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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

If There are Stars in the Sky: Waldjinh and Keroncong
in Postcolonial Indonesia

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

by

Russell Peter Skelchy

June 2015

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Rene T. A. Lysloff, Chairperson
Dr. Deborah A. Wong
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Dr. Christina Schwenkel

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The Dissertation of Russell Peter Skelchy is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

Acknowledgements

My research on keroncong began in 2007 during my first year of graduate studies at the University of California, Riverside. Along the way there have been many important people who have helped me throughout the process and I am truly grateful for all of them.

I start with my family, especially my wife, Lisa Boggeri, who has given me her unconditional support, love and timely advice during the tenure of this project. She not only accompanied me on every trip to Indonesia but also has patiently endured through a nomadic lifestyle and my rather erratic sleep schedule the last few years. Thank you also to my parents, Colin and Monica Skelchy, as well as Linda and Michael Boggeri for their continuous love and support.

Thank you to the members of my committee: Christina Schwenkel, Deborah Wong and Hendrik M.J. Maier. Each of them, in their own way, has shaped and influenced the type of scholar, educator and person I am and will become. I especially thank my adviser, Rene T.A. Lysloff for his input, guidance and support for the duration of this project.

I was able to conduct research for this dissertation with financial support from the Fulbright IIE Fellowship (2011-2012) and the University of California Pacific Rim Research Program Advanced Graduate Student Research Fellowship (2011-2012). These two grants allowed me to spend an extended period of time in Indonesia, which given

the nature of this project, proved to be invaluable. I also thank Nellie Paliama and the staff at the American Indonesian Exchange Foundation (AMINEF) in Jakarta and Lisa Nishioka at the UC Pacific Rim Research Program for their help administering these grants. Additionally, I received generous funding from: a UC-Riverside Humanities Graduate Student Research Grant, a UC Pacific Rim Research Program mini-grant, the Gluck Fellowship for the Arts, and a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) grant.

Thank you to Jonathan Ritter, Walter Clark, Tim Labor, Leonora Saavedra and Rogerio Budacz of the UC Riverside Music Department, Monica Wicker of the UCR Office of Research Integrity, Karen Smith and Kara Oswood of UCR Graduate Division, Benicia Mangram (UCR Performing Arts Administration), faculty in the Southeast Asian Text, Ritual and Performance (SEATRiP) program (especially Mariam Lam, Sally Ann Ness, David Biggs and Muhamad Ali), my Indonesian and Javanese language teachers at Wisma Bahasa in Yogyakarta (Niken Wijayani, Anna Widiastuti, Mbak Mika, Pak Yosef, Mbak Deta and others) for all their efforts.

Thanks to my cohort at UC Riverside for their friendship and many hours of intellectually challenging discussion: Shawn Mollenhauer, Jake Rekedal, Ron Conner, Mindy O'Brien, Miles Shrewsbury, Supeena Insee Adler, Victoria Dalzell, Alexandra Anaya, Joshua Brown, Lori Gregory, Teresa Maribel Sanchez, Aaron W. Singer, Popi Primadewi, Neal Matherne, Paula Probst, Taylor Greene, Hannah Balcomb, Erica Jones, Kate Alexander, Mike Atienza, Husni Abu Bakar, and Panida Boonthavevej.

In Indonesia, I thank the community of keroncong musicians who welcomed me into their worlds and enabled me to learn from their expertise. At the top of this list is Ibu Hajjah Waldjinah, who over the course of a year and a half, graciously allowed me into her home and into her life on a weekly basis. I am in deep gratitude for the generous amount of time she spent with me, especially during periods she suffered from ill health. I hope I have done justice to the stories she shared with me.

There are many other keroncong musicians (and others) I wish to thank, unfortunately the list is too long to add all of their names here. In Solo (Surakarta): Pak Supto Haryono, OK Putra Seniman, Pak Ary Mulyono and Pak Sanang of OK Bintang Surakarta, Pak “Keroncong” Wartono, Mas Imam D. Kamus and Mbak Dwiana Pandanwangi, Pak Danis Sugiyanto, Mbak Sruti Respati. In Yogyakarta: Pak Jimbo, Pak Nugroho, Mbak Nunuk Nirawati, Mas Basuki and OK Kadin, Ibu and Pak Priyadi, Ibu Sri Hartati, Pak Andi and Pak Abdul Kadir Petrus of OK Surya Mataram, Pak Subardjo HS, Pak Martinus and OK Rinonce, Pak Aryon Suharyono, Pak Singgih Sanjaya, Pak Hardjono, Mas Sem and Keroncong Roti Bakar, Mbak Dwi Wahyuni, Mas Canggih Finalti (Ichank), Mbak Sekar Natawijaya. In Bandung: Pak Adi Wiratmo and OK Jempol Jenthik, Pak Partho Djojodihardjo. In Jakarta: the late Pak Hendarmin Susilo and his son Djakawinata Susilo of Gema Nada Pertiwi (GNP), Pak Andre Michiels and Krontjong Toegoe, Mbak Ubiet Raseuki, Pak Didit Hadiyanto. In Malaysia: the late Pak Wawang Wijaya, Pak Dwiono Hermantoro, Encik Abdul Malik, Encik Nizar Kamal Ariffin, Encik Makmor Jantan and OK Arif Lukisan, Encik Zubin Mohamad, Pak Edhi Kunthoro. Last on this list but

certainly no less deserving of my gratitude is my assistant for this project and friend, Sowanya Hara, who helped me not only with transcriptions for many hours of interviews but also invaluable insights into the nuances of Waldjinhah's stories. Thank you my friend, I am truly grateful for your contributions to this project.

In the Fall 2008 I founded *Orkes Pantai Barat* (the West Coast Orchestra, or "OPB" as we call it), an ensemble comprised almost entirely of students and faculty at UC Riverside. Since that time, I have had the pleasure of playing (and learning about) keroncong with talented musicians who were also incredibly fun to be around. Over the years, the list of OPB members has grown substantially and I wish to thank each of them: Mike Atienza, Angela Montijo, Genie Yoo (vocalists), Husni Abu Bakar, Aaron Singer, Erica Jones, Hovig Sarkissian, Rafaella McDonald (guitarists), Jennifer Courtier, Vito Mahaputra, Neal Matherne, Stephen Fong (electric bassists), Julian Lozos (violin), Kate Alexander (violin/cak), Deborah Wong (flute), Craig Chin, Popi Primadewi (cuk), Rene Lysloff (keyboard/synthesizer) and Matt Geer (cello).

Finally, I am grateful for friends and family who have been especially supportive during this period: Tetsunori Ishida, Melanie Nottingham, Felipe Neira, Anita and John Pater, Barbara Hendroff, Elsie and Francis Hendroff as well as my Skelchy and Hendroff relatives in Malaysia, Australia and elsewhere.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

If There are Stars in the Sky: Waldjinah and Keroncong
in Postcolonial Indonesia

by

Russell Peter Skelchy

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Music
University of California, Riverside, June 2015
Dr. Rene T. A. Lysloff, Chairperson

The basis of this dissertation is a life history of Waldjinah, keroncong's most renowned vocalist, whose career spans the era of Indonesian independence and modernization beginning in the mid-twentieth century. As a musician, the arc of her career places her at the forefront of larger developments in the keroncong genre—whose historical trajectory and popularization in the twentieth century paralleled Indonesia's emergence as a modern (and modernizing) independent nation. The dissertation interweaves four main threads: 1) a life history of Waldjinah, 2) a narrative of keroncong, 3) a narrative of postcolonial Indonesia as a modernizing nation, and 4) my own subjectivity as a researcher and keroncong musician. In a broad sense, this

study examines how Waldjinah attained her stature as a national artist, the challenges she faced in doing so, and the mechanisms that enabled her to succeed. Drawing from research in ethnomusicology, anthropology, postcolonial studies and critical theory, I explore how processes of modernization in non-Western countries continue to complicate and disrupt previously held theoretical interpretations of modernity. By approaching “the modern” through cultural production rather than political economy, I examine how Waldjinah, as a keroncong musician, helped to bind and shape the modern nation by giving tangible form to the abstract idea of national culture.

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Prelude: Introducing Waldjinah

When the night breeze sways and rumbles in unison, my thoughts recall the rhythms of my life.

From “Kr. Romansa (Keroncong Romance),”
composed by Sapari and WS Nardi in 1950

My first meeting with Waldjinah ended in a visit to the hospital. This, of course, had less to do with her and more to do with a series of decisions I made in the days leading up to the interview. A two month stay in 2008 marked the first time I had ever been to Indonesia. Despite visiting relatives in neighboring Malaysia regularly while growing up, my experiences with Indonesians there were limited to encounters with migrant workers and various unsavory stereotypes circulating in the media. To physically mark the occasion, I felt it appropriate, like some other tourists, to get tattooed. I found an artist who did quality and affordable work close to where my wife, Lisa, and I stayed in the southern end of Yogyakarta (also known as Jogja).

Two days before the interview with Waldjinah, I booked a session to start on a large chunk covering my left outer calf and ankle, it lasted six hours and concluded late into the night. The next afternoon, rather than take a taxi, Lisa and I took a two hour walk across Jogja to eat at a *warung* (a food stand) in the northern part of the city. The following day we, along with my assistant and some other friends, who tagged along in order to meet Waldjinah, boarded a train to Surakarta (also known as Solo), a nearby city in Central Java where she lived. During the short one hour ride, I felt soreness and

swelling in my calf and foot, but nothing uncommon. I have had work done on various parts of my body and knew the burning ache of a healing tattoo well. It was part of the process. Besides, as the train rumbled on, I was actually more captivated looking out at a distant and majestic Mount Merapi, the towering volcano dominating the bucolic Central Javanese landscape. This was, after all, the first time I had been on a train in Indonesia and every passing town, thatched hut, rice paddy and goat herd offered up visual novelties. Somehow this felt more like how I mentally envisioned the “real” Indonesia than what we experienced in modernized Yogyakarta, a small yet bustling city filled with, among other things, motorized traffic, shopping and cell phones.

We disembarked at Purwosari station in Solo and decided to find Waldjinah’s house on foot—I had heard it was not too far away. The mild morning sun quickly gave way to a blistering midday heat and the trek there, which included several detours, seemed to last for hours. Almost forty minutes later, we found her home on a narrow, quiet street, which on first impression appeared surprisingly modest for a performer of her stature, located in Solo’s Mangkuyudan district. I gingerly rattled the gate handle and soon we were greeted by her son, Ary Mulyono (or Pak Ary as I knew him), a stocky middle-aged man with a rounded face, thick black mustache and thin square wire-rimmed glasses.

Pak (Mister) Ary led us through the front door and into an ornately decorated foyer that looked nothing short of astonishing. It resembled a shrine to Waldjinah and her career in *keroncong*, the string based Indonesian popular music for which she was

known. Every wall was brightly covered with gold flaked framed photos, awards of recognition, small trinkets and mementos from international performances and trophies from various vocal competitions. I sat on the small couch and looked around in awe, trying not to think about the throbbing in my left leg, which had since become more intense. Instead, I focused on absorbing as much detail as possible, especially since another visit was not guaranteed. Visually overwhelmed, it finally hit me that this was the person so many other musicians had told me about: Waldjinah, keroncong's most renowned vocalist.

Another five minutes passed before she entered the room. I introduced myself, along with the small group of visitors I brought along. Her booming voice and charisma immediately filled the room and captured everyone's attention. Soon we all were laughing with her and any pretense of unfamiliarity seemed to melt away into casual conversation about my own background. Waldjinah wanted to know where I was from, what I was doing in Indonesia and how I became interested in keroncong. She was somewhat surprised that someone pursuing a doctoral degree in the United States would focus on keroncong as a research topic. She told me that most of the Western academics she had encountered previously came to Indonesia, or Solo specifically, to study Javanese gamelan at the local Indonesian Art Institute. After explaining that I was there to conduct research for my master's thesis, at the time, and perhaps preliminary work for my doctoral dissertation, she appeared satisfied. The conversation now shifted

to questions I had for Waldjinah and she began telling me about her life and career as a keroncong vocalist.

An hour into the interview, despite being captivated by her stories and the discussion, I felt my left foot tighten up. Looking down underneath my pant leg, I immediately noticed my ankle and foot had swelled to the point where the lower half of my leg resembled a thick, fat stump. Seconds before, my attention was focused entirely on Waldjinah but now it shifted toward my leg. Was it infected? Is something spreading? Did I get bitten by a venomous spider? Would it require amputation below the knee? With such thoughts whizzing through my head and the stifling heat of the enclosed foyer closing in on me, I gently interrupted Waldjinah in mid sentence to ask for a break. All eyes in the room focused on me and appeared to share the same perplexed facial expression. “What are you doing?” they all seemed to shout in silence.

Stumbling outside onto the covered porch, I found a bench and slumped down into it feeling clammy and faint. A few minutes passed and my wife and assistant walked outside concerned and wondering why I had not returned. After gasping at the sight of my leg, which had now swelled even more, we decided it would be best to head to the hospital as a precautionary measure. Unfortunately, I had no idea how to explain any of this to the renowned musician sitting patiently inside waiting for me. I eventually decided that showing her my extremely swollen leg would be explanation enough. Although confused as to how a seemingly normative interview had so quickly degenerated into a medical emergency, Waldjinah agreed that I should seek treatment.

I was loaded into the family van driven by Pak Ary. She stood at her front gate observing while wearing a smile that mixed concern with bewilderment. I managed a slight wave goodbye and wondered how I had managed to blow such an opportunity. Although concerned about my own health, I felt more disappointed in how my interview with a keroncong icon had turned out. That ended my first interview with Waldjinah.



1.1 Interviewing Waldjinah at her home in Mangkuyudan, June 2012. Photo by Eliot Yasumura.

If there was an upside to this abrupt conclusion, perhaps it would be memorable enough that she would not forget me later—at least that is what I hoped. I would not meet with Waldjinah again for another three years and when I did, she was in her late 60s and no longer performing regularly. She had suffered two serious strokes within

three years, one soon after I returned to Indonesia in 2011, and was left bed-ridden for months struggling to recover each time.

It is fitting, in a way, that my first encounter with Waldjinhah involved health issues, because so many of our subsequent meetings began with her telling me about her own aches, pains, traumas, treatments and hopes for recovery. Old photos on album covers depicted her as youthful, attractive and exuberant. Others captured her during live performances, dressed in her customary batik *kain* and *kebaya*, singing with unflinching confidence before throngs of fans. Both contradicted the fragile state of health I found her in. Despite this, she remained an immensely popular and beloved figure in Indonesia, occasionally appearing on nationally televised talk shows, or in newspaper and magazine articles. Many Indonesians, especially older Javanese, remembered Waldjinhah for the *langgam jawa*, a Javanized subgenre of keroncong that combined elements of Javanese gamelan and keroncong she popularized in the 1960s and 70s—some of these songs became hits nationally. Even at this point in her career however, she was far from a relic relegated to the dusty vaults of nostalgia. At various points in a long and storied career, Waldjinhah cleverly reinvented herself, as most great artists do, managing to remain relevant in the public eye through collaborations with younger vocalists and composers, extending her repertoire into emerging musical spheres of *campursari*, *dangdut*, Indonesian pop and even performing as a guest vocalist in *wayang kulit* (shadow theater). Aside from her life as a performer, she was also deeply involved in the keroncong musicians association as the leader of the local Solo

chapter and as an adviser to the national organization.¹ Throughout her career Waldjinh actively mentored younger generations of mostly female keroncong vocalists, some of whom she even brought on tour with her. She once told me about a political cartoon that ran in *Kompas*, one of Indonesia's national newspapers—it depicted a line of past presidents passing through a turnstyle with Waldjinh serenading them as they passed by. The caption read: “The presidents can come and go...as long as we keep Waldjinh.”

The basis of this dissertation is a life history of Waldjinh—as keroncong's most renowned vocalist, her career spans the era of Indonesian independence and modernization beginning in the mid-twentieth century. I have chosen her specifically as opposed to lesser known keroncong artists, because of her immense stature as a performer. Waldjinh's story deserves to be told. Not only is she Indonesia's most beloved keroncong singer, she is an icon of Indonesian independence and modernity, and her life in keroncong serves as an allegory for the rise and decline of a (certain form of) national culture. Waldjinh's story is simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary. Her experiences and struggles are common and familiar to most Indonesians, especially growing up in a large family decidedly of the *rakyat* (the common people).² As a

¹ The formal name is *Himpunan Artis Musik Keroncong Republik Indonesia* (or HAMKRI), the Association of Keroncong Music Artist of the Republik of Indonesia.

² *Rakyat* also refers to “the working-class,” the people, the nation, the general public, the masses and citizens (Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings 2010: 800).

musician however, the arc of her career distinguishes her from others and places her at the forefront of broader developments in the keroncong, a genre whose historical trajectory and popularization in the twentieth century paralleled Indonesia's emergence as a modern (and modernizing) independent nation.



1.2 Waldjinhah in the late 1960s. Photo courtesy of Waldjinhah.

This story, however compelling, would be incomplete if it failed to address some of the challenges and hardships Waldjinhah faced over the course of her career. Some of

these issues are gendered, especially being a high-profile female touring artist while attempting to avoid harmful gossip and maintaining a clean public image. Her roles as a primary household breadwinner, wife and mother all position Waldjinah at the cusp of significant social developments taking place in a rapidly modernizing Indonesia in the years immediately following independence. Although some of these conditions were familiar to other Indonesian artists at the time, many are specific to Waldjinah, and as a keroncong musician, she also was at the forefront of changing attitudes toward gender roles, ideas about spiritual power and potency and female status discussed at length in previous scholarship on Java (see Brenner 1997, Atkinson and Errington 1990, Anderson 1990, Keeler 1987).

In a broader sense, I consider this project an individual-centered musical ethnography (see Rice 2003)—one that contributes to other scholarly works in ethnomusicology featuring historical and biographical writing, or else referred to as the “ethnomusicology of the individual” (Stock 2001). In a survey of books published in the field of ethnomusicology, Jesse Ruskin and Timothy Rice (2012:303-304) observe that since 1995, individuals have been featured, at least in a peripheral role, in nearly every musical ethnography. In these works, ethnomusicologists tend to focus on individual musicians who are innovators in a tradition and/or are key figures who occupy important roles in a musical culture (ibid).³ Ethnomusicologists have been pulled

³ Ruskin and Rice (2012: 303) also point out that ordinary musicians and normally anonymous audience members who play an important role in dissemination, music production, and reception are two other groups that ethnomusicologists have studied.

toward the study of individuals for a number of reasons, including: 1) ethnomusicologists tend to rely on individual musicians who are sometimes (but not always) exceptional in a given musical community, 2) ethnomusicologists belong to a subculture that values the exceptional and valorizes individual achievement, 3) they study individuals in order to make sense of increasingly globalized and deterritorialized worlds where new individualized identities emerge, and finally 4) while engaging with recent social theory, ethnomusicologists focus on individual agency while acknowledging their own roles in the musical communities they study (Ruskin and Rice (2012: 299). Drawing from these ideas, my dissertation examines how diverse and abstract forces of capitalism, religion, patriarchy and the state (among others) can be understood through the Waldjinah's lived experiences as a performer.

One of the characteristics differentiating individual-centered musical ethnographies from other works is the type of narrative strategy employed by the author. Ruskin and Rice (2012: 312-313) note that some of the common approaches, which I define briefly here, include: the *biography* (a monologic account of an individual's life and work, constructed from historical research, fieldwork or some combination of the two), a *dialogue* (an ethnographic technique used to decenter ethnographic authority by situating knowledge and the field encounter), *polyvocality* (incorporating multiple voices), and *assisted autobiography* (where individual recollections or oral autobiographies are recorded, transcribed, or reprinted by the author with little alteration, restructuring or interpretive interruptions). At various

points in the text of this dissertation, I incorporate elements of each strategy, however, the assisted autobiography best describes my approach—especially given its emphasis on presenting extensive and continuous quotations and an accurate portrayal of the individual’s voice . At the same time, I am not comfortable using this term to describe my work entirely because of the extensive interpretive and editorializing role I (as the author) have played in constructing Waldjinah’s story (as she herself has constructed a telling of it). This collaborative process, in some instances, has created silences in the text based on the choices both she and I have made separately. Although I have constructed this telling of her life story, Waldjinah also has chosen to include what she deems appropriate and pertinent based on the information she shared with me. Jeff Todd Titon (1980:290) writes that one of the distinguishing features of a life story is that first and foremost, it is a story, one that “affirms the storyteller in the act of telling.” Similar to other assisted autobiographies, Waldjinah’s story is as much about the actual telling as it is about the information contained.

“Keroncong-scapes”

Interweaved into this life history of Waldjinah is the story of keroncong as part of Indonesia’s musical landscape, which in itself is a story worth telling. Keroncong is a string instrument based music that came to Indonesia on Portuguese ships carrying traders and slaves, and some scholars claim that the first of these ships arrived on the

northern coast of Java as early as the 16th century (see Heins 1975).⁴ Keroncong's overall sound is driven by the instruments establishing its foundational rhythm, namely two Indonesian ukuleles known as the *cuk* and *cak*. The *cuk* and *cak* are especially important in creating an interlocking rhythm, where *cuk* emphasizes downbeats while *cak* accentuates off-beats. Contrabass anchors the tempo, providing cues for chord changes while an acoustic guitar concurrently fills in melodic figured lines. An Indonesian cello with three thick nylon strings accentuates offbeats and drives the overall rhythm by playing a percussive, pizzicato style evoking *kendang* drum patterns in Javanese gamelan. The overall combination of these instruments creates the distinctive rhythms of *keroncong*. Florid melodic lines, improvised on flute and violin in a loose rhythm anchor to the underlying melodic-rhythmic figuration, appear to float in and out as a piece progresses, generally complementing vocal lines. Keroncong vocalists are usually the proverbial face of the collective. Positioned in a performance setting standing alone in front of seated instrumentalists (except for the contrabass player), vocalists are often the "stars" of the show demanding the audience's attention.

As keroncong's biggest star, Waldjinhah has been this genre's principal proponent both on the national and international stage for most of her career. She is, however, far

⁴ I am using the spelling "*keroncong*" (as opposed to *kroncong* or *krontjong*, alternate and older spellings found in Indonesia) because it is the one currently the most common one used in Indonesia (and Singapore and Malaysia). Several *keroncong* publications such as the Indonesian magazine, *Tjroeng*, and Yahoo! On-line and Facebook forums for *keroncong* artists in Indonesia and Malaysia also use this particular spelling. The *Comprehensive Indonesian-English Dictionary* by Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings (2004) shows *keroncong* as the standard spelling and *kroncong* as an alternative. My thanks to Hendrik M. J. Maier and René T.A. Lysloff for pointing out these differences.

from being the only keroncong musician performing and promoting this music currently. A “revival” beginning in the mid 2000s, saw a wave of younger, internet savvy musicians take to social media like Facebook, Yahoo! Groups and WhatsApp and emerge at the forefront of efforts to “preserve” keroncong as a form of Indonesian culture. Yet keroncong, as a cultural phenomenon, remains difficult to locate. It has maintained a tenuous and at times liminal existence throughout its history, at various points belonging to no one and everyone in Indonesia. Similar to the Malay language, keroncong was identified by Indonesian nationalists early on as a musical lingua franca capable of unifying a diverse archipelago population by musically crossing ethnic, class and geographic boundaries.⁵ Different from regional musics (*musik daerah*) or the longstanding court-based traditions of gamelan, keroncong historically has not been associated with one specific place or people. Musically speaking, it has been flexible enough to incorporate elements from many of these other Indonesian genres along with foreign musics, such as Western pop and jazz. These characteristics meant that keroncong has blurred our attempts to classify it as either an “urban folk” or popular music. Such ambiguity, as Peter Manuel (1988: 3) points out, is readily apparent in musics like keroncong and Portuguese *fado*, which confound the characterizations attributed to either category. Manuel defines popular music along the lines of secular entertainment, free from ritual or life-cycle functions, having a “star system,” where mass media promote a personality cult glamorizing an artist’s lifestyle or fashion,

⁵ See Maier 2004, Mrazek 2002

distancing him or her from the general public, and involving high turnover of repertoire, where media constantly generate interest in new releases. The term popular music itself has been used to refer broadly to music mass-reproduced and disseminated through mass-media outlets, often with large listening audiences and generally drawing from a wide range of preexisting musical traditions. Larry Star and Chris Waterman (2006: 2-3) argue for a more nuanced understanding suggesting that popular music must be understood in the context of a broader musical landscape where various styles, audiences and institutions interact in complex ways. In this sense, the popular musical landscape is never static and ever evolving. In the United States today, many popular musics are designed with the intent not to draw critical attention to itself, for instance the multimillion dollar “environmental music” industry pioneered by the Muzak Corporation, while other popular musics like rap, punk and heavy metal explicitly seek attention, if not analytical engagement (ibid). Keroncong has existed as an urban folk music long before the advent of mass mediated star systems, yet has since been fully incorporated into the realm of popular music, consumed and marketed like any other pop genre in Indonesia today. It is, however, far from just another pop genre, in that keroncong blurs the established boundaries of pop and “traditional” music in ways usually reserved for gamelan and some forms of regional music. This categorization was evident in nearly every CD and cassette shop I visited, where the keroncong section was usually located within or near the traditional music section. Although Indonesians today

tend to think of it as a “traditional” music, earlier in its history, keroncong was considered more along the lines of how Indonesian and Western pop are today.

Language and Metaphor

Keroncong’s ambiguity and multiethnic characteristics also made it an alluring and powerful metaphor for nationalists, like Sukarno, seeking to create a broad and inclusive national identity for Indonesia. The term “Indonesia” itself only appeared in the rhetoric of nationalist political leaders in the early 1920s.⁶ The term was originally coined by an English naturalist to classify the distinctive ethnic and geographic identity of the archipelago, but eventually was adapted to new means within the nationalist movement (Vickers 2005: 79).⁷ Understanding the metaphor begins with language—specifically Malay, the language of maritime Southeast Asian regional trade which became the basis for Indonesian, the national language. As the lingua franca of the archipelago during the Dutch colonial period, Malay, as a first language in the late colonial Indies, was spoken primarily in parts of Sumatra and by some in large cosmopolitan cities like Batavia (Mrazek 2002: 32). Malay itself was considered a practical language and “not very warm,” it was a medium of communication between strangers and in essence a language of the road (ibid). Malay’s function seemingly

⁶ See Elson 2008, Vickers 2005

⁷ Adrian Vickers (2005: 79) states that “Indonesia” was first used for nationalist ends by Indonesian students in the Netherlands and was later taken up by activists such as Semaun, who changed the name of his political party to the “Communist Party of Indonesia.”

became more complex and profound in the context of Indonesian. As Benedict Anderson (1990: 124) writes,

“the new Indonesian language has had to develop into a means of communication that can express not only Indonesian nationalism but also Indonesian aspirations, Indonesian traditions and international realities—within the limits of a single vocabulary.”

Indonesian emerged as a result of a synthesis between, what Anderson calls a “new political-cultural intelligence,” and a fragmentation of colonial and early postcolonial conditions. The outcome was the development of a counterlanguage to Dutch, which until that point was the language of an Indonesian intellectual class that served primarily as bilingual “cultural middlemen” controlling and facilitating communication between the bureaucratically separated Dutch and Indonesian cultural realms. Despite the Indonesian elite’s full, or at least partial, mastery of Dutch, colonial educational policies made it impossible to use Dutch as the language to unify regional nationalisms. After Indonesia gained its independence, nationalists looked for a language that would traverse ethnic and status lines to fulfill the unifying functions that Dutch had performed among intellectuals—this language would itself represent the “spirit of resistance to the domineering monopoly of Dutch as the bridge to modernity (Anderson 1990: 138).” The adoption of Indonesian as the “new” language of the nationalist

movement in the 1920s and 30s was also revealing, especially because most nationalists at the time were not entirely fluent in Indonesian (Elson 2008: 65).⁸ It did, however, have the virtues of being flexible, simple to learn and “nationless,” given that it belonged to no one particular ethnic group or region. Indonesian also had the benefit of eluding the hierarchical issues associated with the Javanese language and conformed to the social egalitarianism and anti-feudalism espoused by leaders of the movement—it was non-exclusive and had a shapelessness and moldability suited to the emerging nation (ibid).⁹ The adoption of Indonesian as the national language appeared to be an immense concession by the Javanese, who represented the ethnic majority. Even to more traditionalist Javanese intellectuals, however, nationalism was still considered a “breaking out of Javanism” and the hierarchical features of Javanese social intercourse, compared to the simpler modalities of Indonesian (Anderson 1990: 139).

Keroncong, as a musical lingua franca, shared some of the flexible and moldable characteristics of Indonesian language. The vast majority of keroncong lyrics written during the nationalist and revolutionary era also were in Indonesian and not regional

⁸ The Dutch often ridiculed nationalists’ inability to effectively communicate in Indonesian (Elson 2008: 65). At one particular event, Sukiman, a Muslim leader and nationalist, gave a speech in Indonesian incomprehensible to the audience. Not being allowed to use Dutch, he was left no option except reverting to Javanese.

⁹ Indonesia’s nationalist movement was slower to develop than some other Asian countries, according to Vickers (2005: 73-84), because it had only been unified as a colony in the early nineteenth century. The movement was comprised of members from an array of ethnic, religious, political and socioeconomic backgrounds. Many came from aristocratic backgrounds and felt that education was imperative to overcoming Indonesia’s most urgent problem, ignorance. Others came from decidedly non-aristocratic backgrounds and were active members of trade unions, political groups (especially Communist), religious activists (primarily Muslim) and various other organizations. The movement did not belong to one political party but to a number of parties—by the mid 1930s there were up to nine nationalist political parties (ibid).

languages. Earlier keroncong songs however, mixed Portuguese, Dutch and occasionally English, with Malay and later Indonesian—a cocktail referred to as “barracks language” for its associations with the colonial army, civil service, and as historian Rudolf Mrazek (2002: 181) suggests, “the colonial explaining modernity to those of the colonized who could not speak Dutch, the real colonial language.”

Although not “belonging” to a particular ethnic group, it should be noted that over the course of its history, keroncong has retained strong associations with Indonesian mixed-race Eurasian communities, particularly in an area of northeastern Jakarta (near the port of Tanjung Priok) known as *Kampung Tugu*. If early keroncong belonged to anyone, it was to this predominantly Christian community that continues to identify as the descendants of the original Portuguese slaves, known as “black Portuguese” or “Mardijkers,” who originally began playing the music now known as keroncong (Heins 1975: 22). Keroncong remains an enduring and potent source of identity for musicians in Kampung Tugu. As I found out on a number of visits there, current incarnations of costumes, song repertoire and instrumentation are all intended draw from the extensive and romanticized history that combines keroncong and “Portuguese-ness” with a localized Jakartan “Indonesian-ness” (or else “Malay-ness”) as a cultural marker in this community. Tugu musicians adhered to playing a distinct style of keroncong generally considered closer to the “original form” their ancestors played. Eschewing the predominant upbeat rhythmic accentuations of *cak* and cello, Tugu style keroncong instead focused on the percussive rhythms of the *rebana* frame drum and

the hard downbeat strumming of various ukuleles,¹⁰ the organological designs of which are said to be a tradition passed down from previous generations. Although most Tugu musicians included themselves in a national fraternity of keroncong musicians, they also insisted that keroncong's origins were in Kampung Tugu, therefore staking historical claim to a music that signified their community and distinct (multi)ethnic background.



1.3 The band *Krontjong Toegoe* (Keroncong Tugu) performing to celebrate Jakarta's 485th anniversary, 21 June 2012. Photo by the author.

¹⁰ Historically there are three main types of five string ukuleles associated with Tugu keroncong: the *jitera* (the largest), *prounga* (middle sized) and the *macina* (the smallest) (see also Ganap 2013, Kornhauser 1978).

Genre, Form and Radio

Waldjinhah and artists who popularized keroncong from the late 1930s to 1960s represent different threads in keroncong's history altogether. Drawing from an array of influences, they established bold new subgenres, like *langgam jawa* (drawing from Javanese gamelan) and "keroncong beat" (influenced primarily by Western pop and rock), while moving keroncong away from its roots as an urban, Jakarta-based folk music into the realm of mass mediated popular culture. Although few Indonesians could afford radios, by the 1940s, keroncong became standard fare of Dutch colonial radio formats and during the Japanese occupation during World War II, public loudspeakers were even set up to spread radio broadcasts so everyone could listen to keroncong followed by messages from the Emperor (Vickers 2005: 93). After independence, Republic of Indonesia Archipelago Radio (*RRI Nusantara*) in 1951 began broadcasting live keroncong performances and vocal competitions from Jakarta and Yogyakarta. As the Indonesian government sought to solidify a postindependence national cultural identity, Sukarno, the country's first president, and other nationalists promoted keroncong as a music that could effectively cross diverse ethnic, linguistic and geographical lines because of its "flexible" repertoire which included songs from various regions of Indonesia (*lagu daerah*). During the next twenty or so years, RRI Nusantara not only broadcasted keroncong but also had a hand in crafting a particular keroncong "sound" (Harmunah 1987: 38).¹¹ Serving as curatorial councils (*dewan kurator*), both RRI and the Indonesian

¹¹ See Chapter 9 for further discussion of this topic.

Ministry of Education and Culture played a significant role in determining aesthetic standards of quality that carried over into the judging of keroncong competitions held in subsequent years. Keroncong was no longer the music of urban, lower class Eurasians characterized by unsophisticated musical simplicity, and romanticized through images of rugged, sometimes violent, yet suave and attractive *buaya* (crocodiles)—a term given to male keroncong musicians who roamed Jakarta’s streets seductively flirting with women through improvised *pantuns*, Malay/Indonesian quatrains (see Becker 1975). Urban keroncong *buaya* were usually of Eurasian mixed ethnic background, but also included Indians, Chinese, and Malays, and their association with keroncong stigmatized the music with a “shady reputation” that remained until the Japanese occupation during World War II (Kornhauser 1978: 130-131). A general unruliness in keroncong gave way to a cleaned and polished image as it was simultaneously altered and codified musically into a form fitting the criteria of an elite-based, nationalized culture. This process likely began as early as the 1920s when keroncong entered the arena of professionalized popular entertainment—embraced by popular theater and the recording industry, both were, by that time, deeply reliant on the star system to generate public interest (Yampolsky 1991: 2)

Keroncong’s crystallization as a genre by the mid twentieth century is most evident in the form that came out of that era, *keroncong asli*. The term keroncong asli, translated as “original” or “true” keroncong, when taken literally, connotes a sense of authenticity. Its architects, namely Javanese composers like Kusbini and Budiman B.J.,

were trained in Western classical music and appointed by government officials to craft a dynamic and “modern” (re)incarnation of keroncong meant to distinguish a new style from past ones. In other words, as keroncong gradually became Javanized, it also gained greater respectability as an art form (Kornhauser 1978: 133).¹² Developments during this era may stem from a number of factors including a spike in creativity among musicians or the fact that a significant number of nationalists were of Javanese descent, including Indonesia’s first president, Sukarno, along with his successor, Suharto, who would rule for more than thirty years. In the spirit of this rupture, keroncong asli became the “real” keroncong. Even today most bands are comprised of, what many musicians unwittingly refer to as *pakem* (standard) or “traditional” instrumentation while continuing to perform songs they refer to as being from the “classic” asli era. Understood another way, “asli” could have a less pointed meaning—as one musician explained to me, the term “asli,” in this context, implies a derivation *from* older styles of keroncong.¹³ Here rather than being true, original or authentic, asli instead emphasizes a process of change within the genre drawing aesthetically from older styles while also creating a different set of aesthetics based on keroncong songs composed mostly from the 1940s to 60s. As a composer who helped to define keroncong asli, Kusbini himself used a system of categorizing repertoire into six main groups: keroncong asli, keroncong

¹² She also notes, however, that even as a greater number of Javanese people became interested in keroncong, the majority of keroncong musicians were still of Eurasian descent—the most famous being the keroncong band Lief Java, fronted by Fred Belloni and included the blind singer Annie Landouw, Louis Koch, and Leo Spel (Kornhauser 1978: 133).

¹³ Interview with Imam 12 December 2012. See also Soeharto 1987.

baru (new keroncong), *Stambul II asli*, *Stambul II baru*, *langgam keroncong* and *lagu extra* (extra songs) (Kornhauser 1978: 144-145). Although Bronia Kornhauser (ibid) describes Kusbini's system as "impractical," it does shed light on his thought process in differentiating keroncong asli from what he considers "keroncong baru." The main difference here is in performance practice with vocalists in keroncong asli songs improvising text and to some extent melody, while in "keroncong baru," singers adhere to a set melody and text—Kornhauser notes that there are no formal structural differences between the two types of songs.¹⁴ Kusbini's differentiation between the two however, suggests the possibility that keroncong asli (based on his definition), in its "looser" structure permitting improvisation, recalls earlier styles of keroncong.

Beyond these interpretations and meanings, keroncong asli also referred to a specific type of song structure and instrumentation.¹⁵ Many of the songs written in the asli style adhere to a basic chordal structure along with a standardized instrumentation: *cuk, cak*, cello, guitar, contrabass, violin and flute.¹⁶ Different forms of keroncong songs were also explicitly defined differentiating characteristics of *keroncong asli*, *langgam keroncong* and *stambul*—in a sense, the keroncong as a genre is used as an umbrella

¹⁴ According to Kornhauser (1978: 145), a keroncong baru song also usually includes instruments such as trumpet, clarinet and saxophone. She points out that Kusbini's differentiation between keroncong asli and keroncong baru creates "unnecessary problems" when trying to classify songs that have characteristics that overlap between the subgenres, for instance a keroncong song with set melody and text (as in keroncong baru) yet is performed by a singer who improvises extra verses and melody.

¹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of keroncong's musical structure see chapter 7.

¹⁶ Yampolsky (1991:2) argues that this basic chordal structure (I, V, II, V, IV) is a formula keroncong musicians have used for at least the last one hundred years and possibly longer.

term incorporating each of these three different forms. Most keroncong asli compositions date back to the 1940s or later and consist of 16 bars, in ABAB form. *Stambul*, in the early twentieth century was a music different from keroncong sung in popular theater known as *Komedie Stambul*. Although early 78rpm recordings of stambul incorporate a wide range of instruments and sound like “European ditties and drinking songs,” by the 1930s, much of the stambul repertoire was absorbed into the keroncong idiom and performed using keroncong instrumentation (Yampolsky 1991:3). Langgam keroncong is a “catch all” category used for songs that fall neither into the keroncong asli or stambul category—these songs consist of 32 bars and are usually structured in AABA form, similar to most Western popular songs. The most popular keroncong songs also fall into the langgam category, including the genre’s most famous song, *Bengawan Solo* (ibid). Songs outside the keroncong repertoire, ranging from Western pop to dangdut and other Indonesian regional songs, are also included in this category when they are performed in the keroncong idiom (ie. “keroncongized” or adapted to keroncong style). Langgam’s flexibility has kept keroncong current and pertinent by allowing musicians to incorporate songs from outside the genre. While the majority of keroncong asli and stambul songs are associated with a specific era in keroncong’s history, langgam’s repertoire expands every year as many bands adapt the latest pop hits from Indonesia and beyond.

Moving Inland, Javanizing Keroncong

As keroncong's popularity spread outward from the urban center of Jakarta to the smaller cities and villages of central Java, a regional form of keroncong, called *langgam jawa*, emerged.¹⁷ This new subgenre incorporated the instrumentation and idiom of keroncong played in an approximation of the *pelog* scale used in Javanese gamelan—in this sense *langgam jawa* evokes gamelan without adhering to its formal structure or musical principles. Unlike in keroncong asli, violin and flute melodies in *langgam jawa* are inspired by the Javanese modal scale rather than Western harmonies. Instruments such as the *cak* replicate the elaborating lines played on the *siter*, a small zither-like instrument in Javanese gamelan, while the cello evokes the rhythmic patterns and sounds of *kendang* and *ciblon* drumming—adding the techniques of slapping and tapping the cello's body not previously found in keroncong.¹⁸ Yampolsky (1991: 3) argues that *langgam jawa* represents “more an adaptation of the keroncong ensemble to the Javanese style than the other way around...and is therefore embedded in the style of an assertion of pride in Javanese culture—albeit a qualified pride, since the instruments are not in fact those of the gamelan.”

Langgam jawa's emergence in the 1950s and 60s, centered in Waldjinah's hometown of Solo in Central Java, parallels her own rise as a vocalist from pre-teen

¹⁷ The term “central Java” here refers to a geographical region of Java which includes both the provinces of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, or DIY) and Central Java, which includes the city of Solo.

¹⁸ The *siter* is a smaller, more portable version of the *celempung*, a zither-like instrument used in gamelan. Often Javanese people will refer to the *celempung* but it is actually not common in most gamelans, what they are actually referring to is the *siter*.

phenomenon to national prominence as a professional recording artist. Although she was certainly not the first langgam jawa vocalist, her rise to fame in the 1960s brought this regional variation of keroncong to the widespread attention of a national audience. Likewise, the Javanization of keroncong was also concurrent with the Javanization of national culture, especially during the more than thirty year rule of Indonesia's second president, Suharto (a period known as the New Order). The opposite effect appears to also have taken place in central Java where langgam jawa's popularity enhanced keroncong's appeal generally, with groups that played a mix of keroncong asli and langgam jawa sprouting up in neighborhoods around cities like Yogyakarta and Solo (ibid). The impact of keroncong moving inland during this period continues to be felt today. As musicians informed me, only three cities in Indonesia, namely Jakarta, Solo and Yogyakarta, have continuously broadcasted weekly television programs featuring live keroncong performances. As keroncong became more Javanized, it also became increasingly popular, especially in Yogyakarta, Central and East Java, more so than in other regions of Indonesia. During the time I conducted fieldwork from 2011 to 2013, many of the keroncong musicians I encountered, even the ones living in Jakarta, Bandung and Sumatra, originally grew up in central Java. A significant reason for keroncong's popularity in Central and East Java was a shift in language from Indonesian to Javanese as it moved inland, creating a sizeable market for performers like Waldjinhah. Song lyrics in Javanese helped to move langgam jawa away from influences of the Malay *pantun* form toward Javanese poetic forms along with added musical elements, such as

the extended vocal introductions heard in most classic langgam jawa pieces which resemble the *bawaswara* introduction heard in Javanese gamelan. Javanized aspects of keroncong, however, were not necessarily based on a conscious executive decision to move keroncong inland in order to appeal to a Javanese audience. Instead these developments took shape within the context of other emerging forms of communication and transportation technologies, such as radio, railways and cars, in the late Dutch colonial period (Mrazek 2002: 11-13). Indonesians embraced these technologies, and physical movement across Java, especially by rail, accelerated to a rate that alarmed some Dutch officials, who feared a potential destabilizing impact on their plans of empire (ibid). Early radio also played an important role in the spread of keroncong, which was programmed on *Nirom*, the main colonial Indies radio broadcast. Some scholars have argued that it was radio during the late 1930s and 1940s that helped keroncong become the dominant Indonesian national and nationalist music.¹⁹ It is to these technologies that I now turn.

