Indonesian popular music and identity expressions

Issues of class, Islam and gender

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1 – Introduction

In the past fifteen to twenty years, Indonesia has been characterised by unprecedented transformations in both political and cultural life. One of those transformations was in the music industry which thrived as never before. As the authoritarian regime of president Suharto came to an end in 1998, new political leaders adopted a much more democratic system, allowing freedom of the press and political parties with new orientations that were largely suppressed before. A growing Indonesian middle class has a clearer view of what lies beyond the nation's boundaries through modern technologies, such as the Internet and mobile phones. The rise of pop culture went hand in hand with the expansion of national and local TV and radio stations, and the emergence of many new magazines. As a result of these changes, where political aspirations were free to be expressed and debates about social issues reached the public sphere, Indonesians may have reconsidered their place in society and expressed their identities in new ways.

What I will research in this thesis is how young Indonesians express their identities or how they create new identities as a result of this transitional period and I will examine this through forms of Indonesian popular music. One of the key insights of cultural studies concerning popular music is that due to the contested nature of its meanings and ownership, popular music is an important site of cultural struggle and can reveal much about class, gender and other social divisions. That is why I want to zoom in on these social divisions by dividing them in class, religion and gender, to see how each of them relates to popular music and identity formation. Many scholars have acknowledged the important link between music and identity, arguing that music can be used as a means by which we formulate and express our individual identities. It is used to present oneself to others in the way we prefer. People's musical tastes and preferences can form an important statement of their values and attitudes, and composers and performers use their music to express their own distinctive views of the world (Hargreaves *et al.* 2002: 1). Quoting Stokes, music is "socially meaningful not entirely but largely because [it provides] means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (quoted in Sunardi 2010: 91). Feld also says that privileging music is justified because it "is the most highly stylised of social forms, iconically linked to the broader cultural production of local identity" (quoted in Chapman 2004: 135). With cultural production comes also the process of producing and innovating new cultural forms, which includes Indonesian popular music. The notion that this self-conscious cultural production is linked to identity formation has become commonplace in

anthropology, ethnomusicology, cultural studies and other human sciences (Wallach 2002: 1). In recent studies about identity and the self, however, there has been a shift towards the idea of the self as something which is constantly being reconstructed and renegotiated according to the experiences, situations and other people with whom we interact in daily life, instead of an earlier, much less dynamic view that the self is a relatively unchanging core aspect of individuals' personalities (Hargreaves *et al.* 2002). In this respect, it could be expected that Indonesians' identities have been reconstructed and renegotiated, considering the changing circumstances, both in the political, social and cultural field. I think that popular music is an important medium through which these changing identities can be found, formed and represented.

Before the change of regime in 1998, Indonesia had been politically very stable with one ruler, president Suharto, for over 30 years. Suharto's rule, also known as *Orde Baru* (New Order) was authoritarian and freedom of press and expression were restricted, although this hasn't kept some artists, such as Harry Roesli, Rhoma Irama and Iwan Fals, from expressing objections about the regime. Compared to other authoritarian regimes, Indonesian artists were relatively free, but still had to be careful with their messages. They could face the threat of censorship or punishment by the government. Harry Roesli, for example, was imprisoned twice for criticizing the government (Wallach 2002: 12). After more and more uprisings in the late 1990s and the start of the Asian financial crisis in 1997 by which Indonesia was heavily struck, Suharto was forced to step down in 1998. After this, Indonesia opened up more and more to a globalized world, but it also knew an unstable period, known as *Reformasi*, with many different political leaders in a relatively short time who were all struggling to solve the deficiencies of earlier times. A democratic structure was implemented and freedom of the press was allowed. From this time on, many in the Indonesian music business began a rebuilding phase. It is difficult to say whether democratization was a direct cause for this or not, but other factors likely had a part in it, such as globalization, the rise of popular culture, development of new technologies, and the Internet (all of these allowing an easier access to world culture). Decentralization is another probable factor, especially concerning the development of regional pop musics, as regional leaders could plan their own programs and did not have to follow the edicts of the central government in Jakarta anymore. Moreover, the focus of the Reformasi government has shifted from the search for a national culture, with which Suharto's regime was very much occupied, to the diversity of regional and popular culture (Kartomi 2002: 121). The new Reformasi policies promoted ethnic diversity and regional autonomy, giving regional cultures a new importance in their own right. Even though Indonesia has still barely recovered from

the economic and political crisis, its contemporary cultures have been thriving as never before, which makes this period very interesting. Since 2000, contemporary pop music has achieved sales figures that would have been unimaginable even a few years ago and licensed presses have multiplied threefold since 1998 (Heryanto ed. 2008: 5-6). It is remarkable that the job market of the media industry was expanding in this time while millions of others lost jobs, which makes music a relevant topic for scrutiny. The development of new technologies and transnational media have made national boundaries culturally permeable, linking Indonesians more and more to other parts and cultures of the world. Rapid technological developments, as well as an expansion of national radio and TV stations accessible to an expanding middle-class, have caused the ways in which people experience music to be far more diverse than ever before and as a result, music plays a greater part in the everyday lives of more people.

My main research question is: how has the Indonesian youth used popular music to create, negotiate, express and transform their identities from 1998 until the present? Subquestions related to this main question are what role the national political climate, as well as globalisation, have played in influencing the consumption of popular music, and what impact the social and cultural divisions of class, religion and gender have on the use of music and identity formation. Although I will also be discussing political issues, my study is not about the construction of a (national) identity through the national government, but rather on the grassroots level. The main agents will thus be young Indonesian citizens who are involved with making and listening to music. I choose to focus on class, religion and gender because these have undergone drastic and interesting transformations during the period I want to examine, allowing people to reconsider their place or someone else's in the social ladder, as a religious person or as a woman or man in society. Popular music and the way people consume it can reveal a lot about people's thoughts and conceptions on class, religion and gender in contemporary Indonesia. The period from the 1990s until the present knew for example a remarkable growth of the Indonesian middle class who adopted a consumerist lifestyle and wanted to set themselves apart from the lower class, using popular music among other things. Concerning religion, I will focus on the developments of Islam in Indonesia, the religion of roughly 90% of the country's population. The fall of Suharto has been a significant turning-point for religious expression, because for much of the New Order, Islam was marginalized especially in the political sphere and Islamic organizations were restricted. After 1998, Indonesian Muslims could express themselves more freely, leading to an amplified process of Islamization which includes the creation of new Islamic political parties, the rise of radical Islam and the expression of religious identities in public that could

not be expressed before, particularly extremist ones. Moreover, in the 21st century Muslim pop culture has flourished immensely and popular music has helped in the process of articulating religious identity. Finally, issues of gender, including for example femininity, masculinity and the role of women in the family have become a more prominent subject of discussions and debates in the past two decades. Women's rights groups and opinions about feminism have more political support than before, but so has (conservative) Islam. This leads to diverse opinions about popular female artists who are regarded as a role model to some and an actor of immorality to others. Popular music is a strong medium to spur debates about gender and to introduce new images of how young men and women can, or should, dress and behave. Consequently, this makes young Indonesians rethink and possibly reshape their gender identities.

The following chapters will look further into these three aspects of Indonesian society, their recent developments, and how they are reflected in popular music and identity formation. Chapter 2 is about social stratification and popular music genres that are produced and consumed according to presumed class boundaries. The genres *pop Indonesia*, underground and *dangdut* will be introduced in this chapter and I will explain what changes their position in the Indonesian society has undergone since the 1990s. In chapter 3 I will examine how the recent revival of (political) Islam has influenced music genres to flourish or decrease, and how Indonesian Muslims try to express their religious identities through music. *Dangdut*, although secular, is again an important genre here, and other genres with Islamic themes will be discussed as well. Chapter 4 concerns issues of gender through music in contemporary Indonesia. What kind of debates has it spurred about the role of women and men in society and how does it help people define their feminine or masculine identity? In the last chapter I will try to draw a definite conclusion from the findings in the previous chapters and answer my research questions. My expectation is that popular music has served as a significant terrain for young Indonesians to express themselves and 'discover' new identities, which will help them deal better with the vast changes in Indonesian society. I think globalization is an important factor concerning these changes, giving more and more Indonesians a look into the rest of the world and bringing Western culture to the East. Class identities, religious identities and gender identities are renegotiated, I expect, not only due to political changes, but also largely because of the process of globalization and new forms of musical expression.

2 – Social stratification in popular music

2.1 From kampungan to gengsi: music genres within class boundaries

The 1990s knew a rise of the Indonesian upper and middle classes, characterized by the adoption of a cosmopolitan lifestyle and, through the emergence of VCDs and the Internet, access to (modern) world culture. The working and lower class majority (*rakyat kecil*), on the other side of the social scale, were in turn more and more separated from the higher classes. These widening class divisions form a threat to nationalism and national unity in post-Suharto Indonesia and I will show that it is also class identity which divides the musical audience. Social stratification in relation to popular music in Indonesia has known some interesting turns in the 1990s and 2000s. These changes, which are part of a broader process of modernization, globalization and a change of regime can be quite contested and sometimes turn out to be different in theory than in practice. For example, old notions about a popular music genre being largely for a lower-class audience still exist among many Indonesians, while in practice many studies have shown the growing interest and popularity of these 'lower-class genres' among middle to upper-class Indonesians (Wallach 2002, Heryanto ed. 2008, Knauth 2010, Weintraub 2010). As is evident from this example, different musical styles in Indonesia can be associated with social stratification. Western and Indonesian popular music (the latter having a similar style and using similar instruments as the former) are connected with sophistication and personal pride or prestige (*gengsi*), while more hybridized popular music genres that contain local, Middle-Eastern, South Asian and Euro-American influences, and *musik daerah* (regional styles) have inferior prestige and are generally linked to the lower class (Knauth 2010: 1-2). So particular music genres exist within class boundaries. In this chapter I will demonstrate how this phenomenon has changed in recent years and how important social stratification through popular music is for expressing Indonesian youth identities.

