before the National Commission of Human Rights. The people from Cigugur thought that the film had insulted their ancestors and presented a false representation of history and the teachings of the religious figure Pangeran Madrais, whom they believed was referred to in the film (LAM 2003; rik 2003; sin 2003).

<sup>22</sup> About recent television focusing on the depiction of what is 'real', and on 'facts', 'truth', and 'authenticity' see Bernard Arps and Katinka van Heeren 2006.

<sup>23</sup> 'Misalnya untuk mengembalikan arwah penasaran ke alam baka dengan tenang membutuhkan bantuan kiai.' 'Dan memang jalan keluar yang baik tetap meminta pertolongan kepada Allah.'

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed description of a *Pemburu Hantu* programme see Bernard Arps and Katinka van Heeren 2006.

## **6 The celebrity *kyai* and phantoms of the past: Tussling with the bounds of Indonesian moralities, realities, and popularities**

<sup>1</sup> FPI was formed in August 1998 and now claims branches in 22 provinces. Based in Jakarta, FPI is led by Habib Muhammad Riziek Syihab, a religious teacher who was educated in Saudi Arabia. As does Habib, many of the top FPI leaders have Arab blood. The stated goal of FPI is the full implementation of Islamic Sharia law, although it

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supports the current Indonesian constitution and avoids making demands for an Islamic state. FPI has a paramilitary wing called Laskar Pembela Islam and is well known for organizing raids on bars, massage parlours and gaming halls. FPI justifies these raids on the grounds that the police are unable to uphold the laws on gambling and prostitution. Skeptical observers suspect that the police turn a blind eye to, or are even complicit in, these activities, knowing that the victims will be encouraged to keep up payment of protection money to the police. In late 2001, FPI took the lead in threatening to sweep Americans out of Indonesia in retaliation for the US operations in Afghanistan, although the threat was not in fact carried out (see URL: <<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/FAD/sea.htm>>).

<sup>2</sup> For more on regional autonomy see Usman 2001 and Jacobsen 2003.

<sup>3</sup> For more background information about RUU APP see 'Anti-Pornography Law-Indonesia' from *journeymanpictures* posted on YouTube: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFm2Y7CmoEA>>. (Last accessed on 6 April 2008).

<sup>4</sup> 'Ada hal-hal yang sebenarnya terjadi di kalangan remaja tapi tidak bisa ditampilkan dalam sinetron, itulah yang dimunculkan dalam *Buruan Cium Gue!*'

<sup>5</sup> For example, in the wake of the controversy the ticket sales in Semarang rose. About 70 to 80 per cent of the tickets were sold, which has not often been the case when Indonesian films were screened. At first the pro-contra issue about *Buruan Cium Gue!* brought in lucrative business. However, when it became known that nothing really controversial was depicted ticket sales soon declined ('Mana yang perlu.' 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Film director Ahmad Yusuf believed that AA Gym should have watched BCG first before voicing his protests. The fact that the film was removed from cinemas after AA Gym's protests he stated recalled the atmosphere of the old regime. He considered the role of MUI was also dubious, as the MUI member on the Censor Board had obviously let the film pass for release. Still, after AA Gym had raised an outcry MUI joined the protests against the film ('Mana yang perlu.' 2004).

<sup>7</sup> See the revealing title of an article in *The Jakarta Post* 21 August 2004: 'Local teen flick withdrawn after Muslim leaders' protest: The House of Representatives is deliberating a bill on public morality, which bans kissing in public'.

<sup>8</sup> In early 2005 President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono declared he would call for maximum measures to ban pornography in Indonesian written and audio-visual media (Barendregt 2006:9-10).

<sup>9</sup> In his paper on the use of mobile phones and debates on the RUU APP Barendregt also referred to the fear that the liberalization of society had gone too far (2006:6).

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter Five pages 97-8.

<sup>11</sup> See afa/ghu 1996; Ant 1995; ant/mz 1996; hht 1993; 'Kelompok Islam.' 1994; Sutara 1994.

<sup>12</sup> For various protests see ahd 1994; amd 1995; ant/mz 1996; Ant/RS 1996; ikh 1997; 'Kelompok Islam.' 1994; KI/950 1994.

<sup>13</sup> These discourses recall the early years of Independence in the 1950s. At that time debates were also imbued with a spirit of great enthusiasm about the future of Indonesian cinema and also covered the questions of American film imports, censorship, and Islamic morality (Sen 1994:19-20, 22-3).

<sup>14</sup> See for example CR-14/M-2 2000.