Technologies of Keroncong

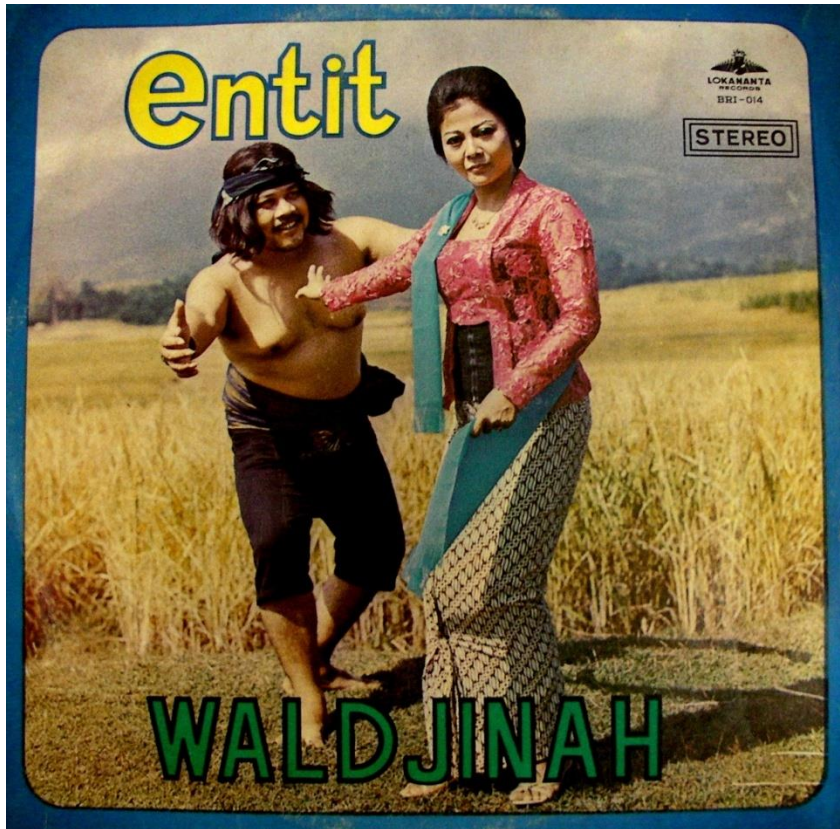
Waldjajah's popularity during the 1960s and 70s came within the context of keroncong's rising popularity across central and East Java. Musicians I met recounted

¹⁹ Rudolf Mrazek (2002: 180) makes this argument, along with Kenji Tsuchiya (1987) and Adrian Vickers (2007). Mrazek also points out that 81 percent of *Nirom* radio broadcasts in 1939 were devoted to playing music, which consisted of "light classics" or "light music and cabaret" selected by radio officials themselves. Keroncong consistently fit this programming format.

stories of how they along with their neighbors gathered around a communal radio, eagerly waiting to hear Waldjinh's latest song. Of her numerous recordings for Lokananta, Indonesia's first national record label, many are now considered langgam jawa classics. Earlier on however, these recordings introduced this subgenre to new audiences, many of whom remain loyal to her until today. Her base of support was (and continues to be) comprised mainly of Javanese-speaking fans in the provinces of Central and East Java—especially fitting given that the majority of her recordings, even the ones on Lokananta, are in Javanese.²⁰ Although initially released on vinyl recordings from the 1950s to late 1960s, some of them became available on the popular cassette format when they were later rereleased in the 1980s and 1990s. As late as the 1990s, cassettes continued to be the best selling format in Indonesia, far outselling the more expensive digital compact discs.²¹

²⁰ Waldjinh's langgam jawa songs, based on my own account, are nearly always sung in Javanese while her keroncong asli songs generally are sung in Indonesian—although she has released keroncong asli albums that contain songs in Javanese. These Javanese keroncong asli songs are usually featured on releases by regional cassette labels, such as Nirwana.

²¹ See Wallach 2002: 86



1.4 *Entit* LP cover on Lokananta Records, released in 1971. Photo by the author.



1.5 *Katju Biru*, another of Waldjinah's classic LPs on Lokananta, released in 1971. Photo by the author.

Downloading free mp3 files on the internet and purchasing pirated mp3 files on CD compilations is the most popular method of obtaining music in Indonesia currently, especially among teenagers and young adults. Legally produced compact discs and cassettes, however, are still available, especially keroncong reissues and compilations of more popular artists like Waldjinah, Sundari Soekotjo, Hetty Koes Endang and Gesang,

which usually sold for around Rp. 25,000 to 50,000 (about US\$3 to \$6).²² Most keroncong fans today are of older generations and are the target audience for these CD recordings. Based on my own observations, none of the major record labels in Indonesia currently release keroncong and only a handful of smaller labels do, almost none of which are releases of new or lesser known artists. In fact, few keroncong artists and bands now release albums at all, those that do are generally self-released and self-funded, meaning they are not affiliated with a record label nor do they have formal distribution. Some musicians complained that major labels generally consider the keroncong market to be shrinking and unprofitable, primarily because its audience is literally “dying off,” as one informant put it, while labels that do release keroncong usually pay small fixed advances without the prospect of any future royalties.²³

Jakarta-based label Gema Nada Pertiwi (GNP) founded in 1985 by the late Chinese-Indonesian record producer, businessman and keroncong aficionado, Hendarmin Susilo, is one of the only labels currently releasing keroncong with distribution networks across Indonesia.²⁴ Older labels with a national presence like

²² Hetty Koes Endang and Sundari Soekotjo, as some musicians have pointed out to me, are actually pop-oriented singers, however both have also have an extensive catalog of keroncong recordings and are for the most part considered to be keroncong singers by most Indonesians.

²³ Interviews with Andre Michiels, 16 February 2013 and Adi Wiratmo, 7 March 2012.

²⁴ Gema Nada Pertiwi was initially called Hins Collection, a company founded in 1970 by Hendarmin Susilo. Pak Hendarmin ran the company until he passed away in January 2013 and has been succeeded by his son, Djaka. Their releases on cassette, CD, VCD and DVD are distributed through networks of local/regional distributors (“resellers”) in North Sumatra, Lampung, West Sumatra, Batam, Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, East Java, Surakarta (Solo), Yogyakarta, South Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, North Sulawesi and Bali. These local distributors also sell to smaller “resellers” in Nusa Tenggara, West Papua and small cities in the outlying islands--GNP previously had distribution in West Kalimantan, South

Lokananta, based in Solo, or Remaco in Jakarta along with regional labels, like Kusuma in Klaten (Central Java), have also recently begun reissuing some of their keroncong back catalog on CD format, although on a much smaller scale. Video compact discs (or VCDs) for karaoke have recently emerged as a popular medium in the keroncong market, while the format experienced a significant spike in sales in recent years, it has since leveled off.²⁵ Although most current releases are on CD, cassettes continue to represent a significant portion of the section devoted to keroncong and dangdut in the small, independently owned record shops I visited. Part of the reason for this may be the continuing effects of the “class-inflected status hierarchy of musical genres” that Jeremy Wallach (2002: 85) describes in his study of cassette retail shops in the late 1990s. According to Wallach, the Indonesian popular music market is viewed not as an entity of undifferentiated mass consumers but instead as a ladder of different socioeconomic classes. Western music and upmarket Indonesian pop occupy the upper echelons of this ladder, often consumed in urban areas, while the lower rungs are occupied by

Sumatra, Riau and Ambon but a sharp decline in the number of record stores in these areas (and in Indonesia generally) ceased distribution. In addition to these local distribution networks, GNP products are also in the largest music chain stores in Indonesia, including Disc Tarra (over 100 stores in nearly every province in Indonesia), Music Plus, Duta Suara, Harika, Demajors and Pendopo. In 2005, they began making their catalog, including keroncong recordings, available in digital format online through iTunes and Amazon, and their online presence expanded in 2011 with distribution through Nokia Music, Deezer, Spotify and Pandora. Internet download sites have allowed their music to be purchased globally in the USA, Australia, Europe, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and other countries (personal correspondence with Djakawinata Susilo, 4 March 2014).

²⁵ Cd and tape shops I visited all carried keroncong VCDs of the popular singers (some had a wider selection than others), Popeye’s Records on Jalan Mataram in Yogyakarta mentioned that their keroncong VCDs continue to outsell the Cds and tapes—however, sales are less brisk than in recent years.

sentimental, melodramatic pop and *dangdut*.²⁶ Age and generational preference also factor into patterns of consumption and marketing, as I mentioned, for genres like keroncong, the majority of consumers today are of older generations who grew up listening to it via the radio and/or older recordings.²⁷

Consumers of keroncong, at this point, run the gamut of age and socioeconomic background, and CD's are generally geared toward wealthier, urban fans while the more affordable cassette format are intended for everyone else. Whenever I visited record stores, it was hard not to notice that the variety of artists released on cassette far outnumbered those on CD—the cassettes generally also were more visually appealing in terms of their colorfully designed cover art. In this sense, keroncong cassettes remain the domain of small labels, whose releases are comprised primarily of lesser known local or regional artists. These labels cater not only to audiences on lower ends of the socioeconomic spectrum but also to fans whose tastes and interests surpass the limited choices offered by labels that release primarily on CD format. While standing in line to pay at a record store in Yogyakarta, I chatted with a middle-aged male customer who

²⁶ *Dangdut* is another immensely popular form of Indonesian popular music blending influences from Indian Bollywood film music, *orkes melayu* music, and Western rock. I will discuss this music later on in this chapter.

²⁷ This is not to suggest that a market for keroncong among teenagers and young adults does not readily exist today. Some musicians have mentioned (and I agree somewhat) that if effectively marketed, keroncong could find a niche among young audiences who enjoy sentimental, soft (or even “indie”) rock or pop commonly heard in Indonesia. Bondan Prakoso and Fade2Black's hit song, “Kroncong Protokol,” exemplified possibilities but instead the song became just a passing fad. It was interesting to see that few, if any, singers on the popular TV show “Indonesian Idol” (based on the globally popular “American Idol” vocal competition) sang regional songs (*lagu daerah*) and not one performed a keroncong song—the vast majority sang Western or Indonesian pop hits. While this may have been at least in part due to restrictions by producers, it appeared that keroncong songs could easily have been adapted to this pop music competition.

told me he shopped for cassettes, in addition to CDs, because the cassette section contained albums not yet available on CD (or may never be available on CD).

This is especially true for vocalists with large back catalogs, like Waldjinhah. Over the course of her career, she has recorded for nationally recognized labels like Lokananta and Gema Nada Pertiwi, and if there were a keroncong “canon,” many of her recordings would likely be included. Lesser known recordings, not necessarily lacking in quality, have been released on dozens of smaller record labels including Puspita, Wisanda, Samudera and Nirwana. Although Waldjinhah may have become famous through touring and for her recordings on nationally distributed labels, her fan base and popularity were built by the numerous releases for small regional labels. The majority of which were based in towns across central Java and were part of an emerging cassette industry. In India, Peter Manuel (1991: 190-192) writes that by the early 1980s, cassettes had appeared in such quantity that they effectively restructured the entire music industry, accounting for ninety-five percent of the recorded music market and leaving vinyl records to wealthy audiophiles, radio stations and cassette pirates, who preferred them as masters. Besides advantages for consumers (in terms of portability, affordability, durability), the relatively low expense of cassette technology also meant lower production costs enabling, according to Manuel, the proliferation of small, “cottage” cassette companies specializing in local or regional markets. Unlike the major labels that focused on creating mass homogeneous markets, smaller labels catered to a

diverse range of musical interest while targeting specific audiences based on class, age, gender, ethnicity, region and in some cases, even occupation.

An increasingly competitive cassette industry also developed in Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia around the same time (Wong 1989, Sutton 1985). Despite the benefits, cassettes opened up an entire industry of piracy, simultaneously creating a proliferation of recorded music available to Indonesians that also undermined the local recording industry. From its inception, the industry in Indonesia, similar to other countries, took on a regionalized approach giving rise to small, local record companies that encouraged regional musics and local markets, especially in places like Java and Sumatra.²⁸ This phenomena is especially evident in Waldjinhah's catalog of recordings, the overwhelming majority of which were either released or reissued on cassettes beginning in the early 1980s.

Conclusion: Finding Regional and National Audiences

Waldjinhah once described herself to me in passing as a "regional singer who had found the national stage." Although I did not think much about her comment at the time, it later made me think about how she distinguished between her identity as a regional singer, who specialized in Javanese songs versus the performer who brought her music to a national audience beyond Java or ethnic Javanese. If the question, however, is about how she managed to reach a national audience, the answer includes a

²⁸ See also Suryadi 2002.

range of factors: sheer talent, a strong work ethic, an attractive physical appearance, support from the state apparatus and technological developments, such as cassettes, which allowed a music genre with a rich repertoire to be marketed to a broader geographic and more socioeconomically diverse audience. For these and other reasons, Waldjinhah became the voice (and face) of Javanese style keroncong. She also benefitted from belonging to the largest and most dominant ethnic group in Indonesia. When I asked if she ever felt like she needed to appeal to a larger audience by singing more songs in Indonesian (as opposed to Javanese), her answer was an unequivocal “no.” I was somewhat surprised by her curt reply and asked her to explain her answer.

My audiences have always come to me, I haven't gone to them. They understand that when I sing, no matter what language I use, I try to do it in a genuine way. I think that's why they like me, even if they don't necessarily understand the lyrics. Besides, why do I need to find a larger audience when there are already so many Javanese people living all over Indonesia? Wherever I've toured, people come out to watch because either they've heard of me or maybe they're just curious...but most of the audience is always (comprised of) Javanese people. I don't need to find a larger audience because the Transmigration Program already did it for me, everywhere I go.

Regional musics usually target consumers located in a specific region or belong to a specific ethnic group, rather than at Indonesians generally (Yampolsky 1989: 12-13).

Lyrics are often in a “local” or “ethnic” language while musical idiom hints at the residual music-making practices of that particular region. They may also aid in consolidating a collective identity by stressing a group’s historical tradition and invoking a shared past (Barendregt and van Zanten 2002: 4). The “regional artist,” as a discursive label, can also be limiting in numerous ways. Especially since these artists tend to be marketed within the constraints of genre, geography and ethnicity and not necessarily toward a “national audience.”

Although Waldjinhah may identify as “regional singer,” the circumstances of her fame differ substantially from most other regional artists and cast doubt as to whether this label truly applies to her at all. In popularizing langgam jawa she certainly became an icon of “Javaneseness,” especially in her vocal technique and instrumental approximations of gamelan. Langgam jawa, however, is still generally considered to be a subgenre of keroncong, a nationalized music. As an artist, Waldjinhah confounds the boundaries between the regional and the national by concurrently identifying as a keroncong singer who specializes in langgam jawa. As a keroncong singer, she has been on the “national stage” since winning Radio Republic Indonesia’s (RRI) *Bintang Radio* (Radio Star) competition in 1958. This does not automatically discount, however, her assertion to regional identity not only as a Javanese artist but more specifically as a Javanese artist from city of Solo.

Chapter 2

Voices of Development: Keroncong Modernities and the Postcolonial Nation

It's as if the world is a wheel, turning and turning as it goes...

From "Kr. Roda Dunia (Keroncong Wheels of the World),"
composed by Gesang in 1939

Waljdinah's fan base consists primarily of older generation Javanese speakers living in the provinces of Central and East Java. One reason for her sustained popularity over the years, however, has been because of large diasporic Javanese populations creating markets for keroncong and langgam jawa on islands outside of Java. As she alluded to in the previous chapter, the Transmigration Program, initiated by the Dutch in the early twentieth century and continued by the Indonesian government after independence, had the objective of moving millions of Indonesians from the heavily populated islands (Java, Bali, Madura) to less populated ones. The goal was to alleviate poverty by distributing land and providing new opportunities to generate income for poor landless settlers and exploit the "economic potential" of the outer islands. Under Suharto's New Order regime, with financial support from the World Bank and other bilateral donors, the program increased dramatically and large numbers of people were moved to Kalimantan, Sumatra, Sulawesi, Maluku and West Papua. New Order development programs to a large extent replicated the techniques of their colonial predecessors, often involving resettlement, forest enclosure and the intensification of

agriculture (Li 2007: 78-79).²⁹ In some cases, labels such as *masyarakat terasing* (isolated or estranged people) were used by the New Order to describe “deficient hill farmers” living in rural highland areas (often on outer islands), inserting a social and cultural divide between them and “ordinary Indonesians.” New Order officials asserted that the presence of these estranged people inhibited the overall image of national development. Therefore, they were included in a list of other deficient subjects requiring normalization under the paternalistic care of the Department of Social Affairs (Depsos)—a list that included prostitutes, orphans, and the disabled (ibid).

Although the conditions of transmigrants were somewhat different, they also represented a type of estranged population under New Order development programs. Transmigration, as Brian A. Hoey (2003: 110) suggests, was also “a way to promote a nationalist vision and narrative of territory and culture through deliberate community building in the name of development and progress.” Anecdotal evidence from musicians I spoke with supports the idea that the spread of *keroncong* to outlying islands was part of the project to construct a homogenizing national (and Javanese-centered) culture through, what Hoey refers to as, socially constructed “spaces of dislocation” that encouraged citizens to deemphasize (or even relinquish) ethnic identities for an imagined one as “Indonesians.” *Keroncong*, a music foreign to these outlying islands, was associated primarily with the Javanese settlers (*pendatang*) and

²⁹ By 1906, colonial officials in Central Sulawesi, such as Assistant Resident W.G. Englenberg, established a rationale for conquest with the expressed goal of not only teaching Natives how to live better but also to govern—Englenberg wrote, “I foresee our task as that of educators...I seek to bring here the power of self-determination” (Li 2007: 69).

their communities. As an example of encounter, John Maury, a civil servant and former keroncong vocalist from West Papua, who was also happened to be my neighbor in Yogyakarta, told me that he first learned keroncong in the early 1970s from Javanese civil servants working in West Papuan regional government office. After “developing” his voice, Pak John was encouraged by friends to sign up for the highly anticipated local *Jayapura Bintang Radio* keroncong vocal competition, which he ended up winning, providing him an all expenses paid trip to Jakarta for the national competition and his first trip outside West Papua.³⁰ Pak John’s story is interesting on a number of levels. Firstly, it characterizes how many Indonesians living outside of Java learned to sing, play, listen to and, in some cases, simply enjoy keroncong, a music new and unfamiliar to some of them. Similar to Pak John, these experiences of encounter happened through the apparatus of the state. His story also alludes to ways that some Indonesians, in the years immediately following independence, were being incorporated into a rapidly evolving narrative of the nation—one that simultaneously promoted “tradition” while eradicating cultural difference. This narrative, of course, included its silences—for instance, racism in the distrust of certain minority ethnic groups such as Chinese Indonesians and Papuans, who, despite being Indonesian citizens, were relegated to the margins of “belonging.”³¹ The historical narrative of keroncong was also informed by

³⁰ Interview with John Maury, 9 November 2012.

³¹ Chinese Indonesians, despite, in some cases, having lived in Indonesia for many generations, periodically experienced violence across various regimes, rulers and political models (see Purdey 2006: 2-5). Violence against Chinese Indonesians has often coincided with particular periods of social, political

these silences, especially in the ways that the contributions of Chinese Indonesian musicians have been overlooked or else obscured. The narrative Waldjinh constructed also suggests elements of racist thinking, especially in particular instances when she made passing remarks about fearing Papuan immigrants in Solo and her reluctance to perform in the province of West Papua. While her sentiments are not entirely uncommon, especially among some Javanese people, her narrative suggests a predominantly Javanese-centric view of the nation and its expressive culture.

The “development” of voice in this case also conveys this narrative, especially in how “development (*pembangunan*),” as a term in Indonesia, had (and continues to have) highly-charged and contested interpretations associating it with New Order-era rhetoric of modernization, economic progress and political and social stability. Developing one’s voice, in this case, corresponds with becoming a “voice of development”—a voice not of antiquated ritual and unchanged lifeways, considered by the New Order as an impediment to socioeconomic advancement, but instead one of an envisioned “progress.” If Pak John exemplified this voice, then so did Waldjinh.

This chapter, and the remainder of this dissertation, explores how developments in the life and career of Waldjinh, as well as in the *keroncong* genre, have paralleled Indonesia’s emergence as a modern and modernizing nation in the postcolonial era.

and economic change at the national level but also has been driven by local concerns and conflicts (*ibid*). Most Chinese Indonesians are primarily engaged in trade and commerce, and although they only comprise around two percent of Indonesia’s total population, they control the vast majority of the country’s private business capital (as is true in some other Southeast Asian countries as well). They also tend to follow Christianity, Buddhism or Confucianism rather than the majority religion, Islam. Along with religious differences, symbols of wealth also mark their “foreignness” and have led to them becoming targets of violence and discrimination at various points in Indonesia’s history.

Much has been written, at this point, about modernization as a function of economic development, technological indicators and state formation, some of it leading to abstract generalizations and metanarratives about what constitutes “the modern” and how it can be successfully achieved. Looking beyond such narratives and more closely at what Habermas (1990) refers to as “communicative lifeworlds,” I am interested in how the lives of Waldjinhah and other keroncong musicians have been implicated in distinctly Indonesian aspects of modernization. Drawing from Suzanne Brenner’s (1997: 8) study of a community of batik-makers in Laweyan, a district in central Solo coincidentally located not far from Waldjinhah’s home, I examine “modernity” and processes of modernization “from the inside out,” showing how intimate aspects of Waldjinhah’s personal life and career as a performer are deeply interwoven with modernizing, gendered forces of capitalism, religion and the state. Blurring the gendered spheres of “public and private” and “family and economy” that Brenner argues are so closely wedded to Western ideas of modernity, I examine the intersections of Waldjinhah’s quotidian roles, as mother, wife, professional artist and public figure, in order to understand how and why they correlate and negotiate abstract forces of capital and state. Brenner’s discussion of Laweyan’s museum-like qualities, a site of transformation, which once represented a modern mix of Javanese and European in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to a site of nostalgia, also informs the ways I am thinking about keroncong and how it now engenders a similar convoluted

nostalgia for a romanticized “*Tempo Doeloe*” (literally the “Old Times”), associated with the late period of colonial rule and incipient Indonesian nationalism.

The process of reconfiguring a music as an object of nostalgia is never a politically benign project and raises important questions as to what happens when nostalgia replaces the “development” of a genre. The most urgent being: who exactly is doing the remembering? Christine Yano (2002: 4-6) observes that musics representing a national self-image are also representational of a collective imagination—an imagination that glosses over and masks parts of the national self in order to shape a homogeneous whole. Yano (2002: 15) argues that national(ist) musics, like *enka* in Japan, encode within nostalgia a historical moment of self-reflexivity, distancing the present from the past while firmly placing the past in the present. *Enka* becomes nostalgia compartmentalized, assigned a place and categorically separated as something “Japanese” rather than “Western.” As opposed to *enka*, nostalgic aspects associated with *keroncong* in Indonesia are slightly more difficult to compartmentalize, and while the genre is distinctly Indonesian, its “Western-ness,” especially in terms of instrumentation and ties to the colonial period, remain at the forefront of how it is understood today. Historically speaking, as I mentioned earlier, *keroncong* has been a socially and ethnically ambiguous music, thought of as a seamless blending of elements East and West. Although many Indonesians generally consider it a music of Indonesia, its “Portuguese” origins and Western instrumentation are usually brought up when musicians and fans describe *keroncong*, which in interesting ways continues to attach a

sense of “hybrid” foreignness to this music. Historical self-reflexivity evokes a keroncong past that not only recalls Indonesia’s struggle for self-determination but also one that conjures European specters that situate keroncong within the milieu of the colonial Dutch era.

An Issue of “Hybridity”

In 1934, ethnomusicologist Jaap Kunst, in his seminal book *Music of Java*, unforgivingly described keroncong as “a degenerate *hybrid*. . . whose monotonous and characterless wail.... causes Javanese to become more and more estranged from their own art” (Kunst 1974: 375). While Kunst’s disdain for the syncretic qualities of keroncong was based on his belief in the existence of a pure and authentic Javanese music, his dismissal of it had an enduring effect, causing Western scholars to overlook or dismiss keroncong and perhaps other musics they deemed “hybrid.” Kunst’s use of the term “hybrid” was a precursor to its emergence in Western scholarship, especially in the 1990s, and its widespread use in popular culture. “Hybrids” have become seemingly ubiquitous, attributed to an array of objects and ideas in technology, religion, music, ethnicity, identity and so on. The word has taken on a celebratory tone upholding the agency created in “hybrid moments” without considering its limited potential for political empowerment, and at this point its use is so extensive that much of its meaning has been lost, or more accurately, the term has taken on so many meanings as to now

become a “floating signifier.”³² This also has become evident in recent musical scholarship where the term “hybrid” is frequently used in cursory ways to describe musical elements without elaborating on how these processes of syncretism actually work. Sarah Weiss, in discussing music in a production of *I La Galigo*, an Indonesian play, correctly points out that it is “a political act to enjoy a hybrid (Weiss 2008: 205).” I take her assertion a step further and suggest that it is also a political act to label a music hybrid—especially in a Southeast Asian context. This region has long been recognized as the crossroads to the world’s maritime trade, where openness to an influx of foreign and transregional elements (particularly in the arts) historically, whether from India, China, Europe, the Middle East or the United States, has been especially prevalent and intense. Scholars have argued the importance, in evaluating these influences, of understanding how the foreign has been deeply localized so as to reshape and recontextualize it into something demonstrably “Southeast Asian” (Reynolds 2006, Day 2002, Wolters 1999, Winichakul 1997).

In understanding the politics of hybridity, Bakhtin’s (1981) work in linguistics is especially significant, particularly where he delineates two forms of hybridity, in a philological sense. The first described as a process of “organic hybridization” or one that does not disrupt the sense of order and continuity: new images, words, objects, are integrated into language or culture unconsciously (Werbner 1997: 5). In a performance context, Weiss explains it as performers “cannibalizing” aspects of other genres over

³² See Kraidy 2007, Garcia Canclini 2005

long periods of co-existence resulting in a “new” performance genre that resembles neither of its “parent genres” and at some point in the history of its development could be considered a genre or style on its own (Weiss 2008: 206). The second is an “intentional hybrid” in the sense that it creates an ironic “double consciousness” setting different points of view against each other in a conflictual structure.³³ This juxtaposition of at least two differing genres or culturally disparate ideas, Weiss observes, results in hybridizations that do not “herald long term genre development except as a kind in and of itself without the specifics of the cultural fusion determined—an overarching genre called interculturalism (ibid).”

She offers up keroncong as an example of the first category: “organic hybridization,” and in a number of ways this categorization makes sense—especially since the origins of keroncong’s hybrid (ie. non-Western) musical elements (ukulele strumming patterns, melodic lines on violin and flute, guitar figuration, incorporation of song repertoire from Komedi Stambul theater) have either been forgotten or are now primarily overlooked. Undoubtedly, keroncong is, and has been, a genre of its own for quite some time and perhaps more importantly, it is considered a distinctly Indonesian genre. And yet, on a discursive level, it retains a degree of foreignness not attributed to other Indonesian regional musics or court traditions, like gamelan, despite the fact that these also contain foreign elements and are hybrid in their own respects. Keroncong continues to be described in mass media sources, and even by some fans and musicians,

³³ See also Werbner 1997, Young 1995

as a music of “Portuguese” origin. In this sense it continues to be remembered as a cultural import inhabiting the liminal space between the binarial relationship of intentional and organic, or “native” and foreign. Accentuating its “Portugueseness” exemplifies what Homi Bhabha (2000:219) calls the *stubborn chunks* of hybrid hyphenation that “emphasize the incommensurable elements...as the basis of cultural identifications.” As Bhabha observes, the hybrid is never merely the product combining elements of foreign and familiar, but also an awareness of the untranslatable bits that linger on *in* translation and therefore represent an accumulation of identities (see Papastergiadis 1997: 278-9).³⁴ Rather than consider keroncong’s syncretism as “inferior,” as Kunst did or even “different,” I find it more useful to locate keroncong within the milieu of musics in Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia that are commonly characterized by their hybrid elements.

Modernities and Historical Processes

As a genre characterized by Western scholars as hybrid for its ability to localize the foreign, keroncong also offers insights into how processes of modernization in non-Western countries continue to complicate and disrupt previously held theoretical interpretations of modernity. Here I engage with scholars in a number of disciplines who have critiqued dominant narratives of modernity centered on conditions in Europe, while assuming global modernities to be the outcome of an even and simultaneous

³⁴ See Papastergiadis 1997: 278-9)

process everywhere. The debate over modernity, in most cases, has involved such high levels of abstraction as to make it nearly meaningless. Drawing from the works of revisionary modernists, Joel Kahn (2001: 7-11) argues that there can never be an abstract theory of modernity not “contaminated” by the cultural and historical contexts within which modernization takes place—the modern is embedded in the specific historical and cultural circumstances that we as analysts are just as bound up in context as the modern subjects of our inquiries. A “discovery” of culture in recent modernist theory, according to Kahn, represents a shift from an objective to a subjective emphasis—modern subjectivity becomes the focus of our understanding of the modern. Modernity, understood in this way, becomes as much a state of mind as a set of objective historical processes, and therefore the aesthetics of modernism, often considered a movement within the arts, construct modernity as much as modernity itself provides the conditions for modernism’s emergence (ibid). Rather than previous narratives positioning modernity as a single cultural movement characterized by rationalization, instrumentalization and commodification, modernity now emerges as a product of contradictory or conflicting cultural processes and symbols, creating the possibility of “multiple modernities” based on the challenges of modernizing processes outside the West. As Kahn (2001: 15-16) reminds us, the modern is everywhere embedded in particular historical, social and cultural contexts and always more than an objective social process (modernization) and/or a specific constellation of social forces

(modernity); it also refers to a state of human consciousness (modernism), “without which we could never speak of ourselves as moderns.”

In Indonesia, these processes carry over into the realm of religious and spiritual belief, and in various ways, religion, especially Islam, and projects of modernization are deeply intertwined. Different from the “faith in development” model that characterized the postcolonial histories of what were formerly referred to as developing nations, Daromir Rudnykyj (2010: 3-4) observes that recent efforts in Indonesia to merge Islamic practice with corporate norms instead represent a trend toward a “development of faith.” Developing faith represents what he calls, an “afterlife of development,” where neoliberal ideologies have resulted in a shift from modernization supported through state investment in the space of the nation to a market-based system catering to private transnational capital. This “afterlife” emerges as the consequence of post-Suharto failed schemes for national modernization where the state no longer functions as the principal agent responsible for improving the lives of its citizens. Developing faith in Indonesia has created a spiritual economy governing through affect and reframing the project of development away from large-scale industrial and technological investment to one premised on the individual religious practices of corporate workers. Islam, rather than the state, is substituted as the common denominator for subjects of the new spiritual economy, a project that, according Rudnykyj, precipitates tensions with Indonesia’s history of nationalist pluralism.

In a study of governmentality in the Central Sulawesi highlands, Tania Murray Li (2007) explores Indonesian modernity as it is formed through what she calls “the will to improve.” Li (2007:3-5) examines “improvement,” specifically through programs shaping Indonesia’s landscapes, livelihoods, and identities, and people who have occupied positions as trustees, defined as positions where those holding power claim to know how others should live, what is best for them and what they need—roles historically filled by colonial administrators, missionaries, politicians, international aid donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as specialists in agriculture, hygiene, conservation and so on. Drawing from Gramsci and Foucault, Li (2007: 24-26) points out that improvement has not necessarily been imposed on Indonesians and cites examples of villagers creating localized identities based on ideas learned from NGOs in order to make sense of their own situation, organize and locate allies and opponents. This “multiplicity of power,” neither totalizing nor seamless, according to Li, can inadvertently stimulate political challenge and adds to our understanding of non-Western modernities, especially in “the many ways that practices position people, the various modes ‘playing across one another’ (that) produce gaps and contradictions (ibid).”

Current conditions of global modernities do not to imply, however, that “provincializing” histories and thought from Europe (and the United States) requires

discarding or flatly rejecting them, rather it is a project of decentering. As Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000:16) memorably writes,

“European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought—which is now everybody’s heritage and which affect us all—may be renewed from and for the margins.

As postcolonial scholarship has shown, both the “margins” and the “Europe” in question are far from monolithic entities, differing in appearance based on experiences with colonialization or inferiorization in specific parts of the world. While different geographies of colonialism have alluded to multiple “Europes,” the overarching problem of getting beyond Eurocentric histories remains a shared problem across geographical regions (ibid). Keroncong’s history is richly filled with the specters of its “European” pasts, and these stubborn chunks undoubtedly remain identical with the genre in a number of ways. The focus of understanding the sociocultural place of keroncong, at this point however, should be less about its perceived foreignness or presumed origins in “Portuguese” music and more about the processes that have shaped it into a distinctly Indonesian, or even maritime Southeast Asian, music. At the same time,

keroncong's history has never been entirely external from other histories it has been enmeshed in, among them histories of colonialism and transnational musical flows.

The success of artists such as Waldjinhah and the emergence of a subgenre like langgam jawa demonstrated how musicians recontextualized and localized keroncong as its popularity spread to inland Java. Keroncong's syncretic qualities, namely its ability to seamlessly incorporate both "Western" and "local" elements, along with its entrance into the realm of Indonesian popular music in the early half of the twentieth century positioned it as a vehicle Indonesian nationalists would use to construct and modernize the newly independent nation. By approaching "the modern" through cultural production rather than political economy, I examine how a renowned musician like Waldjinhah, similar to Indonesian popular theater and photographic technology, helped to bind and shape the imagined community of the modern nation by giving tangible form to the abstract idea of a national culture. In her study of photographic technologies in Java, Karen Strassler (2010: 13) examines how the concepts of "modernity" and "nation" became so entangled as to make the two nearly indistinguishable during the late colonial period—technologies, such as photography, became "emblems of modernity and mediators of new kinds of social relations and imaginaries that gave rise to national communities." Although photographic technologies represented the tensions between the globalized scope of modernity and territorialized ambitions of nationhood, they also were seen as a lingua franca that "would offer perfect translatability and open transmission, a medium ideally suited for a

new orientation to the globalized world of modernity and away from the closed boundaries, rigid hierarchies and fixed identities of “traditional” and “colonial” society. The *lingua franca*, as a power used to solidify the imagined community, also establishes visual and tangible form to national spaces, subjects and narratives.

Similar to photographic technology and the Malay language, keroncong’s role as a musical lingua franca gave audible form to what the imagined community and modern nation would sound like. While photographic genres cultivated distinctive visualities or “ways of seeing,” I propose that the emergence of musical genres, like keroncong, suggest the existence of particular “audalities,” or ways of listening to particular timbres, instrumentation, rhythms and syncretized musical elements enabling Indonesians to listen to the emerging nation. In the context of Indonesian popular music, scholars have argued that music generally signifies either a local (ie. ethnic or regional) or a national identity (see Weintraub 2010, Hatch 1985). Characteristics of nationalized popular musics include criteria such as: lyrics in the national language (Indonesian), musical elements (instrumentation, tuning, timbre, melody, rhythm) based on “Western” models, and recordings produced in Jakarta and distributed through nationalized media networks. Andrew Weintraub (2010: 19) notes that nationalized art forms like *dangdut*, *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet theater) and keroncong tend to originate from elsewhere and as I discussed earlier, national musics cross ethnolinguistic lines in ways that regional or local musics do not, especially given that regional musics are performed in local languages, incorporate indigenous musical elements and are

often produced locally for specific markets. Beyond merely signifying, national musics also produce the affiliations that become symbolic markers of national identity (ibid). Weintraub suggests that the politics of center and periphery govern the production of Indonesian national culture where art forms emanating from the capital city of Jakarta filter outward. In this model, a nationalized music like dangdut, “due to its hegemonic force in media...maneuvered in such a way as to threaten and displace local music, exerting a homogenizing force in the realm of culture...like the national language (*Bahasa Indonesia*), people began speaking the same musical ‘language’ (Weintraub 2010: 20).” As Waldjinh’s case suggests however, the center/periphery politics described above are intertwined with (and complicated by) the identity politics of a performer who has consciously blurred boundaries of regional and national culture. Although Waldjinh’s performances and recordings in Jakarta helped to establish her as a “national” performer, she continued to assert a strong “regional” identity in various ways over the course of her career.³⁵

Ties That Bind: Keroncong, Dangdut and Colonial Era Popular Theater

Dangdut and keroncong are aesthetically quite different from each other.

Originating in Malay band music (known as *orkes Melayu*), dangdut first emerged in the 1950s, as Indonesian composers transitioned from the four line verses of the Malay *pantun* poetic form, based on metaphor, allusion and language play, to a narrative style

³⁵ I discuss this further in Chapter 7.

creating character and situations in song common in Indian film songs (see Frederick 1982). Dangdut bands today incorporate instrumentation associated with Western rock: electric guitar, keyboard, bass and a drum kit, but also include *gendang* (a double-headed drum used to approximate the sound of the tabla in Indian film songs), *suling* (an end-blown bamboo flute), and sometimes a mandolin and tambourine. Dangdut seamlessly blends its influences to create a wildly distinctive sound driven by the percussive rhythms of the *gendang* and heavily distorted solos on the electric guitar. The genre, however, is known mostly for the stereotypes associated with its female singers, who tend to be young women dressed provocatively in colorful, form fitting outfits while gyrating their hips for predominantly male audiences. Aesthetic differences, along with other disparities relating to their historical development, seemingly position dangdut and keroncong on opposite ends of the Indonesian popular music spectrum, and I am not assuming here that the two are musically interrelated (although historical connections in *orkes melayu* may exist). Both genres do, however, share certain sociocultural similarities—as William H. Frederick (1997: 69) questions: “What is dangdut if not today’s keroncong?” Frederick argues that the two share common elements historically: both at one time were considered *kampung*, crossbred musics, scorned by intellectuals and the moneyed elite, and “more than a little sensuous (ibid).” Both keroncong and dangdut also spoke for the common folk and were (and continue to be) popular among this segment of the population.

Despite differences in context, both musics share roots in the urban underclass and have been vilified for associations with antisocial behavior and moral looseness at various points in their respective histories. Reports of frequent violence, drunkenness and debauchery at dangdut concerts (Weintraub 2010: 6) evoke the specters of vulgarity associated with keroncong in late nineteenth century as Indo (Eurasian) musicians wandered the late night streets of Batavia (ie. Jakarta) in small gangs committing petty crimes and picking fights while playing keroncong to woo neighborhood women, or perhaps even the milieu at Stamboel theater, which featured nightly keroncong performances along with drunken fistfights in the audience (Cohen 2006: 168, 206-7). These romanticized settings of early keroncong and Stamboel theater suggest that the two were enmeshed in social scenes that reflected and represented the underlying tensions and antisocial impulses in Batavian society (ibid). In one particular instance, rumors swirled that the Dutch government had banned keroncong in a colonial city, not because it was directly dangerous to the state but because it was harmful to peace and morality of that city—since it was considered the cause for abductions, killings, broken marriages and “broken souls” (Brandts-Buys 1921: 1-90).³⁶ These types of incidents depict keroncong pasts as something other than the “sanitized” and modernized genre it became around the time leading up to Indonesia’s independence, a music worthy of interest from elite audiences.

³⁶ Bronia Kornhauser (1978: 131) points out that even though Brandts-Buys did not place much truth to this rumor, his even mentioning it reveals the type of stigma associated with keroncong at the time.

Keroncong and dangdut also share similarities in their incorporation syncretic musical elements as well as their histories in cultural hybridity. Although other Indonesian musics also are involved in their own processes of “hybridization,” these two are often discursively distinguished by their respective “Portugueseness” or “Indianness,” often without qualification as to what these terms may mean or how they are currently reflected in these genres. Weintraub’s characterization of “Melayu” (another predecessor of dangdut) music as a flexible and constantly evolving framework also applies to keroncong. Dangdut and keroncong, as musical lingua francas, have helped to forge an imagined common national culture and identity, but more importantly these musics also provided subjects with specific “ways of listening” to the nation and to syncretic musical elements. Strassler (2010: 13-14) argues, in the context of photography, that the analytic of genre allows for a viewing of *both* material and historical coherence as a medium *and* a profound malleability that can be put into the service of different projects and social actors. These genres of photography therefore participate in globalized “visual economies” extending beyond the temporal and geographical boundaries of “Indonesia” while simultaneously being shaped by conditions and histories specific to postcolonial Java—it is through this specificity that popular envisionings of Indonesia are generated in turn making them “Indonesian” genres (ibid). The process of imagining “Indonesia” also includes listening to the localized, transnational and transregional flows circulating in the popular music landscape during this time. Although keroncong’s syncretic musical elements may

metaphorically allow for Indonesian inclusivity, its lyrics provide tangible examples of national imaginings along with narratives of modernization and the independence movement.

***Bengawan Solo* and Lyrical Constructions of “the Modern”**

Texts describing the historical grandeur of physical landforms (mountains, rivers, fields) elicit a sense of national pride in similar ways as songs about fallen soldiers or “love,” whether it applies to romantic love or to a love of country, are meant to. Ethnomusicologist Margaret Kartomi (1997: 86) describes how the lyrics to keroncong’s most famous song, *Bengawan Solo* (The Solo River) written by one of genre’s most prodigious composers, Gesang Martohartono, serve as a symbol of the people’s fortunes while speaking eloquently to their condition. The river flows through Central and East Java and has supported and sustained life since prehistoric times. It has long been used as a local trade route linking the fertile inland farmlands of Java with traders on the coasts while also bringing suffering and misery as a result of regular flooding. Kartomi describes how during the years of Japanese Occupation and the ensuing Indonesian Revolutionary struggle against the Dutch, the song reached national audiences through Republican and private radio stations. Indonesia’s first president Sukarno was even said to have told all Indonesian ambassadors during the 1950s to sing and promote the song in all of their overseas postings. Besides a simple yet catchy melody and flowing lyrical lines, *Bengawan Solo* employed familiar and “universal”

themes in its message—exalting landforms (a river and mountains), occupations (fishermen, traders) and seasons (dry/rainy) commonly understood and experienced by people across Indonesia. The song resonated with musicians and audiences in the vibrant, evolving artistic climate of the late 1930s, when live music in theater and in radio performances were encouraged. Keroncong spoke to the vitality of city and had the “buzz of modern life” (Vickers 2005: 69). Many young people formed bands and composed fresh new songs in the rapidly developing Indonesian language filling a dearth in repertoire—in this sense, songs like *Bengawan Solo* were satisfying a real need (Kartomi 1997: 89). Similarly, in Indonesian *teater*, a term used for theater informed by Western practices that developed in the urban centers of Java in the 1940s, Evan Winet explains that unlike other “modern” genres, such as Javanese *ketoprak* and *ludruk* or Betawi *lenong*, often performed in local ethnic languages, *teater* used the national Indonesian language “to claim a greater universality insofar as its Western roots are equally foreign to all (Winet 2010: xviii).”