Changes in ideas about class divisions, which occurred as a result of the change of regime from Suharto's authoritarian New Order to the more democratic Reformasi period, can in turn influence ideas about and practices of musical consumption. The New Order ideologies included the idea that social inequality was necessary for development. Social hierarchy was strongly prescribed, including those of urban over rural, nation over region and social harmony over individual rights (Heryanto ed. 2008: 20). Besides, it is important to realize that musical styles mediated through television and radio were very limited and restricted by censorship. Radio was dominated by commercial hits of a very sentimental

character and there was barely any musical diversity. This changed when MTV came to Indonesia in 1993, bringing a diversity of sounds to middle-class urban Indonesians. Consequently, new styles began to emerge gradually and gained popularity, although these were mostly reserved for middle to upper-class Indonesians. Looking at the development of different popular music genres in Indonesia can tell something about associated changes in the social stratification, as I will examine in this chapter.

In which stratum of social prestige and power one is ranked often determines which genres and artists Indonesians admit to liking and which they do not. Western culture and music (primarily British and American) is regarded as 'superior', especially by educated middle and upper-class Indonesians (Wallach 2002: 79). While Western popular music is considered to enjoy the most *gengsi*, non-Western music, including traditional Indonesian music, is backward and *kampungan* (literally: "of the village"). Fans listen to, and musicians play, Western music in order to not be considered *kampungan*, making music an instrument to distinguish oneself from low-class and rural Indonesians. The other way around, non-affluent Indonesians also have their conceptions about genres as *pop Indonesia*, the national version of Western popular music. They view it as egoistic and not belonging to the people but to an exclusive elite concerned with its country's image abroad (Wallach 2002: 370). Since about 2007, however, a musical style became very popular in Indonesia which seems to stand outside of this dichotomy. K-pop is an in South Korea produced music style characterized by boy bands and girl groups with flashy clothes, easy-to-master dance moves, and catchy songs. Although K-pop has been inspired by Western and European sounds, it has developed as a distinctly Asian music form with a unique performing style. It has gained substantial popularity in both the Eastern and Western world, and many Indonesians view South Korea as a model for popular culture. K-pop can thus be viewed as a prestigious genre, which shows that the simple dichotomy of Western/superior/upper-class versus non-Western/inferior/lower class not always holds true. However, these views about music genres being tied to a specific social stratum are held quite firmly by both fans and artists and can even be found in the commercial sphere. When one goes to a music store in an air-conditioned mall, it will be difficult to find CDs or VCDs with non-Western music genres here. One would have to go the market, a kiosk or a *warung* (stall) that sells music of these genres and where in turn Western pop music is in the minority. Salesmen adapt to the well-known needs of their customers, reflecting again how specific genres are connected to specific social classes. In the next part I will first briefly describe some popular music genres and their relation to social class, and then elaborate on their recent developments and how they relate to young Indonesians' identities.

2.2 An introduction to dangdut, pop Indonesia *and underground music*

Dangdut is a genre that fits within the category of non-Western popular music in Indonesia, having influences from Hindustani film music, Arab music, Malay *joged* dance music, and using modern musical instruments and technology such as the electric guitar, piano, electric organ and a Western trap drum set. Unlike, for example, pop and rock music in Indonesia which largely imitate Western styles, *dangdut* emerged in the early 1970s as a uniquely Indonesian musical form (Browne 2000: 1). *Dangdut* music thus emerged during the New Order, a time when the goals of progress and modernity were linked to foreign investment, to practically everything originating in the West (including music) and to consumerist practices so that the emerging middle class could differentiate itself from the 'backward' masses. *Dangdut*, including its suggestive dance movements and extravagant costumes, got a rather negative connotation, its performers and fans being perceived of as disgusting and vulgar, and considered neither 'traditional' (in the sense of indigenous high arts such as *gamelan*) nor truly 'modern'. But despite this negative connotation, *dangdut* became very popular among a large part of the Indonesian population. Especially in the 1990s *dangdut* flourished to become essentially the music 'of the people'. The media, including television and popular print media, as well began to promote *dangdut* as the national genre, the music for all Indonesians. In this time, *dangdut* also reached middle-class living rooms through commercial television. Of all Indonesian music genres tracked by ASIRI (the Indonesian Sound Recording Industry Association), *dangdut* constituted about 35% of music recording sales in the 1990s (Weintraub 2006: 412). However, claims by popular print media that *dangdut* had been completely incorporated into the national Indonesian culture were not true, although its audience has certainly grown. The media were also misleading in giving the idea that *dangdut* was not only the music of the lower-class 'common people' anymore, but that the genre had gained more prestige. This had certainly not happened according to views of most music performers and fans at that time, still regarding *dangdut* as *kampungan* and backward. Musician and author Remy Sylado for example remarked that "*Dangdut* always looks to the past. With Pop, its orientation is to America" (Weintraub 2006: 416).

This brings us to the development of music genres belonging to the other category namely Western style popular music. As mentioned before, *pop Indonesia* is one of those genres. Its sound is very similar to Western popular music, but it generally uses the Indonesian national language, *bahasa Indonesia*. Because of its Western vibe, it is associated with modernity and appeals mostly to middle-class and elite listeners. In the early 1990s, *pop Indonesia* bands could not be viewed separately from their Western (Anglo-American) counterparts who had inspired them. Therefore, the majority of *pop Indonesia*

bands also used English for their song texts. From the late 1990s onwards, *pop Indonesia* experienced a change and its audience, the young generation of the past fifteen years, experienced the genre in a different way than its preceding generation. For many fans, the genre has little to do with the West anymore and is conceived of more as fundamentally Indonesian. It is produced in Jakarta, for a national audience and mainly sung in *bahasa Indonesia* (Baulch 2010: 114). However, it still carries the connotation of a middle-class and elite genre, that of malls, businesses and capitalist consumption.

Other popular music genres in this category came to Indonesia in more recent times, as a result among other things of the coming of MTV, an easier access to world culture and the loosening of restrictions on media. Underground music, sometimes called indie, which has a lot of subgenres, is one such type of music that started in the early 1990s in Indonesia but became especially prominent in the early 2000s. At first it was dominated by the harsher sounds of metal and punk and was sung in English, but towards the end of the 1990s many underground *aliran* (streams) had emerged, such as hardcore, death metal, grindcore, grunge, industrial and gothic and they had shifted to using Indonesian song texts. The orientation of Indonesian underground artists is towards Western underground bands, many being strongly influenced by them and even imitating them in sound and clothing (Luvaas 2013: 102). This reflects the notion of Western culture being superior and more prestigious, and in turn makes the connection to middle to upper classes. While in the early 1990s underground was primarily used to express any discontent with the national regime and its policies, it now has broader purposes, such as a way to distinguish oneself from the mainstream. I will now turn to the question of how the introduced genres relate to identity formation and expression among Indonesian youth.

2.3 Class struggles and musical expression

I will first continue with underground music. The underground scene is characterized by themes such as autonomy and a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic. This ethic implies autonomy from major entertainment labels and a preference for small independent labels, seeking alternative methods of production and distribution and encouraging bands to record and release albums on their own. It reflects the typical wish of these scenesters to 'stand out' and resist the mainstream music industry, including *pop Indonesia* music.

As said above, Indonesian underground artists tend to imitate Western underground bands. By imitating these bands, and, for the audience, by listening to these Western-influenced bands, one can show off his or her 'middle-classness' and access to the outside world. So the Indonesian audience of underground music, which is middle-class youth, uses

this genre to affirm their middle-class identity which includes a focus on the West and access to Western culture. Although this can also be said of *pop Indonesia's* audience, the underground scene strongly wants to differentiate itself from this genre. They want to show that they do not blindly follow the masses, but make their own choices about musical preferences. The desire to stand out and be different can be ascribed, as Luvaas (2013) has suggested, to their position 'in the middle' (*di tengah-tengah*). They are positioned in between the truly rich and the poor and their status is still uncertain. Because of the expansion of the middle class, one can feel like being just one among many, so underground serves as a way of distinction. As Martin-Iverson puts it: "Underground music provides young Indonesians with a set of alternative identities and lifestyles, providing a route to escape from, challenge, or at least negotiate the dominant frameworks of nationality, ethnicity and class" (2012: 382). He also discusses an expectation many young middle-class Indonesians struggle with, which is the kind of idealistic image of an affluent lifestyle so many people long for but which is out of reach to them. Young urban Indonesians wish for this affluence, which is often influenced and embellished by the media and images from the West, but turn out to be disappointed realizing the actual possibilities of upward mobility are limited. Luvaas also recognizes this issue, saying that "Middle-class young people can see well beyond Indonesia's borders and yet still have difficulty accessing what lies beyond" (2013: 105). It is interesting how the youth uses specifically the underground style to overcome or help alleviate such contemporary, post-modern struggles.