<sup>15</sup> In 1999 threats by FPI to disrupt the screening of the Israeli film *Kadosh* (Sacred, Amos Gitai 1999) violently caused the committee of the Jakarta International Film Festival to decide not to show it. In 2000 protests by FPI led to the end of the screening of the highly popular Latin-American soap *Esmeralda* on SCTV. FPI demanded the soap be scrapped because the antagonist was called Fatima, the name of the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, and giving an antagonist her name was perceived to be an insult to Islam. In 2003 members of the PKS organized protests in all cities during the road-show of the independent film production *Novel Tanpa Huruf R* (Novel without the letter R, Aria Kusumadewa, 2003). However, the film-maker refused to stop screening his film and in a counter move opened a debate with the people who had protested about his film during a film screening in Bandung.

<sup>16</sup> In the same year Garin Nugroho encountered another protest from Islamic groups. This time the trouble was caused by his production of a Public Service Announcement (PSA) called *Islam Warna Warni* (Different hues of Islam). The MMI protested about this PSA and demanded a ban alleging that mentioning the 'different hues' of Islam represented Islam as something ambiguous. In the opinion of MMI there only was one Islam, and different interpretations of the religion were not possible. To represent Islam as something unfixed was perceived to be an insult (Abidin 2003).

<sup>17</sup> At the beginning of 2003 when 45 new members of the Film Censor Board were appointed for the period 2002-2005, the secretary of MUI, Ichwan Sjam, had stated that he regretted that the number of representatives of religious mass organizations in the board that year had declined from two persons per organization to only one (*Kompas Cyber Media* 28 January 2003). Before 2003 the Islamic mass organizations Muhammadiyah and NU both each had two persons in the board.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the popularity of religious series in for example Egypt and India see respectively Abu Lughod 1993 and Mitra 1993.

<sup>19</sup> SCTV produced *Astaghfirullah* (May god forgive me! also an exclamation to be used when shocked by immoral behaviour) based on true stories from the magazines *Ghoib* (Mysterious, pertaining to the invisible (divine or supernatural) sphere) and *Kuasa Ilahi* (God's power). Trans TV had *Taubat* (Repent and forswear) taking its stories from the magazine *Insting* (Instinct) and the series *Insyaf* (Aware) and *Hidayah*. Lativi screened *Azab Ilahi* (God's wrath) and *Sebuah Kesaksian* (Witness to faith), both based on stories of people who had experienced or witnessed miracles which they attributed to God.

<sup>20</sup> Bukhari and Muslim were Arab Islamic scholars who lived around AD 800/200 Shawwal. Their books both called *Sahih* are still highly celebrated among the collections of

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traditions (Gibb and Kramers 1974).

<sup>21</sup> ‘aktualisasi dari peristiwa yang pernah terjadi di zaman Rasulullah’.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Artinya, masyarakat kita sekarang ini mundur ke zaman 1970-an lagi’.

<sup>23</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Four in the few past years the MUI had given awards to television stations which have made a contribution to enlivening the Ramadan fasting month.

<sup>24</sup> In a press-statement presented by MFI on 3 January 2007, the movement called attention to the fact that the film *Ekskul* illegally used the music score of several Hollywood films. This constituted a breach of copyright. Observing the fact that this was not noticed by the FFI jury, MFI drew the conclusion that this was an indication of the poor management and lack of competence on the part of the festival organizers.

<sup>25</sup> See ‘Pernyataan Sikap MFI’ (Statement of the Stance of MFI) at URL: <<http://masyarakatfilmindonesia.wordpress.com/pernyataan-sikap/>>. (Last accessed on 7 April 2008).

<sup>26</sup> For example, in kissing scenes sometimes even a mere peck on the lips was cut. However, as mentioned earlier, the kissing scene in the teen flick *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta*, and to great surprise a gay kissing scene in *Arisan!*, and even a masturbation and lesbian sex scene in the film *Detik Terakhir* (Last second, Nanang Istiabudi 2005) passed the censor board uncut (Diani 2005).

<sup>27</sup> In addition to the example of *Buruan Cium Gue!* in 2004, in 2005 the Censor Institute withdrew the action film *Bad Wolves* (Richard Buntario, 2005) because the police objected to the portrayal of corrupt officers in the film. The police said it would tarnish the image of the force, which, as journalist Hera Diani commented, was in fact already at an all time low (Diani 2005)

<sup>28</sup> Likewise, the FFI organizers, who initially failed to comprehend the wider objective of MFI, did not see the protests as a positive effort to bring about change. In the mass media, they criticized the return of the Citra as an act by ill-mannered youngsters who could not accept their defeat. Veteran film-maker Chaerul Umam, a member of the FFI jury who himself had won a Citra for his film *Ramadhan dan Ramona* (Ramadhan and Ramona) in 1992, dismissed the young film-makers as childish for staging a protest. ‘It shows that they can’t accept their defeat. If they thought there was a problem they should have informed us as soon as possible’ (Hari 2007).