While the exchange between foreign and familiar combined with universalities of language and lyrical themes enabled audiences to imagine “Indonesia” through keroncong songs like *Bengawan Solo*, questions remain as to how and why keroncong, rather than other regional “ethnic musics,” was promoted as a national culture, especially during the post-independence Sukarno era and subsequent New Order regime, both of whom focused on establishing unity through the formation of homogeneous political, social, developmental and cultural characteristics (see Reid

2012, Bertrand 2004). This “official culture” represented a form of exclusion often ill-received by segments of the general public, especially artists, intellectuals, “modernist” Muslims and minority ethnic groups who claimed it to be thinly veiled hegemonic Javanese culture and values (see Bogaerts and Raben 2012, Hefner 2005). The fall of Suharto and the New Order regime in 1998 resurrected many of the issues (and rifts) thought to have been resolved in previous years, leaving some Indonesians questioning the national model and its institutionalization.

During Suharto’s thirty-three year rule, words like *kesenian* (arts) and *kebudayaan* (culture) became very conspicuous in official presentations of the Indonesian nation. Scholars in recent years have begun to consider how inventions of “culture” and “tradition” fit into the national construct of “Indonesia” by focusing on ways that local traditions were integrated and adjusted into New Order political agendas so that they corresponded with state objectives shaping a national identity. Indonesia was presented on the world stage as a multicultural state considered the sum of its assorted cultures, and the performing arts were understood to be concrete manifestations of specific cultural traditions (Hellman 2003: 15). Establishing links between national identity, local cultures and the performing arts made it increasingly vital for the government to incorporate the arts into the context of nationalism. Strategies for development, including official policy towards culture, art, tradition, and national identity were articulated in five-year plans, under the acronym *Repelita*, stating that local cultural values may be “revitalized” by artistic exploration—the value system

encouraged for “preservation” and “revitalization” was also considered complimentary to broader state objectives toward development. The process of establishing certain art forms as national cultural traditions by the New Order was crucial to Indonesia’s reformulated national identity and such practices were promoted vigorously by the state both nationally and internationally (Larasati 2013: 6-7). These traditions were not only disseminated through national education curriculum but also through regional and national festivals and abroad where, as Rachmi Diyah Larasati (ibid) suggests, Indonesia’s renegotiation of its position on the international political stage involved “a strategic foregrounding of its cultural heritage,” which included, in many cases, using female dancers as vehicles of expression.

The term “development” (*pembangunan*) takes on complex and highly-charged multiple meanings in New Order Indonesia, signifying centralized policies applied to an array of conditions ranging from economics and technology to civil service and religion. In this sense, “development” usually was interpreted as necessitating change, or in other words, what was perceived as old or unchanged, was categorized broadly as undeveloped (Hoey 2003: 5). This applied especially to the realm of culture where “traditional” cultures and lifeways were often interpreted as signs of underdevelopment and formidable obstacles to socioeconomic advancement (ibid). New Order usage of “development” also ascribed to it a specific set of ideas guiding and regulating the actions of Suharto’s government—in this sense, the meaning of the word changed drastically during the New Order emphasizing a break from the past toward a man-

made, controlled and engineered construction of something new “which previously did not exist (Heryanto 1988: 12).” As the proclaimed “Father of Development,” Suharto embodied the semantic ambiguities of *pembangunan*—while he aspired to create an industrial economy and national identity, he also chose to avoid Western democracy and instead promoted the idea that “development” (and the value system he associated with it) had to be constructed based on the foundations of indigenous “traditions” (Hellman 2003:25). Suharto also implemented the doctrine of *dwi fungsi* (dual function), which established a permanent military influence on all levels of Indonesian government. *Dwi fungsi* essentially allowed the military to serve not only as defenders of the nation but also as a distinct political entity through the Golkar party, where high-ranking military officials were allowed to hold seats in the Indonesian parliament and other top level public offices as well as enter the business sector while still in service.

New Order support of local traditions continued previous Sukarno era policies promoting a national culture that included elements of certain regional cultures. Sukarno’s push for national unification justified his overall disregard of Indonesia’s Constitution in order to initiate Guided Democracy in the late 1950s, a system of representation through “functional groups” standing in for different elements of society: workers, artists, women and the military. Technically it was still a form of representative democracy necessitated by the party system’s failure to bring about consensus, factoring in regional uprisings that threatened to tear apart the fledgling

nation. Guided Democracy saw the banning of some political parties and the regression from democratic principles enacted in the years immediately after independence.

Sukarno surrounded himself with ideologues who helped him expand on his desire to forge national unity and instill a revolutionary will in Indonesians that would overcome all obstacles to development (Vickers 2005: 146). His Minister for Education and Culture, Priyono, established institutions to reinforce national culture that were in sync with the revolutionary sentiment, introducing invented traditions such as new “folk dances” based on the activities of peasants and workers and ideological songs (ibid).

Not all of these traditions were necessarily fabricated though. In an effort to incorporate “folk arts” and non-Javanese elements into national culture, Sukarno also championed non-court arts, such as East Javanese musical drama (*ludruk*) and Sumatran social dance (*serampang duabelas*), and these rural arts consequently gained some legitimacy among intellectuals and urbanites (Sutton 1986:117).

“Revolutionary sentiment” was already embedded in keroncong repertoire beginning in the 1930s, most evident in the lyrics of songs associated with nationalism and the struggle for independence, known as *lagu keroncong perjuangan* (keroncong songs of struggle). Popular songs, such as *Sepasang Mata Bola* (A Pair of Eyes), *Selendang Sutera* (Silk Scarf), *Gugur Bunga* (Fallen Flower) and *Melati di Tapal Batas* (Jasmine at the Border), popular songs by nationalist composer Ismail Marzuki, were all adapted into the keroncong idiom and quite a few became signature songs of the genre. Drawing from the imagery of nature (flowers, mountains) and mundane articles like

clothing (handkerchiefs, scarves), “songs of struggle” crafted simple yet poignant lyrical metaphors, poetically describing the anguish of war while honoring fallen soldiers and revolutionary heroes and promoting nationalist fervor. Sukarno and Suharto not only used keroncong as a vehicle to unite Indonesians, it is rumored that both were also considerable fans of the genre. Waldjinah, on multiple occasions, fondly recounted receiving the trophy for the 1965 *Bintang Radio* (Radio Star) national keroncong vocal championship from Sukarno, which, according to her, was the first and only time the trophy was awarded by the Indonesian president himself. In subsequent years, she was regularly invited to perform at the presidential palaces in both Jakarta and Bogor during official state events and even now she nostalgically holds Sukarno in high regard for various reasons, including his devotion to keroncong.

Methods and Models

My research follows from the methodologies and approaches of other life histories in anthropology (McCarthy-Brown 2001 [1991], Behar 1993) and ethnomusicology (Hellier 2012, Danielson 1997). Like these works, my project is driven by a strong narrative and historical consciousness. It critically examines and re-evaluates the universalities prevalent in past scholarship in ethnomusicology and anthropology on modernity in Indonesia by offering a grounded understanding of what these processes do and have done in the lives of Waldjinah and her fellow keroncong musicians. I also examine these processes at the intersections of Waldjinah's quotidian

life and her life as a performer, seeking to understand how she and her music implicates and reflects processes of Indonesian modernization during the era of independence. This project was based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Java, primarily in the cities of Solo and Yogyakarta, with shorter trips to Bandung and Jakarta, over the course of nearly two years (2011-2013). In the course of this research, I spent a significant amount of time interviewing Waldjinah at her home in Solo on an almost weekly basis beginning in December 2011, except for prolonged periods as she recovered from illness. Waldjinah suffered a stroke in May 2010 and then another in August 2012 and health issues were a consistent topic of discussion. At times I was deeply concerned for her health and this project, especially during the recovery period from her second stroke, when her legs would swell from the extended period of time she spent sitting on the couch talking with me. We eventually came to the agreement that she should either have lunch before I arrived at her house (usually around noon) and/or we would take a break for her to eat and walk around during the interview. As in other aspects of her career, Waldjinah showed the grit and determination of a performer who has fought her way up from the bottom. At times I would even try to convince her that she was too tired for a prolonged interview. Her response was always, "Let's keep going, I'll let you know when I'm tired." All of our meetings took place in Waldjinah's home, although there were times when I accompanied her to performances or on rare occasions when we all piled into the family van to run an errand or eat at a local restaurant.

My own subjectivity as a foreign male researcher about thirty years younger than Waldjinhah precludes any illusions of “insider” status—although I was born in Malaysia, Indonesia’s neighbor to the north, and have frequently visited relatives over the years, my foreignness was readily apparent having grown up in the United States, especially during some of our early interviews. In some respects, Waldjinhah considered me similar to how she would other reporters and college students who have come to interview her before. For the first seven months or so that I visited her, the types of responses she provided and the depth of information she was willing to share equaled that of what mass media has gotten from her. My assistant, Hara, and I jokingly referred to these her “*senang* (happy) responses” because most of the answers to statements or questions began with “Oh, I enjoy...” or “I’m just happy that...,” which we knew did not encompass how Waldjinhah actually felt. I am not suggesting that Waldjinhah is not naturally a “happy” person or that she was necessarily lying to us. She generally exudes a level of energy and congeniality in public rarely matched, but these personality traits have also served well as protective agents, shielding her from unwanted attention and deflecting questions about issues she does not want addressed. The stoic mask of tranquility and contentment, attributed to Javanese culture generally (see Keeler 1987), began to loosen when Waldjinhah opened up about her separation from her second husband about seven months into interviewing her. After insisting for months he was in Jakarta helping to care for his newborn grandchild, she finally disclosed some of the real reasons I had not seen him in the previous seven months.

Details about the difficult decision to separate from her husband and the factors leading up to it were topics she had discussed with only a handful of her closest friends. After that interview, I graciously thanked Waldjinhah for sharing the stories about her marriage. She responded by insisting that I not “gossip” or “spread rumors” about her. These stories, she insisted, were to be written about only within the context of her life. I tried to reassure her by reiterating that I was not a tabloid journalist looking for a quick sensationalized headline, and that my goal was, in fact, to tell the story of her life in an appropriate way. I even promised to send her summaries of chapter drafts so that she would know what was included. Even though I had mentioned this to her much earlier, this time my words appeared to carry more weight. She looked at me with a slight grin and appeared satisfied. I was eager to think we had reached some sort of unsaid agreement, hoping this was the needed “breakthrough” signaling a willingness to loosen (or even discard) the mask. My hopefulness proved premature. Only days after that conversation, Waldjinhah suffered a second stroke in as many years and we would not speak again for another six weeks while she recovered in the hospital and at home.

Once her health improved, she agreed to meet again and this time our interviews had a different vibe, as if she remembered our last conversation. No longer did I bring a list of questions for her, instead I merely asked her to talk about aspects of her life she considered important—and she did. Interviews became less formal discussions. Hara and I sipped tea, ate Marie biscuits or Javanese pastries and listened to Waldjinhah tell her stories—a “deep hanging out” that Clifford Geertz would certainly

have appreciated. She spoke in greater depth and with more emotion than before about issues relating to her marriages, children, career, problems with male fans, her “image,” her favorite songs, involvement with Golkar (the political party closely linked to the New Order regime), efforts to “preserve” *keroncong* and much more.

Her increased openness may be attributed to her disposition in a state of weakened health or possibly even a heightened sense of mortality, resulting in a willingness to move away from the *senang* (happy) responses I was accustomed to hearing from her. In this sense she was not feeling as “happy” in the weeks and months immediately following the stroke. More likely, I think Waldjinhah, in addition to becoming more comfortable talking with Hara and I, also came to terms with the idea that this project was to be a life story about her and on some level she understood that this story had to include experiences involving an array of emotions beyond *senang*. Many of the events and personal details she willingly elaborated on after suffering her second stroke appeared based on directions or lines of questioning that I broached months before, which at that time, she was not yet ready to discuss. Towards the end of the interview when she first spoke about separating from her second husband, she admitted, “Yeah, I remember you always asking me about him but I couldn’t tell you the truth, I was just trying to deceive you by saying he just went to Jakarta to care for his grandson.”

Waldjinhah was actually trying to deflect the topic more than “deceive” me, she later mentioned that “protecting her name” was the cause of this deception.

Conclusion

Biographies are a popular literary genre in Indonesia. Many of the bookstores there have a sizable section devoted to them, often ranging from political and historical figures, military and revolutionary era heroes to entertainers. Although I am not sure, at this point, if Waldjinah is (or was) an avid reader of biographies, she is familiar with the genre and appeared pleased with the prospect of a Western audience getting to know her. The shift in approach from her primarily answering questions to “telling stories” is also significant in terms of how she chose to tell her stories. Linguistic anthropologist Paul Koskrity explains that storytelling ideologies

“prescribe a narrow but significant intertextual gap by recognizing the emergent aspects of storytelling performance and the need for recontextualizing story scripts in accord with the particulars (ie. setting, participants, ends) of actual performance. Though these ideologies make a concession to the emergent properties of performance, they otherwise do valorize a particular regime of calibration that demands that individual performances closely conform to the genre’s dominant emphasis on speaking the past (Koskrity 2009: 49).”

Although Koskrity’s context refers to Tewa storytelling as a means of constructing tribal identity, his discussion about recontextualizing scripts precipitates questions about performative aspects of Waldjinah’s storytelling, especially in how she

chose to express aspects of her life as well as the details either to included or left out. The idea of a “regimen of calibration,” pertaining to how an individual performative act conforms with or departs from what is taken to be normative values and expectations for a genre (Bauman 1984: 10) also informed the ways she framed her stories. Waldjinah’s narrative structure was rarely, if ever, linear, in fact, it was more circular in shape—she had a tendency to transition quickly between topics, sometimes returning to specific “stories” or parts of stories adding bits of detail or further clarification later on. Sometimes these added bits came the following week, and other times it came three months later. In this sense, her method of storytelling rarely had a normative narrative structure of beginning, middle and end—she often launched into a story and either Hara or I would at some point interject to ask questions or clarify about details and a basic time frame for the events she recalled. While reviewing transcripts of our discussions, I pieced together particular stories or accounts based on fragments from multiple interview sessions, in some cases, I let her retell an entire stories a number of times, despite hearing it before, because new details surfaced each time. Waldjinah seemed well aware however, that these stories constituted individual scenes in her life and discussed experiences she considered remarkable and fitting into her conceptions of a life history—at times she would mention to me, “Last night I remembered a great story I wanted to tell you about when I was in school” or ask “Did I ever tell you this story of when I toured in Suriname?” Waldjinah was not merely waiting for me to ask

about aspects of her life, she also was consciously thinking about what should be included in the story and her narrative choices also frame the overall story I will tell.

I have chosen to approach this dissertation as a life history because I want Waldjinah's voice to be the authority driving a grounded theorization heeding Lyotard's (1979) warnings of grand narratives and Judy Lockhead's (2007: 112) assertion that epistemological categories created by postmodern theory have resulted in abstractions, making individuals, and especially women, disappear, "while particularities of lived experience are subsumed into abstractions and generalities in a conceptual move replicating the universalizing tendencies of modern thought." I am also thinking of Ellen Koskoff (2005: 98), who further reminds us that respecting the individual and the "process of life" means "putting real people and the truth of their musical lives back into the picture" allowing for a theorization rooted in "the experiences *of* people rather than *about* them."

This dissertation is the story of one keroncong musician. Her voice appears foremost and frequently, but it also is intertwined with a chorus of other voices, including my own, members of her family, friends and other keroncong musicians, and implicated with broader themes, such as Indonesia as a modernizing nation, historical developments within keroncong as a genre and relations of gender and power. The story undoubtedly has its silences but as I got to know her over the course of fifteen months, I would like to think she "opened up" and discussed topics, especially about her personal life, in far greater depth than she did with the average reporter—in some cases

I know she did. Waldjinah pointed out subtly, more than once, that she was entrusting me with personal details previously discussed only with her closest female friends (or with just one friend in particular). It is possible, among a multitude of factors, that my being foreign, male, an academic, significantly younger than her, and completely outside the realm of her social circle actually worked to my benefit in building rapport with her. In a sense, not only did Waldjinah see the benefit of sharing her life story, she also may have considered me less of a “threat” to the public image she guarded so carefully over the course of her adult life. While I intend to present her story in an honest way, I also intend to retain her trust.

As I sat putting on my shoes preparing to leave her home late one afternoon, Waldjinah succinctly summed up the value of understanding individual lives when she turned to me with a slight chuckle and quietly said, “I may not be a very wealthy person, but I am rich in experiences.”

Chapter 3: Spirituality, Islam and the Aging Voice

I sing as entertainment for my troubled heart, with this very sweet voice...

From “Kr. Suara Baru (Keroncong New Voice),”
composed by Mardjokahar in 1940³⁷

In the latter portion of her career, Waldjinah was forced to adapt to changes in her voice, especially after suffering two strokes and other bouts with ill-health. Without suggesting that her voice had deteriorated, I discuss in this chapter how she coped with these changes along with other changes in lifestyle as she grew older. This chapter also addresses the voice as metaphor, as opposed to the literal singing voice. Virginia Danielson (1997: 2-3) explains how the vocalist Umm Kulthum became the “voice of a nation” and a cultural symbol for Egypt and the entire Arab world in the twentieth century by asserting indigenous values through the medium of her musical style which helped constitute Egyptian cultural and social life while advancing the ideology of Egyptianness. In this sense, the metaphor “voice of a nation” implicates a performer within specific configurations and ideologies of power and nation. The voice also becomes a means of articulating ideas and experiences, which until they are voiced remain private and non-existent (Tiwon 1996: 48). Applying this metaphor for Waljinhah elicits further questions not only about relationships between the spatial scales of national, regional and local but also of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and religion.

³⁷ Lyrical excerpt translated by author

In the context of some female singers, ethnomusicologist Ruth Hellier (2012: 3-5) observes that the voice as metaphor is often tied to issues of individual subjectivities, agency, representation, interpersonal relationships and choices—“voice” here derives from the idea of the voice of the people, indicating a wish, choice, and right of expression. Hellier notes the close associations between voice, identity and other social processes, especially for some female vocalists who create a singing voice “at once enabling and empowering, yet often constrained and bounded by multifarious controls (ibid).” For Waldjinhah, the trope of voice extends to her identity as a female keroncong vocalist, and more specifically as a langgam jawa vocalist. Some Indonesians have told me that the high-pitched nasally timbre of her voice creates a distinct and identifiable style that somehow “sounds Indonesian.” Yet at the same time, it is difficult to apply the same argument Danielson does for Umm Kulthum and Egyptianness. Is Waldjinhah a cultural symbol for “Indonesianness?” In a sense, she clearly is. Part of her becoming a national artist involved connecting with a national audience and as a performer she was versatile enough to do so by performing an array of Indonesian genres. Yet her identity as a performer was also distinctly Javanese—most evident in her sartorial choices, make-up and hair styles along with the fact that she specialized in langgam jawa, a music evoking Javanese gamelan and featuring lyrics in Javanese.

All of this created a voice and identity that simultaneously functioned on multiple levels of regional and national and my intention here is to point out how a complex interweaving of identities leads to a qualified assertion that Waldjinhah is the

voice of the modern Indonesian nation-state. Applying this metaphor, I explore how changes in Waldjinhah's spiritual life, namely her Islamic faith, are implicated in broader processes of Islamization in Indonesia.³⁸ Part of this discussion involves her past encounters with so-called black magic attacks, causing vocalists to lose their voice either before or during a performance. This discussion will not only to highlight the syncretic nature of old Javanese spiritual belief but also to examine how she used orthodox Islamic practices to overcome the literal loss of voice caused by black magic. As the voice of Indonesia, I argue that changes in Waldjinhah's Islamic practices provide insight into how Islam itself is (and has been) changing in Indonesia.

The Gesang Memorial Dedication

Early on a Saturday morning Lisa, my friend, Ichank and I stood on a cracked sidewalk facing Jalan Slamet Riyadi, one of Solo's busiest streets, waiting for a taxi to take us across town to a cemetery. Being the weekend, traffic was light. A small group of *becak* (pedicab) drivers stood nearby chatting while waiting for customers and food vendors busily set up their stalls. A gentle breeze blew through the tree branches above us but the morning air already felt warm and thick with humidity. Sweat dripped down

³⁸ Despite having the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia is often conspicuously absent in current discussions of Islam in the world. Part of the reason for this marginalization has been justified based on geography, since Indonesia is located far from the Muslim heartland, and specifically Arab civilization. Previous Western scholarship has focused on Muslim law and classical Islamic commentaries, in some ways justifying Indonesia's exclusion. Indonesianists in the United State also have contributed to this exclusion based assumptions that Islamic influence on Indonesian cultures were merely minor and superficial (see Hefner 2000)."

the nape of my neck and seeped through my thin cotton t-shirt. We watched as taxis passed us by occupied with passengers until finally one stopped and we all jumped in. From the backseat, I told the driver we wanted to go to the Pracimaloyo cemetery. He immediately flipped on the meter, pulled into traffic and looked back at me in the rearview mirror sizing up the foreigners sitting in his backseat. “What’s going on at the cemetery?” he asked quizzically. I assumed this was not the destination he had in mind when we entered his cab. I explained that we were heading there for a dedication ceremony for the Gesang Martohartono monument, which had been erected on his gravesite. Gesang was a lifelong resident of Solo and one of keroncong’s most celebrated and prolific composers—especially famous for composing the genre’s most recognized song, “*Bengawan Solo* (The Solo River),” along with scores of other keroncong and langgam jawa pieces. He passed away the year before I arrived in Indonesia and a company from Jakarta specializing in water pipes had funded the monument in his honor. Gesang was its longtime spokesman and the company adopted the famous line from *Bengawan Solo*, “*dimana air mengalir sampai jauh* (wherever water flows a great distance)” as its company slogan.

A thirty minute taxi ride across Solo brought us to the cemetery entrance in time for the festivities to begin at 8am. Although Gesang lived the majority of his life relatively poor, his monument appeared quite the contrary—a bright and regal edifice neatly painted beige with dark brown trim towering over the other gravesites. The monument even had several faucets installed, courtesy of the water pipe company, at

its base so visitors could wash their arms and face at the site, a practice that reminded me of *wudu*, the ritual cleansing that Muslims engage in prior to entering a mosque.³⁹ My interest in attending the monument dedication ceremony, however, ran deeper than merely wanting to see Gesang's gravesite. The event also promised a special performance by Waldjinah, who met Gesang as a teenager during her first recording session at Lokananta studios in Solo. Gesang happened to be one of the hired background singers and the two quickly became friends. They would remain friends and musical collaborators for years to come until his death in 2010.

³⁹ The process of *wudu* is methodical and includes washing of the hands three times, rinsing of the mouth three times, washing the face, taking water with the right hand and putting it in your nose, then wiping it off with the left hand, washing the face again, washing the right arm up to the elbow three times and then doing the same to the left. No part of the arms or hands should be left unwashed. Once the hands and arms are clean, the forehead and neck receive attention, along with the backs of the ears, the legs and feet (with the right foot always being washed before the left). Not all attendees perform *wudu* in the same way, and visitors to Gesang's monument appeared less comprehensive in their washing (based on my own observations and an interview with Sarawat Mahmoud on May 2, 2008 at the Islamic Center of Riverside, California).



3.1 The Gesang Memorial at Pracimaloyo Cemetary. Photo by the author.

The performance at the monument also marked a couple of other firsts for Waldjinhah. Despite already having interviewed her regularly for nearly two months at that point, the ceremony was my first opportunity to watch Waldjinhah perform live. It was also her first public performance since suffering a serious stroke, not long after Gesang passed away. Ichant, Lisa and I wandered across the cemetery grounds into a giant tent where white plastic folding chairs had been set up overlooking the monument. We were cheerfully greeted by event organizers who eagerly handed us packages containing commemorative key chains, a t-shirt, pens, hard candy and a notebook with a caricature of Gesang's face and the water pipe company's logo

prominently displayed on the cover. We thanked them, took our seats among the gathered crowd and listened to what seemed like an endless procession of speeches by officials from the piping company and the city and regional government, while patiently waiting for Waldjinah as the temperature rose along with the sun in the sky.

Nearly two hours into the event, Waldjinah's band *Orkes Keroncong Bintang Surakarta* (Surakarta Stars Keroncong Orchestra) took the stage. By this time the covered seating area underneath the tent was filled and there were a number of spectators, presumably from the surrounding neighborhoods, standing around the edges. Waldjinah arrived soon after the speeches began and was seated prominently in the front row. This was the first time I had seen her in a public setting, since we usually met at her home, and I intently watched her interactions with other spectators who approached her to pay their respects. Waldjinah's facial expressions fit the context of the event—a mix of joviality yet sullenness and anxious at times. The band took the stage and played songs composed by Gesang sung by a chorus of predominantly female singers dressed in matching black and light brown batik print shirts. Most of these women were Waldjinah's close friends, and she had known a few since mentoring them as teenagers many years ago.

After three songs, it was time for Waldjinah to take the stage. The process of bringing her up was a slow and careful one, with two members of the band holding each of her arms as she gradually climbed the stairs leading up. Fans watched patiently and intently at each step she took as if this too was part of the performance. Seeing her

ascend to the stage reminded me (and certainly others in the audience) how fragile her health was following two strokes in as many years. I had been used to seeing her gregarious, talkative and comfortable in her own home, and despite being a performer for nearly her entire life, Waldjinah appeared less than comfortable on stage at this particular event. Dressed in a flowing majestic purple gown adorned with intricate silver lattice, she performed a Gesang song entitled “*Dongengan (Folk Tale)*,” as a duet with a young female backing singer in the band. Although she sang the majority of the verses, she left the chorus sections, which would have required her to use higher vocal registers, to her partner. Two things immediately became apparent about her performance that morning: first, she performed only one song (a duet) and second, the song she sang was in *keroncong asli* style (or “original” keroncong), not the subgenre she is known for, *langgam jawa* (a Javanese form of keroncong). Choosing one of Gesang’s langgam jawa compositions, many of which she popularized, would seem appropriate but also would have required her to use the upper registers of her voice, which she clearly was not comfortable with. After Waldjinah finished the audience clapped politely and she was helped off the stage. The proceedings continued and despite performing only one song, her presence at the event carried a significance no government or water pipe company official could match.



3.2 Waldjinhah helped off the stage after performing at the Gesang Memorial dedication.
Photo by the author.

As a close friend of Gesang, she was not only at the very center of the dedication ceremony, but also the main attraction for mass media reporters and journalists, who consistently approached her with questions and requests for photos after the ceremony. Waldjinhah looked to be in her element in front of an audience while celebrating the achievements of her longtime friend. She appeared poised and convivial handling the chaotic throng of people swarming around her. Perhaps more importantly, she showed no apparent signs of fatigue, ill-health or stress—she simply smiled and congenially received anyone who approached her. And yet I could not help thinking about her demeanor on stage less than an hour earlier, how she smiled and playfully

jabbed her tongue out at the audience as if to simultaneously acknowledge and deflect the inadequacies she felt singing before them. Although Waldjinhah had successfully returned to live performance, she along with everyone else in the audience that morning knew that it was not the same Waldjinhah they were accustomed to hearing. As a vocalist now in her late sixties, she, more so than anyone else, realized that her voice did not “do” what it used to—clearly she could not reach the upper registers of her vocal range the way she once did. This is not to suggest, however, that she had lost the nasally high-pitched tone and playful coquettishness that made her voice so distinct among other vocalists in Indonesia. For those familiar with her recordings or have watched her perform live, it remains instantly identifiable and remained the hallmark of her identity as a performer.



3.3 In front of the media at the Gesang Memorial ceremony. Photo by the author.

Illness and Healing

In late March 2013, Waldjinh continued to recover from a stroke she suffered about seven months prior. Her energy was returning and she could move around, albeit slowly, but with greater ease than in the months immediately following the stroke. It was an exciting time for her. The month before she received an invitation to perform in May at the 2013 Tong Tong Festival in the Netherlands, which she was hesitant to accept at first, but had since changed her mind. Initially she was quite skeptical about the possibility of traveling to the Netherlands again, especially given the current condition of her health—she could barely sit on a couch for more than an hour without

her legs swelling, much less endure a sixteen hour flight from Jakarta to Amsterdam. “I don’t know if I’m up for it; I want to perform in the Netherlands again but I’m not sure if I’m brave enough to try it. If I can I’ll do it,” she explained. A week later her outlook had changed and Waldjinah told me that she had decided to accept the invitation to perform at the Tong Tong festival.

I’m starting therapy immediately; the doctor has already given me medication to help lower my uric acid and the swelling in my legs and he told me to eat papaya regularly, which also reduces swelling, and I get six injections every week into various parts of my legs and lower back to help reduce stiffness and swelling.⁴⁰ I also just realized that my passport has expired so I need to go renew it soon...

Waldjinah’s decision to perform again changed her entire attitude during the last three months I visited her. Despite making strides toward recovery in the months immediately following her second stroke, she still appeared sluggish and tired most of the time I saw her. The upcoming performance at Tong Tong gave her not only something to look forward to but also a reason to accelerate her regiment toward recovery. It was now imperative that she regain her health in order to perform again. During one of my last visits to her home, I accompanied Waldjinah and her son to retrieve their passports and travel visas to the Netherlands from the local immigration

⁴⁰ Papaya is a type of fleshy, orange/yellow colored tropical fruit.

office. As we sat in the crowded hall waiting in line for her number to be called, she excitedly recalled memories of previous performances in the Netherlands. People sitting near us turned and stared, wondering who this person was or perhaps they already knew. A woman walking by on her way to one of the service windows stopped in front of Waldjinah, smiled at her and told her that it was nice to see her. Waldjinah smiled back and thanked her graciously. Although it may have appeared mundane, the excursion represented a positive step—not only did she manage to leave the house, she was about to perform internationally again. My assistant, Hara, commented on how her appearance looked “fresh” on this particular morning. Dressed in a long, flowing navy blue and gold-trimmed cotton dress with her hair neatly veiled underneath a colorful, loose-fitting headscarf, Waldjinah did look to be on her way to recovery. She had regained the aura of celebrity missing during those long months of recovery. I remembered back to when she appeared frail and haggard, and there were concerns as to whether she would ever recover from the second stroke.

Recovery was an ongoing process and included changing certain aspects of her daily routine. Part of it included taking short walks outside her home in the early in morning, starting a new regiment of heart medication, and changing her diet in order to help her gain weight while reducing cholesterol and increasing muscle strength.

Can you believe it?! The doctors aren't allowing me to eating anything fried...instead they tell me to eat more bread. There's no taste to that stuff, it's so bland!

I'm used to eating stuff like fried yams (ketela) and banana. Now I can't even eat glutinous rice (ketan) or any spicy foods because it upsets my stomach and gives me diarrhea.

Complaints about her new diet however, were tempered by the prospect of performing at a prestigious international festival, and as Waldjinah was well aware, a considerable part of regaining her health included recuperating her voice. Every Thursday night, her band, *Orkes Keroncong Bintang Surakarta* (or OK Bintang Surakarta), held “practice” at the Lorin Hotel on the northwest side of Solo on Jalan Adi Sucipto, the road leading to the airport. Their practice was actually more of a weekly performance, and the hotel paid the band to entertain its guests at an outdoor restaurant, known as the “Fish Village” (*Kampung Ikan*). The hotel grounds were well-maintained and resembled a lush tropical paradise filled with large trees, colorful flowers and bushes as well as small ponds and streams that flow throughout. Thursday nights were often serene and filled with a resounding chorus of sounds echoing from crickets, *tokek* (large lizards) and frogs in the surrounding ponds and streams. Other sounds filling the night were provided by the band and those who came to watch them—comprised mostly of friends, many of whom showed up weekly to socialize. In a sense, weekly practices were like a cross between keroncong karaoke and open-mic night, where visitors signed up to sing their favorite keroncong asli, langgam jawa and Indonesian (or Western) pop songs, played by the band in keroncong style. One thing I noticed whenever I attended

was that Waldjinah rarely sang. She was however, undoubtedly the guest of honor each week, sitting prominently at the table directly in front of band. Most of the time, she watched the singers, sipped on tea or chatted amicably with friends seated at her table. In a sense, everyone who stepped up to the microphone was singing for her, because she sat directly in front of them at eye-level. Nearly all the singers I saw acknowledged her prior to singing. Some even dedicated songs to her—Waldjinah seemed to especially enjoy this and usually was quick to applaud after they finished singing. This almost ritualistic acknowledgment prior to performance established her considerable presence even when she herself was not performing. Paying tribute to her in this way meant acknowledging not only her physical presence but also the contributions she has made to keroncong over the years either by singing one of her popular songs, or else dedicating a song to her.

A Changing Voice

One Friday morning, I dropped by Waldjinah's home for an interview and waited for her in her parlor room (as I normally did). After a few minutes she emerged from the rear section of the house, cautiously ambling across the room in her loose-fitting house dress and sat down on the couch across from me. "How come you didn't come to practice last night?" she immediately asked, "I sang three songs; it was the first time (I've sung) in a long time. You should have come." I apologized and told her that I had planned to attend but got caught up at another keroncong practice. It is likely that she

mentioned this only because I had repeatedly asked when she was going to sing again.

In any case, I smiled back at her, and excitedly asked how it went.

It was ok but my breathing wasn't right...the way I was breathing just wasn't right, I always seemed to be short of breath and even though I exhaled well, I couldn't really draw in deep breaths. Next week I'll try again but until then I'm going to continue my breathing exercises during my morning walks. The doctor says I shouldn't go too far though because if I walk too long, my legs start to get really sore. But I'm still going to try.

She broke eye contact and turned her head slightly to the left and downward.

Yeah, because of the heavy rain last night, there weren't as many people as usual. I thought (my performance) went okay, overall. I'm not ashamed to say that my voice still isn't as good as it should be.⁴¹ I was able to sing but it just didn't sound that good...I didn't like the way it sounded. But there weren't very many people (in the audience) last night, so I guess it was good that I could practice. I do need to practice much more.

⁴¹ She uses the phrase *ora isin* in Javanese, which I've translated as "not ashamed."

I asked her how it felt to perform in front of an audience again after having not done so for such a long time.

My legs were shaking, they kept shaking for the entire time I stood up there singing. Maybe it's because I was in high heels (shoes), but nowadays my legs shake whenever I'm standing up for a long time. I felt embarrassed up there with my legs shaking and my voice quivering. It was embarrassing. My voice has never done that during my entire career. I've never before experienced what I felt last night. Could be that I was nervous, I probably was...but I need to practice more so that I don't feel so nervous next time.

I listened intently and in considerable disbelief at what Waldjinah was telling me. After all, here was the woman revered by many as the “Queen of Keroncong” who, over the course of her storied career, had performed countless times for presidents, foreign dignitaries, throngs of people across Indonesia and internationally and yet she somehow felt nervous performing in an intimate and familiar setting, in front of a handful of people, most of whom were her close friends.

To be honest, I was more nervous about my legs than my voice. If I'm standing for a long time, my legs start getting tired and instead of focusing on singing, I'm thinking more about my legs and become distracted. I can hear the music, I can hear

myself singing but if my legs aren't right then my whole body feels off. I just can't seem to focus. I have to get healthy first.

I've never felt like this before, singing used to come so easily and now I have to concentrate so much just to sing one song. Singing used to feel as natural as eating, any type of music I sang sounded good, any song I sang sounded good. Now I have to be really picky about the songs I think I can sing. It can't be too high (pitched), because that's difficult. It's a tough choice because it has to be good...so now I choose the songs that are easiest for me. Actually, I don't think there's much wrong with my voice, I just need more practice. I've still got confidence in my voice...and in myself.

The main issue that Waldjinah faced, at least in terms of performance, was that she had difficulty singing the langgam jawa songs she was most famous for. Not only were these songs her personal favorites but langgam jawa also represents the vast majority of her standard repertoire. Also of issue was that her vocal range had diminished in recent years due in part to age and ill health, especially after suffering two strokes in three years. Waldjinah could no longer sustain the high pitched head voice required to sing langgam jawa which had subsequently created problems for her as a performer.⁴² Instead she increasingly opted for songs she was less known for, from the keroncong asli repertoire. These songs are often less strenuous because they require a lower vocal register and are sung using, what some vocalists refer to as, the vocal center

⁴² I further discuss the nuances and techniques of langgam jawa and keroncong asli vocals in Chapter 7.

versus the upper harmonics, or head voice. At this late point in her career, Waldjinhah was deeply concerned about the legacy she would leave as a performer, and maintaining a high level of quality remained as, if not more, important to her now than it was earlier on in her career.

In my entire life I don't think I've actually felt nervous. I had enough money in the past so I never worried about anything. Now I don't make money anymore...and I'm nervous (she chuckles sardonically). What worries me most is my name, because my name is held in high regard. People associate me with quality and if my voice isn't good then (the audience) won't understand the feelings and emotions I convey in my songs. I think that if my voice is good then they'll understand what I mean. When it's good it sounds coquettish and makes people smile (she laughs).⁴³ Sometimes I wish that my voice would just go back to the way it was before, but that's just me hoping. Whatever I have now is a gift from Allah, (my voice) was good before and I'm thankful for it. Allah has provided me with everything I need.

At times, Waldjinhah appeared to be in denial about changes happening in her voice and the impact it had on her ability to perform—singing and performing after all had been constants in her life beginning from a young age, and the timbre of her high

⁴³ She uses the term *kemayu*, which is a Javanese term that roughly translates to coquettish, a characteristic associated with feminine vocals in Java. In other interviews, she has also used the word *centil*, which in Indonesian also refers to similar vocal characteristics.

pitched voice had long been her trademark as a performer—some people have even told me that they could identify her by just listening to the first bar of a song. On occasion she vehemently insisted that her voice actually had not changed much and that she could probably still sing the high pitches as she did before. Her mantra reflected an almost puritanical ethic: hard work would eventually result in a desired outcome. All she needed was to practice more and harder in order to overcome her deficiencies. At other times, she appeared to give in to the inevitable, and lamented the decline in her voice. At the time, I did not doubt that she could regain some or even most of the vocal range she had previously, especially knowing her level of fierce determination. She also knew her voice and body best. Changes in her voice were not new phenomena and have taken place at various points over the course of her career—this, perhaps, fueled hope that it could revert to one of its previous stages. On one occasion we sat and listened to some of her early recordings on vinyl and she described some of these changes.

When I was twelve (years old), my voice wasn't quite "mature" (matang) yet, I sounded very much like a little kid (bocah kecil) and didn't know yet how to use the vocal techniques that I learned later on. I still sang coquettishly but much more like a little kid, my voice was still very high-pitched and sounded thin.⁴⁴ Only after puberty did it sound

⁴⁴ She uses the Javanese word *kemeng* to describe her voice early on as a singer—the word, in addition to high-pitched (of voice), can also mean “stiff and sore from over exertion (Robson and Wibisono 2002: 352).”

*thicker (kental). Like on the song, "Rujak Nanas," (Pineapple Salad), that's how I used to sound. Actually, I wish my voice could go back to sounding like that, even though it wasn't mature yet, it still sounded good. Most young kids usually have high-pitched voices...not yet their real voices.*⁴⁵

Waljinah also mentioned that most young children have a voice that, in her words, "is not yet O (*belum O*)," pronounced like the English letter "O." The phrase "not yet O" means the same as "not yet perfect" or "complete" (or *belum utuh* in Indonesian) with the letter "O" in this case referring to a circle, signifying perfection or completion.⁴⁶ Although Waldjinah could not articulate the exact meaning of the term "O," her description implied an adult or "mature" voice, perhaps slightly deeper sounding and different from a prepubescent male or female child-like voice. "Mature," in this context, also refers to a vocalist's ability to both comprehend and convey the emotional qualities of song lyrics while also being able to use proper vocal technique, especially if a singer intends to improvise. For instance, she specifically mentioned not being able to "truly" convey the emotions of a love song until she was old enough to date and understand romantic relationships.

⁴⁵ Here she uses the Javanese word *tenan* (true or real).

⁴⁶ "*Belum O*" can also refer to the number zero, which carries the same meaning. My thanks to Rene T.A. Lysloff for explaining the term "*belum O*" to me.

It wasn't until after age seventeen that my voice became more "O" and I could finally sing with real emotion and style. My voice became more and more mature and by around age twenty-five, it was done. By that time, I really could use all kinds of vocal techniques that I'd picked up. So, there were some specific phases of development in my voice which happened at age twelve, seventeen, twenty and again at twenty-five where it just kept getting higher and higher pitched each year. After that it stayed the same for a long time. Only now has my voice changed again, it's definitely not as high-pitched as before.⁴⁷ I used to sing in the key of B flat and now I'm down to G. When I was younger I remember my voice went up two octaves and now (that I'm older) I'm down two octaves. So since my voice is lower I no longer dare sing the really high songs, if I sing them I definitely lower the key. I still sing them the same way, the tone (nada) of my voice is the same. If I use cengkok, it's usually the same style of cengkok I've used, sometimes I change it but I'm not brave enough to try the higher pitches, I'm not brave (berani) enough anymore.⁴⁸

Waldjinah knew that subtle changes in her voice had taken place over the course of her career and felt that at this stage of her life, she would have to make further

⁴⁷ She describes this change by using the Javanese word *cendhèk*, meaning "low, deep" (of sound).

⁴⁸ *Cengkok*, in keroncong vocals, refers to a series of ornamented notes sung before reaching a fundamental note, and is a vocal technique used in keroncong asli style songs (Sanjaya 2012: 2). Although there are certain parts in keroncong songs that require a vocalist to use cengkok, especially at the end of particular phrases, additional insertions of cengkok are left to the vocalist. The term derives from Javanese gamelan and I discuss it further along with other keroncong musical terminology in Chapter 7.

adjustments in order to continue performing. Her concern stemmed from whether or not, especially given her health, she would be able to meet these challenges. I once asked how she felt about not being able to reach notes as high as she did before. After all, the ability to consistently reach these notes was not difficult for her, and in some ways, set her apart from other langgam jawa singers.

Yeah, that's been me since I was twenty-five (years old), but now my voice has become lower and that's just how it is. If I perform nowadays, I usually sing keroncong asli, I'm wouldn't dare sing with the gamelan anymore.⁴⁹ If I sing with the gamelan I have to be able to sing in (the key of) B flat, and I know I can't do that anymore, my voice is too low. If it becomes more hoarse or gets any lower, I might be better off not singing anymore...I'll just be silent (lebih baik aku diam saja).⁵⁰

Her facial expression was emotionless, her body still and her eyes fixed in a downward gaze toward the glossy tiled floor. Waldjinhah paused a moment before continuing, perhaps understanding the gravity of her previous statement and the reality it entailed. While she remained hopeful that her “old” voice would someday return, she also realized the odds were against it. A number of factors contributed to Waldjinhah’s

⁴⁹ Here I think she’s referring not only to singing with a Javanese gamelan literally but also langgam jawa pieces.

⁵⁰ She uses the Javanese word *gerok*, which translates to hoarse, to describe the timbre of her voice currently. The Indonesian word *serak*, which also means hoarse, husky or “throaty,” carries a similar meaning.

current health, some of them attributed to natural processes of aging and others to the two strokes she suffered in the span of three years. Health issues in the latter part of her life took a significant physical and mental toll on Waldjinhah and essentially put her in a *de facto* state of retirement. Although she did not formally express an intention to retire, her previously active live performance and recording schedule slowed dramatically due to her ill health. Combined with other changes in her personal life, Waldjinhah had to adjust to significant changes in her lifestyle and career based on health concerns.