Of *pop Indonesia* we know that it has been "Indonesianized" to some extent, which replaces the earlier strong connection to the Western counterparts. It is a nationalized global form of music intended for middle to upper classes. The mostly urban images on *pop Indonesia* VCDs underline this, portraying images of street life, cars and big houses (Barendregt and Van Zanten 2002: 91). Since the fall of Suharto, there has been a striking rise in the production and consumption of *pop Indonesia*, which has also become more available than ever before to the masses, and since this time, sales of *pop Indonesia* have well overtaken those of Euro-American pop (Barendregt ed. 2014: 206). This is due to changes in media regulations and an increasing use of media technologies such as mobile phones and television. Private television stations blossomed, featuring live performances by *pop Indonesia* bands, or featuring *pop Indonesia* performers in advertisements. Besides, since the end of the New Order it became easier to obtain a permit for concerts so that *pop Indonesia* could be promoted easier through such performances.

The *pop Indonesia* genre is characterized by a mellow and soothing sound; it must be simple and easy listening in order to attract a middle-class audience in search of relaxing

music (Wallach and Clinton 2013: 13). It is the music of malls, of consumerism and cosmopolitanism. The soothing sounds of *pop Indonesia* in malls for example are meant to close off the noises from the busy streets, enabling people to live the idealistic modern, consumerist lifestyle. But this embellished ideal does not always apply. As I already mentioned above, young middle-class people discover that upward mobility and gaining wealth is not as easy as it seems. But this particular group struggles with another issue as well: that of loneliness. Especially through Indonesian pop and underground music, feelings of loneliness are expressed, which can be ascribed to the social change which has been taking place in the past 15 to 20 years. The Indonesian culture is essentially a collectivistic one, and making and listening to music is a communal activity. But since media technologies have become more accessible, enabling the new growing middle class to have a look into what lies beyond their country, this group aims to have a Western lifestyle which is, however, individualistic. This seemingly perfect lifestyle does not take into consideration the negative aspects of a post-modern condition, which for example take the form of an experience of isolation and lack of community (Reuter 2009: 860). This includes the fact that middle-class youth have more and more access to isolating technologies such as mobile phones, video games, mp3 players/iPods, which makes listening to music and life in general more individualistic and less sociable. Young Indonesians, raised in a collectivistic environment, are not used to this 'privatization', which may result in a feeling of loneliness. Through popular music, this tension can be found and expressed between the longing for a solidary, egalitarian community on the one hand and for modernity, affluence, identity and consumerist lifestyle on the other (Wallach 2002: 74). The following lyrics are from a rap song entitled "*Bosan*" (Bored) by Indonesian rapper Blake and reflect the theme of loneliness well.

Bosan

Bosan dirumah lagi sendirian Papa sibuk, Mama arisan.
Ngga ada lagi yang bisa jadi perhatian.
Semua jadi bikin gue belingsatan.
Nonton TV acaranya ngga karuan cuma iklan yang ngisi tiap saluran mau keluar rumah tapi ngga ada teman mau makan tapi ngga ada yang bisa dimakan.
Akhirnya kuberjalan sendirian, mataku menatap lurus kedepan dadakupun terasa penuh dengan beban, kepalaku dipenuhi dengan pertanyaan
masih ada di pinggir jalan ini ku sendiri memandang lalu lalang mobil yang tak pernah terhenti,
lima menit berlalu tanpa ku sadari, ternyata aku masih terdiam disini.
Refrain: *Tersisa hari ini didalam sepi (masih didalam sepi)*
Mencoba untuk tak peduli, yang kualami (yang kualami hari ini).

Bored at home, I'm all alone, Father's busy, Mom's at an *arisan* [meeting of a rotating credit association].
There's nothing anymore that can become something to care about.
Everything makes me feel uneasy.

Watching TV the programs make no sense, only advertisements filling up each channel, I want to go out but there isn't a friend, I want to eat but there's nothing to eat.
Finally I walk out alone, my eyes gaze straight ahead, my chest feels filled with burdens, my head is filled with questions,
still at the side of the road here I'm alone peering at the cars that never halt,
five minutes pass without my being aware of it, turns out I'm still here being quiet.
Refrain: Left behind today in loneliness (still in loneliness)
I try not to care, about what I'm going through (what I'm experiencing today).

Dangdut is a particularly interesting but also complex genre when it comes to class divisions and expressions of identity. The genre has always had a symbolic association as the music of the lower class and its position in contemporary Indonesian society remains largely contested. This is exemplified by the television station Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI, Indonesian Educational Television), which is known for its focus on *dangdut* programs and has mockingly been called "Televisi Pembantu Indonesia" (Indonesian Domestic Workers' Television) by middle and upper-class commentators (Weintraub 2010: 3). *Dangdut* music addresses themes about social issues that *pop Indonesia* would not dare to bring up or would find inappropriate, and the rhythmic sound of *dangdut* "invites" people to dance, to *goyang* ("shake it"), often in an erotic way. Through *dangdut*, people can do all sorts of things that would be considered unacceptable according to middle-class and elite standards of behaviour. *Dangdut*'s popularity among the working class majority can be ascribed to both its up-beat, danceable tempo and its lyrical themes that describe the everyday struggles of this class. Performers like to sing, and fans like to listen to these songs because the lyrics address the circumstances of their lives. It can be a way of protesting injustice and class oppression, or of commenting on one's fate (Wallach 2002: 252). Dancing to *dangdut* can also be a way of relieving stress. After all, the working and lower classes are the most disadvantaged and have had little voice in national public discourse. That's why the most prominent expression of their identity, aspirations and suffering has been popular music, especially in the form of *dangdut*.

Dangdut has experienced some changes in the past decades which make its status and prestige a bit complicated to define. In the 1990s *dangdut*'s popularity increased and it was advertised in popular print media and on TV as the music of all Indonesians. It was also used by politicians as a tool to reach the masses. However, this nationalized *dangdut* was different: it was made respectable and subdued according to middle-class and upper-class standards and it was regulated through government censorship and official cultural organizations (Weintraub 2010: 150). For the original *dangdut* fans, however, the genre had actually not changed; they wanted little to do with this nationalized type. The renewed *dangdut* was 'purified' and made glamorous, meant to appeal to the middle class and above, but only with the result that the majority of Indonesian society distanced itself further from

this form of music. Yet it stayed close to the excessive, controversial *dangdut*, that of "scandalous" and extravagant outfits worn by female singers, of lyrics addressing infidelity, social injustice and economic hardship.

Nevertheless, the extensive promotion of *dangdut* music through media and politics had led to a growing popularity of this genre among middle and upper classes. Although there were still many people who looked down upon it, *dangdut* started to get rid of its image as *kampungan*. Towards the end of the 1990s it had even become a popular middle-class entertainment, being performed at cafes, pubs and star-rated hotels ("*Dangdut*' music beats', 2000). The people enjoying *dangdut* music in these places include business people, politicians, intellectuals and foreign tourists. For them, listening to *dangdut* is of course not so much a way of protesting class oppression or complaining about economic hardship, but *dangdut*'s dynamic beat and danceability can serve as a way of relieving stress or easing other burdens. It is possibly exactly this feature of *dangdut* which helped the genre reach people of all social positions: *dangdut* makes people dance collectively, which fits into Indonesia's communal culture. Another explanation for its popularity could be that the overwhelming presence of global musical styles and outside influences made people long for something indigenous: the in Indonesia originated *dangdut*. *Dangdut* can be used by Indonesians to maintain patriotism, as Wallach has suggested (2002: 345). Finally, there is a political explanation. Towards the end of Suharto's regime, the New Order ideologies lost strength and gave way to more democratic principles in the Reformasi era. The idea that social inequality is necessary in a developing nation-state, which was prominent during the New Order, was now being contested and more and more people did not see *dangdut* as an exclusively lower class genre anymore. Besides, after the fall of Suharto in 1998, commercial television flourished which had a particularly important role in increasing *dangdut*'s national popularity. This was strengthened by the emergence of "ethnic" or "regional *dangdut*", which uses dialects and traditional local rhythms, and emerged as a result of decentralisation and the reevaluation of local cultures, languages and identities which were suppressed during the New Order. Times are changing and so are attitudes towards music genres existing within class boundaries. The boundaries between prestigious/superior and backward/inferior pop music forms are blurring, as I described here for *dangdut*. But for other music forms we can see this as well, since it becomes more and more accessible to everyone. Although economic inequality may have increased, the musical preferences of the rich and poor actually lie closely together.