<sup>29</sup> ‘LSF harus tetap ada. Lihat saja tayangan televisi dan bioskop, disensor aja gila, apalagi kalau lembaga sensor itu nggak ada. Selaku Ormas, kami akan memantau kelembagaan ini, sekaligus memperluas bidang kerja FPI’

<sup>30</sup> Personal communication from Veven Wardhana via e-mail on 22 January 2007. In an interview Titie Said denied the charge that FPI had been invited by LSF. She stated it was just a visit as those made by many different Indonesian social communities and groups to the institute. The Censor Institute, she stressed, ‘always opens its door to the people’ (Hadaysusanto 2007)

<sup>31</sup> Communication via e-mail with Dimas Jayasrana on 23 January 2007, and personal communication in March 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Personal communication from Aria, Ekky and Tino in March 2007. Moreover, they pointed out rumours which insinuated that FPI was an organization run by the Governor of Jakarta Sutiyoso or the police forces.

<sup>33</sup> For more on the use of the threat of Islamic fundamentalism in Muslim countries to justify repressive state measures see Esposito 1999:172.

## **Conclusion**

<sup>1</sup> For more on this subject see Casanova 1994; Robertson 1992; Beyer 1998; Hoerber Rudolph and Piscatori (eds.) 1997.

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## Nederlandse samenvatting

### Hedendaagse Indonesische film: Geesten van *Reformasi* en spoken uit het verleden

Overall in de wereld circuleren in de media dezelfde beelden, films, en televisie formules. Nieuwsprogramma's wisselen onderling identieke opnames uit, en in verschillende landen kijkt men naar de eigen varianten van *Idols* of *Who wants to be a millionaire*. Ook soaps en 'telenovela' zoals *The bold and the beautiful* en *Ugly Betty* zijn in veel landen ondertiteld, nagesynchroniseerd, of in eigen varianten te vinden. Bovendien vertonen de preken van televisiedominees in Noord en Zuid Amerika, Islamitische geestelijken in Egypte, en Hindoe priesters in India erg veel overeenkomsten. Hoeveel de programma's en soaps wereldwijd ook op elkaar lijken, en hoeveel films uit Hollywood, Bollywood en Nollywood elkaar ook kopiëren, toch zijn de films en programma's die in een land in omloop zijn onderdeel van een eigen complex van *discourses* en *mediation practices*.

Het begrip discours is ontleend aan Norman Fairclough's *media discourse analysis* (1995). De term wordt hierin op twee manieren gebruikt. Enerzijds wordt naar discours verwezen zoals gebruikelijk is in de taalwetenschappen: discours (een combinatie van discussie, debat, en gedachtewisseling) als een sociale actie en interactie van mensen in sociale situaties. Anderzijds wordt discours gebruikt zoals Michel Foucault er in zijn poststructuralistische sociale theorie naar verwijst: een discours als een maatschappelijke constructie van de werkelijkheid, een vorm van kennis. Als de twee betekenissen worden samengevoegd is een discours de taal die wordt gebruikt om een gegeven sociale praxis van een bepaald gezichtspunt weer te geven. Bijvoorbeeld de sociale praxis van politiek wordt verschillend geduid in liberale, sociale, of Marxistische politieke discourses. Verder betekent *film mediation practices* de praxis van film productie, -distributie en -vertoningen. In andere woorden hoe films worden geproduceerd, verspreid en aan een publiek gepresenteerd. Deze *discourses* en *mediation practices* samen creëren de wijze waarop in een land film teksten te lezen en te begrijpen zijn.