Her first stroke happened in May 2010 and according to a newspaper article, she entered the Mother's Love Hospital (*Rumah Sakit Kasih Ibu*) in Solo during the second week of May complaining of exhaustion and pain caused by a fall she had two months prior while performing at the Solo branch of the national radio station (Radio Republik Indonesia Solo, or RRI Solo).⁵¹ She required multiple blood transfusions and spent almost three weeks in the hospital recovering before returning home. The recovery period after this initial stroke was significant, and when I arrived in Yogyakarta to begin my fieldwork in 2011, a number of keroncong musicians there told me she had not fully recovered. By the time I finally met with Waldjinhah again in mid December 2011, her health had improved somewhat. That is until she suffered a second stroke in late August 2012.

⁵¹ Captured from Liputan6.com on 18 May 2010, with a headline reading "Letih, Waljinhah Masuk Rumah Sakit (Exhausted, Waldjinhah Admitted to the Hospital)." *Rumah Sakit Kasih Ibu* is the same hospital I visited after experiencing health issues during my first interview with Waldjinhah in 2008.

Health Concerns Take Over

It was Wednesday and as usual, I planned to visit Waldjinhah in Solo via the Prambanan Express (or more commonly known by the acronym “Prameks”) that traveled the corridor from Yogyakarta to Solo on the hour. That morning, my assistant, Hara, and I ran late and the train was especially crowded—Prameks has limited seating so most passengers who cannot find seating either stood or on sat on the floor of the train often on sheets of newspaper. The train was old and not air-conditioned—the only ventilation came through small side windows that were only slightly cracked open or else tightly shut. By the time we arrived at Purworsari station in Solo, I was drenched in sweat. Hara and I jumped into a taxi parked outside the station and sped off to Waldjinhah’s house. When we arrived, the house was unusually quiet—I thought this strange considering that Waldjinhah expected us on Wednesdays. I assumed she and Pak Ary were likely out running errands and would return sooner or later, so we waited on her front porch patiently. Forty-five minutes went by with no answer to the text messages I had sent Pak Ary. Something seemed odd, Hara knocked on the front door again with no answer. Usually even if Waldjinhah was not home, her maid answered the door and let us in. The heat was getting to both of us and I suggested cooling off at the nearby air-conditioned mall. Just as we opened the front gate to leave, Pak Ary roared up on a black scooter. “My mother’s in the hospital,” he called out over the sputtering roar of the engine, “She’s at Mother’s Love just down the street. Do you want to follow me there?”

I entered the hospital room to find Waldjinah lying motionless in bed with only her arms visible above crisp tightly-fitted white sheets, tubes ran out from her nose and crisscrossed her face and left arm while electronic monitors blinked red intermittently. Her eyes remained slightly ajar but she appeared distant and unconscious, staring blankly up toward the ceiling. I flashed back to the prior week, when we had our most productive meeting yet; when she looked as energetic and healthy as when I first met her four years ago. Pak Ary approached the bed and leaned over hoping to attract Waldjinah's attention. She seemed to recognize him. He introduced Hara and me but she gave no response and continued to stare blankly. Close friends arrived soon after we did, and she smiled but appeared to look through them also. Pak Ary later mentioned that she had suffered a brain aneurysm and required multiple blood transfusions. She checked into the hospital a few hours before I arrived and by Friday night she was unconscious for most of the weekend until finally being awakened on Monday morning. Apparently she had regained consciousness only after a friend, who had stopped in to visit, played a recording of her 1960s hit song "Walang Kekek" on his cell phone and urged her to sing along.

I don't remember a thing about those three days. The doctor later told me that I suffered amnesia, I remember seeing people coming in and out of the room but I couldn't remember at all who they were. It felt like I was taken far away, somehow I thought that I had been put on a train to Ngawi (in East Java) and was checked into a

hospital there. Later on I thought I had been transferred by bus to a hospital in Sragen. All the while I just kept watching people enter my room and thinking “why are all these people staring at me?” Eventually I recognized my son Ary and my daughter-in-law, who is a nurse at Mother’s Love Hospital. So I figured I was still in Solo.

Waldjinah spent almost two weeks in the hospital and for three of those days, was mostly unconscious. She remembers receiving injections with rather large needles, describing them (only half-jokingly) as the kind used on cows and other livestock, and taking lots of medication unfamiliar to her. After her condition improved slightly, doctors diagnosed her with a number of health issues, chief among them internal bleeding from her intestines and complications from an infection caused by this bleeding. She was told to stop eating spicy foods altogether and rest when she returned home. Despite considerable health issues, Waldjinah insists that she must recover in order to perform again.

I still thoroughly enjoy (performing). I know I’m sick now, but once I get on stage and hold the microphone, I forget everything, all the pain is forgotten. When I sing, I feel whole...even if my voice is not the same as before, I don’t care because I’m happy, my heart is happy. Singing can be therapeutic. If I have aches or pains anywhere, the minute I get on stage, I have a rush of energy and immediately forget all about them. I remember once having to perform soon after spraining my ankle badly. I could barely

walk up to the mic, but once I started, I didn't think twice about the swelling or pain my leg was causing me. I only heard the instruments and my voice.

Waldjinah suffered her first stroke in 2010 while in Jakarta for a concert. She does not recall much of what she felt before the stroke only that she had been very tired and perhaps under the weather.

I traveled to Jakarta for a performance but wasn't feeling well. I decided to go ahead with it anyway. While on stage I felt fine...didn't feel ill at all. But right after I got off I nearly collapsed. They had to wheel me out (of the venue) in a wheelchair but I told them I didn't want to remain in Jakarta, I wanted to go home and rest...so I got on a flight back to Solo that night. Mul (Pak Ary) picked me up from the airport and lifted me into the van while I was still in the wheelchair. We went straight to the hospital.

It was not the first time Waldjinah had an extended hospital stay in recent years though. Before 2010 she had been hospitalized twice but managed to keep news of her ill health out of the mass media. As a result, her stroke in 2010 was portrayed publicly as her first real bout with serious illness when actually Waldjinah's health had already

been in decline for a number of years.⁵² This first stroke did, however, require the longest period of recovery and had immense effects on her ability to perform.

When I was sick, I couldn't go anywhere for almost an entire year. I couldn't sing at all, my voice was lost (hilang)! Can you believe it?! Gone entirely! Only now, after lots of practice I can sing again but for that whole year it was gone! That's also when I lost my "high voice" (suara tinggi)...I'm not sure why it happened, maybe it was just chance, or by the will of God. Whatever it is, I surrender to God; if I can't sing anymore then that's just how it is. I accept it.

Losing one's voice, especially for a vocalist of Waldjinh's stature, was predictably catastrophic for her. She still appeared to be in a state of disbelief as she described it to me. I also sensed she was still coming to terms with the possibility of having to retire altogether. The thought of not performing again clearly did not sit well with her for obvious reasons, but it was not the first time she had experienced a loss of voice in her career.

⁵² In February 2014 Waldjinh suffered a liver infection and was placed under intensive home care by doctors (Liputan6.com, "Waljinah dirawat karena Infeksi Ginjal [Waljinah is Treated for a Liver Infection]" captured 20 February 2014, <http://showbiz.liputan6.com/read/832795/waljinah-dirawat-karena-infeksi-ginjal>). Her son, Ary Mulyono wrote via email that she has since recovered well and is now able to walk about the house again (pers com 18 March 2014).

Casting a Spell

Since anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1964), in his book *Religion of Java*, famously characterized traditional Javanese spiritual belief as syncretic, there has been discussion (and even controversy) surrounding the nature of this syncretism.⁵³ Part of the cosmology of this belief, however it is construed, involves sorcery, which remains evident in media representations describing *ilmu hitam* (black magic) and *guna-guna* (a magical spell or charm). Most of Waldjinah's memorable stories involving black magic specifically involved loss of voice and took place primarily in the context of shadow theater rather than keroncong performances. When I asked why this was, she didn't have a direct answer but suggested it was because the use of black magic among performers is generally less common among keroncong musicians. While this assertion may be true, her simple and straightforward response made me wonder what other possible factors were involved, especially given the trajectory of Waldjinah's career and knowing that she began singing with *wayang* troupes at a point of transition in her career. As a well-known keroncong artist, she entered the realm of Javanese gamelan,

⁵³ Syncretism in this context, according to Ronny Nitibaskara (1993: 124) refers to "the fusion of numerous traditions of different origins in a new, complex whole—not simply a mixture of beliefs but a compound, drawing on upon numerous mythical and religious sources." As Nitibaskara observes, the acceptance of a Hindu cosmology of beliefs and traditions and its incorporation into a Javanese set of religious ideas, which emphasized ancestor-worship and the power of the forces of nature gave rise to what has been referred to as the Hindu-Javanese tradition, which was incorporated into and modified by Islamic traditions arriving in Java in the late thirteenth century. Geertz's well-known formulation of Javanese syncretism stirred controversy after some scholars (see Bachtiar 1985, Woodward 1989) questioned his division between social groups and their adherence the syncretic traditions Geertz proposes (Nitibaskara 1993: 124). Furthermore, some of the characteristics Geertz attributes to Hinduism may actually have been derived from Islamic mysticism.

an established court tradition familiar and yet different for her, as an outsider she confronted the hostilities of female *pesindhèn*, some who considered her an adversary because she was a big star. Venturing beyond keroncong created new opportunities but also opened the door to scrutiny and uncertainty, both in her vocal abilities and more broadly her future as a performer. She had yet to encounter either as a keroncong singer.

When I sang with the gamelan in wayang kulit (shadow theater), I often came across pesindhèn (female singers in Javanese gamelan) who liked to use black magic. I remember being affected by it once in the town of Purwodadi. I was on my way to the wayang performance when suddenly I realized that my voice became extremely hoarse (gerok). No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't vocalize anything clearly and I definitely couldn't sing! Since I couldn't perform, I decided to just return home. By the time I got there, it was as if nothing had happened, my voice sounded like it was back to normal. I remember another time when I had trouble breathing before a show and suddenly I began throwing up uncontrollably...but it would happen to me often enough and I think it was because someone went to see a dukun (a shaman).

Well, I think someone was looking for a dukun so that whenever I sang there, I would be always be inferior (kalah). I was sometimes put under a spell, where if I had to sing, my voice would suddenly become hoarse and I wouldn't be able to go on. That happened a lot to other singers as well, especially during the Bintang Radio

competitions.⁵⁴ Singers would go up to the microphone and suddenly...nothing! Nothing comes out of their mouths except incoherent mumbling. Believe me, it happened quite often! Alhamdulillah (Thank God) it never happened to me during one of those competitions! Some of the pesindhens were really evil-minded. Since I was a famous performer and was well liked by both the audience and dalang (puppetmaster), they were fearful I would be asked to sing regularly.⁵⁵ Or worse, many of them feared that the dalang would just have me do more of the singing and fire most of the other pesindhens. I think they may have thought up ways to get the dalang to dislike me, so they went to a dukun and put me under a spell so I would lose my voice before each show.

Frequently, Waldjinah was a bigger star than the *dalang*, the one usually considered the main attraction of wayang performances. She mentioned that many dalang, especially the lesser known ones, invited her to perform simply because they knew it would draw a large crowd. This same dynamic that endeared her to some

⁵⁴ She is referring here to the national vocal competition, known as *Bintang Radio* (the Radio Star) organized by Indonesian Republic Radio (or Radio Republik Indonesia, RRI), the national radio station, annually from the early 1950s until the early 1990s (although there were some years in between when it wasn't held). Contestants came from all over Indonesia and could choose one of three genres: *keroncong*, pop, or *seriosa* (some Indonesian singers described *seriosa* singing to me as "dramatic" and operatic, similar to singing in Italian opera. Contestants had to advance from various levels of regional competition until only the champions of each region would compete at the national competition in Jakarta.

⁵⁵ Frequently, Waldjinah was a bigger star than the dalang, the one usually considered the main attraction of wayang performances. She mentioned that many dalang, especially the lesser known ones, invited her to perform simply because they knew it would draw a large crowd. This same dynamic that endeared her to some dalang, also caused animosity and suspicion among pesindhens.

dalang, also caused animosity and suspicion among the *pesindhèn*. There are also other ways to interpret the loss of voice Waldjinh associates with “black magic” here and my intention is not to necessarily determine which ones are more viable than others. She firmly believes that she encountered a form of black magic causing her to lose her voice or experience ill-health before performing with certain wayang troupes and this belief, undoubtedly, frames her recollections of experiences associated with these events. Although she referred vaguely to “someone” or a “he” or “she” who went to the *dukun*, she never explicitly mentioned who that person was (or even who she suspected), and I opted not to press her on these details.⁵⁶ Besides, it seemed irrelevant who these people were since the main point was that she believed outside forces were responsible. She also mentioned later on that dalang would sometimes mysteriously lose their voices or fall ill immediately before a performance, and there were immediate suspicions that black magic was the culprit in these attacks as well, especially in cases where a talented back-up dalang was ready and eager for an opportunity.

⁵⁶ Ward Keeler (1987: 114) describes the *dukun* as a “magic specialist” in matters of *kebatinan* (mystical beliefs that influence Javanese thinking). Visiting the *dukun* for most Javanese people is culturally approved and quite frequent as they are recognized as the experts in dealing with mystical beliefs. Although *dukuns* are not technically “in business” per se, as Keeler suggests, the “slightly commercial look” to what they do creates a demeaning stigma in eyes of some people—in contrast, there are also specialists known as *wong tuwa* (respected elders), who perform essentially the same functions as the *dukun* but without the negative connotation. In order to maintain their prestige, *dukun* (and *wong tuwa*) must never expressly demand payment for their services and to do so would essentially nullify their claims to potency. However, the *dukun* can expect gifts of snacks, cigarettes and cash as gestures of gratitude, and furthermore if a *dukun* helps a person make money in any way, it’s expected that the beneficiary “remember” the *dukun* by giving either gifts or a share of the windfall (Keeler 1997: 116). To not do so risks potential magical retaliation.

Most of Waldjinhah's memorable stories involving black magic specifically involved loss of voice and took place primarily in the context of shadow theater rather than keroncong performances. When I asked why this was, she did not have a direct answer but suggested it was because the use of black magic among performers is generally less common among keroncong musicians. While this assertion may be true, her simple and straightforward response made me wonder what other possible factors were involved, especially given the trajectory of Waldjinhah's career and knowing that she began singing with *wayang* troupes at a point of transition in her career. Although a large number of her albums on cassette format continued to be released well into late 1980s, keroncong, as a genre, declined in popularity and entered a period some musicians refer to as "*mati suri* (an apparent death)." As a result, Waldjinhah sought out other opportunities and performing in *wayang* was one of them.⁵⁷ It is possible that some of the effects she associates with black magic could also have been manifestations of anxiety or other emotional distress she was feeling at the time. After all, Waldjinhah has, for the duration of her career, identified as a keroncong singer and although *langgam jawa* evokes Javanese gamelan, there are significant differences between vocal parts in keroncong and gamelan, which would require her to make necessary adjustments in terms of technique and style.⁵⁸ As a well-known keroncong artist, she

⁵⁷ I will explore this period of her career and keroncong's *mati suri* further Chapter 10.

⁵⁸ Within the keroncong genre itself, as I've mentioned, there are differences in style and technique between keroncong asli and *langgam jawa* vocalists. Some vocalists have told me that it's easier for *langgam jawa* singers to sing keroncong asli but more difficult the other way around. I've also noticed,

had to confront the hostilities of some female pesindhèn, who considered her an adversary. Being quite competitive by nature herself, it is possible Waldjinah internalized some of the negativity projected at her and felt the pressures of living up to expectations of her fans and critics, while also having to earn a living as a gamelan vocalist.

Other transitions were also taking shape in Waldjinah's life during this period. Her first husband, Boediono (or Pak Bud), passed away in 1985 leaving a tremendous void—not only was he her first love and regular companion on tour, Pak Bud also was her business manager. After his passing, Waldjinah became increasingly concerned with how she would be received as a widowed performer.⁵⁹ Attention from male fans, something she was accustomed to early on in her career, became more prevalent again after Pak Bud's death, and she was deeply worried that her public image would be tarnished by mass media gossip linking her romantically with, what she referred to as, "strange" men. While some or even all of these factors could have contributed to

however, that langgam jawa vocals require a "head voice" that doesn't necessarily translate to keroncong asli vocals, therefore some langgam jawa singers are less inclined to sing keroncong asli mainly based on the characteristics of their own voice. The same goes for keroncong asli singers who are hesitant to sing langgam jawa songs because they cannot reach the higher pitches.

It is also worth noting here that the primary difference between langgam jawa and gamelan, in addition to instrumentation, is tuning. Although *langgam jawa* might be influenced by the gamelan it is based on the Western equal tempered system while gamelan tuning is based on the two *sléndro* and *pélog* scales. Furthermore, the vocal parts for the female gamelan singer (*pesindhèn*) are derived in performance. In keroncong (including langgam jawa) the vocal parts are relatively fixed and notated, generally following the melodic contour of a piece, with only certain details (such as coloratura, ornamentation, etc.) left to the discretion of the performer.

With the emergence of campursari, however, all bets appear to be off since many gamelans are being retuned to the Western system to play keroncong and pop songs.

⁵⁹ This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 9.

Waldjinhah's ill health when she performed with wayang troupes, they do not discount her understanding that black magic was somehow involved.

I'm fortunate I wasn't more susceptible to black magic. Maybe it's because I prayed a lot. Thank God I prayed so much, that's why I didn't lose my voice more. I'm not afraid (of charms or black magic) though because I trust in Allah and I pray every day. Before I perform I always read Al-Fatihah because that's just what I routinely do.⁶⁰ I don't need magical charms (susuk) to make myself appear more attractive on stage...to make everyone wonder: why does Waldjinhah's make-up look so good? All I have to do is read from Al-Fatihah while I'm putting on my make-up before the show, it's more powerful than any charm. But I don't just tell anyone about it, I don't tell other people that this is how I protect myself. I'm telling you though. (She laughed heartily.)

Dreams and Spirituality

Stories about charms and black magic also suggest ways that Waldjinhah's Islamic faith has changed over the years. Besides referencing the Quran, she considered her voice a gift from Allah while generally attributing her success and longevity of career to the fact that she prayed consistently over the course of her life. Given that Waldjinhah was raised with the syncretic spiritual beliefs of "Javanist Islam (or *kejawèn*)," her emphasis on praying regularly, memorizing passages of the Quran and learning how to

⁶⁰ Al-Fatihah is a chapter in the Koran and some Indonesians have told me that the core of its messages and meanings are contained here.

properly recite these passages points to a shift toward orthodoxy in her own belief system that likely did not exist for her earlier on in life.⁶¹ Undoubtedly, Waldjinhah understood the context of her interviews with me and also intended to craft her own image within the guidelines of being a pious Muslim.

*I was taught Al-Fatihah at a young age but never used to sholat like I do now. I practiced kejawèn like many other Javanese people, but it wasn't true Islam.*⁶² Although

⁶¹ "Javanist" Islam or Javanism (known as *kejawèn*) is an ancient system of belief blending elements mostly from Hindu- Buddhist mysticism and Islam, although elements of Christianity also enter into practice, especially in the wording of particular texts (Hadisutrisno 2009: 205). In the early 1970s, as Robert Hefner (1997: 79) writes, the New Order regime proposed to elevate this form of mystical belief to same status as "religion," as defined based on the monotheistic religions formally recognized by the Indonesian state. This caused immense concern among Muslim leaders, many of whom regarded Javanism and its mysticism as a heterodox threat to Islam. A forceful Muslim response led the government to back down but these initiatives served as proof to Muslim observers that New Order policies were aimed at not only limiting Muslim political power but also Islam's influence in Indonesian civil life.

⁶² By "other Javanese people," I think she is referring to people in her family, in her neighborhood or that she knew of generally—she's not referring to all Javanese people generally. She uses the term *Islam tenan* for "true" or "real" Islam, which is in reference to orthodox Islamic practice. The perception that Islam as practiced in Southeast Asia is not "real Islam" or that Southeast Asian Muslims are not "true Muslims," has circulated in Islamic studies for quite some time. One possible explanation for this, as Hefner (1997: 10-11) suggests, is that in court-based variants of Southeast Asian Muslim traditions, individual rulers, rather than independent religious scholars (*ulama*), were considered the "mystical anchor" of the religious community, and therefore he, and *not* the *ulama*, was responsible for the transmission and implementation of Islamic law. This in turn allowed rulers "discretionary leeway" in deciding how they wished to apply Islamic law (*ibid.*)" Anthony Milner (1993: 31) describes how in Malay sultanates, the Raja, not the Malay race or Islamic *ummat* (community) was the primary object of loyalty and other scholars (Wolters 1999, Reynolds 2006, Day 2002) have discussed the "Mandala" or "galactic polity" (Tambiah 1977) models where diffuse political power emanates from the centers of large Southeast Asian kingdoms rather than from the boundaries.

Hefner argues that these generalized patterns are "one clue to the way in which universalist injunctions of Islam were accommodated to Southeast Asian culture...however, our appreciation of this tradition's distinctiveness in Islamic civilization has been hampered by the obscurity of its literary sources and the embarrassment of some modern Muslims in the face of religious traditions regarded (much too simplistically) as undemocratic or heretical (*ibid.*)" According to him, these and other reasons, made it too easy for students of Islamic great traditions to perceive Southeast Asian Muslims as derivative or simply not quite "real Muslims." In the field of Southeast Asian studies itself, it has not been uncommon

I identified as a Muslim, most of my life I didn't sholat...I wasn't really a practicing Muslim. Only around 1981 did I begin to really pray. Actually I was inspired by a dream I had of my only daughter who had passed away only a few years before. Even to this day I remember the dream vividly. In it I was flying high in the sky above the clouds, so high I could barely see the ground. It seemed like I flew around for an eternity, simply drifting and gliding around like a bird. Eventually I descended and found myself perched on a high tree branch amidst a grove of tall trees. I sat there for a while before I noticed my daughter also perched on the branch of a nearby tree. She sat there peacefully in silence. She didn't acknowledge me nor did she even glance at me. Instead she sat silent merely looking out toward the west. That was it...that was the whole dream. For days afterward I couldn't figure out what it meant and it continued to bother me. I wondered why my daughter didn't look at me or say anything. I couldn't figure out what this dream meant or what it was trying to tell me. Finally I went to consult with a kyai about it.⁶³ He told me that it was a powerful dream that came to me for a reason, which was that my daughter wanted me to pray more. The kyai told me she faced west (toward Mecca) because she wanted to show me the direction I had to sholat.

So I decided to heed the message and began to sholat regularly. It's funny because at first I didn't know many prayers so it was difficult to pray. I knew Al-Fatihah

for Islam to be viewed as a type of late-deposited "cultural layer" or intrusive cultural force. All of which has furthered its marginalization in academic studies.

⁶³ *Kyai* is a Javanese term applied to respected and educated males (Robson and Wibisono 2002: 415).

but that was about it, I had to write down the Qulhu and the Nas so that I could recite them. Then in 1985, my first husband passed away and the following year I made the pilgrimage to Mecca—we initially planned to go together, but after he died, I decided to go alone anyway. One night while I was in Saudi Arabia, I had a dream where I stood before a very high ladder—one so high that I couldn't see where it led. I started to climb and once I got high enough I began looking left and right for my husband. I kept looking all over but couldn't see him anywhere and so I kept on climbing. After some time I felt exhausted and stopped to rest on something that resembled a wooden platform. I was so frustrated I couldn't find him that I sat down and tears began falling from my eyes. Suddenly a man who resembled one of the guides dressed entirely in white robes came and sat down beside me.⁶⁴ He looked at me comfortingly but said nothing. We simply sat next to each other in silence for quite some time. Then, finally he looked at me again and whispered, "Don't look down or you will become scared and fall, don't look up because you cannot see what is above." With that, the man stood up and walked away. I found myself again sitting alone. I felt tears well up in my eyes again but this time I fought to hold them back. Instead, I got up, walked toward the ladder and started climbing again. This time I didn't look around for my husband because I knew I wouldn't find him there. I knew I was climbing the ladder alone.

I climbed until I reached the next platform. Exhausted, I sat down to catch my breath. This platform was different from the other one, where I couldn't see much of

⁶⁴ She refers here to the guides who accompany visitors on pilgrimage to Mecca around to the various holy sites around the city.

anything. This platform had a distinct edge and wondered what was over that edge. After catching my breath, I got up and walked towards it. To my surprise, I could see a gigantic mosque in the distance toward the west. I looked at it for a long time admiring its beauty; I couldn't get enough of looking at it. As my eyes surveyed the ornate detail, I suddenly noticed someone sleeping in the main hall! I squinted and strained to make out who this person was. I thought my eyes deceived me but it was true... the person in the hall was my daughter! She was sleeping soundlessly balled up on a small rug in a corner of the hall. I took solace in knowing that my child had moved from the tree branches into the giant mosque. Upon returning to Indonesia, I went to see that same kyai to recite the profession of faith (syahadat) and I was saved. From that time on, I pray regularly every day.

According to some Javanese people, dreams represent an important conduit between the "living" world and the spirits of the afterlife. Whenever Waldjinah recalled her dreams it almost always had a spiritual or religious connotation, and most involved the two people closest to her who had passed away, namely her daughter, Dwi Harini, and Pak Bud, her first husband. On another occasion, we ventured into the topic of dreams again and she asked if I was familiar with the term *nyekar*. I told her I wasn't and Waldjinah explained that the word actually had two common meanings, the first refers to the singing of classical Javanese poetry (*tembang*) while the other refers to visiting the gravesite of an ancestor or person renowned for their wisdom in order to

obtain knowledge. This practice involved not only paying respects and bringing offerings but also spending three days and nights at the gravesite while fasting the entire time. On the final night, it is hoped that this knowledge will be imparted through a dream. In some cases, the act of spending a protracted amount of time at the gravesite in itself serves as an offering in the hopes that the spirit(s) will grant the request.

Once I performed nyekar in Samber Nyowo cemetery in Mangkunegaran where I slept at a gravesite hoping to have my requests granted and receive guidance.⁶⁵ One night I had a dream where I saw an enormous mango tree that had only four fruits on its branches. It was the biggest mango tree I'd ever seen in my entire life! Somehow I knew the four mangos represented my four living children because my request was that my kids find good jobs so that they could earn a living.⁶⁶ The dream was hazy and vague. I mostly stood looking at the giant mango tree in awe but also remember seeing a large body of water I thought to be the South Sea. When I awoke from the dream I understood it as a sign that I was supposed to pay my respects to the Queen of the South Sea (Nyai Loro Kidul), so the very next day I travelled south to the beach at Parangtritis. While I sat on the sand I paid my respects to the Queen, but I also prayed to Allah. After

⁶⁵ According to Waldjinah, *Samber Nyowo* is a cemetery on the grounds of Mangkunegaran, one of Solo's royal palaces, where its kings are buried.

⁶⁶ She explained that her four sons, at the time, were either having trouble finding jobs they liked, or were having trouble getting into the university they wanted to attend.

praying I felt my eyelids become heavy and with the warm ocean breeze hitting my face, I drifted into sleep. The next thing I knew, I was visited by a short, bony middle-aged man with brilliant, long white hair who sat down beside me. In his hands I saw a cup filled with a yellowish syrupy liquid. He lifted the cup toward my lips and gestured that I drink from it, which I did. It tasted of honey mixed with a little bit of water. That was all I remember of the dream but not long after that dream on the beach, one of my sons received news that he was accepted to Gajah Madah University in Yogyakarta and the others eventually managed to find stable and well-paying jobs in Jakarta.

The combination of Islam and Javanese mysticism is not necessarily uncommon or new to Java. As Islam spread across the Indonesian archipelago from the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries, the majority of Central and East Java, where most ethnic Javanese people live, remained under the rule of a Hindu-Buddhist king living in the interior of East Java (Rickleffs 1994: 7). While the northern coasts of Java were Islamized, most of the interior remained loyal to a Hindu-Buddhist king, which may have caused frequent wars between the two regions. Merle Rickleffs (ibid) argues that it should not be assumed these wars were necessarily “a product of irreconcilable religious and cultural differences, for there was a process of cultural assimilation at work as Islam encountered the powerful high culture of Old Java.” This process continued even after a significant majority of Javanese people were considered at least nominally

Muslim—one reason, according to Rickleffs, that Islam of Java differed from that of peninsular Malaya or Sumatra.⁶⁷

Waldjinhah's dreams suggest that for her, the two worlds are deeply intertwined and often negotiated through symbolic meaning. In the dream recalled above, she prayed not only to *Nyai Loro Kidul* but also to Allah, and although she professed to now follow "true" Islam, many of the dreams she recounted, along with other experiences with "black magic" and *dukun*, suggest that her religious beliefs were profoundly influenced by the mystical Javanism she was raised with.⁶⁸ This type of negotiation also demonstrates how Waldjinhah's shift toward religious orthodoxy paralleled broader trends in Indonesian Islam.

⁶⁷ According to Rickleffs, evidence shows that the spread of Islam began in North Sumatra and eventually reached as far as the spice producing islands of East Indonesia. The areas that it became most entrenched appear to be the ones most crucial to international trade at the time: the Sumatran shores, Straits of Malacca, north coast of Java, Brunei, Sulu and Maluku (1993: 8). However, trade was not the only reason for Islam's proliferation, many other important areas of trade, such as Timor and Sumba, remained non-Islamic. Furthermore, in the ancient centers of high culture (eg. Majapahit and Bali), Islam met stiff cultural barriers—in the case of Majapahit, cultural influence was so strong that even non-Javanese Muslims in coastal areas emulated its style (Rickleffs 1993: 13). Other evidence also suggests differences: in Sumatra, sultans have ruled since the end of the thirteenth century while in Java, no ruling monarch is known to have taken on that title until at least the seventeenth century. Although the impact of Islam on Javanese philosophy is debated, it did fundamentally alter certain social customs, such as circumcision and burial.

⁶⁸ Waldjinhah also once talked about her concern for a friend who recently had become possessed by a snake demon who had a cock's comb on its head (*setan ular yang pakai cengger*). The chimerical snake demon entered her while she was drawing water from a well near her home. Her parents and other elders in the neighborhood recited prayers for her and have taken her to at least five different *dukun* but none have been able to extricate the demon. Waldjinhah mentioned that she also was praying for her but was also helping to search for another, more effective *dukun*.

A Turn to “Conservatism”

In the post-Suharto years, Indonesian Islam presented itself using an array of different faces. Immediately following the fall of the New Order in 1998, violent inter-religious conflicts erupted, including bombings of Christian churches and areas of tourism, and unprecedented support for the idea of transforming Indonesia into an Islamic state and imposing elements of Shariah law.⁶⁹ Martin van Bruinessen (2013: 2-4) points out, however, that these developments appear to be “temporary responses to political tremors in the political landscape rather than a pervasive change of attitude of Indonesia’s Muslim majority.” Bruinessen argues that most conflict-ridden areas have since established a new balance of power while terrorist networks have largely been dismantled, with activists either imprisoned or killed by police. Violence in the name of Islam, in this sense, has been considerably reduced or controlled, at least for the time being. The lasting development of this era, however, appears to be the emergence of dynamic transnational Islamic movements now competing for influence with the older established Indonesian mainstream organizations, namely Muhammadiyah and Nadhlatul Ulama (NU), to set the terms of debate within Indonesia (ibid). Part of this trend included “a conservative turn” in mainstream Islam which happened around 2005—most evident in the number of controversial *fatwa* (authoritative opinions) issued by the Indonesian Council of Islamic Scholars (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia* or MUI).

⁶⁹ Shariah refers to canonical Islamic laws or moral codes based on the teachings of the Koran and the Prophet Muhammad. It can be both secular and religious and addresses a wide range of issues including crime, politics, economics, hygiene, sexual intercourse, diet and other areas of personal and public life.

At least one of these fatwa declared secularism, pluralism and religious liberalism (under the suggestive acronym “SiPiLis” coined by fundamentalist opponents) to be incompatible with Islam (ibid).⁷⁰ The reasons for this conservative turn are deep and complex, and perhaps beyond the scope of my discussion here. However, as Bruinessen cautions, it should not be assumed that any direct connection exists between Indonesia’s democratization and the declining influence of liberal or progressive views—or in other words, that the views of the majority are inherently inclined toward fundamentalism or conservatism. Trends toward religious conservatism and radicalism do pose interesting (and perhaps troubling) challenges for Indonesia, especially as a country founded, at least constitutionally, on the premises of inclusion and pluralism. In Waldjinh’s case, religious pluralism exists not only as an ideal but also within the realm of her daily life.

I’m a child of Pancasila.⁷¹ My family consists of both Muslims and Catholics, and we all get along (rukun). My husbands have both been Catholic and two of my sons are Catholic while the other two are Muslim like me. As parents we never forced any particular religion on our children, we allowed them to choose for themselves. Over the

⁷⁰ Other *fatwa* condemned inter-religious prayer meetings (which emerged in response to conflicts) and declared inter-religious marriage *haram* (forbidden according to Islamic law).

⁷¹ Pancasila is the philosophical foundation that guides the Indonesian state. It consists of five main principles: 1) Belief in God 2) Humanity that is just and civilized 3) a unified Indonesia 4) Democracy 5) Social justice. By claiming to be a “child of Pancasila,” Waldjinh implies that her family embodies these principles promoted by the state in terms of their diversity of religious background and in their ability to avoid open conflict by respecting each others differences.

years I think we've respected each other as a family and haven't had issues about our differences in religion. When my sons and their families come over for Christmas, it's almost certain that there'll be a heated discussion about religion. Whatever the debates are, I just sit back, listen and learn from them.

Islam has been my inner strength, especially after going on hajj, I really began paying attention to the wrongful ways prohibited by Allah and have tried to stay clear of them while trying to pray more. I'm a Muslim but of course, I'm also as an artist, and I realize that my audience isn't always comprised entirely of Muslims. Because I sing for everybody, I choose not to don a jilbab when performing, but instead wear my hair up in the traditional Javanese hairstyle (gelungan).⁷² Actually I'm happy to sing for people of any religion. I've performed in Christian churches, recorded duets with other Christian vocalists on worship songs (lagu rohani), and I've sung Christmas carols on television programs. I don't take issue with religion because I'm a vocalist and my job is to sing. I don't choose for whom I will or not sing simply based on religious affiliation. In my daily life though, if I go out (in public) I do wear a jilbab. Wearing a jilbab today (she chuckles) is actually quite fashionable...you won't believe how expensive some of them are now!

⁷² By saying that she "performs for everybody," Waldjinah is referring primarily to an Indonesian audience, especially in Java, comprised mainly of Muslims but also includes people of the other religious backgrounds. Styling her hair in the traditional Javanese fashion allows her something other than an overtly Muslim appearance, a choice likely reflecting her own aesthetic inclinations and perhaps a desire not to isolate non-Muslims in the audience. Also, the term jilbab in Indonesia refers to a headscarf rather than the long, loose-fitting garment worn by some women in the Middle East.

*Plus there are so many different styles and colors today; it's become like another fashion accessory for some women.*⁷³

Wearing jilbab, for some Muslim women, is as much about choice and fashion as it is about expressing Muslim identity. During some keroncong performances, I noticed some female vocalists wore jilbab for one performance but not for the next. Part of the reason for this may be fashion, but the context of the performance is also an important factor. For instance, female singers wore jilbab more often during the period immediately following the Islamic fasting month of Ramadhan; the context of wearing the jilbab during the performance here suggests it was part of celebrating the holy month. A woman I once chatted with while in line at a grocery store mentioned she wore jilbab mostly when in the company of her in-laws, because her husband's family were more pious Muslims, and she was afraid of being judged by them if she did not have it on. Although donning a jilbab in Indonesia has become relatively common, this has not always been the case. Suzanne Brenner (1996: 676-679) suggests that in the mid-1990s the shift toward wearing jilbab happened predominantly among middle to lower middle class college educated women, who despite identifying as devout

⁷³ During the 1980s, as Ariel Heryanto (2011: 61-62) notes, Indonesia was swept up in a wave of headscarfing among Muslim women—a trend which came mostly voluntarily. Heryanto also suggests that the jilbab has become a new and trendy fashion among better-off urbanites, part of broader trends toward the commercialization of Muslim life and the commodification of Muslim religious symbols based in part on the success of political Islam and the emergence of, what he considers, “the new rich” among Indonesian Muslims, who are not entirely different from their non-Muslim counterparts or from wealthy Muslims in other parts of the world.

Muslims, came from households decidedly less devout than they themselves had become. Brenner describes many of the women she spoke with then as intelligent and strong-minded who consciously and intellectually struggled against the prejudice they sometimes encountered for choosing to wear jilbab in their everyday lives (ibid). Since the 1970s, urban university students have been at the forefront of an upsurge in Islamic activity, especially apparent on college campuses in the form of Islamic student organizations, seminars and study groups.⁷⁴ All of this emerged as Suharto's New Order government maintained a delicate balance alternately encouraging Islam's religious and cultural influence while simultaneously restraining its political influence. As Brenner observes, part of the appeal of veiling for some women was the idea of belonging to a broader Islamic movement that represented an extended community. Appearing devout, in this sense, was one way to identify with a movement that emphasized an alternative to Western modernity, even as it "selectively borrowed from Western models in presenting Islam as modern (Brenner 1996: 280)." Additionally, the emphasis on an alternative modernity allowed the movement to distance itself from older, traditional Javanese cultural practices and values, which included localized forms of Islam. While its objectives are far from unitary, Brenner (ibid) notes that many of its followers "share a common vision (albeit one that takes many forms) of a new society constructed on the principles of Islam." Calls for this "new society," of course, made no mention whatsoever of a return to a glorified Javanese past.

⁷⁴ See Hefner 1993

In terms of fashion, it should also be noted that there are various styles of jilbab for women to choose from. The style Waldjinhah preferred to wear was a looser, less-concealing one. It resembled a wrapped silk scarf and revealed sections of hair and neck unlike the tight-fitting chador that revealed only the face—the style most common among Indonesian Muslim women.⁷⁵ Although she certainly is not the only one wearing this particular style of jilbab, her sartorial choice, whether for aesthetic or other reasons, can be interpreted as a metaphor for the type of Islam she practices, along with her approach to religion generally. This perception of “looseness,” however, should not be mistaken for or misinterpreted as a lack of religious commitment. After suffering her initial stroke, Waldjinhah realized she had forgotten many of the essential daily prayers she had fastidiously memorized previously. In the process of memorizing these prayers again, she experienced a second stroke and had to go back and relearn some of the prayers yet again. In recent years, Waldjinhah also appears to have consciously moved away from the practices associated with Javanist Islam toward more “orthodox” or normative Islamic practices—this is especially apparent in efforts to expand on her knowledge of recitation and understand the meaning and philosophy of the Quran.

⁷⁵ Part of the reason for the popularity of this type of jilbab in Indonesia, I’ve been told, is because it can easily be slid on over the head and stays in place without the use of pins or other fasteners—this is especially important when having to wear a motorcycle helmet on top of a jilbab, which many Indonesian women do on a daily basis. The style worn by Waldjinhah takes more time to put on, requires pins to keep in place and is more susceptible to being displaced by wind. Since she usually travels by car, and not motorcycle, she avoids some of these inconveniences—factors which also point to how socioeconomic and class difference may affect women’s choices of jilbab.



3.4 Waldjinhah in headscarf. Photo courtesy of Waldjinhah.

Before going on hajj I mostly practiced kejawèn (Javanist Islam) but now I'm more confident (she softly chuckles). I memorized the fundamentals—besides Al-Fatihah, I also know Qulhu, Falaq, An Naas and other verses...but that was before I got sick. Now I've forgotten all the readings...all of them are gone. Although my health has improved, I still can't sholat properly. I have to be taught all over again.

I also have to relearn the movements (of sholat)—actually my daughter-in-law is teaching me again since I've forgotten them as well. She gave me a book that describes all of the movements so I read it and follow along every time I sholat. I have a really

hard time remembering these types of things. I still have to use the book in order to sholat properly. I'm trying to learn some of the chapters again too. I recite the Qulhu at Maghrib every evening but some of the others I just can't recite properly anymore. It's my fault...I make all kinds of mistakes (reciting). I can't seem to wake up for the Subuh prayers either but I intend to once I start feeling better...in the past I used to wake up every morning but after this last stroke, I haven't been able to do much of anything. I'm glad that my daughter-in-law and my sons are teaching me about Islam and how to sholat again. Otherwise there's no way I could learn it on my own.

For performers, negotiating Islam is often an individual and very much a local matter determined largely by how they situate themselves along a spectrum of Islamic belief.⁷⁶ As Christina Sunardi (2013: 142) observes, local Islamic matters affected some artists because of the perception that increasing orthodoxy had a tangible impact on their professional activities, namely their ability to earn a living as professional musicians and dancers. Sunardi describes how performers, including those who are themselves Muslims, associated a decline in performance opportunities to an increasingly pious and orthodox Muslim population living in their neighborhoods or towns. This trend also affected performers of stature, such as Waldjinah, who also felt a degree of social pressure to conform to this orthodoxy of Islamic belief and practice—her situation, however, was based less on performance opportunities and more toward

⁷⁶ See Daniels 2009.

maintaining the (public) appearance of piety. She also has retained an overall sense of inclusivity and openness toward the different religious beliefs of friends and family, even going so far as to perform in Catholic churches for Christmas celebrations and other events.

Conclusion

Islam's role has been an important one for Waldjinah both in her personal life and in her professional career. She credits her Islamic faith with not only seeing her through difficult times in her life but also for bringing her the successes she has most cherished. At the same time, Waldjinah's comments are not unlike other older Javanese people who become more devout as they age—after all, it is likely she was less devout earlier on in life. As Indonesia has become more Islamized over the course of its history, Waldjinah becoming more Islamic is not entirely surprising. More interesting is how Islam in Indonesia has changed in recent years. As Robert Hefner (2009: 5) observes about Southeast Asia generally, “by the end of the twentieth century, religious developments had transformed a world area once known for its pantheistic syncretism into a region where doctrinally normative variants of Islam hold sway.” Hefner notes that the objective of mosques and Islamic schools was not necessarily to draw converts but to teach nominal Muslims more orthodox practices. As the voice of the nation, Waldjinah's shift toward more orthodox beliefs and practices come within the context of developments taking place around the country. An example of this is the recent

emergence of Islamic schools in Indonesia that are by nature “social-movement schools” that appeal for a deeper Islamization of self and society among its students (Hefner 2009: 58). This is often done using the networks and perceptual frames, according to Hefner, of religious education to challenge the organization of state and society.

Indonesia and Southeast Asia have historically been characterized by flexible attitudes regarding how Islam is linked to artistic expression, differentiating this world region from others, such as the Middle East and South Asia (Hooker 2006: 128). The most compelling evidence of the compatibility between religion and the arts comes from terms in the Indonesian language such as *seni Islam* (Islamic art) and *musik Islam* (Islamic music), all of which are used in various contexts by even the most conservative religious authorities (Harnish and Rasmussen 2011: 12). Although Islam historically has not been directly associated with keroncong, there are many keroncong musicians in Indonesia, including Waldjinhah, who are Muslim. Symbols of Muslim identity surface in keroncong performances during Islamic holidays and especially when female vocalists perform donning *jilbab*.