I do not want to argue, however, that *dangdut* today has completely lost its backward association and controversy. In the 2000s the most prominent example of this is

female singer Inul Daratista, whose performing style has caused a lot of commotion nationally. I will elaborate on this issue in the other chapters. I have already mentioned the criticism on Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia. Another example is that of a regional legislator of Yogyakarta who anonymously told the Jakarta Post he is a *dangdut* fan but doesn't feel comfortable openly admitting this or going to *dangdut* performances ("*Dangdut*' music beats', 2000). During a more recent incident in Malang, East Java, members of the public were in uproar after a *dangdut* music performance was staged in the plenary hall of the city's legislative council, as part of events to commemorate the country's 64th Independence Day anniversary. They deemed it "unethical and hurting the feelings of the people", and a "misuse of the state facility". One of the protesters argued the *dangdut* performance featured "scantily-clad singers" and continued: "It is inappropriate and should never have been allowed. Despite no rules being breached, it is a moral issue which has a far higher value" (Boediwardhana 2009). It is clear that *dangdut* remains a contested genre, problematizing all sorts of social and moral issues.

3 – Islamic identities through popular music

3.1 Islamic revivalism and Muslim pop culture

The relationship between Islam and music is an ambiguous one. Often, Islam and music are perceived to be antagonistic, while for many Muslims music is an integral part of their religion. This relationship becomes even more difficult to define in Indonesia where many different forms of Islam exist, from fundamentalist to liberalist. There is not a common stance among Indonesian Muslims towards the role of music; some find it to be *haram* (forbidden by Islam) and regard music as a potential medium to distract the listener from worshipping God, while others find it *halal* (permitted by Islam) and feel that music can help bring a listener closer to God. Therefore, "Islamic music" is a contested term. However, radical Muslims form a minority of the Indonesian Muslim population and Indonesian Islam in general can be characterized as "moderate", which allows Muslims to play and listen to most forms of music. This moderate Islam is characterized by flexible interpretations of major religious and legal sources regarding scripture, law, gender and democracy that respond to the contemporary needs of Muslims (Weintraub 2011: 3).

In the past decades Islam has experienced a remarkable growth in Indonesia, with a stronger emphasis on religious piety, more and more women wearing the *jilbab* (Islamic headscarf) and an enormous growth in the establishment of mosques and *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in villages and cities. This Islamization was already afoot during Suharto's regime, but has certainly increased after his resignation. Suharto was strongly against political Islam and wanted to keep Indonesia a secular nation-state, so Islamic organizations and political parties were being suppressed. Suharto's stance towards Islam changed, however, in the late 1980s and 1990s, presumably as a strategy to consolidate his power, as he released political Muslim prisoners, allowed the creation of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), made the pilgrimage to Mecca and fostered a relationship with more conservative Muslim groups. But it was only after the end of the New Order that Indonesians Muslims were truly free to express themselves, and took this opportunity by forming new political parties, calling for an Islamic state and creating more radical Islamic groups. New Islamic periodicals were established, representing a range of opinions and orientations such as Islamic fundamentalism. The period of Reformasi was also characterized by the emergence of new forms of Muslim popular music and the fame of Islamic music performers. But at the same time, the more conservative Muslims expressed their discontent with some of these musical styles and performers, sometimes even attempting to ban them.

Muslim popular music should be viewed against the background of a transforming Indonesia on the political level, but also in the context of a striking rise of Muslim popular culture in general in 21st century Indonesia. This is characterized by a growing Muslim youth culture which combines global pop culture trends with Islamic faith (Naafs 2010: 345). Muslim ringtones for cell phones are heard everywhere, some Muslim preachers have reached the status of celebrities, and the first Islamic fashion show took place in Jakarta in 2006 (Honorine 2010). This mass-mediated, cosmopolitan, popular Islam is influenced by Western consumer culture, but at the same time also by forms of Islamic orthodoxy and resurgence. At first this might seem contradictory, as everything Western is often interpreted as non-Islamic. But this growing Muslim pop culture, although in accordance with features of Western culture, takes a modern form of its own, not simply imitating the pop culture originated in the West. Rather, it invests forms of pop culture, including music, with new cultural meanings (Weintraub 2011: 2). This is often referred to as an "alternative modernity" (Knauth 2010); an Islamic alternative to Western modernity. In this chapter I will discuss the interaction between popular music and Islam, and what role the recent revival of Islam, including the rise of both radical Islam and popular Islam, plays in this. I will examine how popular music genres are being used, debated and criticized by Indonesian Muslims who often have different interpretations of what it means to be Muslim.

3.2 The development of Islamic pop music

The surge of Muslim pop culture shows that religious obedience and modernity are certainly not contradictory in present day Indonesia. It also allows a wide range of Islamic popular music to emerge. These are popular music genres which contain Islamic themes. They can be sung in Arabic, Indonesian or a regional language such as Javanese, and can have an Arabic, (regional) Indonesian or Western musical style, but always contain an Islamic message. Sometimes, however, there exists dissidence about if a genre is Islamic or not, as exemplified by *orkes gambus*. *Orkes gambus* uses Arab musical structures and the Arabic language, making many Indonesians deem it 'Islamic', but its texts are mostly secular love poems without religious messages (Harnish and Rasmussen eds. 2011: 208). Also, recently there have been many secular pop groups who started creating special albums for the Ramadan market, with songs whose lyrics are explicitly about Muslim faith (Sutton 2011: 87). So instead of trying to draw a line between 'Islamic' and 'secular' popular musics, I think it is more useful to analyse different types of music in a broader temporal context, keeping in mind that their meanings can change over time and according to socio-cultural circumstances. Besides, secular pop music can tell us just as many, if not more, interesting

things as religious pop music about how young Muslims conceive of their religious identity in today's Indonesia.

The 21st century has experienced a notable increase in the popularity of Islam-inspired forms of popular music. These have taken many forms, for example through the existing regional pop and *pop Indonesia*, but newly composed music and popular music hybrids with Islamic characteristics have been created as well. Popular music has been combined in many regions with the traditional Islamic music of that specific region, advancing the popularity of regional pop even further, using local traditional instruments and the local language. Regional pop (*pop daerah*), both religious and secular types, has undergone notable advancements in recent years. After decades of standardisation of the arts, regional music has received new interest from pop musicians, who combine traditional and modern sounds to 'popularize' it (Barendregt and Van Zanten 2002: 73). Suryadi (2014), writing about the regional music of the Minangkabau people of West Sumatra, notes that *pop Minang* is not a construct of recent years but has existed since the gramophone was introduced. However, he distinguishes between *pop Minang standar* ('standard *pop Minang*') and *pop Minang baru* ('new *pop Minang*'), the latter appearing since the mid-1990s. This is the popularized type, which incorporates various aspects of foreign pop music, uses predominantly guitar and drums and is favoured by the Minangkabau youth, while standard *pop Minang* uses traditional Minangkabau musical instruments, deals with traditional values and is generally favoured by the older generation (Suryadi 2014: 138-141). Similarly, traditional local Islamic music of various regions has developed into a renewed, modernized form consisting of pop music elements, which can help strengthen someone's regional and Islamic identity.

As popular music is characterized by a celebrity culture and attracts the masses, it has the potential to move the masses in a certain way, to encourage them or discourage them to do or think certain things. Similarly, Islamic pop music can encourage the religious masses to be good Muslims and fulfil their religious duties. Popular music is an effective vehicle for religious messages and has the potential to unite large mass audiences into an "imagined community" which is both religious and modern (Harnish and Rasmussen eds. 2011: 26). In this case, the production and consumption of these musics is most often considered to be *halal*. But popular music's potential to move large audiences can also lead them to do immoral things and other things that are *haram*. Westernization has stimulated the discussion about what is good to incorporate into the Indonesian (popular) culture and what should be avoided. As we have seen in the previous chapter, everything Western is generally regarded as prestigious, but since the fall of Suharto different reformist institutions

and other Islamic organizations have increasingly expressed their discontent about the West. They focused their attention on 'moral' problems such as gambling, pornography and narcotics, and on other moral challenges which in their eyes are posed by Westernization (Daniels 2013: 168). Although the masses of the Indonesian youth still relish Western-influenced music and pop culture, these institutions as well as the broader process of Islamization may have caused some of them to reconsider their lifestyle and Muslim identity. A post from a fan of Debu, an Indonesian Islamic pop group, placed on Debu's website reads as follows:

> Before I used to like western music like Elton John, George Michael, Michael Jackson, Westlife, Mariah Carey, Whitney Houston and such because I wanted to be thought modern, not old-fashioned, and knowing such songs by heart increased one's prestige. But slowly I thought songs like that weren't much use, they only distanced us from Islam—just look at the lifestyles of the singers!! (Harnish and Rasmussen eds. 2011: 202).

As a result of all these recent developments, Indonesians desired an "alternative modernity", so that they can still be part of the modern world but without the need to adopt a Westernized way of life, which is often considered to be materialistic, self-indulgent and lacking morality, as illustrated by the quote above. One important way through which this alternative modernity has been enacted is by creating new Islamic pop music styles or adding Islamic themes to existing musical styles. It was from the 1990s onwards that Islamic popular music started developing in Indonesia, and its musical and performance styles primarily derivate from Western popular music styles (Knauth 2010: 20-21). The Indonesian music industry has adapted to this development by creating new departments within recording companies which focus on a clientele of Islamic music artists. The growing trend is also illustrated by the creation of musicians' unions in Jakarta and Bandung for the advancement of religious music in the secular music industry (Knauth 2010: 24).