Dominante discourses, zoals de ethische waarden van een land, resoneren in de discours over film en dringen door in de *mediation-discourse*- en *narrative practices* van film teksten, televisie programma's en soaps. Film *discourse practices* omvat de samensmelting van discourses van een gemeenschap met de praxis van film productie, distributie en vertoning. In andere woorden discourses krijgen vorm in film teksten. Een voorbeeld van een *discourse practice* is de productie van geschiedenisfilms en documentaires en de manier waarop deze films verspreid worden. In hoofdstuk drie laat ik zien dat de productie van deze genres tijdens de Nieuwe Orde heersende concepten van geschiedenis en de natie vertegenwoordigen, en dat de manier waarop de films werden verspreid gelieerd was aan een poging om de discourses over geschiedenis te sturen. *Narrative practices* gaat om verhalen, en de manier waarop deze verteld worden in audiovisuele media in de context van machtsverhoudingen. De machtsverhoudingen omvatten zowel de macht van de staat om de media te beteugelen door



middel van censuur en regels voor het uitzenden van programma's als ook het bezit van, en controle over, nationale en transnationale media imperia en -instituties. Daarnaast beïnvloeden het filmpubliek en de televisiekijkers door middel van kijkcijfers, en ook publieke organisaties of gemeenschappen door commentaren of protesten over films, de vorm en inhoud van media producten. Al deze factoren bepalen wat voor beelden van de natie, gemeenschap, en sociale werkelijkheden er in een samenleving circuleren. Ondanks de effecten van globalisatie en de overvloed van transnationale media producties, behelzen daarom dezelfde genres, stijlen, en formules van films en televisie programma's verschillende weergaven en interpretaties van voorstellingen die worden gemaakt van samenlevingen en landen.

In *Virtual Geography* (1994), een boek over de verslaggeving van de eerste Golfoorlog, schrijft McKenzie Wark over een in scène gezet media optreden van Saddam Hussein. Hussein liet zich filmen met de buitenlanders die hij in gijzeling hield en geeft daarbij speciale aandacht aan een klein jongetje. Hij neemt het jongetje bij zich en aait hem vriendelijk over zijn hoofd. Wark stelt dat Saddam Hussein daarmee gebruik maakte van een bekend en wijd gedragen stijl binnen een Irakees genre, waarmee hij de indruk zou maken van 'de nobele en gerespecteerde oudere'. Maar in het Westen had ditzelfde beeld een geheel andere uitwerking. Het raakte aan andere ideeën over televisiegenres en de verhalen die ze ons vertellen. In het Westen deden de beelden eerder denken aan shots van dictators als Hitler of Ceausescu die zich ook vaak in vriendelijke interactie met kinderen lieten filmen. Ook weerspiegelde afkeurende reacties in het Westen Oriëntalistische opvattingen over Arabische mannen die Westerse kinderen zouden belagen. Wark betoogt dat mensen die opgroeien in verschillende culturele raamwerken beschikken over andere manieren om met informatie om te gaan. Ook bezitten verschillende culturen een repertoire van zeer verschillende verhalen waarmee een ieder gebeurtenissen in de wereld filtert en duidt.

Dit proefschrift gaat over film als een sociale praxis binnen veranderende politieke en culturele frames van de Indonesische natie. Ik bespreek de invloed van zowel discours over film als het effect van toepassingen of praxis van film, op de vervaardiging van collectieve identiteiten en sociale werkelijkheden. Op zijn Foucauldiaans ontstaan sociale werkelijkheden op basis van de eigen regimes van waarheid die elke gemeenschap heeft. Regimes – of gangbare politiek – van waarheid verwijzen naar de soort discourses die een gemeenschap hoog houdt en door laat gaan voor waar. Sociale waarheden of werkelijkheden zijn niet stabiel maar worden telkens gedefinieerd en her-gedefinieerd in concurrerende discourses. In het bijzonder na het aftreden van president Soeharto wordt het complex van media in Indonesië gekenmerkt door een grote verscheidenheid aan discourses waarin verschillende gemeenschappen strijden om verschillende representaties van de Indonesische natie en haar sociale werkelijkheden. Veranderingen in de politiek, maar ook de verspreiding van nieuwe filmtechnologieën zoals digitale videocamera's, computer editprogramma's en digitale videoprojectoren hebben een democratiseringsproces in de Indonesische maatschappij en filmwereld in werking gezet. Dit proefschrift behandelt de concurrerende vormen van

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representatie, de verbeelding van specifieke identiteiten en de constructie van sociale werkelijkheden in de praxis en discoursen over film in Indonesië tijdens President Soeharto's Nieuwe Orde regime en na zijn aftreden in 1998 waarmee de tijd van *Reformasi* (reformatie) werd ingeluid.