Although Waldjinhah chooses not wear a jilbab while performing, she does veil when out in public—something she did not do as a younger woman. While this may be interpreted as merely an aesthetic choice, the issue of whether to veil or not suggests that she, like other Indonesians, was struggling with her identity as a Muslim. On one hand, Waldjinhah has been a loyal wife, loving daughter and devoted mother who, over the course of her career, has provided financially for her entire family through her own

income while maintaining a clean public image. She is also an artist who has not always been a devout Muslim, at least not according to current definitions. As she grows older, Waldjinhah's turn toward Islamic orthodoxy points to broader changes in processes of Islamization in Indonesia. Ideas of what it means to be Indonesian, Javanese and a Muslim have changed significantly since Waldjinhah began her career. An obvious example of this is how common (or even expected) it is for pious Muslim women now to carefully veil their heads when in public—a practice that up to the 1980s was rare and, according to Suzanne Brenner (1996: 674), seemed “oddly out of place in Java,” given its practical effect of allowing women in other Muslim countries to move more freely in public space does not transpose to Java where women historically have not been confined to domestic or “private” spheres Java.

If the question is whether Waldjinhah, as a young woman today, could reach the level of success she has achieved, in the way she has done it, while remaining a devout Muslim, I believe the answer to be no. The main reason for this are changing attitudes toward what constitutes a moral and devout Muslim. Some have suggested that Islam in Indonesia today is not necessarily becoming more moral but simply more ritualized—focusing on rules regarding dress, fasting, prayer and education. When Waldjinhah talks about praying more regularly and veiling in public, she is not only doing this out of choice but also to uphold the image of a pious Muslim. As Indonesia attempts to balance the ideals of democracy and the ethical imperatives of Islam, Waldjinhah, as the voice of the nation, personifies this ongoing struggle.

Chapter 4—Growing up in Solo

Solo during nighttime, artists' voices seduce, penetrating deep into the heart, captivating one's inner self.

From "Lgm. Solo di Waktu Malam (Langgam Solo at Night),"
composed by R. Maladi in 1943

Solo, or Surakarta as it is formally known, is a city in the province of Central Java with a population of slightly more than half a million residents. Along with Yogyakarta (also known as Jogja), Solo was one of the two centers of Javanese court culture, founded in the mid eighteenth century after the kingdom of Mataram moved its capital here. A dispute over succession led members of the royal family in central Java, influenced by the Dutch, to divide royal power into two rival court centers located roughly 37 miles apart.⁷⁷ An enduring rivalry developed between the two court centers

⁷⁷ The origins of this rift began with Dutch (ie. the Dutch East India Company, the VOC) efforts to control coastal ports not already ceded to them. Based on what they felt was the Mataram kingdom's inability to properly govern the coast over the course of the previous century, the Dutch pressured the Javanese king Pakubuwana II to lease the coastal land to them. One of his closest advisers, Pangeran Mangkubumi objected based on what he considered to be a fundamental oversight on the king's part to sign away one of the most affluent regions of his kingdom without consulting his dignitaries. For this and other reasons, Mangkubumi instigated rebellion in May 1746 beginning the the Third Javanese War of Succession (1746-57).

Amidst the unrest, king Pakubuwana II became ill and called on VOC governor Baron von Hohendorff to oversee the transfer. Nine days later the king passed away but the treaty was already signed, however, it was, as Ricklefs puts it, "a dead letter," as this document could not (and would not) win the war that had already commenced. In December of 1749 von Hohendorff announced that crown prince Susuhunan Pakubuwana III would be the next king but prior to this Mangkubumi already had been declared king by his followers in the rebel headquarters in Yogya in Mataram. Mangkubumi eventually took the title Hamengkubuwana, which all his successors have taken since, and Java was divided between a rebel king and a monarch supported by the VOC.

The rebellion got stronger over the years but there was no clear victory in sight for either side—both, in fact, suffered heavy losses, including the VOC. In 1754, the new Dutch governor of the north coast, Nicolaas Hartingh, attempted to end the war placating Mangkubumi (Hamengkubuwana) by

and continued after Indonesia's independence. Elements of this rivalry are especially intense in the arts where each has made claims to being the true center of Javanese arts and culture. As R. Anderson Sutton (2008: 349-350) observes in the context of Javanese gamelan, musicians and informed listeners, especially those in central Java, continue to differentiate between Solonese (*gaya Solo*) and Yogyanese (*gaya Jogja*) styles of playing.⁷⁸ Although the two are based essentially on the same principles and similar repertoire, both traditions have undergone substantial change as the two court centers have sought to define themselves in opposition to one another.

Historically Solo was also known for its batik cloth industry, centered in the Laweyan district, and was also a stronghold of nationalist sentiment and ardent support for Indonesia's first president, Sukarno (Siegel 1986). Some Indonesians also told me that Solo is referred to as "the city of trade and commerce" in Central Java and the

offering him part of Java. After negotiations, Mangkubumi eventually agreed to terms that allowed him one-half of the kingdom, although he continued to dispute Dutch rule of the coast. On 13 February 1755, the Treaty of Giyanti was signed formally recognizing Mangkubumi as Sultan Hamengkubuwana I, the ruler of half of Central Java. The treaty also signified a defeat of Dutch policy in Java—which, up to that point, focused on maintaining stability by supporting a king who would rule Java in their interest. Hamengkubuwana I moved to Yogya, established a court there and renamed the town Yogyakarta. However, he still faced obstacles, namely another king, Pakubuwana II, nearby in Surakarta. The war finally ended in 1757 with three arms of power now in place: Surakarta, Yogyakarta and the Dutch VOC. This period also represents the beginning of the rivalry between Yogyakarta (Jogja) and Surakarta (Solo) which endures until today (see Ricklefs 1994: 94-99).

⁷⁸ Sutton (2008: 349-350) notes that the court-derived tradition of Surakarta (Solonese style) is the predominant gamelan tradition known throughout Java. However, the Yogyanese style is more popular in the province of Yogyakarta (*Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta*) and is nurtured consistently by court musicians in the Yogyakarta *kraton* (palace). Yogyanese style, essentially based on the same principles and similar repertoire as Solonese style, tends to be more *gagah* (strong, robust) and *prasaja* (austere, forthright). There also are debates about whose tradition is more legitimate, Solonese argue that the Yogyanese style is more archaic, while theirs is progressive but both sides tend to agree that Yogyanese style represents the older practice associated with the Mataram court before its division.

abundance of bustling shops, traditional markets, elegant shopping malls, hotels and other large-scale development projects dotting the cityscape certainly lends credibility to the idea that trade remains a significant aspect of Solo's economy and identity. In the mid to late 2000s, the city also became home to various radical Islamic movements, most of whom have been conspicuous since the fall of the New Order regime in 1998 (Bruinessen 2013: 12).⁷⁹ The period immediately preceding the fall of the New Order also saw violent acts directed at Chinese Indonesian commercial sites in Solo, such as shops, factories and showrooms (Purdey 2006: 124-127). Despite the efforts of Solo residents to downplay the racialized element of these attacks, the basic patterns of violence point toward "Chinese" targets across the socioeconomic spectrum. Most of the dead were people trapped inside shops set ablaze, and an estimated forty thousand people (out of a workforce of around three hundred thousand) lost their jobs as a direct

⁷⁹ As Bruinessen (2012: 13-15) observes, Solo has long had associations with Islam. In fact, the first institutions of Islamic education were established in Solo based on court initiatives. In the past fifteen years or so, there has been a general shift in religious orientation toward Salafism, an extremely puritanical brand of Islam originating from Saudi Arabia, which appears to have influenced nearly all radical movements and organizations in Solo. Prominent Solo-based organizations such as *Laskar Jihad*, are often led by activists who recently graduated from Saudi universities in the 1990s and have established a dedicated following in the city.

In August 2012 there were a spate of murders of policemen in Solo attributed to local Muslim radicals. Rumors circulated that the intention of these murders was to promote terror across the city and disrupt the political campaign of its former mayor, Joko Widodo (or "Jokowi"), who, at the time, was running for governor of Jakarta and is, at the time of this writing, the president of Indonesia. Up to that point, Jokowi had received mostly praise for his tenure in Solo and was highly touted as a rising star in Indonesian politics. Eventually it came out that the shootings were in fact linked to Muslim radicals, but had nothing to do with the election in Jakarta, instead they intended retribution toward police forces who conducted previous raids against radical organizations in Solo killing some of their members. When I asked keroncong musicians at practices about the shootings, most had little to say but some expressed fear and outrage toward what they perceived as the rising tide of radicalism and violence in their city.

result of the destruction of factories, shops, banks and offices across the city (ibid).⁸⁰

Besides financial loss, a significant number of sexual assaults and rapes were committed against Chinese Indonesian women during and after the attacks. Although local police claimed lack of evidence and reluctance on the part of victims and their families to report led to only one formal complaint being filed, NGOs and members of the Chinese Indonesian community insisted cases of sexual violence were much higher (Purdey 2006: 133).

I lived in Yogyakarta, a city known as a center of education and classical Javanese art and culture, but visited Solo nearly every week to interview Waldjinhah and attend keroncong band practices.⁸¹ In addition to being one of Indonesia's most densely populated cities, Solo also had a significant number of keroncong musicians—currently there are between seventy and ninety keroncong ensembles active in the city and its

⁸⁰ Jemma Purdey (2006: 124-125) suggests that downplaying the racial element of the attacks allowed Solo to successfully avoid the attention and condemnation attracted by the "May Riots" in larger cities like Jakarta, where the anti-Chinese sentiment was more overt. In either case, the violence in Solo occurred at such a grand scale that a large percentage of the population undeniably performed some role in it, if only as passive spectators (Purday 2006: 127-128).

⁸¹ In some ways, I felt in the middle of the rivalry between these cities, which spilled over into various facets of everyday life including sports teams, economic development, food and the arts. I spent a significant amount of time with musicians from both cities and although I never heard anyone speak poorly of the other explicitly, a rivalry, even on this level, bubbled just below the surface. I recall being at a band practice one night in Solo and mentioned I was taking keroncong cello lessons from a musician in Jogja. A musician from Solo replied, "Why bother? They don't play it well there anyway. If you really want to play you need to learn from us Solonese musicians."

surrounding areas with even greater numbers in the past.⁸² Solo's intimate association with keroncong stems primarily from the popular song "*Bengawan Solo* (The Solo River)," which was written in the 1940s and has since spread to various countries in Asia and as far as South America (see Kartomi 1998). The connection between keroncong and this city, however, runs deeper than a song. Solo has also been home to some of the genre's most prolific and innovative composers, instrumentalists and vocalists, including Gesang Martohartono (a vocalist and the composer of "*Bengawan Solo*"), Andjar Any, W.S. Nardi, Mini Satria, Koko Thole, Waldjinah and a host of others. Solo musicians I spoke with often boasted that the most important stylistic and technical innovations in the genre, such as the percussive style of cello playing, guitar figuration

⁸² A number of these bands share members, especially since many of them have trouble finding a good and reliable violinist and/or flute player, these musicians tend to be in highest demand and are most likely to be shared (interview with Wartono 4 April 2012). Some are also ensembles known as *keroncong gadhon*, bands with the minimal instrumentation of cak, cuk and cello—one of the instrumentalists usually serves as the vocalist. The Javanese term *gadhon* comes from gamelan usage and refers to a very small ensemble of specific gamelan instruments, usually *slenthem*, *gendèr*, *gambang*, *rebab*, *kendhang* (*batangan*), and female singer. *Gadhon* groups usually perform at the smaller *warung* (food stalls)—for instance I once watched a *gadhon* band perform at *Soto Sawah*, a *warung* on the far northwestern side of Solo overlooking a large rice padi. In terms of the overall number of existing keroncong bands, it's likely that Jakarta also has a significant number of active bands, however, nobody I spoke with had an accurate count or ventured an estimate—the same is true of other large Javanese cities such as Surabaya and Semarang—these large port cities also have a particularly long history of keroncong and continue to have a significant number of groups even today.

Yogyakarta, I have been told, has around 40 to 60 active ensembles currently and Bandung has around 7 to 10. In terms of the other islands, there are bands active in Lampung and Sawahlunto in Sumatra and Samarinda, Banjarmasin and Balikpapan in Kalimantan—however, there are far fewer bands on these islands than in Java. Ambon (in the Moluccan islands) and Manado (in north Sulawesi) historically have had a number of keroncong bands although, at this point, I do not have an exact figure on how many active bands exist in these cities today. I've listed these cities based on my own findings and what informants have told me, there are likely bands in other cities or regions that I've yet to hear about.

and arpeggiated patterns on *cuk* (ukekele), all originated from their city.⁸³ Although difficult to either confirm or deny these claims, Solo keroncong musicians have historically been innovators within the genre and continue to consider themselves as such even today—for instance, Solo is considered the home of *langgam jawa*, the subgenre of keroncong that became popular in the 1960s.⁸⁴ Building on its artistic capital, both the city government and local musicians in recent years have made efforts to brand Solo “the capital city of keroncong.”⁸⁵ Waldjinah was born in Solo on 7 November 1945 and has been a resident of the city her entire life. She speaks proudly of her city and its association with keroncong. On more than one occasion Waldjinah clarified that she was not just a keroncong musician but a “keroncong vocalist from Solo”—a distinction that places her firmly in the pantheon of other respected musicians and in the lore of Solonese keroncong.

⁸³ See Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion of these musical aspects of keroncong.

⁸⁴ Solo is also home to the “Solo International Keroncong Festival,” which has been held annually for more than a decade now. The festival prides itself on not only promoting keroncong and “keeping it alive” but also in attracting keroncong bands from around Indonesia and the world, which usually means Malaysia and Singapore (although other foreign artists, such as my band *Orkes Pantai Barat*, are usually invited). In recent years, the festival has centered on innovation in keroncong and has stressed moving away from static genre boundaries. There is a concerted effort on the part of organizers to showcase not only bands that play standardized keroncong but also non-traditional “innovative keroncong (*keroncong inovasi*).” Furthermore, they’ve specifically targeted young audiences with their selection of bands, often booking acts that feature musicians in high school or college in efforts to dispel the stereotype that keroncong is a music only Indonesians of older generations enjoy.

⁸⁵ These attempts have come under some scrutiny and suspicion by keroncong musicians in other parts of Java and Indonesia. Some have openly questioned why Solo should be considered keroncong’s “capital” when Jakarta and other cities, like Yogyakarta and Surabaya, also have deep historical ties to it as well. Reasons for labeling Solo as keroncong’s capital appear to be based in large part in efforts to market the city as a hub for tourism. During my stay in Indonesia, I noticed that Solo was, on quite a few occasions, featured in print advertisements or on television travel programs promoting its old and refined court culture, arts and other nostalgic recollections “old Java” or *tempo doeloe* (the old times).

Mangkuyudan

Despite reaching the pinnacles of success as a keroncong vocalist, Waldjinah remained a resident of the same neighborhood she grew up in for her entire life. Different from some of her peers, who after achieving fame and financial success moved to Indonesia's capital of Jakarta; she chose to remain in her beloved hometown. During this time, Waldjinah notes significant changes to the neighborhood, most of the families she knew growing up moved away and nowadays more people live here than ever before.

I was born and raised in the neighborhood of Mangkuyudan right here in Solo. My family was poor (tidak punya); my father worked as a batik printer and my mother was a vegetable seller in the market.⁸⁶ It was a good neighborhood, it still is...and to this day, I enjoy living here. Back in the 1950s though, it didn't look anything like it does now.

She rose from the couch and gestured for me to follow. I walked out with her through the foyer and the front gate into the glare of the raw mid-morning sun. Waldjinah pointed down the street and we squinted off into the distance.

⁸⁶ Based on my interpretation, Waldjinah did not necessarily grow up in miserable conditions. Both of her parent held jobs, although humble ones, and her description suggests that her family's condition was no different from many others considered part of the Javanese working poor, who subsist with food and shelter and little else.

You see all those houses over there? Back then none of them was here. I used to play over there as a kid and it was all forests and fields, there were none of these housing developments back then. I loved playing among all the trees and then running through the rice paddies. As a kid I was a “tomboy,” I always wore shorts and t-shirts. I never liked to wear dresses or anything that the little girls wore. Maybe it’s because I had six older brothers and wanted so much to be like them. As the youngest of ten children, I was lucky because I never had to do much work around the house, most of the chores were done by my older siblings. Most of the time, I would be out in the fields tending to the goats and water buffalo playing with my slingshot (ketapel). As a kid, I never left the house without my slingshot...always had it with me in my pocket, and undoubtedly something or someone would be in the line of fire!

Our house was much smaller back then, it was cramped but still accommodated my entire family—all of my brothers and sisters lived under one roof. The house I live in today is built on the exact spot where the old house was, of course it is now much larger—this current home was constructed in 1972. I used the money I earned from performances on my first tour to Suriname that year and to renovate the old house and add on to it...I’ve lived here ever since.



4.1 Waldjinhah's home in Solo. Photo by the author, December 2014.

Mangkuyudan is a quiet neighborhood located in the very center of Solo—it is not especially large in terms of size but it is densely populated. Houses press up against each other on narrow lanes lined with shrubs, small trees and rows of drying laundry, which appear to fill in the gaps. It was hard for me to imagine the forests and rice fields Waldjinhah reminisced about during her youth because there is simply no trace of open land left in the neighborhood I saw. In this regard, Mangkuyudan is no different from the average urban neighborhood in Java today. Despite her stature and perhaps being wealthier than some of her neighbors, Waldjinhah's relatively modest two-story home does not stand out from the others in the neighborhood. Her down-to-earth

mannerisms appear rooted in the working class surroundings she was raised in, and despite achieving popularity and wealth as a performer, it is a place she was reluctant to leave.

Households Divided

My parents were very old-fashioned—both of them were born and raised in Solo. My father had two wives, and my mom was his first.⁸⁷ After having their sixth child together, my father decided to marry another younger woman and from that point on, he didn't live with us anymore. He moved in with his other wife and started another family. My mom had four more children with him though and the ten of us, my brothers and sisters, lived with her. My dad lived not far from here with his second wife, and they had eight children together. My entire family consisted of eighteen children and three parents. I was the youngest in my immediate family. I really don't know much about my father's background or what he did on a daily basis because he rarely visited our side of the family, he mostly kept to his other wife and family. On occasions when he did come visit us, I think he sometimes would forget who we were, especially me being the youngest (she chuckles). I wasn't the only one, sometimes he would forget some of my brothers and sisters as well!

As a child, I remember my dad being very handsome and having a good and very distinct sounding voice. He loved singing old Javanese songs and some say he resembled

⁸⁷ She uses the phrase *kolot banget* to describe her parents, which can also mean very traditional or very conservative.

the type of distinguished person you'd find entertaining in the palace (kraton). Instead he was a batik worker (buruh batik) and while he worked, he liked to pass the time singing. His voice was beautiful and the other female batik workers loved it when he sang. Who wouldn't, right? He was an attractive man with a great voice. Lots of young women were attracted to him and he eventually took one of them as his second wife. It seemed like he and the second wife had eight children very quickly after they married. My dad never divorced my mom though, he kept her as wife number one and the other woman as wife number two. It was a polygamous marriage. After he married the other woman, I never visited my dad, nor did he come to see me very much. When I did see him, he would sometimes quietly pass me and my siblings some money but told us not to tell his second wife...that's what I got from him.

Although never explicitly stated, Waldjinhah's resentment toward her father's second marriage was only thinly veiled. She, however, refused to speak ill of him—often recalling memories and events without expressing her own opinions or any judgments about them. During a subsequent interview, I asked what would happen if her previous husband (hypothetically) wanted a second wife. Without a moment's hesitation she shot back, "I would have taken my kids and left him."⁸⁸ This, however, was not what her mother chose to do.

⁸⁸ Polygamy in Indonesia is legal, however there are laws and restrictions in place regulating its practice. In 1974 the Marriage Law was enacted allowing a man to take additional wives only if his established wife is unable to fulfill her duties as a wife (ie. she is unable to bear children or suffers an incurable illness).

Mom was a gentle and extraordinarily hard-working woman. She worked mainly as a vegetable seller on a busy street intersection in the center of town but also sold other things like sweets and candy. She worked so hard and for long hours to provide for her children. I'll always remember her taking the time, no matter how tired she was, to sing me lullabies before going to bed at night. I would lie in her arms and she sang to me while I held onto my beloved little sheep doll, who I named Rebo. Often, I fell asleep on the grass in the front yard of our house, staring up at the stars in the night sky while holding Rebo and listening to mom's sweet voice. I always felt comfortable underneath the stars because it was where I felt loved. Sometimes I'd fall asleep on top of the

Before taking his second wife, the man must get receive permission from the religious court which can only be granted if he substantially demonstrates his ability to 1) support more than one wife and 2) act justly toward his wives.

As Nina Nurmila (2009: 1-3) points out, it is especially difficult to determine the actual number of polygamous marriages in Indonesia due to the large number of unregistered marriages. According to a rough estimate, approximately five percent of all marriages in Indonesia are polygamous (Azra 2003, Bowen 2003) while previous reports from 1939 and 1953 (Vreede de Stuers 1960, Geertz 1961) suggest around two percent of marriages in Java are polygamous. Nurmila observes that although this percentage appears low, the actual number of polygamous marriages is quite high (more than 163,000 polygamous marriages out of around 8.2 million total)—this number appears to be growing in the post-Soeharto era based on support from Islamists or Islamist political parties who mostly argue for polygamy or promote it as part of Islam (Nurmila 2009: 9-10).

The Soeharto/New Order government (1966-98) considered polygamy and divorce to be social problems to be discouraged by law and regulations. Polygamous marriages were seen as deviant from “normal” heterosexual monogamous marriages promoted by the government. Proponents of polygamy, during this time, remained quiet about their views and many Indonesians considered regarded polygamy as a shameful act to be kept in secrecy (Nurmila 2009: 5-6). Negative reactions were usually directed toward husbands, their first wives and second wives. First wives were generally chastised for not serving their husbands well enough while second wives were blamed for their draining the family's financial resources.

In the post-Soeharto era proponents of polygamy became increasingly outspoken, especially during the presidency of Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001-2004), which resulted from relaxed attitudes toward polygamy, allowing for its public promotion (ibid).

garbage bin in the yard and be awakened by mom in the middle of the night calling me to back inside the house. One night she woke me up and I couldn't fall back asleep once I came in, so both of us went outside again and she began telling me about a dream she had the night before. In it she was visited by a group of wise elders who told her one of her children would lead her up the ladder to a better life, this child would achieve success and bring the family greater possibilities. She told me she thought I was going to be that child. I'll never forget the impact her words had on me that night and the confidence she instilled in me. To this day, I always say that it was because of my mother that I became a famous singer.

Growing up in this neighborhood, I noticed people had all kinds of jobs, some worked in the government offices as clerks and most others were batik workers. My mom also had a second job as a batik worker after she finished selling vegetables. In the mornings, she woke up very early, usually before sunrise, to prepare her vegetables for the day. She sold at the intersection until about noon and then would come home and for lunch. After that she went to work at the house of the juragan (the batik employer) making batik—from what I remember, she would often be the one coloring the cloth but sometimes I'd see her using the large canting (a pen-like instrument used to apply wax in the batik process).⁸⁹ She worked there until late at night and then would come home, sleep for a few hours and then start preparing her vegetables for the next day. Most of the batik made around here at that time sold at the Klewer Market and was stamped

⁸⁹ She also uses the term *mbironi*, which is the Javanese word for this instrument.

batik (batik cap) not the fine, expensive batik (batik halus)—the process for making stamped batik only took about two months to complete. My father also worked at a similar place not far away, it was the house of juragan south of where we lived.

In her study of Laweyan, Solo's renowned batik-making district (and nearby Mangkuyudan), Suzanne Brenner (1997: 99) suggests that "community" was as much defined by social class as it was by bounded space. According to Brenner, very few people straddled the line between elite and non-elite communities in Laweyan and those who did were the less wealthy, but not quite impoverished, descendants of former entrepreneurs—most neighborhood (*kampung*) people, however, were outside the social world and awareness of the merchant class.⁹⁰ Laweyan's merchant class saw themselves, and not the other *kampung* residents, as the rightful inhabitants of the neighborhood, mostly because they could point to their ancestor's graves as proof that the neighborhood did, in fact, belong to them. Brenner recounts how many of the poorer residents were pushed aside as merchant's built extravagant new homes for their families—in some cases, extended merchant families took over entire neighborhoods pushing the poor to the peripheries. Waldjinah's family were undoubtedly among the impoverished *kampung* folk—both her parents, as well as some

⁹⁰ *Kampung* here literally refers to the neighborhood residents, however, it may also refer to village (i.e., used interchangeably with *desa*). It also carries class connotations sometimes used to describe people of low socioeconomic class. *Kampung*, for instance, can refer to a person or thing that is considered "hickish," (ie. crude or folksy), similar to how some Americans use the term "hillbilly" or "White trash" to connote a stereotype of poor, often rural, undereducated people of Euro-American racial background—although *kampung* does not carry a racial component, it highlights a class difference.

of her brothers and sisters, worked for batik merchants in the area. This humble background, I sense, is part of the reason Waldjinh continues to live a relatively modest lifestyle in an unpretentious home in the very neighborhood she was raised in. Despite becoming one of Indonesia’s renowned vocalists, she does not necessarily consider herself part of the elite class—at least not in socioeconomic terms. She once mentioned that, unlike some of her peers who also were well-known vocalists and musicians in Jakarta, she did not feel the need to purchase extravagant homes or other material goods to signify wealth—she felt grateful for what she had and was comfortable with her level of success. This does not imply, however, that Waldjinh did not think about making money or her socioeconomic standing. As she mentioned to me, her income as a professional vocalist provided her a degree of freedom in the sense that it allowed her to be relatively independent, at least financially. Within her family, Waldjinh has been the primary breadwinner for most of her working life.⁹¹

Origins of a Name

While collecting articles about Waldjinh in various newspapers, magazine and other print media sources, I noticed two different spellings of her name: Waljinh and Waldjinh, with a “d” inserted. The reason for the discrepancy is that the latter is an older Dutch influenced spelling from before the 1972 reform which made Indonesian spelling more consistent with Malay—in this case the “dj” became just a “j” in her name.

⁹¹ This is discussed in further detail in later chapters of this dissertation.

Most of the articles pre-1972 used the “dj” spelling, although some continued to use it even after the reform—this appears to be common practice especially for proper names more so than other common words. I assumed that the prevalence of the spelling without the “d” in print media meant that Waldjinhah herself had changed the spelling of her name—of course, based on the spelling used here, this obviously is not true.

People spell it both ways but I prefer the “dj,” that’s what it says on my official identity card. The name Waldjinhah was actually given to me by my father. Since I was born in the Javanese calendar month of “Syawal” and was my mother’s tenth child—ten in Javanese is sejinah—so he combined the two and gave me the name Waldjinhah.⁹² For a long time, I was the only person I knew of with that name, but after I became popular, fans told me that they’ve named their children after me...so nowadays there are a few more Waldjinhah’s running around in the world (she bellows heartily)! Even as far as Suriname there are now women named after me after I toured there in the early 1970s. No matter what, I’m still the original though and probably the only one whose name actually bears meaning (she chuckles again). I’ve never thought about changing my name, it’s been mine since birth and it’s brought me luck.

As a child my family also gave me the nickname “Jithol.” I wasn’t exactly sure why they called me by this particular name but that’s just what everyone called me for the longest time. Later on I found out the word “jithol” actually refers to something dirty

⁹² *Syawal* (also spelled *shawwal* or *syawwal*) is the tenth month of the Islamic calendar, a name adopted into the Javanese calendar.

or untidy but the meaning was also combined another Javanese word, “menthul (meaning plump or chubby)” but no one really knew what the nickname referred to, especially me. Then one day my mother, perhaps the only person who actually knew its meaning, explained it to me. She said the nickname emerged from the time I was born—my vagina was slightly protruding, so much so that as a baby just about everyone assumed I was male. My brothers and sisters didn’t recognize it was not a penis and my mom was too busy recovering after my birth to pay attention. She was told that she had another boy and just went along with it. After all, I was her tenth child and I don’t’ think she really cared what sex I was!

Giving birth to me almost killed my mother. She went into labor in our house and had a very difficult time with it. She kept waiting and waiting for the doctor to arrive at our home but he never did, luckily there was a dukun (shaman) who lived nearby so someone went to get him. Unfortunately, he was so old he couldn’t’ help much at all, in fact he ended up falling asleep in front of our house when I was being born! A group of women from the neighborhood finally helped my mother, and all of them looked at me and agreed I was a little boy. Later on that evening while one of the women was cleaning me, she exclaimed in disbelief, “the penis is gone!” Word got around the neighborhood and many people stopped by curious about the boy who had lost his penis. For many years after I was ridiculed, especially by my older sisters, as the boy who turned into a girl and from there the nickname “Jithol” stuck with me, at least until I became a teenager. Maybe this is why I was such a tomboy while growing up.

Waldjinah, Hara (my assistant) and I rolled in laughter as she recalled the story of her nickname. Afterward I asked about whether her father was present when she was born. The mood of our conversation changed drastically after that.

My father at the time was living with his younger wife. He'd already left our house for about six years. Whenever he came to visit, it seemed like my mom would become pregnant. I was their last one but he wasn't around when I was born, I'm not sure when exactly he came to see me. Giving birth to me definitely put my mom's life at risk though...she had such a tough time and some people later told me she nearly died in labor. She suffered from ill health for years afterward. As I became older, I realized how frail my mother was. She was often sick but continued selling vegetables on the street and making batik nearly every day. As a kid I tried to help her by counting the money she made after coming home from selling vegetables. Sometimes I'd tag along to her job coloring batik with the intention of helping her. Since I was still quite young, most of the time I think I just got in the way. The money she made from both her jobs was barely enough to provide for our basic needs, and sometimes it wasn't enough. During these instances, I would walk around our neighborhood or elsewhere in Solo to beg for money (minta uang). When my father found out, he was furious. I recall him berating me, "How dare you go around town asking people for money like you're some begger!" I'm not sure how much money I made though, since I was such a young kid I'm sure it wasn't very much. Whatever I collected went to my mother and sometimes she'd give me a

little bit to buy something for myself. My dad got mad at me but didn't help us much, in fact, he rarely came to see us at all...and if he did, like I said before, it resulted in my mom becoming pregnant.

As I got older I became more accepting of my father, I tried to be the bigger person and treated him with respect. I tried not to hold a grudge (dendam) against him for the way he acted when I was very young. When my dad got old and became very sick, he wanted to return to our house. The day he passed away I was at a performance in Tulungagung, by that time I already had paying jobs as a vocalist. He came by our house and told my mother that he wanted to speak with the both of us privately.⁹³ She told him I'd only be back later that day and so he waited until I returned. In the late evening he came over to the house and upon entering, greeted my mother respectfully (sembah). He then sat down gently beside her and proceeded to ask for her forgiveness. Afterward he looked at me but no words emerged from his mouth. Our eyes locked and I knew what he was trying to tell me, so I bowed my head and asked for his forgiveness. My father told us he wanted to stay the night and a few hours later, he passed away in our home.

Some of Waldjinah's early childhood recollections are based on not only on her own experiences but also from the stories she heard from her mother, siblings, neighbors and others around her while growing up. The influences of others certainly

⁹³ Tulungagung is a city and regency (*kabupaten*) located in East Java.

colored the way she remembered her childhood. Although she spoke respectfully of her father and about how she held no grudge against him, it is not hard to notice that bubbling below the surface was a deep resentment for his absence—not only in her life but also the lives of her mother and siblings. Her disdain for this absence (and perhaps for him) manifests itself in the ways he appeared in stories of her childhood—in how she describes the outcome of his infrequent visits as times her mother would “end up pregnant” or how he was not around during the time she was born. These ill-feelings toward him likely did not emerge entirely from her own experiences but also from those of other family members. Without explicitly pointing fingers, she also attributed some of her family’s hardships to his absence and lack of financial support generally. Part of the insinuation is that her father, by choosing to live with his second family contributed a greater portion of his income to that household and as a result, neglected theirs. The evocative tale of his passing suggests a metaphorical redemption for Waldjinah and her mother—not only in terms of his returning to ask forgiveness, but also because he ironically spends the waning moments of his life in their home despite infrequently visiting for most of her childhood.

Learning to Sing

Her father’s absence combined with her mother’s extended work schedule allowed Waldjinah’s older siblings to play a significant role in her upbringing—a practice not uncommon in large Indonesian families. Her introduction to music also came from

family members, and although she describes both of her parents as having good voices, her interest in singing was cultivated mainly by an older brother.

In the second grade, my brother, Munadi, began teaching me to sing keroncong. Actually, I wasn't the one he intended to teach initially, it was my brother-in-law who was supposed to sing one of the new songs for the keroncong band he played in— however, my brother-in-law just couldn't sing the song correctly. I happened to be hanging around them one afternoon while they practiced because I had nothing else to do and was curious. Later on that evening, while showering, I started singing the song they were working on earlier. After I finished, my older brother approached me in disbelief and exclaimed, "Hey! How come you can sing that so well?" From that point, he saw potential in me as a vocalist and began teaching me other keroncong songs, and I also became increasingly interested in singing. Because of our shared interest in music, I especially enjoyed spending time with him, but actually I got along well (guyub rukun) in general with all of my siblings. Since I was the youngest child in the family, I was pampered (dimanja) by them. I never had to help cook or wash the dishes after a meal, all I did was play with my slingshot, look after our goats, cows, ducks and water buffalo, which wasn't really hard work for me. I just played around most of the time.⁹⁴

Although my brother gave me some lessons in singing keroncong, I was mostly self-taught (otodidak). Today when singers take formal lessons they are taught to read

⁹⁴ She uses the Javanese word *dolan* (main in Indonesian), which means to play.

(Western) notation.⁹⁵ *If you want to sing, especially now, you have to be able to read music, you can't overlook that aspect of it. Even though at first I didn't know how to read notation, I eventually learned on my own...but it was quite difficult for me and took some time. When I began singing, my brother taught me how to read some notation and about the rules (aturan) of keroncong vocals. He would point out certain lines of the song and say "Okay, you have to use cengkok here and here but not here."⁹⁶ Today people listen to the recordings on cassette and CDs and learn just by listening but we didn't have that option back then...we were forced to create our own characteristics for the vocals. There were general "rules" but it was still open to interpretation, vocalists had to create their own style of delivery (pembawaan) rather than listening to someone*

⁹⁵ It is not clear exactly what she means by "formal lessons," however it is possible that she is referring to studying vocals formally in a conservatory setting or with private instructors. Keroncong vocals, at this point, are learned mostly from older, experienced keroncong singers rather than in conservatories. Some of the band practices I attended, which took place in local neighborhoods, doubled as places where musicians interested in learning keroncong would gather. In the Lempuyangan district of Yogyakarta, for instance, *Orkes Keroncong Surya Mataram's* practices have long been a place where vocalists go to learn from Sri Hartati, leader of the band and a well-known keroncong vocalist who won national championships in the late 1970s. "Bu Sri" as she is commonly referred to has taught multiple generations of keroncong vocalists, especially in Yogyakarta, and continues to teach singers of all ages at her home on Monday nights.

⁹⁶ *Céngkok* is most commonly known as a gamelan term, usually translated literally as "treatment," but it is also used in many other contexts. It is likely the musical usage came into *keroncong* through gamelan. Musically, it refers to "working out" a musical part that is idiomatic to the instrument playing it. In a given moment of a composition, the *céngkok* for *bonang barung* is quite different than that of the *gambang*, or the *pesindhèn*, or *gendèr*. *Céngkok* is usually an elaborating part, chosen by the performer from a huge repertoire of such parts, based on tuning [*laras*], mode (*pathet*), register, overall melodic movement (referring to the *balungan*, usually played by the *saron* instruments), and sometimes idiosyncratic aspects of the composition itself. In keroncong vocals, *céngkok* refers to tonal ornaments used in specific parts of a vocal phrase used to fill in or elaborate on a phrase (see Chapter 7). Although there are particular parts of where vocalists must use it, using *cengkok* is often left to individual vocalists according to their own tastes and variation often occurs based not only on different timbres of voice but also where *cengkok* is inserted.

else's and trying to imitate it. A keroncong singer created his/her own style based on whatever (music) they liked and often added their own "color" (mewarnai sendiri) to the vocals.

Learning to play keroncong by following "rules (*aturan*)" of standardized keroncong is a topic I discussed with a number of other musicians, eliciting a range of responses.⁹⁷ Some of them, including Waldjinhah, felt it was important for beginners to learn the proper techniques of singing and playing keroncong before adding their own style or improvising, while others mentioned that they despised the "rules" because they enforced a type of uniformity in aesthetic as to what fit into the keroncong genre and what did not. Waldjinhah once mentioned that she encouraged the young vocalists she mentored to focus entirely on singing keroncong, and not venture into genres such as pop or *dangdut* too quickly because keroncong, according to her, provided them with the techniques necessary to be competent vocalists in these other popular genres as well. As Waldjinhah's interest in music increased, she faced challenges and obstacles other than learning Western staff notation or proper vocal technique.

As I became immersed in learning keroncong, my parents became less supportive of my desire to become a singer. At the time, pesindhèn (female vocalists in Javanese

⁹⁷ See Chapter 9 for a more detailed discussion of the standardization of keroncong practices and its crystallization as a genre.

gamelan) were not held in high regard by most people and were well known as

“jangglungan.” Are you familiar with that term?

I shook my head letting her know I was not familiar with it.

Well, jangglungan was the term used for singers who danced (berjoget) while they sang, similar to jathilan or some dangdut singers. People in the audience would give them money and they took it and put it in here...

She feigned grabbing money from someone and tucking it into the bra underneath her housedress.

For that reason, my parents refused to allow me to sing. Luckily for me, my brother didn't agree with them and continued to give me lessons. All this had to be done quietly though so that my parents wouldn't find out. Up to that point, I had been following him to practice every week and hanging out with the band and other singers but one day, my mother told me I couldn't go anymore. I was heartbroken and devastated, yet determined to keep on attending practice. So my brother and I devised a plan where he would quietly signal me when he was leaving for practice and I would creep to the back room of our house, climb out the window and head down toward my neighbor's house where the practice was held. I was still in junior high school (Sekolah Menengah Pertama, SMP) and since my parents had forbidden me to sing, I usually

didn't join the band for live performances. The only time I remember performing with them was for an August 17 (Indonesia's Independence Day) celebration—since I was so short, I remember having to stand on a large wooden crate just to reach the microphone! They roared in laughter when I got on stage but soon they were cheering me on when they realized that I actually had a good voice, despite my age and small stature.

In the sixth grade I had my first big chance to perform in public when I became a contestant in the 1958 Queen of the Bean Flower (Ratu Kembang Kacang) vocal competition held in Solo. The competition itself was organized by Perfini (the Indonesian National Film Company) and RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) to promote the film "From All Corners of the World (Delapan Penjuru Angin)," which featured the song "Kembang Kacang (Peanut Flower)."⁹⁸ I entered the competition because RRI officials, who had apparently heard about me, came to my house and ordered (suruh) me to join, even though I was only twelve years old at the time and well below the minimum age requirement. I felt ecstatic to be a contestant in the competition! The RRI officials had come to my house only a few weeks before the show so my brother rushed to teach me "Kembang Kacang" in a relatively short amount of time. Alhamdulillah (praise be to God)...I was able to win that competition!

⁹⁸Perfini is an acronym that stands for *Perusahaan Film Nasional Indonesia* in Indonesian.

I stopped Waldjinah and asked how she felt while performing, given that this competition was only her second public performance and it was in a hall packed with around four hundred audience members and an imposing panel of judges, not to mention her being the youngest and least experienced performer in the competition.

You would think I felt really nervous right? It would seem natural to be nervous. Strangely enough though, I didn't feel nervous at all, in fact, I felt perfectly calm. I got up and sang in front of all those people and didn't tremble (gemetar) one bit, which even surprised me! After each of the contestants had their turn, the judges deliberated and the emcee announced: "Waldjinah is number one...the child is the winner!" I didn't know how to react so I just stood there transfixed with a sheepish grin, staring impassively out into the crowd. Only after I turned my head and saw the look on Munadi's face—he was standing at the side of the stage grinning widely—did I realize I had actually won. I couldn't believe I had beaten all the contestants who were so much older than me! Before I knew it, reporters swarmed and began pulling me here and there asking questions. Through it all I remained calm and increasingly proud of myself.

Maybe I didn't feel nervous because I was still so young. Who knows? I remember back to when I was in grade school, whenever there was any kind of contest or activity involving singing in our school, I was always the first one leaping up from my seat to join in. Maybe that's why I did not feel nervous, I was already used to getting up there in front of people to sing...maybe from a young age I developed a mindset that

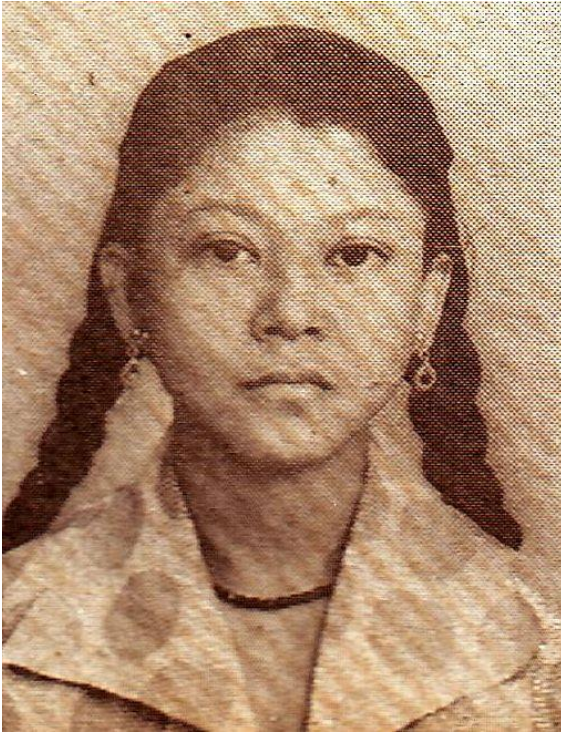
allowed me not to feel nervous in front of an audience. This mindset has actually helped me throughout my career, no matter where I have performed, I have never felt nervous—most of the time I just focus on how I want to make the audience happy and knowing that makes me content when I perform.⁹⁹

In preparation for the Kembang Kacang competition, the hardest thing I had to do was to learn to sing the bowo properly.¹⁰⁰ My brother and I spent most of our time making sure that the bowo was right. Other than that I also had to figure out how I wanted to look while on stage. I had to choose the right fabric for my kain and kebaya and decide on my hairstyle and make-up. Being twelve years old and inclined toward “tomboyishness,” these things didn’t exactly come naturally to me. Since I didn’t own a kain and kebaya, my older sister altered one of hers for me. It was still rather loose but I decided to wear it anyway. It was in preparation for that first performance that I also became interested in my personal appearance, which led to an interest in women’s fashion and especially make-up. I became absolutely fascinated with how other women wore their make-up and then I’d teach myself how to put it on by experimenting with different looks.