One of the new Islamic pop styles is *nasyid*, which first occurred in the early 1990s but later flourished to become one of the most popular Islamic musical arts in Indonesia. I will go into the phenomenon of *nasyid* to see if or how this helped to create an alternative modernity for the Muslim youth.

3.3 Nasyid*'s popularity in Indonesia*

Nasyid is an a cappella or lightly accompanied singing ensemble, consisting generally of a small group of men, that combines Islamic-themed lyrics with mainstream popular music styles such as rock, hip-hop, pop or jazz. *Nasyid* was originally only performed in the a cappella style, and the term is thought to be derived from the Arabic *nasyd*, which means humming. Lately more and more groups have emerged which use music instruments to

accompany the voices, but the vocals are still emphasized and the lyrics are often regarded as the most important aspect of *nasyid* music (Knauth 2010: 46). It was towards the end of the 1990s that *nasyid* music and the number of *nasyid* groups started to grow considerably. In 1998, still in the early phase of *nasyid*'s development, there were reportedly already over 100 *nasyid* groups in Bandung, also known as "*Ibu Kota Nasyid*" (the capital of *nasyid*) (Poetra 2004: 65). Student activists of campus mosques throughout the country played a big role in developing *nasyid* , as it was through their circles that *nasyid* was made popular in Indonesia. The growth of this music genre can be seen in relation to the political circumstances of that time. At the time of Suharto's fall and during the subsequent period of Reformasi, there was a lot of turbulence in the country, many Indonesians were protesting on the streets and there were outbreaks of violence in parts of the country. *Nasyid* offered an alternative to this chaos, because of its modest and peaceful character. The aforementioned student activists did not fall into euphoria or excessive behaviour during Reformasi, and although they did demonstrate, they were always disciplined and polite (Poetra 2004: 63). So at this time, many young *nasyid* singers ("*munsyid*") emerged who tried to spread refinement and humility as a counteraction against the excessive behaviour of political activists. *Nasyid*, as an alternative form of musical art, served as a shelter for those longing for a peaceful atmosphere.

But *nasyid* did not vanish after the turbulent Reformasi period ended. On the contrary, it has evolved in the 2000s into a very popular music form, favourite among many young Indonesian Muslims. The genre has kept its peaceful and polite character, but its main role is now as a medium for *dakwah* (bringing people to Islam/teaching about Islam). *Dakwah* plays a fundamental role in *nasyid* culture through lyrics that promote proper behaviour and religious duties: the music serves to inculcate good values, morals and habits, and stresses the importance of religion (Harnish and Rasmussen 2011: 223). Moreover, many *nasyid* songs touch on social issues using the Indonesian national language, speaking to young Muslims familiar with similar issues. In this respect, *nasyid* can be viewed as similar to *dangdut*. Barendregt (2006) gives an example of a *nasyid* cassette from 2003 which reflects the social issues of teenagers. *Hidup ini Indah* is a cassette by the group Salika which depicts the life of Azalia, an ordinary Muslim school girl who wears a veil, and, like other teenagers, is said to be "funky, dynamic, cheerful, sometimes complaining and of course likes to talk a lot" (Barendregt 2006: 176). The cassette follows Azalia through her teenage life, showing the problems teenagers usually face.

Because of the focus on *dakwah* through its lyrics, *nasyid* music is a very powerful medium for bringing Muslims together and strengthening religious piety. It is probably

because of this that there have been few to none objections to performing this Islamic pop music style. It has even been acknowledged that music with Islamic messages turn out to be big commercial business, of which the zenith is reached yearly during Ramadan. The number of *nasyid* and other Islamic music performances live and televised are exceptionally high at this time of the year. Besides, Islamic music cassettes or VCDs reach sales figures that are much higher than in any other month of the year. Although it seems contradictory because Islam is often held in opposition to Western capitalism, during Ramadan there is a striking combination of religion, pop culture and capitalism which is acceptable. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the whole phenomenon of "Islamic pop culture" seems paradoxical, as pop culture is inextricably linked to capitalist marketing activities and consumerism. But this doesn't seem to be a problem in contemporary Indonesia. *Nasyid*, packaged, presented and consumed as pop culture, is conceived of as typically Indonesian and Muslim rather than Western. Although the musical style is strongly influenced by Western popular music styles, *nasyid* is imbued with cultural meanings that appeal to the Indonesian Muslim population. Its emphasis on *dakwah*, religious obedience, religious values and morality make the genre indigenous yet still modern because of its Western tint in music and accompanying pop culture, including large-scale *nasyid* competitions and festivals. This is one important way of generating an alternative modernity. *Nasyid* is a perfect and successful example of an Islamic alternative to Western modernity. It makes young Muslims familiar with popular culture and the lifestyle that is connected to it, while at the same time bringing them and others closer to Islam and discouraging them to do immoral things. All lyrics of *nasyid* songs contain such an Islamic message, including those of the song *Jagalah Hati* by the famous Indonesian Islamic preacher Aa Gym. The song is arguably the most popular *nasyid* song in Indonesia and has even attained the status of national folk song. Part of the lyrics are as follows:

Jagalah hati jangan kau kotori	Protect your heart, don't contaminate it
Jagalah hati lentera hidup ini	Protect your heart, lighthouse of this life
Jagalah hati jangan kau nodai	Protect your heart, don't defile it
Jagalah hati cahaya illahi	Protect your heart, light of God

The song has been described as "an effective force that is able to challenge the conscience of millions", and "which shows that modesty should not be underestimated" (Poetra 2004: 80-81). It is not only through lyrics that *nasyid* songs promote modesty, politeness and religious devotion; the way *munsyid* perform, often wearing traditional Islamic clothing, is also according to these values. While Islamic pop music may have similarities with for example *dangdut* and secular rock music, it will never be as excessive as those genres. So *nasyid* can be distinguished from Western/secular music both by its objectives (e.g. *dakwah*)

and how it is presented. That way, the audience can identify themselves as modern, pious Muslims, following an ethical lifestyle that is promoted by the *munsyid*.

3.4 Secular dangdut *music and Islam*

In the previous chapter we have seen that *dangdut* is extremely popular among the *rakyat* ("the people") and since recently attained popularity among all social classes of Indonesian society. In contrast to *nasyid*, *dangdut* is a secular genre: it generally does not contain religious messages. *Dangdut* is enjoyed by Indonesians of all religions. *Dangdut* can nevertheless contain Islamic themes, most clearly illustrated by the so called Raja Dangdut (King of Dangdut): Rhoma Irama. He played a significant role in popularizing *dangdut* in the 1970s as a musician and film star, and besides that has also taken on a role as Islamic proselytizer. He was and is actively involved in politics, aligning himself with the Islamist PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, United Development Party) in the 1980s, which evolved as the opposition party at that time. Because of his involvement with the PPP, Rhoma Irama was temporarily banned from state television by the Suharto regime and some of his songs were banned from sale. He still continued to be the most famous *dangdut* performer and used the music as a vehicle to shape people's political and moral ideas, as well as turning *dangdut* into a form of popular Islam (Weintraub 2010: 88). Rhoma Irama has also been a member of the PKS which follows conservative Islamic teachings, and the PKB, a moderate Islamic and conservative party. His devotion to Islam is also expressed in many of his *dangdut* songs, and the sermons he delivered as a religious preacher were rather analogous to his lyrics, which underlined moral behaviour with a strong religious emphasis.

This is one side of *dangdut*, and although the King is widely admired and has been symbolic for the development of *dangdut*, generally *dangdut* is not about spreading religious messages. The well-known other side of *dangdut* has an extravagant character, controversial dance moves and costumes, and because of this remains a contested genre which is not accepted by everyone. After the fall of Suharto, democratization gave hard-line Muslim groups an opportunity to speak out and express their dissatisfaction about what they deemed immoral and *haram*, but at the same time democratization gave performers the freedom of expression and the possibility to perform on national television without many restrictions. The combination of these two factors caused commotion throughout Indonesia in 2003 when a female *dangdut* singer, Inul Daratista, gained national popularity through television. Inul (herself Muslim) had developed a dancing style with dynamic and sensual movements of her hips, called *ngebor* ("drilling"). As a result, some Muslim groups condemned this performance style as being "pornographic" and their disapproval of Inul

soon turned into a disapproval of *dangdut* music in general. Noteworthy is that Rhoma Irama was one of the opponents of Inul who called for a ban on her performances. As mentioned before, popular music is a strong force to move an audience, and it was believed by many conservative Muslims and *ulama* (religious leaders) that Inul moved her audience into the wrong direction, encouraging them to commit supposedly immoral acts. They were of the opinion that her sexually provocative movements would arouse the *hawa nafsu*, lustful desires, of men leading to low morality and even an increase in cases of rape (Daniels 2013: 169). Inul's sudden fame and success worried the *ulama*, and because Islam had gained new authority after Suharto's fall, the call for a ban on Inul's shows was executed by several local governments. The Council of Ulamas enjoyed the strongest power and authority in an increasingly Islamized Indonesia and issued religious edicts (*fatwa*) against Inul (Heryanto ed. 2008: 18). The Inul controversy even spilled over into attacks against participants at *dangdut* concerts by Muslim extremist groups like Laskar Jihad (Troops of the Holy War) and Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front).