De analyse bestaat uit drie delen. Om te beginnen bestudeer ik discoursen over bepaalde audiovisuele media *formats* (bijvoorbeeld 16 mm film, 35 mm film, digitale video en televisie) en genres die leiden tot voorstellingen van identiteit en het vormen van gemeenschappen. Vervolgens onderzoek ik de processen van *empowerment* die de consumptie van deze media *formats* en genres voortbrengen. Tot slot ga ik na welke invloed het circuleren van bepaalde genres en *formats* heeft op publieke debatten. In deze context behandel ik de volgende vragen: Hoe is de Indonesische film industrie te karakteriseren voor, tijdens, en na de val van Soeharto? Op wat voor een manier heeft de geest van Reformatie Indonesische *meditation practices* veranderd, en wat was de rol van nieuwe technologieën die in dezelfde tijd beschikbaar werden? Welke representaties van geschiedenis werden tijdens de Nieuwe Orde verspreid, en tot op welke hoogte bepaalden noties van 'waarheid' en 'werkelijkheid' de kritische discoursen over de Indonesische media? Wat was de rol van Islam in *film mediation practices* voor, tijdens, en na het Reformatie tijdperk? In hoeverre botsten seculiere en religieuze discoursen bij het bepalen van de morele grenzen van film en televisie producties? Op welke wijze bepaalden deze discoursen sociale werkelijkheden?

Het betoog is in drie stukken gedeeld. Het eerste deel behandelt de *film meditation practices*. In dit deel contrasteer ik de *mainstream* praxis van film productie, distributie en vertoningen van de Nieuwe Orde met de *underground* praxis van Reformatie. Ik bespreek hoe film *formats*, zoals 16 mm en 35 mm film tijdens de Nieuwe Orde en digitale video en 35 mm film tijdens Reformatie, bepaalde voorstellingen van gemeenschappen bedongen. In discoursen over film werden 16 mm film en digitale video verbonden met lagere klassen en nationale of lokale gemeenschappen. Daartegenover zou 35 mm een stedelijke hogere klasse en transnationale identiteiten representeren. Ook behandel ik in dit deel de officiële filmfestivals van de Nieuwe Orde en alternatieve filmfestivals en andere sites voor filmvertoningen na de val van Soeharto. Ik beschrijf de discoursen waarin verschillende filmfestivals en kanalen van filmvertoningen verschillende locale, nationale, en transnationale identiteiten vertegenwoordigen. Naast de discoursen over de manier waarop film *formats*, genres, en festivals, gemeenschappen representeren is in dit deel de rol van 'cursieve praktijken' een letterlijke vertaling van het Indonesische *praktek miring* (illegale praktijken) van groot belang. Deze praktijken omvatten bijvoorbeeld het omkopen van ambtenaren of gezagsdragers om verboden films te kunnen vertonen, of om illegaal gekopieerde films te kunnen verkopen. De cursieve praktijken staan haaks op de discoursen hoe het idealiter allemaal zou moeten zijn, maar vormen een onontkoombaar onderdeel van Indonesische *film mediation practices*.

Het tweede deel gaat over *film discourse practices*. Hier ga ik in op het gebruik van bepaalde retorische strategieën en *modes of engagement* in geschiedenisfilms en filmgeschiedenis van de Nieuwe Orde. Onder *modes of engagement* versta ik de dominante

representaties van topics, of manieren waarop bepaalde onderwerpen worden vertolkt, die deel zijn van de centrale discoursen van een samenleving. In dit deel beschrijf ik de *modes of engagement* van helden in geschiedkunde. Verder poneer ik dat de productie van geschiedenisfilms en ‘ontwikkelingsfilms’ van de Nieuwe Orde deel uitmaakte van een transnationaal anti-communistisch discours dat vooral verspreid en gesteund werd door de Verenigde Staten. Deze discours werd in Indonesië maar ook in andere landen zoals Iran ingezet in een cultureel ontwikkelingsbeleid. Dit beleid omvatte de productie en vertoning van een bepaald soort propagandistische documentaires en ontwikkelingsfilms. Vervolgens vergelijk ik de films van de Nieuwe Orde met de films en documentaires die na de Nieuwe Orde zijn vervaardigd. Na de val van Soeharto beginnen filmmakers contrageschiedenissen te produceren. Documentaire verandert van een instrument van propaganda in een medium voor activisten die een stem willen geven aan de stemlozen. Ook staat een groep op van Islamitische filmmakers die zichzelf als een oppositionele en postkoloniale filmgemeenschap ziet. Deze groep verzet zich aan de ene kant tegen de macht over de Indonesische media van de in hun ogen ‘neokoloniale’ Nieuwe Orde. Aan de andere kant wil deze groep de ‘imperialistische’ invloed van de Verenigde Staten in de media wereldwijd pareren. Daarnaast behandel ik in dit deel de manier waarop geschiedenisfilms en documentaires werden verspreid onder het Soeharto regime als ‘film in het raamwerk van’ een bepaald evenement. Daarbij ontleed ik het meest extreme voorbeeld van het vertonen van de belangrijkste Indonesische propaganda film van het Soeharto regime ‘in het raamwerk van’ de herdenkingsdag van de coup in 1965 die tot het ontstaan van de Nieuwe Orde heeft geleid. Na de val van Soeharto gaat de praxis van het vertonen van films in een bepaald raamwerk door, al veranderen de drijfveren. Als voorbeeld van nieuwe frames en overwegingen om films in een bepaald raamwerk te vertonen analyseer ik de groei van beelden van Islam als onderdeel van de commercialisering van de Islamitische vastenmaand Ramadan. De Ramadan programma’s komen niet overeen met het idee hoe de groep van Islamitische filmmakers had gedacht Islamitische films vorm te gaan geven. De beelden van Islam binnen dit raamwerk hebben vooral met uiterlijkheden van het geloof te maken, zoals het gebruik van Moslem kleding en frases. In de ogen van veel Moslems vertolken de programma’s niet de religieuze waarden van de godsdienst.