⁹⁹ Waldjinah made these statements to me about “never feeling nervous” in an early interview. As I discussed in the previous chapter, she has, in recent years, experienced being nervous, due to a growing uncertainty about her health and her voice in particular as she’s aged.

¹⁰⁰ The *bawa* (pronounced “bowo”) is the introductory part of a langgam jawa song and is usually sung a cappella but sometimes includes sparse violin or flute accompaniment as ornamentation to the vocal lines. *Bawa* derives from *bawaswara* in Javanese gamelan and, in this idiom, are sung mostly by female singers known as *pesindhen*.

Immediately after winning the Kembang Kacang competition, I was offered quite a number of opportunities to sing. People were willing to pay me to perform so eventually it became my part-time job. In school, I already had the reputation of being a good singer, having won nearly all of my school's singing competitions. My teachers often told me, "Oh, you're definitely going to become a singer when you get older." Winning the Kembang Kacang competition reaffirmed their beliefs. By my second year in junior high, I was making enough money singing that I decided to drop out of school. By that time, I was performing regularly in Solo as well as in surrounding towns like Purwodadi and Sragen, and although still in my early teens, I was already making enough money to support myself and help my family. My mother, despite her earlier reluctance, eventually stood by my decision to become a professional singer. Once she realized I loved to sing and had a good enough voice to do it professionally, she did not stand in my way.



4.2 A grade school photo taken in 1957. Courtesy of NOVA, 3 September 1989.

I stopped going to school at a relatively young age but never felt that I missed out on being a kid. I still had my friends in the neighborhood and we ran around playing with our slingshots. As I got older I began dating a boy (who would become my first husband) and started meeting lots of Solo keroncong musicians, especially other female vocalists. Most of my close friends were female keroncong singers and we all spent a lot of time together, so I never felt lonely or isolated. Most of the young singers at the time joined the same social circles, and I hung around people who had a similar lifestyles and interests—so despite not attending school, I didn't necessarily feel alone. I've always been surrounded by my friends. That's true even today.

Besides kickstarting her career as a professional artist, winning the *Kembang Kacang* vocal competition as a teenager instilled a strong sense of confidence in Waldjinah as a performer, which endured into her teenage years and adulthood. During our interviews she at times spoke using a tone of defiant resilience when describing how she overcame the challenges that she (and her family) faced based on their socioeconomic position and her father's decision to take a second wife. This self-confidence and pride was also attributed to how she became a keroncong musician, namely as a self-taught vocalist. Although Waldjinah certainly benefitted from her older brother's skill, guidance and patience, she took immense pride in pointing out how she taught herself about keroncong vocal techniques, Western musical notation and women's fashion and make-up. In certain cases, however, this air of self-confidence also masked feelings of resentment, inadequacy and other feelings she preferred to keep from the public, myself included. Part of this constituted the challenge I faced getting her to openly discuss recollections and experiences as a child (or even personal aspects of her life generally). What she discussed in this chapter represents selected portions of her childhood, or essentially what she was willing to share with me. Most of these anecdotes were often told in increments over the period of time I spent visiting her regularly and I have since stitched them together to achieve some form of linearity. As I mentioned earlier, she chose not to elaborate about her feelings toward her father, although reading between storylines suggests ideas about her actual sentiments. In any case, resilience, self-confidence and self-reliance are three themes she repeatedly used

to characterize how she chose to talk about her life. During one interview she addressed claims that she has generally been treated like “a pampered queen” for much of her life.

Some say I've lived like a queen...that I've been served (by others) my entire life. Until now, they say, I've lived like a true queen...unable to do anything for myself. In some ways maybe they're right. I do feel like a queen. All my children respect me, both my husbands respected me...and from a distance it appears that people merely do what I want them to. But truthfully, what they don't know is that in my life I've had to do many things for myself. Foremost, I've taught myself to sing, and I still believe I can teach myself to do almost anything.

Chapter 5—Interlude: Songs, Technique and Idiom

I will leave an eternal legacy, throughout my life, before I die.

From “Lgm. Sebelum Aku Mati (Langgam Before I Die)”
composed by Gesang in 1963

Before continuing to discuss aspects of Waldjinhah’s life, I pause in this chapter to address the genre of music she is most known for. The word “keroncong” historically has had a number of associative meanings. It has been used in the context of food—such as “keroncong tea (*teh keroncong*)” or “keroncong rice (*nasi keroncong*). “Keroncong tea” refers to a brewing process where leaves are dropped into a cup and hot water is immediately poured in—the mixture is left to steep until quite dark and is then served with leaves still in the cup.¹⁰¹ Another meaning, as one musician told me, refers to rumblings in the stomach when a person is hungry, which some Javanese people jokingly refer to as “*keroncongan*,” associating the interlocking rhythms of keroncong instruments to the sounds of churning gastric acids. A third meaning refers to thin bracelets (*gelang*) worn by women made of either gold or silver and commonly worn either on the wrists or ankles.¹⁰² Since it was popular for women to wear

¹⁰¹ “Keroncong rice (*nasi keroncong* or also known as *nasi liwet*),” refers to a similar process where rice is cooked in a pot of hot water as opposed to rice-cooker or being steamed (see Soeharto, et al 1996: 24).

¹⁰² According to Judith Becker (1975: 15), another form of jewelry, in the form of ankle bells worn by Madurese dancers performing *ngremo* dance were also called “*kroncong*.” Becker suggests that it is possible that the Madurese *kroncong* bells later as applied to the Portuguese-inspired music and the ukulele-like instrument. At this point, however, there is no explicit evidence linking keroncong music to any Madurese origins.

anywhere from five to ten at a time, the bracelets made a noticeable “krong krong” sound whenever they moved and some people began onomatopoeically calling the bracelets “kroncong” (Soeharto, et al 1996: 22-23).

A fourth meaning refers to a Portuguese-derived miniature guitar, resembling a ukulele, whose strings when strummed created a “krong” sound reminiscent of the jangling bracelets.¹⁰³ This guitar, usually played unaccompanied by other instruments, was called a number of names including *krung*, *kencrung* and *cuk* and according to some, musically represented the earliest form of what eventually became keroncong music (ibid).¹⁰⁴ As Judith Becker (1975: 14) notes, this miniature guitar became popular among the indigenous population in the late nineteenth century, especially in the coastal, trade-oriented cities of Jakarta in Java, Banjarmasin in Kalimantan, Makassar in Sulawesi, and Ambon and Ternate in the Moluccan islands. These cities shared similar characteristics that culturally set them apart from inland areas—for instance, the use of Malay (ie. Indonesian) as the *lingua franca*, large Chinese populations, and the ubiquitous presence of keroncong. It was around this time also that the stereotype of the *buaya* (crocodile) or *jago* (rooster) became associated with early forms of

¹⁰³ In addition to the meanings I explain here, further definitions for the word “keroncong” in the Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings (2010: 491) dictionary also include 1) green manure with edible seeds (ie. a type of water bush) and 2) the deepest recesses of a fish trap (also connoting a sense of hopelessness, past saving). It is possible that these definitions pertain to local usage in regional languages, perhaps outside of Java.

¹⁰⁴ Most keroncong musicians today commonly refer to this ukelele-like instrument as the *cuk*, although I’ve also heard it called the “cukulele” by some, combining the name of more popular the Hawaiian instrument with the Indonesian name for it. Unlike the Hawaiian ukelele, however, the Indonesian version has only three nylon strings.

keroncong. As Becker (ibid) describes it, the imagery of the *buaya* and *jago* in Java referred to

“a young male with no visible means of support, yet who dresses well, often flamboyantly, is handsome, virile, wears a “fierce” (ie. thin, black) mustache, spends his time gambling (usually in cockfighting), drinking and seducing women...women are attracted to him, men envy him, and everyone, of course, disapproves of him.”

By the early 1900s, these *keroncong buaya*, who were street musicians, performed regularly in nearly every neighborhood in Jakarta in groups of two to four—the instrumentation included guitars of various sizes and usually a mandolin. *Buaya* earned a meager income from handouts and in some cases, female vocalists (assumed to be prostitutes) accompanied the groups. The term “keroncong buaya” continues to be used today, however, less in the context of suave street musician but rather a skilled keroncong musician knowledgeable about the music’s history.¹⁰⁵

Although the word “keroncong” appears in other contexts, I have highlighted these four meanings as a way of illustrating how its usage has been part of the lexicon of

¹⁰⁵ For instance, some musicians used the term “keroncong buaya” to describe the late Wawang Wijaya (1945-2009), a keroncong musician of mixed Javanese and Chinese descent, who was not only an adept instrumentalist but also a renowned source of knowledge about keroncong’s history. At the time of his death, Pak Wawang lived near Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and was working on a book about keroncong, unfortunately it was never completed or published in any form.

everyday speech in Indonesia in a variety of ways and in some cases may precede the musical usage. As I mentioned, however, keroncong most commonly refers to a genre of music and more specifically, a type of musical form within the genre (ie. *keroncong asli*, which I will explain in further detail later in the chapter). This chapter begins with a musical analysis of keroncong: its structure, rhythms and instrumentation along with a discussion of the differences musically between standard keroncong and langgam jawa, the subgenre popularized by Waldjinhah. I will discuss examples of popular songs in both genres as well as lyrical themes and meanings. The chapter also provides a historical overview of developments in keroncong as a genre and discusses different approaches to keroncong and langgam jawa vocals, based primarily on information Waldjinhah and other vocalists have shared with me, literary sources, and my own experiences learning to sing keroncong. My discussion for this chapter draws on my own study with musicians, interviews and analysis of music as well as books, articles and papers on keroncong published or presented in Indonesia. There is a limited amount of scholarly literature on keroncong in the West and much of the Indonesian scholarship on keroncong was helpful, especially musical analysis, which has been written by expert musicians, many of whom began performing keroncong at a young age.

Musical Characteristics of Keroncong

To listeners in the West, keroncong may sound simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. While instrumentation in a standard keroncong ensemble is recognizable to

the average Western audience, the rhythms and playing techniques used on these instruments differ significantly from what might be considered common practice. By the mid 1940s, the instrumentation now usually associated with keroncong (namely flute, violin, cello, bass, guitar and *cuk* and *cak* (two Indonesian ukulele variants), was established. Keroncong instrumentation developed over a number of years and I will discuss some of these changes in the course of the music's history later in this chapter. I begin with a description and analysis of different types of keroncong and what Harmunah (1987: 16) calls the "distinctive features of keroncong" (*ciri-ciri khas musik keroncong*): form (*bentuk*), harmony (*harmoni*), rhythm (*ritme*), instrumentation (*alat-alat*) and function of instruments (*pembawaan*).

Stambul

Over the course of keroncong's development from the early nineteenth to mid twentieth century, four categories of repertoire emerged based on musical form—*Stambul*, *Keroncong asli*, *Langgam keroncong* (not to be confused with *langgam jawa*), and extra songs (*lagu ekstra*). The *Stambul* category emerged from songs performed as part of *Komedie Stamboel*, an itinerant popular theater of Indonesia during the colonial era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁰⁶ *Komedie Stamboel* theater

¹⁰⁶ I follow Matthew Isaac Cohen's (2006: xiii) spelling of "Komedie Stamboel," which is based on Dutch and Malay newspaper sources from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century predating the standardization of vernacular Malay as Indonesian. At the time, Malay orthography in Indonesia followed conventions and, as Cohen explains, *oe* was pronounced as *oo* (as in tool), *ie* as *ee* (as in peel) and *tj* as *ch* (as in chat). Current Indonesian spelling would be *Komedi* (or *Komidi*) *Stambul*.

was so popular it left audiences humming and singing tunes long after visiting theater troupes left town (Cohen 2006: 112).

“The Komedi Stamboel was on people’s lips though the company was no longer to be seen. People recalled it and decided to imitate its art. People sang stambul songs, they did line dances, they whistled causing surprise and astonishment. The stambul songs were so sweet. Many enjoyed them (Tan Tjiok San 1892: 279-80, quoted in Cohen 2006).”

The incorporation of keroncong music into popular theater combined with popular stambul songs (*lagu stambul*) later entering keroncong repertoire served as the basis for the stambul category.¹⁰⁷ Within this category are two subcategories known as “*Stambul Satu* (Stambul I, or Stambul One)” and *Stambul Dua* (Stambul II, or Stambul Two).

¹⁰⁷ The name “stambul” derives from Istanbul, the city in Turkey, which was also supposedly the name of a touring theater group in the 19th century that billed itself as “opera from Istanbul (Soeharto et al. 1996: 84).” The association with Istanbul may have no musical implications whatsoever, however, later on the term was used for *komedi stamboel*. Although, as Matthew Isaac Cohen (2006: 40) observes, exact origins of the theater are “mysterious,” most reviews, notices and advertisements described it as a Malay version of European opera. Cohen suggests that while such comparisons are apt, they also overlook the immense influence that other less visible regional theater forms had on *komedi stamboel*—for example, *Wayang Parsi* (as it was known in Malaysia and Indonesia), which delivered songs from Persia, Arabia and Hindustan featuring instruments such as the harmonium, fiddle, and drum. Based on this one can speculate that “opera Istanbul” performed stories of the Ottoman Empire or had references to Mevlevi Sufism, bolstering the argument that it was a Malay version of European opera, since Turkey has a long history of contact with the West. Referencing Istanbul (or “Stamboel”) in this form of urban theater may have been done intentionally to differentiate it from rural, folk forms (such as *wayang kulit*, *wayang golek*, *ketoprak*, *ludruk*, and so on) which provided influence.

Stambul I consists of eight measures/bars (repeated for a total of sixteen bars) and played in 4/4 meter—the B section usually consists of different lyrics.

| | |
|---|--------------|
| I - - - IV - - - | Introduction |
| IV - - - IV - - - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - I - - - | Section A |
| IV - - - IV - - - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - I - - - | Section B |
| I - - - | Coda |

5.1 Stambul I chord progression.

Stambul songs, different from keroncong asli and langgam keroncong, generally do not have an instrumental introduction (known as *voorspel*).¹⁰⁸ Some songs however, such as “*Stambul Jampang* (Stambul Sideburns)” begin with a very brief introduction that features a two bar guitar instrumental part followed by two bars of solo singing before the other instruments begin playing. Stambul II consists of sixteen measures/bars (repeated for a total of 32 bars), but otherwise carries the same characteristics as Stambul I.

¹⁰⁸ According to Soeharto, et al (1996: 83) the *voorspel* in stambul is usually performed on guitar followed by a brief rest and the vocals entering. The *voorspel* is improvised within a scale transitioning from the Tonic (I) to the subdominant (IV).

The basic chord progression for a *Stambul II* composition:

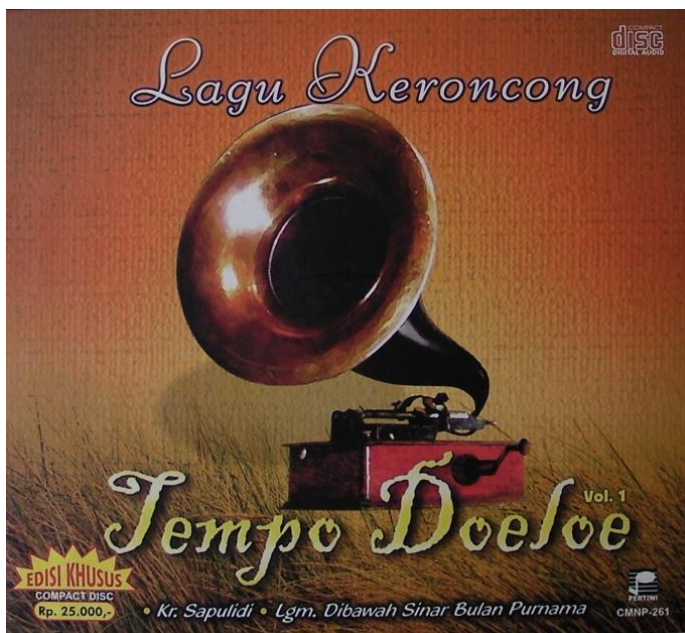
| | |
|--|--------------|
| I - - - IV - - - | Introduction |
| IV - - - IV - - - IV - - - IV - V - I - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - | Section A |
| IV - - - IV - - - IV - - - IV - V - I - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - | Section B |
| I - - - | Coda |

5.2 Stambul II chord progression.

Keroncong Asli

The term “keroncong asli” translates to English as “original” or “true” keroncong, which immediately associates the term, at least discursively, with an authenticity not attached to the other categories. Red flags incurred by such associations should, however, be considered within the context of how this term is interpreted. When I began researching and listening to keroncong, I questioned what exactly made keroncong asli more “original” or “true” than songs in the other categories? Indonesian musicians later provided me with an array of useful answers but none to my satisfaction. It was not until I spoke with my friend, Imam, a keroncong musician and instrument maker from Solo, that the term keroncong asli became clearer. Rather than thinking of *asli* as “true” or “original,” Imam suggested it would be more useful to consider the Indonesian word *asal*, meaning “origin” or “source.” In this sense,

keroncong asli is not necessarily authentic or “true” but instead draws from previous, older styles of keroncong. As Soeharto, et al (1996: 85) point out, keroncong asli is influenced by repertoire that predated Stambul (which originated around the 1920s) extra songs (*lagu ekstra*), also originated in the 1920s, and langgam keroncong (a category of songs that emerged in the 1940s). The reference to *asli*, according to Soeharto, indicates that its sources (*sumber*) date back prior to the 1920s and after the emergence of other categories of keroncong. Philip Yampolsky (2010: 4) considers the term “keroncong asli” a retronym that emerged only after it became necessary to distinguish an earlier, unmarked form from later developments in the genre such as *keroncong rumba*, *keroncong tango*, *keroncong blues* and so on. For this reason, musicians and composers eventually used the categorization “keroncong asli” for new, modernized compositions mostly of the 1930s and 1940s. Today, keroncong asli is nostalgically associated with this period, known as “*Tempo Doeloe* (the Old Times),” referring to compositions dating back to this era. The term is also used more broadly to promote current keroncong cd releases—for instance, many album covers now prominently feature the title “keroncong asli” yet include songs from langgam keroncong, stambul and other categories as well.



5.3 An album by vocalist Sundari Soekotjo (above) with the title *Keroncong Asli* prominently featured and another compilation entitled *Tempo Doeloe* (The Old Times). Courtesy of Gema Nada Pertiwi (GNP) Records.

Using the term *keroncong asli* in this broader sense also creates a subtle shift in its meaning. While composers of earlier eras may have interpreted the term *asli* differently, the use of this term in marketing current releases positions *keroncong* as an “authentic” music of the era of independence and revolutionary struggle, which I discuss further later on. Traveling around Indonesia, I noticed on billboards and advertisements that *asli* was used in various contexts to describe a range of products and services including food-related products (from fried chicken to food stalls), laundries, cable television, clothing and much more. In each of these instances, invoking the term *asli* was intended to make these products and services appear somehow more authentic than others, suggesting that other foreign or even locally mass produced goods and services are inferior. In cases of food particularly, Indonesians told me certain types of food, for example, *satay Madura* (skewered barbecued meat seasoned in the Madurese style), were considered more *asli* when the preparer was ethnically Madurese.¹⁰⁹ In any case, these claims to authenticity, whose actual validity would, in most cases, be difficult to prove, serves its purpose as a marketing tool convincing consumers to purchase a product or service based solely on insinuation or perception of authenticity.

¹⁰⁹ This type of discourse appears to be common elsewhere in the region as well, especially in regards to food. For instance, there are certain Malaysian Eurasian foods associated with Christmas that my relatives tell me only Eurasians (in Malaysia) can prepare. In their understanding, if someone of another racial/ethnic background cooked these dishes, they would somehow “taste different” or “not quite as good.”

It was during the 1930s and 40s that characteristics of keroncong asli became codified into the form recognized today. Keroncong asli consists of 28 measures/bars (excluding the introduction and coda sections), is played in quadruple meter and is organized in three sections (usually played twice through).¹¹⁰ Keroncong asli songs also always include a solo instrumental introductory passage, played either on flute, violin or guitar, and a brief instrumental ensemble section, usually beginning on either the ninth or tenth measure.¹¹¹

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| I - - - V - - - - - - - IV - V - - - - - IV - V - I - - - | Introduction |
| I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - II - - - II - - - V - - - V - - - | Section A |
| V - - - V - - - | Instrumental interlude |
| IV - - - IV - - - IV - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - IV - V - | Section B |
| I - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - I - V - | Section C Coda |

5.4 Keroncong asli chord progression.

¹¹⁰ Soeharto, et al (1996: 80) breaks the keroncong asli category into Keroncong Asli I and Keroncong Asli II. The difference being that Keroncong Asli I consists of 14 bars (played twice through totaling 28 bars) with part A consisting of 10 bars and part B consisting of 4 bars. In my own experience, I have yet to hear a musician differentiate between keroncong asli I and II (as opposed to Stambul I and II, which I have noticed). Many of them today simply refer to songs in this category as keroncong asli although differences in structure do exist. For instance, in the song “*Keroncong Kemayoran*” the basic keroncong asli chord progression is halved, instead of beginning the piece playing four bars of the tonic (I), only two are played, followed by one bar of the dominant (V) and supertonic (II) (see Yampolsky 1991).

¹¹¹ This interlude is called “*middel spell*” or “*sengaan* (Harmunah 1987: 17).”

Langgam Keroncong

Songs in the *langgam keroncong*, or *langgam*, category include of some of the most popular songs in the entire keroncong repertoire.¹¹² Keroncong musicians have told me that *langgam*, in a number of ways, is the most flexible of all the categories because it closely fits the strophic verse-chorus-verse form of Western pop music. Popular *langgam keroncong* songs such as “*Rangkaian Melati* (Bouquet of Jasmine)” and “*Di Bawah Sinar Bulan Purnama* (Under the Rays of the Full Moon),” consist of 32 measures/bars (usually played twice through for a total of 64 bars) in quadruple meter and usually in refrain form—all of this, of course, may differ for songs originating outside the keroncong tradition. Unlike songs in other categories, the instrumental introduction for *langgam* songs is taken from the last four measures of the song.

| | |
|---|--------------|
| V - - - V - - - I - - - V - - - | Introduction |
| I - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - I - V - | Section A |
| I - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - I - - - | Section A1 |
| IV - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - II - - - II - - - V - - - V - - - | Section B |

¹¹² *Langgam keroncong* should not be confused with *langgam jawa*, the subgenre of keroncong influenced by Javanese gamelan popularized by Waldjinh in the late 1960s. *Langgam keroncong* is based on musical form. The inexperienced listener may not actually be able to tell the difference between keroncong asli and *langgam keroncong* (or perhaps even *stambul*) songs because the techniques and rhythms used in these three styles are quite similar (as least in terms of how these songs sound today)—the differences in form may not be obvious to outsiders but they are nevertheless important. Techniques and rhythms used in *langgam jawa* are quite distinct from the other types of keroncong and I will discuss these differences later in this chapter.

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| II - - - II - - - V - - - V - - - | |
| I - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - I - - - | Section A2 |
| I - - - IV- V - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - I - V - | Instrumental Interlude |
| IV - - - IV- V- I - - - I - - - II - - - II - - - V - - - V - - - | Section B |
| I - - - IV - V - I - - - I - - - V - - - V - - - I - - - I - - - | Section A2 |
| IV - - - I - - - | Coda |

5.5 Langgam Keroncong chord progression.

“Extra Songs (Lagu Ekstra)”

The “extra songs (*lagu ekstra*)” category accommodates songs played in the keroncong idiom but whose form deviates from the three other categories of keroncong. Similar to *stambul*, the term “extra songs” also originates in late colonial era popular theater of Indonesia and Malaysia referring to the live music played to entertain audiences during intermissions or a change of backdrop. In *bangsawan* theater in peninsular Malaysia, which was akin to *komedie stambul*, Tan Sooi Beng (1993: 155-156) notes that keroncong and *stambul* songs were first performed in “extra turns sections” in between plays but were formally introduced into *bangsawan* plots in the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹³ Many of the early “extra songs” conveyed lyrical themes that were upbeat,

¹¹³ According to one of Tan’s sources, an veteran *bangsawan* performer, keroncong and *stambul* songs were sung in garden scenes in Javanese and classical stories, especially in stories that were fairy tales or considered more “modern.” *Stambul* songs were often chosen in classical stories because they “sounded a bit Western” (Tan Sooi Beng 1993: 156).

cheerful, flirtatious and humorous (Harmunah 1987: 18). The song “*Jali-Jali*,” which is said to originate among the Betawi, the original inhabitants of the area now known as the city of Jakarta, and others, like “*Gambang Semarang*,” a song some claim came from the *gambang kromong* tradition, are two examples of extra songs that have become firmly established in keroncong repertoire. This category is also comprised primarily of regional songs (*lagu daerah*) and Indonesian, Western and other international pop played in the keroncong idiom. At keroncong band practices, I often heard songs such as “It’s Now or Never” (by Elvis Presley), “*Alamat Palsu*” (or “Fake Address” by Indonesian dangdut singer Ayu Ting Ting) as well as traditional and pop songs in Batak, Moluccan, Javanese and Mandarin languages. Although the extra songs category is usually reserved as one of the four main categories in literature about keroncong, a considerable number of musicians also told me they consider non-keroncong songs played in the keroncong idiom to be part of the langgam category, especially since many of the pop songs they perform fit neatly into its musical form. For this and other reasons, usage of the term “extra songs” appears to be waning today.

Instruments and Rhythms

Casual listeners of keroncong may find some of its rhythms and instruments difficult to discern—quite understandable given that keroncong ensembles feature string-based instruments where timbres, pitch frequencies and rhythmic lines often overlap. My initial experiences really listening to keroncong came early on in graduate

school via old cassettes and vinyl recordings collected by my professor and adviser, Rene T.A. Lysloff, when he conducted fieldwork in Java. My goal was to use these recordings to broaden my understanding of keroncong in order to learn about the music and perhaps start a band in the United States, which eventually I did. While listening to the recordings, I quickly noticed that each instrument had a distinct function but beyond hearing a basic melody, understanding and differentiating between the interlocking rhythms proved somewhat challenging.

In a keroncong ensemble there are generally two broad categories for instrumentation based on their function: rhythmic and melodic. The flute, violin and guitar are considered the melodic instruments while the *cak, cuk*, cello and stringed bass are rhythmic. Harmunah (1987: 20) describes these instruments as either accompanists (*pengiring*) or as an “upholders of rhythm (*pemegang ritmis*).” These categories highlight not only a fundamental difference in function but also suggest an approach for close listening—as with some other types of music, listening to keroncong instruments as stratified sonic layers rather than as a wall of sound proves helpful in various ways.

Figure 5.6 displays four staves of musical notation representing basic rhythmic relationships in keroncong. The staves are labeled Cuk, Cak, Cello, and Bass. Cuk consists of four quarter notes. Cak consists of eighth notes with beams, including some beamed eighth notes. Cello consists of eighth notes with beams, including some beamed eighth notes. Bass consists of quarter notes with stems pointing downwards.

5.6 Basic relationship between rhythmic instruments in keroncong.¹¹⁴

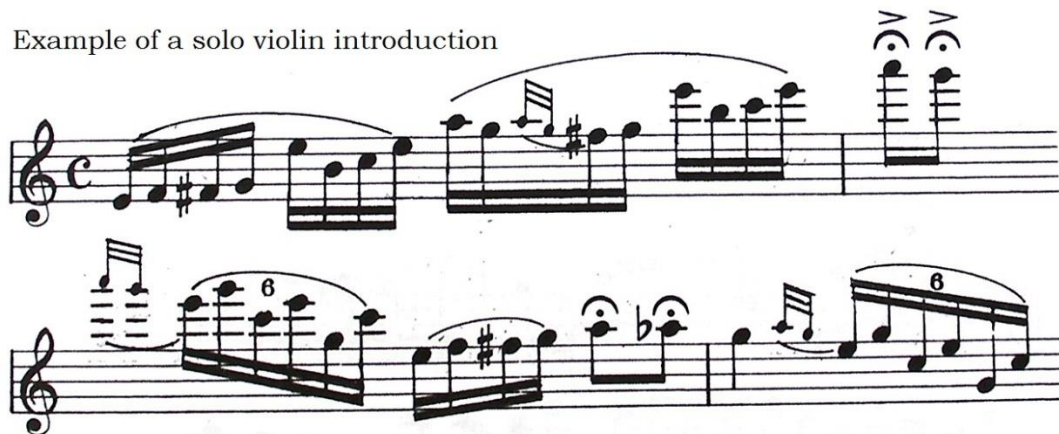
Figure 5.7 displays four staves of musical notation representing an improvised elaborated version of basic rhythms. The staves are labeled Cuk, Cak, Cello, and Bass. Cuk features eighth notes with beams and trills (tr). Cak features eighth notes with beams and trills. Cello features eighth notes with beams and trills. Bass consists of quarter notes with stems pointing downwards.

5.7 Improved elaborated version of basic rhythms.

The violin and flute are usually the first instruments heard, since one or both are usually responsible for playing the solo introductory section. After that, however, their parts become less frequent and are improvised (within the key signature of the piece), often serving as imitative counterpoint to the melodic contours of the vocals until they return in the solo interlude where the flute, violin (or in some cases both) carry the melody.

¹¹⁴ Harmunah 1987: 20

Both the violin and flute are played in the same manner as they are in Western music and often appear to float in and out the piece adding melodic trills and other ornamentation.



5.8 Violin introduction.¹¹⁵

Guitar

Figurated guitar lines create another layer of melodic accompaniment and although there is a degree of repetitiveness, they are far from static. Guitar parts are a type of figuration that is improvised within a scale and change in harmony. Similar to other instruments in the ensemble, the guitar follows keroncong's two main rhythms: *engkal*, the fundamental rhythm and *dobel* (or *rangkap*) when certain instruments, namely *cuk*, *cak*, guitar and cello, essentially double the number of notes they play per

¹¹⁵ Kusbini 1972: 42

measure.¹¹⁶ Although *engkal* rhythm seems noticeably slower than *dobel*, in actuality the song's overall tempo does not change considerably—although some guitar players do play considerably faster than in non-*rangkap* tempo. Keroncong guitar players also tend to favor a picking technique using an elongated thumbnail rather than using a guitar pick—based on my own experience learning keroncong guitar, using the thumbnail allows for a much faster picking technique.

Cak and Cuk

The use of interlocking melodic-rhythmic patterns, played on *cuk* and *cak*, two small Indonesian ukuleles, is not found in Western music and characterizes the uniquely local (i.e. Malay/Indonesian) elements in keroncong music. The *cuk* resembles a Hawaiian ukelele except it has only three strings, usually made of thick nylon. Players pluck the strings in an arpeggiated pattern interspersed with trills punctuating the downbeat of compositions in 4/4 time.¹¹⁷ Although the plucking technique is used most often, there are also instances when the *cuk* is strummed like a Hawaiian ukelele or

¹¹⁶ The term *rangkap* (*rangkep* in Javanese) is used to refer to the same kind of phenomenon in gamelan music (i.e., *irama rangkep*). The use of this term in keroncong music, outside of langgam Jawa, suggests that even older keroncong was influenced by the Central Javanese gamelan.

¹¹⁷ Prior to the 1940s, strumming was the most common playing technique for *cuk*, however, sometime around 1942, a musician named Abdulrazak altered this technique by incorporating trills. This style of playing became quite popular and the use of trills is now considered standard technique for *cuk*.

guitar.¹¹⁸ Because of its nylon strings the *cuk* tends to produce a lower pitched tone quality than the *cak*—recall that the name *keroncong* itself is said to derive onomatopoeically from the “*crong crong*” sound of the *cuk*. Nowadays *cuks* are commonly tuned to E ($g'' - b' - e''$) however, in some rare cases a four-stringed *cuk* is tuned to A ($g'' - c'' - e'' - a''$).

The *cuk*'s partner in rhythmic function is the *cak*, which is also about the same size as a ukelele, however its body (ie. resonating board) tends to be thinner.¹¹⁹ While most *caks* and *cuks* tend to be of similar size (measured from the tip of the head to edge of its body), differences in depth are an important factor in creating differences in timbre, especially for the higher pitched *cak*. Another factor is that the *cak* has four steel strings (as opposed to nylon on *cuk*) also contributing to a more piercing tone quality. A common tuning for *cak* today is $d' - f \text{ sharp}'' - b'$ (B tuning) but $g'' - b' - e''$ (E tuning) and $g' - b' - e''$ also exist. Although the instrument has four strings, the top two strings are grouped closer together and tuned to the same pitch—for instance if the tuning is B the two top string are tuned to d' . Playing technique between *cak* and *cuk* also differs significantly—the *cak* is predominantly strummed rhythmically emphasizing

¹¹⁸ For example, I have noticed that *cuk* players used a more percussive strumming technique on songs such as *Kr. Sapulidi* (Keroncong Broom) and in the *keroncong* music played by the Kampung Tugu musicians in Jakarta.

¹¹⁹ Earlier forms of *keroncong* used a banjo and/or mandolin, and the *cak* has also been called *banyo* (presumably from banjo) and *tennor*.

the offbeat of compositions in quadruple meter, which in combination with the *cuk*'s emphasis of the downbeat, creates the interlocking pattern.¹²⁰



5.9 A *cak* (left) and *cuk* owned by the author. Photo by the author.

Basic *cak* technique emphasizes not only strumming but also damping strings. A down stroke (strumming downward) is immediately followed by damping on the

¹²⁰ Returning to the example I laid out in a footnote for the *cuk* where one measure in 4/4 time is counted 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and, the *cak* punctuates the “ands.”

upstroke (strumming upward), and this pattern is then repeated.¹²¹ Using this fundamental technique as a guide, cak players create a myriad of individualized styles based on how long they damp, what strings they choose to damp (or mute) and how they choose to subdivide a measure (ie. sometimes accentuating certain downbeats along with upbeats). Each of these choices adds to the overall aesthetic of how a cak part can sound. It should also be noted that early forms of keroncong in the early twentieth century used a banjo or mandolin rather than a cak –its sound, in a sense, is reminiscent of its predecessors. When the cak was introduced, it only had one or two strings, and the interlocking patterns between cuk and cak were much less intricate. Based on recordings I have heard, cak patterns appear to have become more complex sometime during the mid to late 1970s. Although exact reasons for this increased complexity are uncertain, part of the reason for this development may be attributed to the influence of langgam jawa (and possibly the influence of Javanese gamelan music generally) as well as possibly the addition of two or three strings on the cak, which allowed players to play more complete chords.

¹²¹ Damping refers to a technique where the sound of a string (or strings) is stopped (ie. not allowing it to vibrate as it normally would) by pressing a finger or the palm of a hand against it, but simply soft or brief in sound. This technique differs from muting in that the actual pitch of the note is still evident. In keroncong, most damping is done with the hand holding the neck of instrument—this technique is used to create percussive aspects to playing.



5.10 My friends, Dwiana and Imam, playing *cuk* and *cak*. Photo by the author.

Cello

At first glance, a keroncong cello appears no different from any other cello found in the West. A closer inspection, however, reveals how this instrument has been localized to perform specific functions in keroncong—some musicians have argued that the rhythms played on cello are what make keroncong distinctly Indonesian rather than Portuguese. While its dimensions and overall shape are similar to Western cellos, the keroncong cello features characteristics slightly different from its cousins. One obvious feature is that keroncong cellos have three nylon strings (in the past they were made of cowhide and called *jangat*) as opposed to the four metallic strings commonly used on Western cellos. Common tunings for keroncong cello are D – G – d or C – G – d. The

technique used to play keroncong cello also differs from the bowing technique used for Western cellos. The keroncong cello features a plucked technique, similar to pizzicato, to create percussive contrapuntal rhythms evoking *kendang* drum patterns in Javanese gamelan. Similar to cak, there are basic patterns for playing cello accentuating the offbeat, however most players tend to elaborate on these patterns, improvising within a scale. As a cello player once told to me, the purpose of the cello, in addition to guiding the rhythm of the piece, is essentially to fill in the rhythmic gaps left by the cuk and cak. How this is done, of course, is left to individual improvisation. While some choose to play less intricate and sparse patterns, other players readily show off technical virtuosity by creating dense and complex rhythmic patterns.

Cello example 1



Cello example 2



5.11 Cello rhythm examples.¹²²

¹²² Harmunah 1987: 27

Contrabass

The final, and according to some, most important instrument in the ensemble is the contrabass (use of the electric bass is also now common). In keroncong the bass punctuates the first and (to a lesser degree) third beats of each measure, with the specific function of keeping metric time for each of the other instruments while signaling chord changes. In a sense, its function in the keroncong ensemble evokes that of the vertical hanging gongs that punctuate repeated phrases within cyclic structures in Javanese gamelan—this is not imply the function of the bass in keroncong is exactly the same, however similarities exist.¹²³ Although a number of bands today use the electric

¹²³ Philip Yampolsky (1991: 2) argues that any resemblance to other Indonesian stratified ensembles (ie. Javanese and Balinese gamelan) is not “felt as leaning toward Java or Bali,” which according to him would contradict keroncong’s function as a national music. Instead he argues that the Western scale and harmonic structure distance keroncong from gamelan and the stratified quality is felt more as a “diffuse Indonesianess.” Yampolsky also points out that the stratification of keroncong was a relatively recent development that took place between 1925 and 1935. Early 78 RPM recordings feature guitar parts that function as basslines do now, and *cuk-cak* interlocking along with plucked cello all emerged in the late 1920s and 30s (ibid). Yampolsky believes these developments to have taken place due to an overall slowing of keroncong’s tempo which allowed room for instruments to develop more complicated parts.

While I agree with Yampolsky on some of these points, there are issues with some of his assertions. As Rene Lysloff has pointed out (pers com 10 February 2015), his argument implies that a slower tempo in any music would allow musicians to fill in space with figurative lines, which of course does not happen. The characteristic of filling in time is common in Indonesian musics, not necessarily Javanese music but also Balinese gamelan as well as *dangdut* and *jaipongan* which have little to do with gamelan. According to Lysloff, one of the pleasures of listening to gamelan music “is hearing thick textures of melodic figuration and rhythmic patterning, both supporting the highly melismatic vocal (or solo instrumental line)” and this pleasure extends to keroncong as well.

The important issue here is that keroncong and gamelan should not be compared in a one to one relationship. Instead it would be better to think of them as sharing underlying aesthetic principles. Furthermore, the influence of Javanese music on keroncong, especially as it moved inland to Central and East Java during the period of time he mentions, should not be overlooked. Especially given that a number of keroncong’s most innovative and prodigious composers, like Kusbini, Gesang, Ismanto and Soekamto, all originated from Central and East Java. A few of them also had backgrounds in gamelan and other Javanese musics.

The emergence of popular vocalists from inland Java, such as Anny Landouw (from Solo) and Sulami (from Semarang) combined with annual keroncong vocal competitions (known as “*kongkurs*”) held in Solo and Surabaya (at Jaarmarkt), suggest that keroncong had become (or was becoming) established

bass (usually for practical reasons) the contrabass continues to be popular a choice. Some musicians told me that keroncong simply “sounds better” with an all-acoustic instrument set-up; the deep, resonating sound of the contrabass enhances the textural palette of the ensemble as a whole. It has been noted that the introduction of the contrabass, due to its size, also altered how musicians performed keroncong in the early half of the twentieth century (Soeharto, et al 1996: 65-66). Prior to this, it was customary for musicians to perform sitting cross-legged on flat straw mats known as *tikar*. However, contrabass players found it difficult to play the instrument laying it on its side and were given chairs to sit on (ibid). This eventually led the other musicians to also use chairs, which is somewhat ironic today given that contrabass players are usually the only ones who perform in a standing position.¹²⁴

Differences with Langgam Jawa

Langgam jawa first emerged in the early half of the 1950s but only became popular during the late 1960s, due in large part to Waldjinhah’s popularity. Unlike standard keroncong whose harmonic structure may appear recognizable to Western

in these large urban areas (see Soeharto 1996: 48-49). It is possible that the slowing of keroncong’s tempo also had to do with influence from Javanese gamelan as keroncong became popular in inland Java, and even if this influence was indirect, it could also explain the development of more intricate interlocking rhythms.

¹²⁴ Some keroncong musicians have told me that it was also common for flute and violin players, until around the 1970s, to perform while standing. Today, it is common for ensembles to perform while sitting in chairs (usually in a semicircle facing the audience), which in itself has become characteristic of keroncong performance.

ears, langgam jawa sounds more “exotic.” Instrumentation between the two is exactly the same and yet langgam jawa sounds profoundly different from keroncong. However, as Soeharto (1996: 54) describes it, metaphorically speaking, langgam jawa is the offspring (*anak kandung*) resulting from the marriage between the “regional rhythms of Java (*irama daerah Jawa*)” and urbanized keroncong. Although instrumentation and idiom are of keroncong, langgam jawa’s scale is an approximation of the *pelog* and *slendro* scale used in gamelan music, while drawing melodic influence from the Javanese modal system rather Western harmonic structure.¹²⁵ Yampolsky explains that langgam jawa represents an adaptation of keroncong to Javanese gamelan rather than the other way around. According to him, “it sounds like gamelan music played on other instruments, and there is therefore embedded in the style an assertion of pride in Javanese culture—albeit qualified pride, since the instruments are not in fact those of the gamelan (*ibid*).” This sense of pride comes also within the context of differentiating langgam jawa, which many keroncong musicians still consider to be a Javanese form, from keroncong asli, a nationalized form. The use of Javanese language in lyrics and lyrical themes that are, in some cases, influenced by Javanese folklore and mythology, and differences in instrumental and vocal technique intended to evoke the sounds of

¹²⁵Javanese music employs two scalar systems (*slendro* and *pelog*), neither of which is standardized according to tonal intervals or absolute pitches—resulting in slight nuance and variation that characterizes gamelan music (Sutton (2008: 358-359). According to R. Anderson Sutton, gamelan music is essentially pentatonic with *slendro* consisting of five tones per octave, spaced at nearly equidistant intervals and *pelog* is usually described as a seven tone system consisting of large and small intervals. In actuality, although *pelog* consists of seven tones, no piece of *pelog* music uses all seven tones in equal or near-equal distribution (*ibid*). Instead many compositions in *pelog* are entirely pentatonic, and the ones who do incorporate six or seven tones are limited to five tones per phrase.