However, it is important to remember that a large part of the Indonesian population actually supported Inul, illustrated by her large (mostly female) fan-base which included many Muslims. Moderate and liberal Islamic groups as well as women's movements also supported Inul. The *fatwa* against her did not gain much support outside the fundamentalist Islamic community, and a poll in the news magazine Tempo reported that 78% of its readers (mostly middle-class) were against banning Inul's performances (Weintraub 2008: 381). The actions against Inul and *dangdut* were not very successful; the commotion actually had a reversed effect, because Inul only became more and more well-known and TV stations started to broadcast numerous new *dangdut* programs and 'gossip' shows about *dangdut* artists.

So where did the views differ between Inul's opponents and supporters? What exactly attracted so many fans, including Muslims? First, I think it is important to remember that Inul as a *dangdut* singer performed songs with a dynamic beat and high danceability. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this is partly what contributed to *dangdut*'s nationwide popularity and which can help people relieve stress. A 21-year-old fan has for example stated that "… she [Inul] can lift our spirits with her energetic and dynamic movements. Watching her perform, the stress of a full workday disappears" (Weintraub 2008: 385). *Dangdut* also has the status of *budaya rakyat*, "people's culture" which should be left untouched instead of being subverted. Another important thing is that her supporters view art/entertainment and religion separately. They consider *dangdut* to be art (*seni*) and/or entertainment (*hiburan*) and feel that religious principles should not interfere with these

domains (Daniels 2013: 170). A 27-year-old man expressed his admiration for Inul as follows: "Inul is entertainment. Her voice … the way she dances … I think she is really talented. Even my mother, who is a strict Muslim, says, "It is a gift when someone can dance like that." I have been a fan from the start" (Naafs 2010: 149). The masses of Inul's proponents supported the ideology of freedom of expression in art and entertainment and wanted to enjoy music without being hindered by religious enforcers. So Inul actually became a "medium" through which conflicting ideologies, both political and religious ones, were being debated.

Although both popular music genres, it is clear that reactions to *nasyid* and *dangdut* differ greatly. Even views within one genre among people of the same religion can differ, as is the case with *dangdut*. The fact that Islam in Indonesia is far from monolithic is reflected in how people deal with music. *Nasyid* and *dangdut* also developed in different ways towards different purposes. *Dangdut* emerged creatively on its own, and though some artists, such as Rhoma Irama, added Islamic themes to their songs, it developed apart from Islam and according to the tastes of the Indonesian population looking for relaxation and entertainment. *Nasyid*, on the other hand, developed as a symbol of Islam, of a Muslim lifestyle, and serves as a badge of Islamic identity for the Indonesian Muslim population. It is one of the many "badges" to display one's Islamic identity that have emerged in the years of Islamization, with popular culture as a considerable tool.

4 – Gender representations through popular music

4.1 Gender ideologies

The third and final social division which is relevant in popular music and identity formation is gender. Gender and morality issues have been topics of debates in Indonesia at least since the 1980s when the first NGOs dedicated to gender equality and women's rights emerged. As with notions about (the practice of) Islam, notions about gender and sexuality vary greatly among Indonesians. Opinions vary for example about if polygamy is acceptable or if domestic violence should be officially criminalized. In the case of popular music, the focal point of controversy and heated debates is frequently the female body of performers, as we have seen with the case of Inul Daratista. The female body then becomes a domain through which conflicting ideas about feminism, democracy and Islam are expressed. Easier access to Western popular culture has also influenced Indonesian artists to take over some of the moves and costumes of Western artists which can be quite risqué by Indonesian standards. Sexual images, and with it, identities of females have been made more and more available through the media and advertising. So it is important to realize that images of young women in popular music and the media are closely linked to broader developments, such as political and economic change, the reduction of censorship by the government, new technologies that give access to world culture, and Islamic revivalism (Naafs 2010: 344). In relation to Islamic music, it is noteworthy that women are not excluded from singing and performing. *Qasidah moderen* for example, a Middle Eastern-influenced genre targeted at Muslim youth using the Indonesian language and blending Arabic poetry and prayer with contemporary music, is often performed by groups of women or girls. Learning to sing *sholawat* (religious songs often in Arabic) and *qasidah* is a common activity especially for women, teenagers and children. *Gambus* is another Islamic music genre where women can perform as vocalists, sometimes together with men.

While contemporary Indonesia is characterized by diverse and often contradictory gender ideologies, during Suharto's regime one ideology concerning the role of women in society was strongly upheld by the national government. This was a model image of the good and devoted wife who supports her husband, raises children and who is dependent and obedient. This was in line with the broader characteristics of the New Order which promoted paternalism and social hierarchy, including male over female. The media underlined this image of Indonesian women as well: alternative representations of women as anything

besides dependent, irrational, emotional, passive and obedient were rarely portrayed on television in the 1980s and into the 1990s (Weintraub 2010: 170). The Suharto regime relied heavily on these ideologies of gender and family in order to promote particular views of development and model citizens of the nation-state, and to encourage social order and stability. Although I will refer to it here as 'traditional', this ideology imposed by Suharto is not exactly traditional in the sense of original, pre-independence traditions of family and women's roles in the archipelago, but is quite heavily influenced by Victorian family ideals from abroad. While Suharto promoted a domestic-centred ideal of women as self-sacrificing wives who are expected to be calm generally, the original role of women in the Malay archipelago was rather different. Women enjoyed relatively high autonomy and economic importance, and played a strong, rather than passive, role in sexual relations (Jones 1994: 9-10). Women in the Javanese tradition are for example able to own and administer property, have control of the finances in the household, make day to day decisions, participate in agriculture and predominate in petty market trade (Browne 2000: 15). Although Suharto's family ideal gained ground in the years of his rule, after his resignation more and more representations of women that differed from his ideology were available through media. During the New Order, NGOs and women's activists played a substantial role in building civil society and in some places were able to raise awareness about gender inequality, but they did not succeed to get political support. Since the fall of Suharto, gender activists have been more straightforward in demanding improvements in women's and other forms of human rights (Brenner 2011: 479). The democratized political climate seems like a good climate for feminist activist groups to flourish, but we should not forget the political power of conservative Islam which has increased in the same climate and is generally opposed to the progressive, often Western-influenced gender ideologies promoted by these groups. So we see a dichotomy of one the one hand Indonesians with liberal attitudes towards gender equality, and on the other Indonesians with conservative attitudes supporting traditional notions of women and the family as promoted by Islam and by Suharto, where women are strongly connected to the domestic sphere. The current young generation may find itself in between these conflicting ideologies, as they may be raised by their parents who adhere to the traditional lifestyle, but see images of young modern and free men and women all around them in the media. Many of the Indonesian female pop artists of today challenge the traditional notion by presenting themselves, and being presented by the media, as independent, active women who spend more time on stage or in the recording studio than in the household. How does this come across to the audience? Do they identify with the artist and wish to take over her lifestyle? And how does the male audience react to these changing

gender representations? In this chapter I will try to answer such questions in the broader context of how popular music has helped young Indonesians define their feminine or masculine identity.

4.2 Images of femininity through music videos

An important way how representations of female singers are diffused, besides by live performances, is through VCDs (Video Compact Discs). VCDs are a cheaper alternative to CDs and contain music videos in karaoke-style so that people can see the lyrics and sing along. Popular genres for music VCDs are Western pop and rock, as well as *pop Indonesia, dangdut* and regional pop forms, such as *pop Sunda* or *pop Minang*. They mostly target teenagers and young adults. Images from VCD clips, and of course also from YouTube clips, to which more and more Indonesians of all social classes have access, can reveal much about representations of gender ideologies and can promote a certain lifestyle which may or may not be taken over by the targeted audience. Moreover, the Indonesian performers themselves are often influenced by Western music videos and thus perform in a way according to Western popular culture, including suggestive moves and costumes. VCDs are big business in Indonesia and try to reach as big an audience as possible, using lyrics about love and also erotic images. In VCDs women are often filmed in close-up, women and men touch each other and kissing is sometimes implied, although rarely explicitly shown (Barendregt and Van Zanten 2002: 91).

Agnes Monica is a *pop Indonesia* singer who gained fame in 2003 at the age of 17 and is still active as singer and actress today. Many of her songs contain themes as falling in love, having a boyfriend and suffering from a broken heart. Her music videos take place in urban settings with a trendy clothed Agnes, flirting and dancing, sometimes surrounded by male dancers, and portray images of people drinking in bars or boys and girls walking hand in hand. Naafs (2010) tells us that fans of Agnes who like her style would, however, not take over her clothing or lifestyle themselves. These decisions can depend on the fans' surroundings and local norms that are upheld; Naafs' respondents came from Padang (West Sumatra) which is a city in a predominantly Muslim area and considered less advanced than for example Jakarta. This also becomes clear from the comment by a 22-year-old female fan of Agnes: "Agnes Monica is from Jakarta, where there is more freedom compared to Padang. I don't expect her clothing style to become a trend here. People would find it strange and I wouldn't dare to go out dressed like that" (Naafs 2010: 347). Not entirely surprisingly, the young audience of pop music keeps the mediated sphere of VCDs and YouTube clips separated from their everyday lives, taking local values into consideration. It is true,

however, that in a cosmopolitan city like Jakarta one would encounter women dressed like superstars with crop tops, miniskirts and high heels more easily, especially in places like malls and nightclubs. To videos where Agnes was dancing with male dancers, some young men from Padang reacted disapprovingly, one explaining that he sees her as a woman whose clothes are too vulgar and clash with local culture, and who exploits her body (Naafs 2010: 347).