Het derde deel van dit proefschrift analyseert *film narrative practices*. Ik ga in op de roulatie van populaire genres en de compositie van verhalen binnen film genres in relatie tot machtsverhoudingen. De focus is gericht op horror en hoe de discoursen over formules in horror film inhaken op discussies over wat wel en niet vertoond kan worden in verschillende film en televisie *formats*. Het gaat hierbij onder andere om het inzetten van *kyai*’s (Islamitische geestelijk leiders) in horror films als deus-ex-machina figuren om zo de films door de censuur te krijgen. Ook onthullen de discussies over horror films en televisie programma’s opvattingen over wat wel en niet deel uitmaakt van de verbeelding van de moderne Indonesische samenleving. Hier gaat het om debatten over de juiste representatie van geesten, en de vraag of die een feitelijk onderdeel zijn van de moderne Indonesië samenleving. Zo behandel ik de discours over mogelijke representaties van geesten in horror films tijdens de Nieuwe

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Orde, en de nieuwe ontwikkelingen tijdens Reformatie als er horror reality-programma's worden geproduceerd die geesten 'live' op televisie filmen en zelfs vangen. Verder kijk ik naar de recente toename van beelden en protesten van Islam in de Indonesische media. Ik bestudeer het verbod op films en andere media uitingen uit naam van de Islam met als doel het moreel van de natie te bewaken. Daarmee verbonden ga ik in op discoursen in 1996 over de voorbereiding van een nieuwe anti-pornografie wet die Indonesië onder meer zou beschermen tegen de, volgens sommige met name religieuze groeperingen, te vrije media. In deze context laat ik zien dat er een machtsstrijd wordt gevoerd tussen seculiere en religieuze visies op de werkelijkheid, en de moraal van de Indonesische maatschappij. Ik analyseer de strijd rond film censuur van de staat en de straat tussen seculiere en religieuze krachten. Daarbij kijk ik naar de rol van echte en imaginaire Islamitische leiders bij het bepalen van de grenzen van onderwerpen en verhalen in de audiovisuele media van het land. De strijd is bepalend voor wie en wat de nationale populaire discours vorm geeft, en vaststelt welke realiteiten worden erkend in de moderne Indonesische samenleving. Vooralsnog geven geld, aanzien, en populariteit de doorslag.

## **Curriculum Vitae**

Katinka van Heeren was born on 7 January 1973 in Jakarta Indonesia. She has been a student of Indonesian Languages and Cultures since 1995. Over the years she built up a specialization in Javanese, Indonesian Islam, and audio-visual media in contemporary Indonesia. Between 1997 and 1999 she has taken courses on Javanese culture and Islam at the Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Central Java. Also in 1999 she was an exchange student in Old Javanese and Gender studies at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. In 2000 she obtained her Masters degree at the University of Leiden with a thesis on identity politics and socio-political influences of New Order rule in Indonesian culture in the analysis of two Indonesian films. From 2001 to 2005 she was member of the Indonesian Mediations research project. This project was part of a larger Dutch KNAW research project of Indonesia in Transition. Between 2001 and 2007 she has organized several Indonesian film screenings and took part at different film festivals as a member of the jury. She is affiliated to ASEACC, which annually organizes the Southeast Asian Cinemas Conference.