Javanese gamelan, create an aesthetic distinct to langgam jawa. Overall, however, the function of each instrument remains the same as in standard keroncong. For instance, the cak's repeated patterns imitate the gamelan's *siter*, continuing to emphasize the offbeat, while the cuk plays a simple repeated plucked pattern, usually incorporating only two pitches, emphasizing the downbeat—together the cak/cuk interlocking imitates the function of the *kethuk* and *kempyang* in Javanese gamelan.¹²⁶

Cello technique in langgam jawa also evokes the rhythms of drumming in Javanese gamelan. Specifically, the tapping and slapping of the cello's body near its f-holes, in between pizzicato style plucking, is distinct to langgam jawa and differs from the plucking techniques of standard keroncong. This style of playing, which is even more percussive than standard keroncong cello technique, suggests that cello in langgam jawa is also meant to explicitly evoke *kendhang* drum sounds. This influence carries over to other functions attributed to drumming in gamelan (ie. signaling tempo changes, establishing tempo, etc.)—the cello (along with the cak and bass) not only establish an overall tempo for the piece but also lead the ensemble in speeding up or slowing down—for instance speeding up during the transition from *engkal* to *dobel* (*rangkap*) or slowing down in the concluding section. Musicians, including Waldjinah, have stressed the importance of having a skilled cello player when performing langgam jawa, especially since the cello's vibrant pizzicato and slaps provide timbral contrast to

¹²⁶ The *kethuk* is a single knobbed gong instrument of definite pitch that creates a dry “thuk” sound when it is struck by a wooden mallet. The *kempyang* consists of two kettle knobbed gongs higher pitched than the *kethuk*—one or both may be struck with a resulting “pyang” sound.

the repetitive rhythms of *cuk, cak* and bass. In this sense, the cello tends to be featured more *langgam jawa* than in standard *keroncong*. Unfortunately this aspect of live performance is often lost in the mixing and production stage of most *langgam jawa* recordings I have heard where cello rhythms usually blend into and are lost in the overall texture of the ensemble.

The remaining two instruments, the flute and violin, function similarly in *langgam jawa* as they do in *keroncong*. Both continue to help carry the basic melody of the piece along with the vocals, filling in gaps in vocal parts. Another noticeable difference between *langgam jawa* and *keroncong* is in the vocals, namely the presence of an introductory vocal solo at the beginning (or near the beginning) of the piece imitating the *bawaswara* (or *bawa*, pronounced *bowo*) in Javanese gamelan. Although the *bawa* is not incorporated into all *langgam jawa* compositions, when it is present, it usually is accompanied by brief flute or violin interludes. In some cases, the *bawa* section begins with a flute or violin solo lasting anywhere from twenty or forty seconds at which time it drops out and vocals commence. The vocals carry the remainder of introduction with the flute or violin filling in brief interludes between vocal phrases. The *bawa* section eventually ends, anywhere from around one and a half to two and a half minutes into the song, signaled by a pause at the end of a vocal phrase followed soon thereafter by the sound of a single note struck on the bass. Immediately, the violin (or flute) begins to play and the other instruments in the ensemble follow—in some cases there is an eight to ten bar instrumental section before the vocals reenter and continue

on to the main section of the piece.¹²⁷ Some recordings omit the bawa altogether and the piece begins with instrumental section that usually follows the bawa.

Ngimpi (composed by Gesang)
 As performed by Waldjinhah on the album *O Sarinah* (Lokananta)

Bawa transcription (non-metered):
 B: 0
 C: 1
 D: 2
 E: 3
 F#: 4
 G: 5
 A: 6
 B: 7 (one octave lower)

0 1 1 1 1 2 0 1
 Sin-ten won-gé mbo-ten ge-lâ

0 1 2 0 5 4 4 245
 Ti-lem a-wan na-da ngi-lir

(flute interlude)

0 1 5 5 5 5 5 4
 Ge-ra-ga-pan gra-yah - gra-yah

5 5 4 1 2 72 5
 Ke- can- dhak mung mang- geh gu-lèng

2 4 4 4 4 4 4
 No- leh nan- gan lan ngi-ri

¹²⁷ In some cases, this instrumental section is omitted and the vocals reenter immediately after all of the other instruments begin playing.

$\overset{\cdot}{5}$ $\overset{\cdot}{5}$ 0 1 $\overset{\cdot}{5}$ $\overset{\cdot}{2}$ $\overset{\cdot}{5}$ $\overset{\cdot}{4}$ $\overset{\cdot}{2}$ $\overset{\cdot}{1}$
 The- lek the- lek nye- peng dheng- kol

(Bass sounds)

$\overset{\cdot}{1}$ $\overset{\cdot}{2}$ $\overset{\cdot}{4}$ $\overset{\cdot}{4}$ $\overset{\cdot}{4}$ $\overset{\cdot}{5}$ $\overset{\cdot}{5}$
 Ti- was ti- was diga- gas

$\overset{\cdot}{5}$ $\overset{\cdot}{5}$ $\overset{\cdot}{5}$ $\overset{\cdot}{4}$ $\overset{\cdot}{1}$ $\overset{\cdot}{1}$ $\overset{\cdot}{2}$ $\overset{\cdot}{2}$ $\overset{\cdot}{1}$ 7 $\overset{\cdot}{5}$
 Je- bu- la- ne na- mung- e ng- im--pi

(flute interlude)

$\overset{\cdot}{2}$ $\overset{\cdot}{4}$ $\overset{\cdot}{4}$ $\overset{\cdot}{4}$
 Mung tu- ju- né

$\overset{\cdot}{5}$ 0 0 1 $\overset{\cdot}{5}$ $\overset{\cdot}{2}$ $\overset{\cdot}{4}$ $\overset{\cdot}{4}$ $\overset{\cdot}{5}$ $\overset{\cdot}{2}$ $\overset{\cdot}{1}$
 Wong li- yâ tan pâ-dâ mén-go

(flute enters, bawa section ends)

5.12 “Ngimpi” *bawa* translation and transcription by the author.

The following listening guides are for classic pieces by some of langgam jawa’s most famous composers. Most langgam jawa share similar structure overall with slight variations in form.

◆**“Lela Ledhung,”** composed by Dharmanto
As performed by Waldjinah on the album *Luntur* (Kusuma Recording)

Introduction (ie. *Bawa*)

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 0:00 – 0:36 | Flute solo |
| 0:37 – 0:39 | Single bass note sounds |
| 0:39 – 1:05 | Vocal solo |
| 1:06 – 1:11 | Flute solo interlude |
| 1:12 – 1:25 | Vocal solo |
| 1:25 – 1:32 | Flute solo |
| 1:33 – 1:40 | Vocal solo |
| 1:40 – 1:44 | Flute solo |
| 1:45 – 1:59 | Vocal solo |
| 1:59 – 2:04 | Single bass note sounds (signaling end of <i>bawa</i> , beginning of main section) |

Main Section

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 2:05 – 2:23 | Violin, cuk, cak, cello, guitar and bass enter |
| 2:24 – 2:32 | Flute replaces violin (all others continue) |
| 2:33 – 2:40 | Both flute and violin play interchangeably |
| 2:40 | All instruments perform in <i>dobel/rangkap</i> tempo until conclusion |
| 2:44 | Vocals enter |
| 5:24 – 6:03 | Instrumental interlude (flute and violin respectively perform solos) |
| 6:04 – 7:22 | Vocals enter |

Concluding Section

| | |
|------------|--|
| 7:22 | Vocals end, tempo slows |
| 7:23 – End | All instruments slow down and fade out—flute, violin and cak sound final notes |

5.13 Listening guide for “Lela Ledhung.”

◆**“Wuyung,”** composed by Ismanto
As performed by Waldjinah on the album *Kembang Kacang* (Kusuma Recording)

Introduction (ie. *Bawa*)

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 0:00 – 0:38 | Flute solo |
| 0:39 – 0:40 | Bass strikes single note |
| 0:41 – 1:03 | Vocal solo |
| 1:03 – 1:09 | Flute solo |
| 1:10 – 1:26 | Vocal solo |
| 1:27 – 1:30 | Flute solo |
| 1:31 – 1:42 | Vocal solo |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1:42 – 1:45 | Flute ornament, overlaps with voice briefly |
| 1:46 – 2:07 | Vocal solo |
| Main Section | |
| 2:08 – 2:09 | Single bass note sounds, begins cycle of sounding on first beat of measure |
| 2:10 – 2:13 | Flute solo, bass strike another note |
| 2:14 | Cuk, cak, guitar and cello enter |
| 2:30 | Violin enters |
| 2:48 – 4:00 | Vocals reenter, instruments perform in <i>engkal</i> |
| 4:00 | Transition to <i>dobel/rangkap</i> : cak slows its rhythmic pattern, cello plays repeated pattern signaling change, vocals pause momentarily |
| 4:34 – 4:42 | Tempo slows (after six measures), instruments gradually fade out |
| 4:44 – 4:46 | Brief pause, no instrumental or vocal parts |
| 4:47 | Vocals enter, followed by other rhythmic instruments performing in <i>dobel</i> |
| 5:25 – 6:02 | Instrumental interlude (flute and violin) |
| 6:03 | Vocals enter |
| 6:34 – 6:43 | Tempo gradually slows again |
| 6:43 – 6:45 | Momentary pause |
| 6:46 – 7:23 | Vocals enter with other instruments |
| Concluding Section | |
| 7:23 - End | Vocals end, followed by violin solo, all other instruments fade to conclusion, violin and cak are last instruments heard |

5.14 Listening guide for “Wuyung.”

| | |
|--|---|
| ◆“Ngimpi,” composed by Gesang Martohartono | |
| As performed by Waldjinah on the album <i>O Sarinah</i> (Lokananta Records) | |
| Introduction (ie. <i>Bawa</i>) | |
| 0:00 – 0:14 | Flute solo |
| 0:15 – 0:17 | Single bass note sounds |
| 0:17 – 0:43 | Vocal solo |
| 0:43 – 0:45 | Flute solo |
| 0:47 – 1:57 | Vocal solo |
| 1:57 – 2:02 | Flute solo |
| 2:02 – 2:22 | Vocal solo, single bass note sounds concurrently with vocal decay (end of <i>bawa</i>) |
| Main Section | |
| 2:24 | Brief flute solo leads introduction of cuk, cak, guitar and cello |
| 2:59 | Vocals reenter, instrumental accompaniment performs in <i>engkal</i> |
| 4:11 – 4:16 | Transition to <i>dobel/rangkap</i> : instrumental accompaniment slows gradually, cak |

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| and | cello begin doubling |
| 4:16 | All other instruments enter <i>dobel/rangkap</i> |
| 5:41 – 6:25 | Instrumental interlude (violin solo followed by flute solo) |
| 6: 28 | Vocals reenter |
| Concluding Section | |
| 8:19 – end | Vocals end, tempo gradually slows, flute and cak are last instruments to be heard |

5.15 Listening guide for “Ngimpi.”

A common feature among the recordings is a prominent *bawa* section at the beginning. While some langgam jawa recordings omit or shorten the *bawa*, the three I discuss here represent the classic langgam jawa form and do feature an extended *bawa*, which is in free time (sung primarily in a non-metrical fashion). This section begins with a flute solo followed by the entrance of vocals. After this the flute and vocals alternate, with the flute filling in pauses in the vocals with short melodic ornaments. The end of the *bawa* and beginning of the main section is signaled by a single note played on the bass. Either the flute or violin then leads the other instruments into the body of the piece, which commonly begins with an instrumental section prior to the entrance of the vocals. *Wuyung* and *Ngimpi* both begin in *engkal* meter before transitioning to *dobel*, signaled by a gradual slowing of all instruments.¹²⁸ Cak and cello are usually the first instruments to begin playing in *dobel* signaling a change in meter while other

¹²⁸ Note that *Lela Ledhang* is performed entirely in *dobel* after the initial *bawa* section. I was curious to know if it was performed this way only on this recording or if others included *engkal*. Two other recordings of this piece, I found, are also both in *dobel* after the *bawa* so it is likely that this piece was intended to be performed entirely in *dobel*.

instruments such as the *cuk* and bass remain in *engkal*. Each of these recordings also feature a violin and flute instrumental interlude approximately two-thirds way into the song prior to the final vocal passage leading up to the concluding section. Concluding sections are comprised of a gradual slowing of the tempo after the vocals conclude, and eventually all instruments fade out except for either the violin or flute and the *cak*, which usually plucks a single note signaling the end of the piece.

It is worth reiterating here that *langgam jawa* is evocative of Javanese gamelan without actually trying to recreate it. It uses instrumentation in the *keroncong* idiom to recreate rhythms and musical textures reminiscent of gamelan, therefore encouraging audiences to think of and perhaps feel like they are listening to gamelan without the specific intent of imitating or emulating it. Furthermore, *langgam jawa* does not adhere to the organizing principals of Javanese gamelan and referencing, in this case, is done in a very general way that again evokes gamelan without following any of its structural rules. In this sense, rather than referencing a full gamelan ensemble, *langgam jawa* references minimalist ensembles such as *gamelan gadhon* or *gamelan siteran* to evoke the gamelan five tone pentatonic scales using modality through Western instrumentation.

Lyrical Form in Langgam Jawa and “Standard” Keroncong

Lyrics in *langgam jawa* are in Javanese and draw influence from the traditional Javanese poetic verse forms known as *tembang*. *Tembang* verses, according to Bernard

Arps (1992: 3, 14-15), govern the phonological and syntactic shape of texts while creating melodies by which the texts are recited and since traditional Javanese written poetry is often read as song, these verse forms have certain metrical structures that also incorporate melodies. Arps (1992: 4) explains that tembang verses are organized and defined based on both phonology (the sound form of words) and prosody (the sound form of utterances in terms of patterns of pitch, duration, loudness and pausing). The metrical structure of different tembang verse forms are distinguished based on 1) the number of lines per stanza (usually four to ten), 2) the number of syllables in a verse line (three to twelve) and 3) the final vowel of each line. Although these principles are generally considered to distinguish tembang forms, regional traditions tend to be less rigid in terms of metrical principles—although the number of lines per stanza remains fixed for the most part, often the number of syllables in a line may vary (within certain limits) along with the final vowels of lines (ibid). In central Java, three main categories of tembang are prevalent: *tembang cilik* (little tembang), *tembang tengahan* (intermediate tembang) and *tembang gedhe* (large tembang). Most langgam jawa lyrics draw from tembang cilik and tembang tengahan (also known as *tembang macapat*), since these were the two most common verse forms for *macapat* contests (*lomba macapat*)—the term *macapat* refers to the recitation of written tembang verse in relatively simple melodic style (Arps 1992: 46). The word macapat can be broken down into the Javanese words *maca* (to voice) and *pat* (a shortened form of the numeral four,

or *papat*)—macapat literally refers to “reciting in fours,” namely the groups of four syllables.

Similar to the ways that *langgam jawa* musically evokes Javanese gamelan, its lyrics evoke a melodic style reminiscent of macapat recitation without necessarily adhering to all of its structural rules.¹²⁹ Looking at eight verses from the *langgam jawa* song *Ngimpi* (Dreaming), some of these patterns of metrical structure emerge.

Ngimpi (selected verses)¹³⁰

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ngimpen ku dhek bengi kaé | 8 syllables, last vowel é |
| Katek kâyâ yen tenan-tenanâ | 10 syllables, last vowel â |
| Ketemu neng kana kaé | 8 syllables, last vowel é |
| Welâ-welâ njur pâdâ gembirâ | 10 syllables, last vowel â |
| | |
| Kantep ku marang dèweé | 8 syllables, last vowel é |
| Katek kâyâ zamané semânâ | 10 syllables, last vowel â |
| Dasar dhek biyen-biyené | 8 syllables, last vowel é |
| Pancèn pâdâ ngucapkè prasatiyâ | 10 syllables, last vowel â |

English translation:

My dream that night
Seemed as if it really happened
We met there
Clearly [we were] happy then

Together me with him
It seemed like that time
Once long ago
We exchanged vows with certainty.

¹²⁹ Arps (1992: 3) also observes that most “reading” of *tembang* actually means unaccompanied solo singing, either done in solitary or else in groups where participants sing in turns or listen to one or more specialized singers. Group reading sessions can be part of celebrations or in some instances, used for rites of passage. In *langgam jawa*, as we know, vocalists are accompanied by *keroncong* instrumentation.

¹³⁰ My thanks to Rene T.A. Lysloff for his help translating these lyrics.

In each of these verses, we can see an alternating pattern of eight and ten syllables along with alternating vowels ending in either *é* or *â*—the other main verses in this piece also adhere to this pattern, however the *bawa* section does not follow such pattern incorporating anywhere from seven to ten syllables per line and having ending vowels in *é*, *i*, and *â* without a noticeable pattern.

Different from *langgam jawa*, lyrics in standard *keroncong* are based on *pantun*, an old form of Malay quatrain. Texts sung to early *keroncong* melodies, as Philip Yampolsky (2010: 14) notes, were quatrains sung in Malay/Indonesian, based on two formal types: *syair* and *pantun*. The two are distinguished in form in the following ways. *Syair* quatrains have the same end-rhyme (AAAA) and although individual quatrains could stand alone, they were also appropriately suited for long narrative poems, sometimes running hundreds of stanzas long. *Pantun* quatrains incorporate an ABAB rhyme scheme and are divided into two distinct halves. The first is commonly referred to as the *sampiran* (hanger or hook in Indonesian) and the second is known as the *isi* (content). Although some versions of *pantun* could reach high literary standards, the ones sung in early *keroncong* were generally unpolished street-level poetry easily memorized and understood by lower class urban audiences.¹³¹ As *keroncong* developed in the early half of the twentieth century, its overall tempo slowed (for reasons

¹³¹ While the *sampiran*, as Yampolsky (2010: 14-15) writes, is often “an objective statement of fact or description of the physical world,” the *isi* “expresses an emotion or describes a personal condition (ibid).” While the extent of how the two are related is debatable, Yampolsky believes these “folk and popular verses” are intended to “delight precisely by outlandishness, the incongruity of the opposition of the first and second couplets.

debatable), which led to overall structural changes in instrumental and vocal lines. Yampolsky (2010: 36-37) observes that the slowing down and stretching out of the melody meant that fewer strophes could fit into a standard three minute recording which required that lines of the pantun's second couplet be extended to fill twice as much melody as before. In order to do so, singers incorporated vocables such as *lah* and *ai*, filler words such as *indung sayang* (a term of endearment), and introduced repetition of words or short phrases from previous verses (ibid).¹³²

Pantun and *syair* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were often considered entertainment. As many of these quatrains could easily be memorized and sung, people collected verses in order to sing along with keroncong, even when pantun were not specifically intended for keroncong. Pantun lyrics were often used purposely to flirt or tease—an individual, either representing himself/herself or a group, initiated a verse immediately answered by a second party.¹³³ Keroncong usually was performed as entertainment in weddings and other celebrations and “street keroncong” was played by groups of musicians wandering through neighborhoods during the evening. As Komedi Stamboel's popularity increased in the late nineteenth century, keroncong was

¹³² There was eventually a backlash against widespread use of “verbal padding,” which some people in the keroncong listening audience considered annoying or boring. Even Armijn Pane commented (1941: 259-260) on this suggesting that “meaningless words, such as *indung sayang* (a term of endearment, literally something that springs from love), *nona manis* (sweet girl, often used for single, unmarried women) and *jiwa* (spirit, soul) be left out since most listeners now have different standards.

¹³³ An activity known as *sindir-menyindir*, flirting or teasing through pantun, appears to have been commonly in Batavia in the 1890s. Most of the time, according to Yampolsky (2010: 16), pantun verses were sung rather than bantered.

performed in yet another context. The inclusion of female keroncong singers in Stamboel theater (see Cohen 2006) created close associations between keroncong and the theater, which would continue on for at least the first three decades of twentieth century where keroncong songs regularly accompanied love scenes.

Although it is difficult to discern exactly how and why lyrical themes of romantic love and other intimate emotions became common in keroncong lyrics, it's likely that popular theater played a significant role in fostering this development. The legacy of these early sentimental keroncong love ballads continues in repertoire performed today with songs such as "*Kr. Hanya Engkau (Keroncong Only You)*" and "*Kr. Hanya Untukmu (Keroncong Only for You)*" as well as Indonesians love of romanticized, melodramatic pop ballads generally.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ The abbreviation "Kr." at the beginning of the title indicates a song is written in keroncong asli form. The abbreviation "Lgm." (such as in the song title "Lgm. Saputangan") refers to langgam keroncong form while "Stb." refers to stambul (in most cases, the title will denote which stambul form is being used, either "Stb. I (Stambul I)" or "Stb. II (Stambul II)."

◆ *Kr. Hanya Engkau*, composed by H. Abdul Gani and Oetjin Noerhasyim
 --translated by the author

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>Hanya engkau surya</i> | Only you are the sun |
| <i>Untuk penhidupanku</i> | Of my life |
| <i>Menerangi ke seluruh kalbu</i> | Illuminating my entire soul |
| | |
| <i>Oh betapakah riang ria</i> | Oh how very joyful |
| <i>Jiwaku di sampingmu</i> | My soul is beside you |
| <i>Hanya engkau tujuanku satu</i> | You are my only purpose |
| | |
| <i>Dikau manis embun</i> | You are the sweet dew |
| <i>Pagi dini hari</i> | At dawn |
| <i>Dengarkanlah hatiku menyanyi</i> | Listen to my heart sing |
| | |
| <i>Tahu sudah, hanya engkau</i> | Knowing already, (it's) only you |
| <i>Yang ku rindukan</i> | That I long for |
| <i>Kian hari kian rasakan</i> | As days go by, I feel it more |
| | |
| <i>Kasih mesraku</i> | To give you my affection |
| <i>Hanya engkau seorang kurindukan</i> | You are the only one I long for |
| <i>S'moga (semoga) jangan ku</i> | Hopefully it's not me |
| <i>Berhampa tangan</i> | Who comes up empty-handed |
| | |
| <i>Hanya engkau</i> | Only you |
| <i>Surya dalam gelap sunyi</i> | Are the sun amidst dark loneliness |
| <i>Deritaku berpulih kembali</i> | My suffering heals |

5.16 Translation of lyrics for "Hanya Engkau."

Lyrics for songs like *Kr. Hanya Engkau* express a seemingly irrepressible feeling of intense desire, presumably for a lover or perhaps a potential lover.¹³⁵ Expressions of

¹³⁵ Besides longing and desire, lyrical themes of many keroncong songs, with titles like *Kr. Kenangan Hati* (Kr. Memories of the Heart), *Kr. Air Mata Berlinang* (Kr. Tears Trickle), and *Kr. Jangan Pergi* (Kr. Don't Leave), express the sorrow of heartbreak and hopelessness. I feel these songs, perhaps predating the popularity of *lagu cengeng*, or sentimental, "weepee" songs banned by the Suharto government, also represent a predilection in some Indonesian popular/pop music to these lyrical themes. I remember walking around malls and stores in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Solo and Bandung that played current Indonesian pop songs slow in tempo and lyrically filled with heartbreak. Although these were not keroncong songs, I

longing and desire in this case, however, may not be directed only toward another person. Given the historical context of many keroncong songs, composed during the revolutionary era in the mid to late 1940s, expressions of longing refer not only to one's lover but also to political freedom and independence. Songs such as "*Kr. Saputangan Dari Bandung Selatan* (Keroncong Handkerchief from South Bandung)," capture a moment of heart-wrenching intimacy between two lovers, where the male presumably is headed off to battle. A secondary meaning ensconced within this drama of departure is the expression of gratitude for the sacrifice and loyalty shown not only for his significant other but also the cause of his country.

could not help but imagine how these current pop songs fit into a historical lineage of sentimental love songs in Indonesia that likely began with keroncong.

Kr. Saputangan Dari Bandung Selatan (Handkerchief from South Bandung),”
composed by Ismail Marzuki, 1948
--translated by the author

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>Saputangan sutera putih</i> | A white silk handkerchief |
| <i>Dihiasi bunga warna</i> | Decorated with colored flowers |
| <i>Sumbang kasih jaya sakit</i> | A token of glorious love and pain |
| <i>Di selatan Bandung raya</i> | in greater south Bandung |
| <i>Diiringi kata</i> | Accompanied by words |
| <i>Nan merdu mesra</i> | Sweet and intimate |
| <i>Terima kasih bung</i> | Thank you, brother* |
| <i>Janganlah lupa</i> | Don't forget |
| <i>Air mataku berlingung</i> | My tears are preserved |
| <i>Saputanganmu kusimpan</i> | In your handkerchief that I keep with me |
| | |
| <i>Ujung jarimu ku cium</i> | I kiss the tip of your finger |
| <i>Serta doa ku ucapkan</i> | And say a prayer |
| <i>Selamat jalan</i> | Farewell |
| <i>Selamat berjuang</i> | Stay safe in battle |
| <i>Bandung selatan</i> | South Bandung |
| <i>Dilupakan jangan</i> | Never to be forgotten |

*The term “*bung* (from *abang*, or brother),” is a term of endearment used for males and does not necessarily imply a sibling relationship.

5.17 Translation of lyrics for “*Kr. Saputangan Dari Bandung Selatan.*”

Other keroncong songs use metaphors to deliver social messages and express fondness and loyalty in contexts other than romantic love, for instance a patriotic love of country through descriptions of landforms (rivers, mountains) and cities. “*Bengawan Solo*” (The Solo River), keroncong’s most famous song, illustrates how this river flowing through mountainous landscapes of central Java has served as the lifeblood of trade in the region for centuries. The popular revolutionary era song also represents the fortitude of Indonesian people, enduring hardship while continuing to flow (as the Solo

River does) in the face of adversity. The song “Lgm. Dibawah Sinar Bulan Purnama” (Langgam Under the Rays of the Full Moon) describes a coastal scene at night, as the title suggests, illuminated by a full moon and “thousands of stars,” and a soundscape that includes the “banter” of waves crashing to shore accompanied by strummed guitars, alluding to keroncong musicians on the beach. The song’s lyrics also convey a healing message, suggesting that the moon’s rays can assuage both personal heartache and the rifts of socioeconomic class. After all, as the lyrics suggest, one does not require wealth to take pleasure in a picturesque night (“even the poor living in misery can enjoy [the moonlight] all night long”).

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <i>Bengawan Solo (The Solo River),</i> | |
| composed by Gesang Martohartono | |
| --author’s translation | |
| <i>Bengawan Solo</i> | The Solo River |
| <i>Riwayatmu ini</i> | This is your story |
| <i>Sedari dulu jadi</i> | Since long ago you have |
| <i>Perhatian insani</i> | Drawn people’s attention |
| | |
| <i>Musim kemarau</i> | In the dry season |
| <i>Tak s’brapa airmu</i> | You hardly have a bit of water |
| <i>Di musim hujan air</i> | In the rainy season |
| <i>Meluap sampai jauh</i> | You overflow into the distance |
| | |
| <i>Mata airmu dari Solo</i> | Your source from Solo |
| <i>Terkurung gunung seribu</i> | Within thousands of mountains |
| <i>Air meluap sampai jauh</i> | Water overflowing until far |
| <i>away</i> | |
| <i>Akhirnya ke laut</i> | Eventually to the sea |
| | |
| <i>Itu perahu</i> | These small boats |
| <i>Riwayatmu dulu</i> | Are your history from long |
| <i>before</i> | |

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Kaum pedagang selalu Naik itu perahu</i> | Traders who always Rode those boats |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| Lgm. Dibawah Sinar Bulan Purnama (Under the Rays of the Full Moon), composed by R. Maladi (1940) | |
| <i>Dibawah sinar bulan purnama Air laut berkilauan Berayun-ayun ombak mengalir Ke pantai senda gurauan</i> | Under the rays of the full moon The sea glistens Waves sway as they flow To the shore bantering back and forth |
| <i>Dibawah sinar bulan purnama Hati susah jadi senang Gitar berbunyi riang gembira Jauh malam dari petang Beribu bintang taburan Menghiasi langit hijau</i> | Under the rays of the full moon Heartache becomes joy Guitars ring out cheerfully From the afternoon far into the night A scattering of a thousand stars Ornament the emerald sky |
| <i>Menambah cantik alam dunia Serta murni pemandangan Dibawah sinar bulan purnama Hati sedih tak dirasa Si miskin pun yang hidup sengsara Semalam itu bersuka</i> | Making the world more beautiful With pristine views Under the rays of the full moon Heartache isn't felt The poor living in misery also Enjoy it all through the night |

5.18 Translations for “Bengawan Solo” and “Lgm. Dibawah Sinar Bulan Purnama” lyrics by the author.

Kr. Keagungan Indonesia, a less known song, draws a subtle comparison between the remnants of ancient Hindu-Buddhist temples, described in its first five lines, with those who have given their lives, presumably in battle, for Indonesia, expressed in the last five lines. The underlying meaning here suggests that these are two enduring images creating identity for Indonesia, one as a basis of art and culture and the other through

personal sacrifice—both are upheld things considered important to the nation and its people.

**Kr. Keagungan Indonesia (The Greatness of Indonesia),
composed by K. Sumardi, lyrics by Semijati**

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Angin sejuk 'mbelai daun padi</i> | A cool breeze caresses paddy leaves |
| <i>Bulan indah menyinari</i> | A beautiful moon illuminates |
| <i>Kemegahan candi</i> | The glory of a temple* |
| <i>Oh, peninggalan kebesaran</i> | Oh, the grandeur of its remnants |
| <i>pembentuk seni</i> | A form of art |
| | |
| <i>Jasamu tak'kan terlupa,</i> | Your service will never be forgotten |
| <i>S'moga 'kan tetap abadi</i> | May it continue always |
| <i>Kembalilah ciptakan kepribadian</i> | Returning to create the uniqueness |
| <i>Keagungan Tanah Air kita</i> | Of the majesty of our homeland |
| <i>Indonesia Raya</i> | Glorious Indonesia |

**Candi* refers to an ancient Hindu or Buddhist temple or shrine

5.19 Translation for lyrics to “Kr. Keagungan Indonesia” by the author.

Some keroncong lyrics also describe characteristics of cities or regions, perhaps, among other reasons, to promote the city (to domestic tourists), instill a sense of pride among its residents or nostalgia for former residents. Songs like *Lgm. (Langgam) Kota Solo* (Lgm. City of Solo) promote Solo as the city of “true/original” arts (*kesenian asli*) as well as where priests, nobles and other spiritually powerful people obtain divine powers (*sakti*). According to the lyrics, Solo is also where hardships and sorrow are forgotten when enjoying its beautiful scenery and numerous forms of entertainment—imagery

apparently intended to appeal to visitors on a number of levels. A host of other keroncong songs referencing cities and regions across Indonesia including Bali, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Jakarta and Sukabumi among others, all incorporate similar themes and ideas promoting highlights of each often through nostalgic or romanticized images.

Lgm. Kota Solo (Lgm. City of Solo),
composed by H. Abdul Gani and Oetjin Noerhasyim

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Kota Solo kota tempat kesenian asli</i> | The city of Solo a place for true (or original) arts |
| <i>Tarian agung yang abadi pula iringi</i> | Exalted dances that are eternal and also accompany |
| <i>Banyak pesiaran sejak purba hingga kini</i> | Many broadcasts From the old days until now |
| <i>Para agung serta pendeta Sungguh maha sakti</i> | Nobles and priests (Have received) truly great divine powers |
| <i>Sungguh indah Kota Solo Banyak pemandangan Pula hiburan ditepinya Bengawan</i> | Truly charming is the city of Solo Many beautiful sights And entertainment along the banks of the River* |
| <i>Kota Solo yang menjadikan kenang-kenangan Hingga dapat menghilangkan hati sedih dan duka</i> | The city of Solo has become a keepsake To help forget heartache and sorrow |

*presumably refers to the Solo River (*Bengawan Solo*)

5.20 Translation for “Lgm. Kota Solo” lyrics by the author.

Singing the Song: Vocal Technique and Performance Practice

Unlike the improvised *pantun* and *syair* characteristic of early keroncong, later keroncong repertoire consisted of relatively fixed notation and set lyrics that accompany each song. Although a degree of improvisation exists in keroncong vocal technique today, the degree of improvisation is much less than it was before. When I spoke with young people in Indonesia about keroncong, quite a few told me that the reason they were “afraid to sing keroncong (*takut menyanyi musik keroncong*)” was because of they did not understand the proper technique and were afraid of “making mistakes” or “being wrong.” Although this reaction says much about the teaching methods and philosophies employed by older musicians, what they are also referring to are specific vocal techniques, some of them dating back to at least the 1940s, now considered requisite of singing keroncong, especially keroncong asli. Soeharto (1996: 101) observes that “many non-keroncong vocalists say keroncong songs are difficult (*sukar*) to sing, especially the *cengkok* (improvised embellishment of the main fixed melody) parts, so many of them find difficulty learning it altogether. Even some (experienced) keroncong vocalists are not able to use *cengkok* well or else if they do, it is often (inserted) in the wrong place, out of tempo or else seems *kampung* (ie. unrefined).”

Despite the trepidation, *cengkok* and *gregel* are two essential techniques of ornamentation absolutely essential for keroncong vocalists to learn—the idea is that only a “real” keroncong singer can master these vocal techniques and use them

comfortably.¹³⁶ Harmunah (1987: 28-29) points out that *cengkok* functions as “a tonal ornament (*nada hiasan*) that develops a phrase in a song, specifically by filling, ‘beautifying’ and elaborating on the phrase, it is often referred to as vocal improvisation.¹³⁷ *Gregel* refers to the other main vocal ornament, specifically a single rapid alternation between a note and the one above or below it.



5.21 An example of *cengkok*.¹³⁸



5.22 Melodic contour of how *cengkok* is sung.

¹³⁶ Indonesian vocalists with backgrounds in pop music (either Indonesian or Western) who also sing keroncong are often critiqued or considered suspect by keroncong vocalists for their inability to master keroncong technique. I have watched numerous performances with keroncong vocalists who essentially pick apart a vocal performance for wrong technique (*teknik salah*). As someone learning to sing keroncong myself, I found these comments unnerving and made me much more self-conscious about singing in public, although I continued to do it. In this sense, I can empathize with the young Indonesian singers I spoke with who said they feared singing keroncong “incorrectly.” In another sense, the practice of constant critique is simply part of learning to sing (or play) keroncong, especially since, in most cases, a much older and experienced musician is teaching a younger, less experienced performer.

¹³⁷ *Cengkok* ialah segala bentuk nada hiasan yang memperkembangkan kalimat lagu, artinya mengisi, memperindah, dan menghidupkan kalimat lagu. Jadi dapat disebut pula sebagai improvisasi.

¹³⁸ My thanks to Canggih Finalti (2012: 15) for sharing these transcriptions with me.



5.23 An example of *gregel*.



5.24 How *gregel* is sung.

The uneasiness felt by less experienced keroncong vocalists comes from an uncertainty about where and how to insert these ornaments. Even among expert keroncong vocalists there are varying philosophies toward using *cengkok* and other vocal techniques. For instance, the renowned keroncong composer, Kusbini (1976) notes that *cengkok* should be used on the second beat of a measure, while *gregel* should be inserted on the first beat of a measure if it is used. From my own experience, many vocalists now tend to use *cengkok* at the end of a verse (usually at or near the end of the last measure) before pausing for a breath and continuing on to the next verse. Harmunah (1987: 29) similarly observes that ornamentation can be used anywhere extended notes occur in a piece, except for the last notes in the final vocal section.

Although there are many exceptions to the established guidelines, there are also general tips to help identify areas where ornamentation should occur. For instance, Soeharto (1996: 101-102) notes that *cengkok* is used in sections where higher pitches descend toward lower pitches (often with only one or no other pitches in between), or in inverse movement where lower ascend to higher pitches. Soeharto agrees that *cengkok* is more easily used where extended notes appear (usually half or quarter notes), although it also can be used on shorter notes (usually eighth notes) incorporating another vocal technique, known as *nggandhul*. Like *cengkok* and *gregel*, *nggandhul* translates from Javanese as “to hang” or “to sustain.”¹³⁹ In *keroncong* it refers to vocalists’ sustaining an ornament beyond the beat, somewhat like what is known in Western music as a suspension. *Nggandhul* is used in tandem with *cengkok*, especially after a section with a quick succession of notes. Soeharto (1996: 103-104) explains that some vocalists, however, use *nggandhul* so frequently that they disrupt the rhythm of the piece, often entering too late in the verse causing confusion among instrumentalists. The insinuation here is that there is a balance between using ornamenting techniques correctly and overusing them.

When I was learning *keroncong* vocal technique, Pak Nugroho, my instructor (and a vocalist for the band *Orkes Keroncong Kadin* in Yogyakarta) highlighted specific sections of a lyrical stanza where he wanted me to use *cengkok*. As a beginner, Pak

¹³⁹ Musicians also use the Indonesian term *menggantung maat* which has a similar meaning as the Javanese term *nggandul*.

Nugroho made sure I was not confused as to where cengkok should be used. He would accompany me as I sang (lowering the volume of his voice so that only I could hear it) to make sure that I observed correct intonation, especially using cengkok. Although I felt nervous at first learning to sing keroncong, especially in front of a captive audience in a Yogyakarta restaurant, I eventually became more comfortable using keroncong vocal techniques—with the guidance, of course, of Pak Nugroho.

Concluding Remarks

Over the course of its long history, keroncong has endured through periods of declining popularity by continuously reinventing itself to meet the new tastes and functions (a topic I return to in Chapter 10). Among the more prominent of these are changes that happened during the early half of the twentieth century as keroncong transformed from a popular/folk music associated with urban, Eurasian communities to a music increasingly professionalized, driven by its inclusion into popular theater as well as the mechanisms of the music industry and the state. Despite a tendency to focus on these broad and seemingly impactful “forces,” it is also important to understand that most of the musical developments in the genre have taken place because of the dynamic and creative impulses of individual musicians.

Many of the techniques and styles I describe in this chapter (interlocking melodic-rhythmic patterns on *cak* and *cuk*, guitar figuration, plucked cello, vocal techniques and so on), which today are considered *pakem* (standard) actually represent

relatively recent developments given the long history of this music. Similar to most other genres, developments in keroncong are continuous and ongoing, especially now as musicians and fans ponder how the genre is to remain relevant to the conditions and shifting tastes of audiences in the twenty-first century. A slowing of keroncong's tempo in the early 1920s, described by Yampolsky (2010: 44-46) as an "adaptive strategy," successfully prolonged keroncong's popularity as it entered the era of nationalism and independence. A slower tempo, employed by a new crop of musicians and composers during that time, allowed room to expand on instrumental parts and create new melodies and lyrical meanings while changing the overall aesthetic of keroncong music to fit a rapidly modernizing Indonesia. A faster, livelier tempo was originally associated with keroncong street musicians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Between 1915 and 1925, keroncong's tempo slowed to nearly half its former speed and although exact reasons for this slowing remain unclear, the tempo change, according to Yampolsky, occurred at a time the music was "approaching exhaustion." Given its long history, keroncong has experienced a number of important musical innovations at critical periods in its history, and Waldjinah was at the forefront of both—the emergence of *langgam jawa* in the 1960s and *campursari* in the 1990s. Both extended interest in keroncong times when the genre appeared to be in deep decline.

Interestingly enough, some older keroncong musicians today complain that younger musicians prefer an up-tempo, livelier style that eschews the "feeling" they associate with the slower tempo. In either case, adaptive strategies will again factor

into this genre's survival. This time, however, keroncong's continued existence hinges not only on musical innovation and drawing interest from younger audiences but also on how it joins the ranks of other "traditional" musics used to promote Indonesian culture, especially in the realm of tourism, and also whether it is incorporated into the curriculum of the country's conservatory-styled art institutes.

Chapter 6: A Teenage Bride and Mother

“Dr. Sukartono’s been spending a lot of time in *Taman Sari* recently...They say he has a mistress there...No I haven’t seen her myself but a lot of people have said as much...Where does she live? I’m not sure of...

Abdul knew, however, and one day, possibly because he had nothing better to talk about or just possibly because he wanted to impress Minah, one of the house servants, he told her about the keroncong contest he had attended with the Doctor at *Pasar Gambir*. The Doctor liked it, too. And not just the singing! ‘Just the other day he spent a long time (Abdul stressed the word ‘long’) over in Taman Sari...’

Minah liked to talk too. Not that she was malicious; she just had a loose tongue. So it was that three days later news reached Tini that Tono was seeing Siti Hayati, a keroncong singer who lived in Taman Sari.

That had to be the one; Tini was sure of it. Couldn’t be any other. But a keroncong singer?! How could Tono fall for that kind of woman, a cheap performer? A woman like that!”

--Armijn Pané
from *Belenggu* (“Shackles”), 1940
translated by John H. McGlynn
(1985)

Shackles

In 1940, Indonesian author and nationalist Armijn Pane published the novel *Belenggu* (Shackles), considered almost universally as Indonesia’s first modern novel and one that is often overlooked among the standard works of modern Indonesian cultural history.¹⁴⁰ The novel itself represents Pane’s response to the broader cultural debate of the 1930s which centered on the idea of a modern national culture and who exactly it represents (see Elson 2007, Frederick 1997, Hatley 1994).¹⁴¹ *Belenggu’s* critique of Indonesian society is based on a plot following three main characters:

¹⁴⁰Frederick (1997: 58) makes this argument and suggests that Pane’s ideas regarding the formation of modern Indonesian culture were largely criticized during the 1940s and 50s, resulting in his being ignored and forgotten altogether in subsequent years.

¹⁴¹ I elaborate on the “cultural debate (*polemik kebudayaan*)” and its relation to keroncong in Chapter 5.

Sukartono (Tono), an unhappily married, Western educated doctor, Sumartini (Tini), his Westernized wife, a woman of the educated class, who yearns for personal freedom, and Rohayah (Yah), a keroncong singer and prostitute who embodies a type of “indigenoussness” and goes by the stage name Siti Hayati. The metaphorical theme of “shackles,” as the title suggests, runs throughout the lives of characters in *Belenggu* and can be read, at least superficially, as articulating the conflicts they face in negotiating the classic dichotomies of East versus West or traditional versus modern. A more nuanced reading elicits a broader understanding of the complexities of these characters and the situations they are implicated in (and are fighting to extricate themselves from), which often supersedes the possibilities offered by simple dichotomy. In this sense, the novel addresses not only what Indonesians want to become but also who they are.

Part of the reason I begin with *Belenggu* in this chapter is because keroncong is an integral and fascinating aspect of the novel. Pane’s depiction of keroncong, particularly Rohayah, provides a glimpse into how keroncong musicians were perceived generally in the era of late-colonialism and also informs how this music is remembered currently. The character of Rohayah, as William H. Frederick (1997: 61) explains, serves as a thinly veiled metaphor for keroncong music itself:

“...viewed in ‘polite’ society as no better than a prostitute singing cheap tunes, she is gradually revealed to us as in fact a woman of great heart, high morals, and considerable wisdom... Far more than the petty and confused intellectuals with whom Dr. Sukartono customarily spends his time with, Rohayah is not merely a breath of fresh air, she bespeaks humanity itself—and modernity as

well—through both her individual confidence and her understanding attitude toward all types of people. Keroncong’s universality is Rohayah’s, and vice-versa. This was not a thought that many educated Indonesians...were prepared to accept.”

Rohayah’s ability to convey genuine emotion both as a vocalist as well as in her personal life gives her character a sense of humanity absent from the cold and detached intellectualism of Tono and his wife, Tini. Tono, especially yearns for this sense of humanity, evident in his interest in keroncong and his affair with Rohayah—in this sense he becomes uncomfortably aware of the incongruity between his urban, middle-class existence as a doctor and her world of prostitution and popular music. Drawing from this juxtaposition, while also highlighting some of its complexities (for instance, Rohayah is far more articulate and intelligent than a stereotypical “low-brow” keroncong singer is expected to be), Pane implicitly points to qualities that continue to be associated with the genre today—even if keroncong as a genre now is no longer necessarily considered “low-brow.” One example being that many keroncong musicians I spoke with, including Waldjinhah, mentioned how important it is to be able to comprehend and convey the emotions of these songs (both lyrically and musically) to the audience during a performance. Rohayah’s ability to perform this emotion successfully and immediately captures Tono’s attention each time he listens to her alter-ego, Siti Hayati, on the radio or on vinyl recordings. One of the final scenes in *Belenggu* finds Tono sitting alone in Rohayah’s vacant apartment, after both she and Tini have left him, listening to a recording of Siti Hayati still craving the feeling expressed in her voice.