This is not to say, however, that traditional values and traditional gender representations remain unchanged in most parts of Indonesia. On the contrary, there have been significant changes in the roles of women in society and in the family. Notions of women as weak, helpless and passive are losing strength as women have more and more agency, develop their own careers and have a bigger share in decision-making. Especially in big cities, women's lifestyles are changing as they delay the age of marriage (because of a successful career e.g.) and choose to live in a single person household. This is a drastic transition from the originally valued pattern of marriage and family life. Female pop star fans including those from Padang admit to liking Agnes because of her independent and trendy image. This image, which would be unfamiliar or unacceptable to the generation before them, appeals to this generation, which is a sign of changing gender ideologies (although views among men and women still seem to differ). Images of independent and trendy women go together with progressiveness, cosmopolitanism and consumerism which are most represented in Jakarta but can also be found back in many video clips. Wallach (2002) explains how Indonesian performers are inspired by the dancing in Western hip hop and R&B videos, which portray a cosmopolitan style that appeals to them. They imitate this style in their performances because they want to be thought of as "global divas" as well (Wallach 2002: 333). The influence of global pop culture, including images of rebellious and independent young women, can strongly be felt in Indonesian pop music performances and music videos.

4.3 Modern gender ideologies through song texts

The song texts of popular singers can also give insights into (re)presentations of contemporary lifestyles and identities that are available to Indonesian girls and women. Some of them reflect very well the transformations of the roles of women as described above. This includes a song by Agnes Monica from 2010, called *Karena Ku Sanggup* ("Because I can"). The title of the song already implies a certain agency and decisiveness which also becomes clear in the lyrics. The song is a sentimental ballad about a wrecked woman, portrayed by Agnes, after a failed romance.

Karena ku sanggup walau ku tak mau	Because I can even though I do not want
Berdiri sendiri tanpamu	Stand alone without you
Ku mau kau tak usah ragu	I don't want you to hesitate
Tinggalkan aku	Leave me

The lyrics show the singer's ability to stand on her own and she even tells her ex-lover imperatively to leave her. Although divorce rates have always been relatively high in Java (Islamic law has been appropriated to support the prevailing easy-divorce system (Jones 1994: 11)) and it is not uncommon for Muslim women to initiate a divorce, I want to point out that the feminine image and identity that is portrayed here through song texts and videos is a new, modern one, different from both that of the New Order and of earlier times. It is a lifestyle identity that accords with a global popular culture trend which includes a sense of cosmopolitanism, being fashionable and trendy, and adopting a consumer culture. It is, I think, also one where women aspire an extent of gender equality they have become familiar with through global media, so that they are free to make important life decisions, are able to act rebellious or defiant if they want to and do not have to obey every wish of their partner or parents. The lyrics I discuss here all contain such a sense of authority and autonomy. The degree to which this portrayed lifestyle acts upon the female audience remains uncertain, as we have seen in the previous paragraph. But the music video of *Karena Ku Sanggup* and its comments can show some interesting implications. The video shows a sorrowful Agnes, the only person in the video, crying and dealing with her sadness in a domestic setting. With the video she wanted people who go through the same to identify with her. Agnes has said in an interview: "This song is a true expression of what I felt back then … I wanted to make a simple video to show a more intimate setting that has a special connection with fans — so that when people watch it they think 'this video is so me'" (Kurniasari 2010). Judging on the comments on YouTube, she has succeeded in this. A vast majority of the comments by both men and women are very positive, many praising her voice, and some saying how Agnes' songs can remove their sadness. Moreover, some female commenters seem to identify with the song because they are determinant in making their own decisions and standing on their own. One writes: "I am not a weak woman, who always has to rely on her husband… I can still stand even without you by my side". Another says how the song is "just like my story… not because he left me, but [because] I was always the first to leave because I was not appreciated anymore" (Aquarius Musikindo, 2011).

Although the truthfulness of YouTube comments is of course never entirely certain, it is still interesting that women express views and feelings like these, where they are open in showing their feelings and come across as increasingly empowered to make their own choices. Other song texts of Indonesian pop singers reflect this as well, such as those from

pop music "diva" Krisdayanti. In "I'm Sorry Goodbye" (2007) Krisdayanti sings about having to leave her partner because the relationship could not be fixed in her eyes:

Semakin hari	Every day
Semakin terungkap	More and more revealed
Yang sesungguhnya	The reality
Kumakin kecewa	I am more and more disappointed
Ternyata kau penuh dusta	It turns out you are full of lies
Maafkan ku harus pergi	I'm sorry I have to go
Ku tak suka dengan ini	I don't like this
Aku tak bodoh	I am not stupid
Seperti kekasihmu yang lain	Like your other lovers

The song *Cobalah Untuk Setia* ("Try to be faithful", 2004) is another song by Krisdayanti describing feelings about her partner's infidelity. She sings how she's had enough because he cannot be faithful, and he should realize if he wants to be with her, he shouldn't try to deny it but just try to be faithful. These songs show representations of women who do not hesitate to voice their complaints about their partner and take decisive action if necessary.

Finally, the song "Single Happy" (2009) by pop and rock singer Oppie Andaresta portrays the changing lifestyles where women do not always marry young and have children anymore but are fine with living on their own. Actually the song describes how people around Oppie are saying she is lonely and should find a love because she is already at the age, to which Oppie replies:

Aku baik-baik saja	I am fine
Menikmati hidup yang aku punya	Enjoying the life that I got
Hidupku sangat sempurna	My life is very perfect
I'm single and very happy	I'm single and very happy
Mengejar mimpi-mimpi indah	Chasing beautiful dreams
Bebas lakukan yang aku suka	Free to do what I like
Berteman dengan siapa saja	Friends with anyone
I'm single and very happy	I'm single and very happy
[…]	[…]
Ku inginkan yang terbaik untuk hidupku	I want what's best for my life

It is difficult to say whether these artists and their songs are a direct cause of changing gender ideologies, but I think they are certainly part of, and have contributed to the increasing empowerment and authority of young Indonesian women and the way they conceive their female identity.

4.3 Gendered spaces at music performances

How do live performances contribute to imagining one's feminine or masculine identity? Is there a clear division between feminine and masculine spaces within the audience and/or on stage? And what role take the performers and the audience on in such cases? These questions should be answered according to individual popular genres, as they probably have

different answers per genre. Underground music is known for its harsh sounds and messages and its independent and oppositional character towards "the system", both on the terrain of politics and the music industry. The audience behaviour at indie gigs is quite exuberant as well, with fans head-banging and moshing. This would not fit the traditional image of a modest and passive woman. Indeed most underground youth are men in their teens or early twenties. Although some scholars report that the underground scene is very much a masculine space and mention the strong connection between underground identity and a sense of youthful, masculine independence (Martin-Iverson 2012), others point out the gender balance at indie performances (Heryanto ed. 2008: 174). Moore, writing about indie music in Bali, remarks: "Women, who are still largely excluded from active participation in many types of music making in Bali, are welcome as indie performers—though, more commonly, they take on crucial supportive roles as managers, merchandise sellers, and fans" (2013: 149). It is safe to say, though, that males constitute the majority in the underground scene. This might be not only because the behaviour which characterizes the scene does not fit with the by the state prescribed image of women, but also because female fans rather avoid the mosh pits, concerned that they will be battered by the violent crowd. Hera Sin, female vocalist of sludge core band Oath, confirms this: "The female punk fans are afraid of being groped when moshing or taking a stage dive" (Perdani 2015). She also says how it is difficult for female punk performers to make it in the punk scene, as they are declined to take part in concerts because the audience will be all male. There are, however, activists and organizations that promote gender equality through music and magazines, such as Ika Vantiani who wrote articles like "Most Wanted: Underground Girls" saying that the existence of women in the underground scene matters, and inspiring many other women in the scene (Perdani 2015).

A rock festival in Yogyakarta with performances from pop, rock and underground bands reportedly had a gender-balanced audience of mostly middle-class youth. Interestingly, both men and women participated actively when the underground bands performed. During the performance of BIP, three members of the underground group Slank, young men and women were dancing with an unusual lack of restraint (Heryanto ed. 2008: 175). Audience behaviour at underground gigs is often like this: an intensely active physical and emotional experience, shared among participants. In this case, men and women together shared this euphoric experience, without any problems. Their physical interaction played down gender differences and challenged traditional gender roles imposed by the state.

Dangdut performances have unique gendered spaces and gender implications. The

performance stage is an increasingly feminized place, as most *dangdut* singers are females who are seen as the "owner of the stage". This has even led to changing views towards male *dangdut* singers, as listeners perceive men who perform *dangdut* as being feminine, or like *waria* (male transgenders/transsexual persons), or at least as 'weak' men lacking in their masculinity (Daniels 2013: 165). The audience of live *dangdut* performances is predominantly male, although at home, women constitute a significant part of *dangdut* listeners via TV, VCDs and cassettes. The lyrics appeal to them because they portray the typical agonies of working class Indonesian women, such as husbands remarrying, husbands' infidelity and abandonment by deceitful lovers. But at live performances, the focal point is the sexualized body of the singer, which becomes an object of the male gaze. So on the one hand, there exists the notion that *dangdut* supports the exploitation and objectification of women. This impression is strong when one visits a *dangdut* club, where representations of women as a seductive singer/dancer who is sexually available are dominant, and where sometimes women take on the role of hostesses or dance partners, dressed in miniskirts, tight tops and high heels (Weintraub 2010). Men can pay them to hold and touch them, and they can tip the performer if they, for example, want to dance with her on stage. On the other hand, however, there are also arguments to make which support the view on *dangdut* as female empowerment. For some, a *dangdut* career signifies economic possibilities and independence as women gain economic benefits from performing and can improve their life standards. It can also be understood as a form of sexual freedom and freedom of expression, where women are praised for their dancing and singing skills and are capable of seducing and controlling their male audience. In the case of Inul, for example, for some she epitomized a potential for women's emancipation. Women's rights groups rejected the notion that Inul's performing style and fame were a case of exploitation, commodification, degradation or victimisation of women (Weintraub 2008: 381). Even the wives of state officials approached Inul and requested that she teach them to dance like her (Heryanto ed. 2008: 26).

Although *dangdut* performers acknowledge the economic imperative in becoming *dangdut* singers, they rate this as secondary to the satisfaction they receive from the knowledge that they have the power to entertain a large audience and be the centre of attention (Browne 2000). They gain a sense of pride from this and are attracted by the glamour and possibility of fame. While performing, not only do they have the power to entertain the crowd, but also to challenge and undermine the institutionalised roles of wife and mother prescribed by the state and Islam. In Browne's paper it is argued that *dangdut* performances offer "a sense of liberation for women performers. The stage and their explicit

performances are both the space and the basis for reordering power relations…As such, dancing for these women may be interpreted as a part of a strategy of opposition. Far from being passive objects of their own degradation, these women's testimonies suggest they have agency, actively participating in the creation of their images on stage" (2000: 33). I think this is an important point: we should not simply interpret the sexualized bodies of performers as a form of exploitation and objectification, but also be aware of how these women themselves interpret their career and lifestyle, which turns out to be a much more positive image, where they have at least a fair share of power. Nonetheless, contradictions remain within *dangdut* and are more and more blown up in increasingly Islamic post-Suharto Indonesia. *Dangdut,* supported by liberals as an approach to progressiveness and modern-mindedness, still can, and has, worked as a form of resistance towards the norms of the broader society regarding gender ideologies, where women are often emphasized as passive and *malu* (shy/timid), the opposite of the characteristics of *dangdut* performers.

5 – Conclusion

Popular music in Indonesia has served a variety of purposes and is used in different ways by Indonesians to express their class identity, Islamic identity or gendered identity. The way popular music is produced and consumed is subject to temporal and spatial changes, most notably social and political change and a globalizing world. Social change in the past two decades is characterized by a growing middle class which struggles to define itself and climb higher in the social ladder, a bigger influence of an individualistic culture in the collectivist Indonesian culture and the impact of new isolating technologies, which can all lead to an experience of lack of community and feelings of loneliness. This can be counteracted, though, with music; for example through its lyrics but more importantly by listening and dancing to, and playing music together. This is one of the purposes of music: it is able and is being used to foster communal solidarity. This solidarity is challenged at this point in time by longings for modernity, affluence, and a consumerist lifestyle. Some of the Indonesian youth find themselves in a difficult place in between these modern and traditional values and tend to be attracted to the modern global pop culture that has reached the country through new media and globalization. This global pop culture not only reaches the urban middle to upper class citizens anymore, but stretches far beyond these places into the outskirts of the country. In the most remote and traditional villages, the youths like to listen to Western, Korean and Indonesian pop music, which they access through mobile phones or television. Although there still exists the notion that Western-style popular music is for the middle to upper classes, it is more and more accessible and enjoyed by all Indonesians. Social hierarchy is not as strongly prescribed as it was during the Suharto era, but people still use music to show off their class identity, which for the middle to upper classes comes with a consumerist and cosmopolitan lifestyle.

The lines between prestigious/superior and backward/inferior pop music forms have blurred in the last years, however. *Dangdut* is the most striking example of this, which has transformed from a suggestive village performance type, to an embellished, cleansed music genre promoted by national media targeting upper classes, to the music "of the people" played in both villages and urban clubs and cafés. I have shown in chapter 2 how music genres exist within class boundaries and how this helps Indonesians negotiate and define their identities, but it is important to keep in mind that this given is not fixed; it is subject to change and so are identities.

One of the most prominent issues regarding music in the post-Suharto years is morality, which reflects a dividing line within the Indonesian population. Muslim conservatives have gained more political power after president Suharto resigned and have expressed their disapproval of supposed moral "crimes" in music. There exist divergent perspectives on morality in Islam, which in turn echoes the diversified forms of Islam in Indonesia. While some listeners are influenced by and agree with those who criticize presumed immorality in music, others are not bothered by this "immorality" at all and sometimes even see it as a symbol of progress and freedom of expression. The process of Islamization has caused some Islamic music genres to flourish which promote Islamic values and an ethical lifestyle, but the majority of music fans doesn't seem to have a problem with scantily dressed singers who suggestively shake their hips. They simply like the music if it appeals to them, including the contested *dangdut* (with some notable exceptions), and want to view entertainment and religion separately. While earlier the performing arts were often related to ritual, now modernized Indonesians treat the performing arts as secular entertainment and do not want religious principles to get involved with it. Islamic pop music, which is by definition not a secular form of art, is of course an exception. It emerged within the broader context of the rise of pop culture and Islamization. It is used by Indonesians as an emblem of their religiosity and Muslim identity and at the same time also as an expression of modernity.

Islamic pop music as well as other forms of Indonesian pop music show the current influence of popular culture, which may come from abroad but has been indigenized in various ways into the Indonesian culture. The phenomenon of Muslim pop culture and music is an example of this. Besides, while formerly many Indonesian bands (rock, underground, pop) imitated their Western counterparts, now they develop in their own way. There are always at least some Indonesian characteristics in their music and/or performances, besides the global or Western characteristics.

Popular music is an increasingly strong medium to transmit certain images, ideas or ideologies, due to new media (VCDs, the Internet) and advertising strategies, as well as the removal of restrictions on freedom of expression. The mediated spaces of Islam in popular music, for example, are very powerful fields for education and knowledge about Islam. Gender ideologies are also presented and diffused through popular music. When a performer presents such ideologies or images, of trendy and rebellious women for example, it does not always provoke fans to take over this lifestyle, but the fans choose selectively what aspects they can and want to incorporate into their lives and what not. Representations of women in music are an ambiguous issue, as they can lead to both admiration and criticism. Female pop

stars can be a role model to some and an actor of immorality to others. Moreover, as in the case of *dangdut*, they can be both a sign of emancipation and exploitation.

To a certain extent, you can see how changes in the social lives of Indonesians, as well as on the political level, influence the way pop music is mediated, presented and consumed. Ideologies which recently gained new ground, in the field of gender or Islam for example, are now presented and represented in new ways that accord with the social and political climate. Many of those images, ideas and ideologies would be difficult to present in such a way during Suharto's regime. *Dangdut* singer Inul Daratista would have never become as famous in the New Order as she has become now. Because of censorship, TV channels would probably not have been allowed to broadcast her performance and magazines would be restricted in promoting her *ngebor* style. Moreover, what largely contributed to Inul's fame was the controversy spurred by Muslim conservatives, who were not allowed to speak out as freely during the New Order as during the Reformasi era. The fact that moral issues are dramatized in increasingly Islamic post-Suharto Indonesia is another example how changes in politics influence the reception of pop music. Some Muslim groups with increasing political power achieved their aim of banning *dangdut* singers from performing. Popular music, as well as young Indonesians' identities, change of character as the climate around them changes. Pop music adapts to the contemporary needs and wishes of "the people", which in turn helps these people overcome contemporary struggles, helps express their opinions or place in society, and can even help them act out "rehearsals" for democracy (Weintraub 2006: 426).

The present media-scape has given Indonesians the opportunity to link themselves to people, cultures, and musical forms all over the world and has contributed to the changing identities of young Indonesians. They define themselves as part of both a local, national and global (pop) culture. They get in touch with global culture through globalization while also listening to in Indonesia-produced pop musics which present this global culture with an indigenous touch. Indonesian pop music forms creatively evolve in ways that meet the needs of their audience. As a result, young Indonesians can listen to popular music to overcome contemporary and personal struggles, express their class-identity, to display an emblem of their religiosity, to support (groundbreaking) ideologies, or simply for relaxation because they like listening and dancing to it. Just like pop music's non-fixed character, identities are fluid and are continually being renegotiated by the Indonesian youth as their surroundings change.

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