“The record began to revolve. Faintly he heard the sound of violins and then, a moment later, Yah’s voice:

Even then I knew,
That we would have to part
Time will not be stopped,
And all too soon, must part...

Tono rested his hands on the upper corner of the open gramophone cover and bowed his head, his eyes fixed on the revolving black disc. He appeared to be searching for the source of the voice. It came off the record and up to him like a voice rising hazily from a deep valley far below. Yah was far away, so very far away. Tono cranked the arm of the machine and the record began to revolve faster...but the volume remained the same. He could not make it louder. She was so far away, but still he could hear her voice:

Even then I knew,
My love was yours alone,
You were there within me,
Forever in my soul.

Even then I knew,
My love would never die,
Ever in motion and through time,
To the hollow I will be taken.

Yah’s voice stopped. The record continued to turn round and around, the needle tracing the same circle. Tono straightened his body and looked down at the turning disc. Was this to be his own fate? With the passing of joy, turning, turning, silent, without voice...”

(Pané 1940, translation by McGlynn 1985: 105-106).

Pané’s use of the gramophone and vinyl records implies an emerging age of technology that would allow Rohayah’s voice to remain with Tono long after she had physically departed—however, this scene not only emphasizes the actual record but also how the

recording becomes a conduit for the emotions of the lyrics conveyed by her voice. This essentially is what continues to haunt Tono. Furthermore, Pane's depiction of Rohayah as a female keroncong singer and prostitute also points to disparities of socioeconomic class not only between Tono and her, but also of performers and audiences of keroncong and Indonesian elites at that time—as Frederick's quote suggested earlier, some educated Indonesians were not entirely convinced that a popular music like keroncong could or should, for that matter, represent the nation. The gendered stigma Pané attaches to Rohayah also was ascribed to other young female keroncong vocalists, Waldjinhah among them, with decidedly working class backgrounds. Without implying or suggesting correlation between characters or the plotline of *Belunggu* to Waldjinhah's life, there are certain elements of Rohayah's character, some of which I have described, that provide a context for understanding conditions and events pertaining to Waldjinhah, especially as she grew into early adulthood and progressed in her career as a keroncong vocalist.

Important Meetings

After winning the Kembang Kacang keroncong vocal competition in 1958 at the age of twelve, Waldjinhah went on to win the Solo regional level competition of the *Bintang Radio* (Radio Star) national vocal competition that same year. Although she was not able to advance to the national level of competition held in Jakarta that particular year, her ability to claim titles in two prestigious vocal competitions at such a young age

displayed potential, and combined with an exuberant confidence, Waldjinhah found herself performing regularly around Solo and in neighboring towns. That same year she also began recording for Lokananta, Indonesia's first national recording label, which later would release her most acclaimed albums of the 1960s and 70s. At one of the Lokananta recording sessions, she met Gesang Martohartono, the composer of the well-known song *Bengawan Solo* (The Solo River), who was hired at the time as a background vocalist on her recording. The two quickly became friends and Gesang invited her to sing for the keroncong band he recently had started.

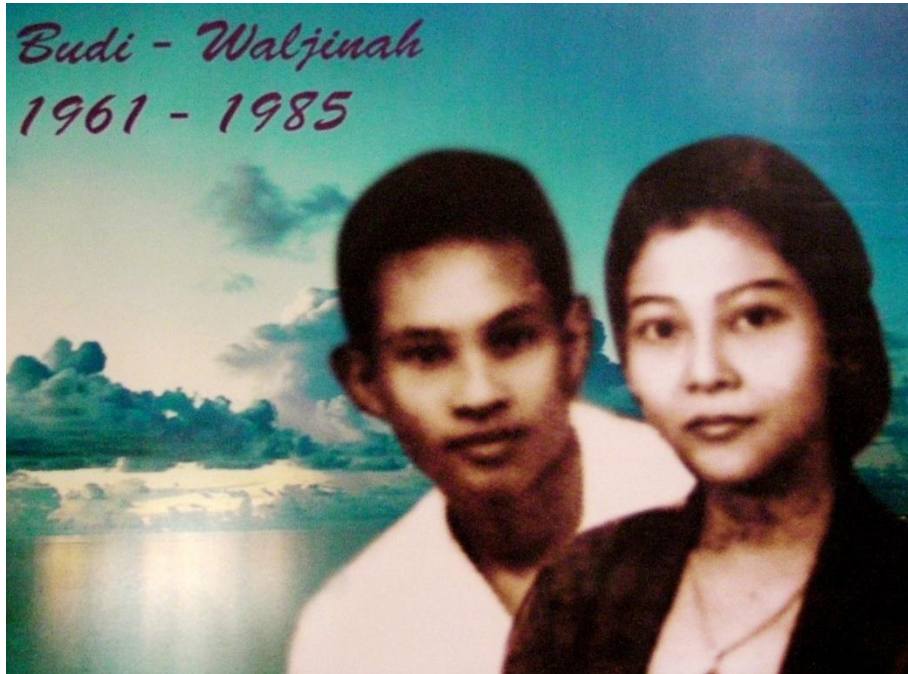
Pak Gesang had a local group that he led, nothing terribly fancy, it was a simple, straightforward keroncong band, and he asked if I wanted to be a guest vocalist for them in an upcoming competition. I agreed and started going to practice with them in the weeks leading up to that competition. One day I arrived at practice late and ended up sitting next to a skinny male singer named Boediono (ie. Pak Bud, her first husband), who had recently won the regional Bintang Radio competition for best male keroncong singer. So I won in the category of best female keroncong vocalist and he won for best male keroncong singer. We hit it off immediately because of our shared interests in singing and keroncong. After practice he walked me home and soon afterward we began dating. Later on Pak Bud revealed that he knew about me even before I showed up to practice with them. When we finally met he thought to himself, "Oh, so this is the Waldjinhah I've been hearing on the radio." We became close very quickly and he started

accompanying me back to my house after practice at night because I was afraid to take a becak (pedicab) by myself. At the time we were just friends, I didn't even invite him into the house, we would mostly sit outside and talk. Soon he started riding over on his bicycle every day. We would hang out in the backyard of my house. Sometimes we'd be out in the backyard so long that my older sister would come outside to wash the dishes and shout at him jokingly, "Hey! Are you ever going home?"

I still keep the book of keroncong songs he gave me after we started dating with his own handwritten notation of how to sing certain parts. It's really old and falling apart now but I keep it because it reminds me of the times Pak Bud and I would sit out there and practice singing. We started spending a lot of time together but my older siblings didn't like that Pak Bud would accompany me home at night after practice. We sometimes came home to find my brother out in front of the house with his hands on his hips (berkacak pinggang) with a stern look on his face, eagerly waiting for me.

One of my brothers once heard from a friend that Bud and I had taken a trip to Tawangmangu by ourselves, we didn't but he thought we had. I came home one day and he began hitting me on the side of my head yelling, "Who said you could go to Tawangmangu by yourself huh?" I starting bawling but tried to explain that we hadn't gone anywhere. Eventually he believed me but it was too late, I had already taken a swift beating.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Since her mother was often out working and her father lived with his other wife and family, Waldjinah's older brothers and sisters acted as parental figures in her household. As the youngest of ten children she often talked about how her older siblings doted on her and according to her, she got along



6.1 A photograph of the young couple displayed in Waldjinah's home commemorating Pak Bud's death. Photo courtesy of Waldjinah.

I was furious and wanted to figure out who had spread such lies to my brother. After asking around a bit, I found out that I was slandered (difitnah) by some girls who were jealous of me because they were interested in Bud themselves. He was not only popular, handsome and quite congenial, he acted friendly toward everyone, not just girls. His personality helped him later on in his career, he was definitely one of the more

well with all of them generally—Waldjinah had nothing bad to say about any of them. She does, however, talk much more about her brothers than her sisters, possibly because she had more brothers or perhaps it was because many of her sister were already married and had moved out. However, as she mentioned in the previous chapter, a young Waldjinah learned about make-up and women's fashion from "watching other women," she didn't specifically mention her sisters.

popular teachers in the middle school where he taught. Students would even stop by our house sometimes just to chat with him.

Even though Pak Bud didn't pursue a career as a professional singer, he had a very good voice. I enjoyed listening to him at practice—Pak Gesang usually picked us as his main two singers, especially for competitions. I was number one and Pak Bud was number two, we usually both walked onto the stage together and respectively sang our songs. I often sang "Merah Delima (Ruby)" and he sang either "Hati Melamun" or "Indah Juwitaku." Later on, when I began recording at Lokananta, we performed duets on some of my albums and even made it onto TVRI (Television Republik Indonesia, the Indonesian national television network) in Yogyakarta and radio advertisements for jamu (traditional drink made of medicinal herbs).¹⁴³

Of Teenage Love and Rebellion

Waldjinhah and Pak Bud's relationship progressed rapidly after their initial meeting. They went from flirting and talking on the way home from practice to spending time together away from music as well. Eventually they began dating formally and Waldjinhah was often seen sitting behind Bud on his bicycle with her arms wrapped

¹⁴³ In addition to dueting with her, Pak Bud also often performed the spoken interludes with her on langgam jawa recordings, these parts were often comedic skits of varying lengths that would be inserted into songs usually after the initial *bawa* introduction and a few sung verses. Quite a few of Waldjinhah's Lokananta album covers also feature both of them, usually with Pak Bud shirtless and dressed as a Javanese laborer, sometimes sporting a foolish facial expression or else posed in the act of "pursuing" her in rice field or some other bucolic setting. In contrast, Waldjinhah is often posed looking serious and emotionally detached from his advances.

around his waist whizzing through the neighborhood. Some adults, including her mother and most of her brothers and sisters, felt that she was too young to be dating seriously and did not hesitate to let her know. Waldjinah, however, was a headstrong and self-confident teenager who usually refused to let detractors or advice from elders steer her course of action, especially in this instance where she felt so strongly about Pak Bud.

In the late 1960s, years after Waldjinah and Pak Bud were married, she popularized a langgam jawa song composed by Andjar Any entitled "*Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang*," which from Javanese translates to "If There are Stars in the Sky." The song's lyrics refer to a deeply romanticized and intense longing for one's lover while waiting under the illuminating rays of the full moon.¹⁴⁴ Having translated the lyrics to *Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang* prior to asking Waldjinah about it, I considered it an overly dramatic and sentimental, "mushy" tune and was somewhat surprised to hear her say that this, and not her hit song, "*Walang Kekek*," was her favorite song. As she explained, *Yen Ing Tawang* was the most meaningful because its lyrics accurately described the setting when she and Pak Bud would secretly meet out under the moonlight together.

My favorite song is definitely Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang. It perfectly describes the time we were dating. Pak Bud and I always made sure we knew when there would be a full moon because that was a night we absolutely had to go out (pacaran). My

¹⁴⁴ A further discussion of this song's lyrics also appears in Chapter 5.

brothers watched me closely and would never allow me to go out with him that late at night so I had to be really careful. For instance, if I knew there would be a full moon on the fifteenth of the month, I parked my bicycle under a tree far away from the house that day and would sneak out the back later. My brothers liked to hang out near the market at night so I would wait for them to leave, and then would creep slowly out the backdoor into the dark and head toward my bike. From there I hopped on and pedaled furiously eastward past the market where my brothers were until I reached the bridge overlooking the river. It was dark but the moonlight made things more visible, I searched earnestly for Pak Bud's figure. Usually I found him waiting for me with his ondhel (an old Dutch style bicycle) near the edge of the river but sometimes I got there first and waited for him. Lucky for us, back then we didn't use motorcycles so we could get out there quietly without anyone hearing us. We parked our bikes and then walked along the riverbank. I was only fifteen years old at the time and it all sounds very romantic (romantis banget) now, but it's actually what we did. I always mentally prepared myself for a beating when I got home though (she roars with laughter). That's also why I love "Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang", because every time I sing it, I imagine sitting there on the riverbank under the moonlit sky with him and feeling completely at ease and happy. It's true...when I sing the song I imagine this and it takes me back there. That's why it's my favorite song.

Waldjinah's memories of her courtship with Pak Bud would surface occasionally whenever we talked about him. She recounted the story above to me in at least four separate interviews, attaching new and different details to each rendition—a circular technique of storytelling that meant not only repeating stories but also emphasizing specific events and elements while inserting additional layers of detail. This process exemplified how she recounted events in her life and I compiled the vignette above based on each retelling. The reason for this technique may be attributed in part to the fact that she tended to overlook details of events earlier in her life, however, this process also provided insight into her methodologies of remembering.¹⁴⁵ Based on my own observation, questions posed to her were rarely (if ever) answered entirely the first time around—in this case, when I asked about her favorite song, she immediately mentioned *Yen In Tawang* and recounted part of the story above. Two weeks later, she revisited the story, and again a month or two later until she felt satisfied she had told it in its entirety. This was true of other topics as well, especially the ones she considered

¹⁴⁵ In our early interviews, Waldjinah expressed concern about not being able to remember specific dates or events in her life. As a result, she insisted on having her son, Pak Ary, sit in on our interviews. This happened for a number of weeks and eventually it became evident that Pak Ary would do much of the answering during these early interviews. Although his knowledge about keroncong and his mother's career is immense and he certainly provided valuable insights, some of which led to fascinating discussions, his presence though also created an odd dynamic where I felt his opinions and ideas cast influence on Waldjinah's—she often agreed with him or merely added to his statements.

I eventually convinced her that it would be better if she spoke with Hara and me alone, since I was wanted to hear her own viewpoints. This, of course, contradicted the way she had conducted interviews for nearly her entire career—usually it was her husband (either Bud or Dedit) or her son, Pak Ary, who accompanied her during interviews and at first, Waldjinah didn't know how to react to my request. I'm not certain, but I suspect she spoke with him because eventually she began conducting our interviews with us on her own more frequently, although sometimes he would still drop in to contribute. I will return to this issue in Chapter 9 in a discussion of gender in Java.

to be sensitive. Repeated tellings allowed her to choose which details she wanted to included versus the ones to be omitted. This element of control was especially apparent early on in our interviews when she only discussed what I call her “senang (happy stories) and refused to talk in any depth about issues she considered to be too personal—perhaps not uncommon for a performer of her stature. Most of these stories described how much she enjoyed performing, meeting people or how happy she was with her life in general. Although I do not dispute her happiness, it was also quite clear that each “senang story” included less pleasant elements that she carefully glossed over. Waldjinhah became more open only after (I believe) she made a conscious decision that this project offered her an opportunity to truly tell her life story. After repeated interviews, I also realized that, in addition to accounting for sensitivity, Waldjinhah’s method of storytelling also reflected that she was recounting some of these events perhaps for the first time in her life. On certain occasions she even specifically mentioned to me never having spoken to anyone else about issues we discussed and in this sense, she was also reiterating her trust in me to responsibly depict what she had shared with me.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ In most cases, she mentioned having spoken to only her closest friends about especially personal topics but on occasion, she revealed opinions or details about events that previously had been kept to herself.

A Disputed Marriage

Although Waldjinah and Pak Bud were quite happy in their burgeoning relationship, others in their respective families did not share their sentiments. Waldjinah's family was concerned that she was much too young to be seriously involved with Pak Bud, and his family had their own reservations about her. Pak Bud came from a well-to-do Catholic family in Solo and his father worked as the mayor of Pekalongan, a town on the north coast of Java.¹⁴⁷

His father was a mayor, so we clearly came from different castes (kasta). I was just a common singer and he was the son of a mayor. What were we to do? His parents didn't like the fact their son was interested in a singer and furthermore we were quite young, I was sixteen and a Muslim...they were staunch Catholics. But we were deeply in love and couldn't be separated (tidak bisa dipisahkan). We were determined (nekat) to be together.

This sense of determination combined with other factors, including pressure from their respective families, eventually led Pak Bud and Waldjinah to decide that marriage was their best option if they wanted remain together. Both were still teenagers and their decision met stern disapproval from both families, but especially

¹⁴⁷ According Waldjinah and Pak Ary, the term mayor (*walikota*) wasn't used for his position at the time, however if we were to equate it with a job in city government today, he would essentially be the mayor. She suggested that I simply refer to him as a mayor.

from Pak Bud's. When I first asked about her marriage to Pak Bud, Waldjinhah smiled slightly but did not reveal much else. Her expression conveyed a mixture of both joy and the willful determination she expressed earlier. As with other stories, this one unfurled over the course of several interviews, but the emotion behind each retelling never wavered.

Yes, of course I still remember that time. When we told our families about our plans to get married, the answer from both sides was a resounding "No way!" His family, of course, didn't like me but I had issues with my own family as well. They told me, "What are you doing marrying a boy from a wealthy family? Who do you think you are? His father is a high-ranking official...do you think he'll allow his son to marry someone like you? Don't get your hopes up in vain (sia-sia)." Pak Bud's family also would say things to him like, "Don't you know you're a mayor's son? You're crazy for wanting to marry a singer!" Them telling us that we were not permitted to marry made us even more determined to go through with it because we truly loved each other.

One day my eldest brother sat down with to me in our front yard and warned me about my decision. "His family hates that you're a singer and besides that, they don't seem to like you in general. But if you're determined to become his wife, they're probably going to kick him out of the family." We went ahead with the marriage and my brother's prediction came true. Pak Bud's family later disowned him...but my husband also was adamant about us getting married. So that's what we did. Of course it was

done without the blessings of either his parents or mine so it was a bit confusing...we were determined though! My family protested the marriage although all of them eventually decided to attend the ceremony. Nobody from his family attended.

During one interview, Waldjinah, her son, Pak Ary, my assistant, Hara, and I discussed some of the reasons the families were against the marriage. According to Pak Ary, the “social discrepancy (*kesenjangan sosial*) between the respective families was a source of great concern for Pak Bud’s family and their primary reason for objecting—his grandfather (Pak Bud’s father) was also a high-ranking official in the regional government and therefore the family believed that Pak Bud should marry somebody at least of his own *priyayi* class and stature.¹⁴⁸ Pak Ary described Waldjinah’s socioeconomic background as “of the common people (*rakyat biasa*)” and therefore her social standing was far below that of Pak Bud. I believe her being a professional *keroncong* vocalist also cast her in a dubious light, especially since some female singer/dancer traditions in Java are associated with prostitution, sexual freedom and other forms of social misconduct (see Spiller 2011, Weintraub 2010, Lysloff 2002, Walton 1996, Sutton 1987).¹⁴⁹ Waldjinah’s age, according to Pak Ary, was the main reason her family disapproved of the marriage. As both he and Waldjinah explained it

¹⁴⁸ *Priyayi* is the term for the administrative upper classes in Java. As Ricklefs (1993: 129) writes, the emergence of this group reflected “an ambivalence in late nineteenth century policy about the need for ‘traditional forms of authority.’ Their tasks were wholly new, being the jobs which new administrative services required.” According to Ricklefs they were formally defined into the *priyayi* class and given titles and “forms of display associated with that class” so that these new roles became a clear marker of status in indigenous society (*ibid*).

¹⁴⁹ For a more in-depth discussion of these issues see Chapter 9.

though, it appeared to me their response had as much to do with gender as it did age, not only was she the youngest child in the family, she was also the youngest sister and as she alluded to in some of the stories above, her older brothers were especially protective of her and were unhappy with her choice to get married.

The following comes from an excerpt of a conversation where Waldjinhah and Pak Ary discussed the mannerisms of her older siblings generally:

Pak Ary: *My mom's older siblings were all a little strange, all of them were quite fierce (galak).*¹⁵⁰

Waldjinhah: *Yeah, it's true...that was my family...*

Pak Ary: *Her brothers were all very aggressive and scrappy by nature...they liked to horseplay, wrestle and fight.*¹⁵¹ *Almost all of them practiced silat...nobody knew about karate back then but they definitely knew silat.*¹⁵² *When I was young I was afraid to wake them up from sleep because sometimes if you got too close and startled them, you would get hit or slapped hard before you knew it (he laughed).*

Waldjinhah: *They were also quite strict when I was dating...very strict (ketat banget).*

¹⁵⁰ Pak Ary actually uses the English word "strange" here to describe them.

¹⁵¹ He literally describes them as *jago gelut*, which translates roughly to someone who likes to wrestle or roughhouse, and *jago berantem*, which translates to someone who can fight well.

¹⁵² *Silat* refers to *pencak silat*, the term commonly used for Indonesian martial arts, although the term *silat* itself is known in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and throughout much of Southeast Asia. *Pencak* derives from East and Central Java while *silat* is used mostly in Sumatra and Borneo—today the two terms are two aspects of a similar practice. *Pencak* refers to the performative aspects of the martial art and *silat* refers to the art of fighting and self-defense (Alexander, Chambers, et al 1979).

Pak Ary: *Even her sisters were very fierce. My mom didn't have anyone in her family who wasn't fierce!*

Waldjinah: *If my boyfriend (Pak Bud) accompanied me home after practice in the evening, he would make sure to greet each of my older siblings when we arrived. When he started coming over more often, my brothers always kept an eye on how long he stayed. If they felt it was time for Pak Bud to go home, one of them usually started tapping his fingers repeatedly on the back of a plate. That was the code to let us know that he had to leave. We usually could hear it well, even through the walls. Sometimes if we didn't hear it or react fast enough, they used the pestle (uleg) to bang on the wall, creating a loud booming noise impossible to ignore. In Java, you can be certain that if someone uses the pestle in this way, then it's time for you to leave that house immediately! (She laughed.)*

I felt that my brothers loved me very much though and I loved them. When I was young, they brought me along with them everywhere they went. Even though I wasn't old enough to work, they sometimes brought me along anyway because I told them repeatedly that I wanted to work alongside them (she laughs). All of my six brothers worked at Pasar Klewer (Klewer Market, one of Solo's largest wet markets) selling clothing and when I didn't follow, they made sure I stood by the front door to wish them each one goodbye as they walked out the door...and in return, they brought me back a treat from the market at the end of the day. Wishing my brothers eventually became a daily ritual...they never left without a farewell (pamitan) from me.

Waldjinah's fond recollections of her brothers again pointed to her close relationship with them (more so than her sisters). Lacking a true father figure in the family, they collectively shared the responsibility of raising their youngest sister and were understandably concerned about what they deemed to be a rash decision to marry Pak Bud. Despite the overall objections to their marriage, Waldjinah and Pak Bud pushed forward with their plans—that is not to say, however, that the doubts of others did not affect their decision-making process.

We talked about what would happen if they wouldn't allow us to get married. We considered running away together but I was afraid to actually do it. I just kept thinking, "What if I get pregnant...then what would we do?" We were really afraid but so were my brothers. One night, my brother, Munadi, and I got into a heated discussion about the marriage.¹⁵³ Munadi expressed to me that he didn't understand why I was getting married now, that I was making a big mistake. He got himself completely worked up and next thing I knew, he grabbed me and held a knife up to my face! I was terrified...I couldn't believe it was my brother was doing this! At that point both of us were upset and confused.

¹⁵³ Munadi was also the brother who introduced Waldjinah to keroncong and was the most supportive of her career as a vocalist.

I don't think he intended to hurt me but it added dramatic effect to his statements. Munadi eventually lowered the knife but in desperation told me that if I was going ahead with the marriage, I should take the knife and just kill him. He then tried to force the knife into my hands. Munadi was still very emotional and I was trembling and sobbing. He reiterated that I didn't have to get married for financial reasons because he would help me to earn a living. We kept talking and I assured him I was marrying Pak Bud because I truly loved him, not for any other reason.

After some time he managed to cool off. I tried to convince him that since neither of my parents were involved in the wedding, he should be the one to give me away during the ceremony. He refused initially, saying he didn't have enough money to contribute. I assured Munadi that he wouldn't have to pay for anything because I would sell my bicycle, pendants, earrings and anything else I owned of value to raise money, which I did. I sold almost everything I owned— lucky for me, I had some jewelry that fetched a good price and that, along with my bicycle was enough. In the end, Munadi not only attended, he also gave me away at the ceremony. Looking back on it, I think most of the opposition to our marriage, especially from my family came from my mom and siblings who were older, the younger ones didn't appear as concerned.

Wedding Day

Given the obvious tension surrounding their nuptials, Waldjinah did her best to set aside the concerns of others in order to proceed with a life event she had little

doubt about. The events preceding the actual wedding perhaps best exemplify how even at a relatively young age, she exhibited a sense of self-confidence, self-sufficiency and an overall forthright attitude about accomplishing goals she had. In the end, there was little the families could do to prevent the marriage given the strong-willed attitude adopted by the teenage couple.

Our wedding took place in front of my house. It wasn't anything very fancy but we enjoyed it anyway. My mom had to work and didn't attend and my father had already passed away by then, so Munadi gave me away. Pak Bud had no family with him, at the time he had just begun working as a teacher at a local junior high school. We performed the customary practice of tumplak punjen, where we distributed coins to people who attended—this was done according to Javanese custom during the wedding of the youngest child. So as a result, a crowd of my neighbors gathered to collect the money. We threw it out and they all scrambled around fighting over it. I also had to say that I was nineteen years old during the ceremony, even though I was only fifteen, because I was not yet of legal age to marry.

My dress was black in color, as was customary back then—I borrowed it from the wife of a local dukun (shaman) and wore jewelry rented from a local jewelry-maker. Today things are more free (bebas) and progressive (sekarang kan lebih progresif), brides can wear all kinds of colors, they don't have to wear black like I did. Dresses now have much more sparkle (gebyar) than back then—it was all about following Javanese

tradition, my dress had to be cut a specific way, my make-up had to be done according to custom and so on. My husband was also dressed in the traditional Javanese way.

I felt so sorry seeing him arrive by himself, without any of his family there to support him. He didn't show any concern though, he told me he was happy that we were getting married and that he didn't care if any of his family was there or not. I was also happy because I knew from that day onward, there wouldn't be any further obstacles (halangan aral) to being with the man I loved and wanted as my husband—although there were obstacles in the past, we overcame them in order to become husband and wife.

Of course, we still faced pressures from his family early on in our marriage. After our wedding Pak Bud's family, who went by the name "Puspo Pranatan," cast him out—specifically it was done by his oldest brother (but not his father). The circumstances of him being disowned were strange though because they kicked him out only after our first child was born, despite threatening to do so much earlier. After his older brother passed away while working in West Papua (known as Irian Jaya then) a few years later, there seemed to be less resentment from his family. The situation changed entirely after my song "Walang Kekek" went to the top of charts around 1968, ten years after we married. Suddenly Pak Bud's family was interested in speaking with him again—in fact, not long after the song became popular, the entire family dropped by our house for a visit. They hugged us as if nothing had happened...they spoke to me as if I had been accepted as a family member all along.

Waldjinah paused, chuckled and then smiled slightly with satisfaction—not saying a single word but looking at me as if to make sure I understood the character of the people she described. Although decades have passed, the irony presented by this encounter served as vindication not only for Pak Bud choosing to marry a woman his family considered a lowly keroncong singer but also as a way of exposing their superficiality and hatefulness. It is also interesting to note that in most of her stories, Waldjinah omitted the names of people she referred to (outside of her friends and family) in effort to conceal their identity. In telling this particular story, however, she made certain to mention Pak Bud’s family by name.



6.2 Waldjinhah and Pak Bud in Singapore, 1971. Photo courtesy of Waldjinhah.

I invited them all to go out and eat at a big, well-known restaurant in town and we all enjoyed a meal together. After that, I think we decided to “let the water flow” and I’ve embraced my relatives from that side of the family, just as I embraced my own family ever since.¹⁵⁴ Anytime Pak Bud’s family has needed assistance, I’ve always

¹⁵⁴ Waldjinhah uses the Javanese phrase “*mbanyu mili*,” which I have translated here as “let the water flow.” The phrase is similar to “water under the bridge” in English, which means all is forgotten.

been there to help. I've provided financial assistance to some of my nieces and nephews on that side of the family just as I've done for mine—of course, I've had to give more to my family since they are much poorer.

On one occasion I asked Waldjinah why she thought her future in-laws were so against attending the wedding, even after it was determined that she and Pak Bud were to be married. Her impression looking back on it was that religion played an important role in their decision. As she mentioned earlier, Pak Bud's family was staunchly Catholic and did not support his decision to marry into a Muslim family. Interestingly enough, this was not a factor raised by Pak Ary when he explained why his father's family was against the marriage. Waldjinah, however, mentioned it as the primary reason for their boycott of the wedding on at least two occasions when the topic came up.

Almost everyone from my side of the family attended the ceremony, the only people missing were his family. I think they didn't come because of differences in religion, Pak Bud was Catholic and I'm a Muslim. It wasn't a big deal for either of us but apparently it was for them. So in order for us to marry, Pak Bud became a Muslim...because he was in love (she laughs). We had discussed it beforehand and on one occasion I remember asking him, "How are we going to get married if we're of different faiths? Plus my entire family is Muslim and yours is entirely Catholic?" He told

me that for marriage he was willing to convert to Islam, however, once we were married he would return to practicing Catholicism—which was what he ended up doing.¹⁵⁵ As a result, our family also ended being of mixed religion: three of my kids became Catholics while the other two follow Islam. We allowed them to make their own decisions about religion—we never planned to have certain children be of particular religion, however they all went to Catholic grade school. After that we allowed them to choose their own religion. When my kids were younger, it was fun to watch them debate religion among each other, whenever we’d all get together, we’d discuss religion but not to the point where there would be serious arguments. I’d sit back and enjoy watching without saying a word as they debated. To this day my kids still like to debate religion when they get together and they still manage to do it respectfully.

Transitioning to Married Life

Waldjinah was married at the age of fifteen and by that time she already had a burgeoning career as a keroncong vocalist. Not only had she won a number of distinguished vocal competitions, she had also established a name for herself in and around the Solo area and regularly found paid performances in the area. At the age of sixteen, she decided to put her career on hold in order to start a family. Despite

¹⁵⁵ This practice is not entirely uncommon among families I knew in Central Java. Since husband and wife had to be of the same religious background according to government law, many people converted just to get married, but in practice, adhered to their premarital religion. For instance, people who convert to Islam in order to marry call often refer to themselves as only “KTP Muslims.” KTP, which in Indonesian stands for *Kartu Tanda Penduduk*, refers to their government issued identity cards, so essentially they are Muslims only according to this official standing, in their everyday lives they may in fact be practicing Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, etc.

qualifying for the *Bintang Radio* national vocal competition that year, she willingly stopped performing and had five children over the course of five years.

I only had one serious boyfriend, whom I married. After that I was pregnant for the next five years—my first child came in 1961, followed by the others in '62, '63, '64, and '65...after that I was done! I remember riding back from the hospital in a becak (pedicab), those were the days before we owned a car, exhausted after giving birth to my fifth child in five years. I gingerly stepped out of the becak and was greeted by my mother, who stood watching from the front door of our house. She waited patiently for me to approach her, and as I passed she whispered gently in my ear, "Five is enough, ok?" I smiled at her, nodded in agreement and never got pregnant again after that.

That particular period of my life was tough for me though. Especially since the pregnancies came in succession and were so close together, I barely had time to heal from the previous birth before I was pregnant again.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, all of my children were so large when they were born! I think they were big-sized because I usually bathed with banyu gege (a Javanese term for bath water heated in the sun in order to make a baby grow faster). I continued to use banyu gege even after they were born so their size increased very quickly. Most of the techniques I used during pregnancy I learned from my mother. Before that I had no idea what to do!

¹⁵⁶ The Javanese term she uses to describe this is "*sundhulan*" (from *kesundhulan*), which means becoming pregnant again before the preceding child is weaned (Robson and Wibisono 2002: 706)

My mother also taught me the importance of reciting Al-Fatihah when I was pregnant. She actually practiced kejawèn (Javanist Islam) but emphasized to me the importance of praying and reciting that particular prayer each time I became pregnant. She continued to remind me to pray even after I finished giving birth, whenever I would leave for a performance she would tell me to recite Al-Fatihah before singing—she said it would help my singing voice. I'm not sure if it actually did. I recited the prayer regularly anyway never thinking too much about its effects while performing. I remember being taught Al-Fatihah as a child, before I even knew how to solat (pray) properly. All I know is that whenever I recited it before a performance, my voice sounded good, so I just kept on doing it throughout my career.

Life Away from Home

Waldjinhah's decision to put her career on hold to have children came at a seemingly inopportune time. She was, after all, relatively young and her career was building momentum—she quickly became a rising star in the keroncong scene both regionally in her hometown of Solo as well as nationally. However, she did not regret her decision to have children when she did, and looking back on the trajectory of her career now, this decision clearly did not impede her eventual rise to fame. On the other hand, her decision to return to performing and touring did impact both her immediate and extended family, which included older siblings and their families living within the same household. Older siblings essentially cared for her children while she was away at

performances, and as she became increasingly popular throughout the 1960s and early 70s, Waldjinah had performances scheduled nearly every day of the month.

The relationship between women and the household has been studied extensively beginning in the 1970s when economists, anthropologists, sociologists and geographers began theorizing about issues such as utility, work, labor, production and reproduction (Wolf 2000: 85-86).¹⁵⁷ Many of these studies, as well as subsequent studies that came out of them, identified households based primarily on economic models and conceptualized them as undifferentiated entities operating as a unit, often with a single joint utility function (ibid). Feminist anthropologists in the 1980s began questioning how and why these models ignored and/or marginalized women while simultaneously questioning the conflation of family with households and suggesting alternative configurations of diverse and complex households. Studies of women and the household in Indonesia, and Java specifically, led by the pioneering works of Hildred Geertz (1961) and Robert Jay (1969) established the idea that Javanese women played a dominant role in the decision-making processes of household finances—while certain aspects of these findings remain valid, subsequent studies (see White and Hastuti 1980,

¹⁵⁷ In the 1960s, some feminist scholars had already questioned the natural fit between women and the family—contending that the concept of family, as it was understood then, was a product of European history. As Ratna Saptari (2000: 10-11) observes, with attempts to demystify the family came the need to understand its actual workings, and some feminist scholars argue that while “family” and “household” were closely linked, they were not necessarily identical (ibid). The difference between them being that family is defined mainly by biological and kin relations, while households are social units comprised of individuals who usually share a common residence and conduct a set of activities defined as “domestic” (Yanagisako 1979). While the inclusion or exclusion of members into households is usually based on kinship and family ties, this is not always true—in other words, family is associated with kinship and household with propinquity (Saptari 2000: 11).

Niehof 1995, Brenner 1997) contradicted their ideas by suggesting that women's roles based on the everyday inner workings of the household were far more complex.¹⁵⁸

Waldjinah's case adds further nuance to these complexities. Although she was by the late 1960s a national star and undoubtedly the primary wage earner in her immediate family, she did not always decide how the money was spent. On numerous occasions she lamented that a significant portion of her income from performances (sometimes as much as fifty percent) went directly to her husband, since his primary job was as her manager, and the rest went toward her children, her older siblings, nieces and nephews and friends. While the ability to earn an income may allow more freedom of movement for women generally, Ratna Saptari (2000: 20) points out that a woman's position within the household cannot be judged by measuring economic standing alone—in some cases “a woman's income-earning capacity may improve her decision-making position and control at home, but it may not change her subordinate position there.” Speaking in the context of young rural women in Thailand's labor force in the late 1990s, Mary Beth Mills (2002: 4-5) notes that while male mobility had clear historical precedent in rural Thailand, young women's mobility “represented a sharp departure from established patterns of feminine behavior and notions of appropriate activities for women, especially unmarried daughters.” Mills argues that women's bodies are dually represented as symbols of progress and modernity in Thailand, however, the movement of young women also elicited shifting identities and social

¹⁵⁸ I return to this idea and discuss Waldjinah's role in household finances in the context of her relationship with her second husband again in Chapter 9.

relations. Women's mobility and independence was seen as both a potentially valuable economic resource as well as a source of conflict, particularly when mobility challenged conventional expectations about gender roles and household authority (ibid). These changes in expectations became especially pronounced as some young female workers became mothers. In exchange for remitting part of their earnings to their families, children born to urban workers were sent back to rural villages to be raised by parents, grandparents or other kin, and in this sense, rural households provided migrant workers a safety net of care and support that allowed them to continue living and working in urban areas. While contexts undoubtedly differ for Waldjinah, some of these circumstances resemble conditions she faced as a young working mother in 1960s Indonesia. Combined with the rigors of performing, at one point early in her career, Waldjinah found herself financially supporting at least thirty-two people in the broadly cast net that constituted her household.

I supported many people who didn't have enough money at that time. For instance, each month my nieces and nephews got money for school from me and I'd also buy gifts and other things for them. I'd never give it directly to the kids though, always to my brothers and sisters first because I wanted their kids to think the money and gifts were coming from their parents, not necessarily from me. I didn't want to disrespect my older siblings in that way. I also helped out some of Pak Bud's nieces and nephews to finish school, one nephew went on to become a well-known successful engineer. That's

been my life, that's why I can only afford to live in a house like this now because I've lived my life for so many other people as well. I enjoy sharing my money with other people though, I don't regret sharing it at all.



6.3 On stage in the late 1960s. Photo courtesy of Waldjinh.

Some people close to Waldjinh described her at times as being overly generous with certain friends and extended family members. Although it is unclear who exactly these beneficiaries were, her generosity sometimes came at the expense of her

own financial stability and that of her immediate family. She did not discuss this critique in much depth but told me only that she did “what was necessary.” Part of the reason Waldjinhah was able to financially support as many people as she did was because of a grueling schedule of performances and recording sessions that frequently took her away from home. When I asked about how her children coped with her being away so often, Waldjinhah told me they were well cared for by their uncles and aunts—in fact, since many of her older siblings continued to live at home, her children always had adult supervision and were never neglected. While she spoke reassuringly, I noticed that by asking this question, I had stumbled on a sensitive topic she appeared reluctant to talk about in-depth.

During that same interview, I had a chance to ask Pak Ary (her son) about his feelings on the matter while Waldjinhah stepped out of the room. Pak Ary echoed her sentiments saying he enjoyed the camaraderie of growing up in household full of uncles, aunts, cousins and siblings, and although he sometimes missed his mother, he never felt neglected growing up. At some point in our conversation, Waldjinhah ambled back into the room, sat down across from me smiling and casually asked, “So what are you guys talking about?” When I told her, she nodded but said nothing more. Based on my own interpretation, her question seemed less about genuinely inquiring and more along the lines of asserting “let’s not talk about this now.” Pak Ary also might have picked up on this nuance because he immediately changed the direction of our conversation. I recall this incident not because I think Waldjinhah wanted to avoid discussing her children, to

the contrary, she eagerly spoke of their accomplishments—she is especially proud that nearly all of her children have attained college degrees and now have respectable jobs—and often talked about the hardships she faced providing for their material needs. As I continued to ask about her family life, however, I noticed she repeatedly steered the direction of conversation toward the aforementioned topics and away from issues I intended to discuss. On another occasion we talked about the five years she spent living in Surabaya, Indonesia’s second largest city, located in East Java. She mentioned performing nearly every night so during that time she rarely, if ever, returned to her home in Solo, but insisted that her kids were well cared for and visited her whenever they had school vacation, sometimes staying as long as a month. When my assistant, Hara, and I asked her about being so far away from them for such a long period of time, Waldjinhah responded only by saying that they would visit whenever they could, and with that she abruptly changed the subject. I decided it best to wait before approaching the topic of her children and her role as a mother again, especially since she avoided speaking in much depth about these issues and we did not want to risk upsetting her by repeatedly broaching these topics.

I love all of my kids so much. From the time they were toddlers, to the years they attended college, as they began looking for jobs, until they got married—I’ve always tried to be there for them during each step of their lives. I thank God that I’ve even been able to buy homes for each of them. I know that they all know I love them.

As they've grown up, I've allowed them to follow their own paths and paid attention to all of their needs. I've never forced them to do anything they didn't want to do, the only thing I explicitly told my sons when they began dating was "don't play around with women, think about their feelings, think about whether the woman you're dating is someone you would want as a wife." I've supported them in each phase of life. When they needed jobs, I went out and helped find jobs for them. Later on when they wanted to get married, I was also there for them. For instance, each time I performed in Japan, I used the money to pay for one of my sons' weddings—the first time, I paid for Erlangga's wedding, the second time it was for Mul (Pak Ary).



6.4 Waldjinah's five children. Photo courtesy of Waldjinah.

When Hara interjected to ask whether she felt she had shown affection (*kasih sayang*) for her children by providing for their material needs, she agreed and reiterated that whenever they needed money, she willingly provided it. He then proceeded to ask if she felt her children lacked affection from her in other ways.

Yeah I know, I know...I've thought about it. I felt it after I suffered the last stroke. I thought about it and realized that I was lacking in certain ways (as a mother). I just have to accept it. Before this I never thought much about these deficiencies (kekurangan), I was mostly concerned with making as much money as possible. I was busy with my touring schedule and with my career so they probably didn't receive as much affection from me as they should have. However, I made sure that all my kids had an opportunity to go to college. I paid for all of it so there would be no obstacles to their success. I made sure that all of them had the types of weddings they wanted—whatever they asked for, I obliged. That's what I was aware of. That was my compensation (pembalasan) for the affection I couldn't share with them growing up. I've never openly told this to any of them, but over time, all of my kids have come to know this on their own. At the very least, I was able to buy each of them their own home. Even though some of the houses needed to be fixed up, I paid for the renovations so that it met their expectations. That's how I responded to these deficiencies. That's how I bestowed (mencurahkan) my love on them.

She went on to also explain that her relationship with her children was further complicated after her husband, Pak Bud, passed away in 1981 and she chose to marry Didit Hadiyanto in 1988. Her sons did not get along with Pak Didit and for these and other reasons, they did not support their marriage.¹⁵⁹ For the second time in her life, Waldjinhah married despite reservations from both her family and his. The marriage created a chasm in her relationship with some of her sons for some years after, especially since two of them blatantly refused to visit while she lived with Pak Didit, and according to Waldjinhah, they came only when he was out of town for extended periods of time.

Waldjinhah's reasoning in regards to material "compensation" to her children is perhaps not unlike what some parents in Indonesia (or elsewhere) may use to explain long periods of absence from the home due to their jobs—this also pertains to Indonesian migrant workers who often leave the country for years at a time in order to find employment. When she addressed this issue during our final interview in March 2013, Waldjinhah spoke matter-of-factly about her role as a mother, and while she expressed remorse about not being at home as often as she would have liked, she also argued in no uncertain terms that her rigorous performance schedule early on in her career allowed her children options for schooling and jobs unavailable to her growing up. As a mother who was also her family's primary breadwinner, she did what was best for her family, and especially at this stage of her life, has come to terms with what she

¹⁵⁹ I am referring only to her sons here because her only daughter, Harini Dwi Hastutiningsih, passed away in 1972. I also discuss the dynamic between her sons and Pak Didit further in Chapter 9.

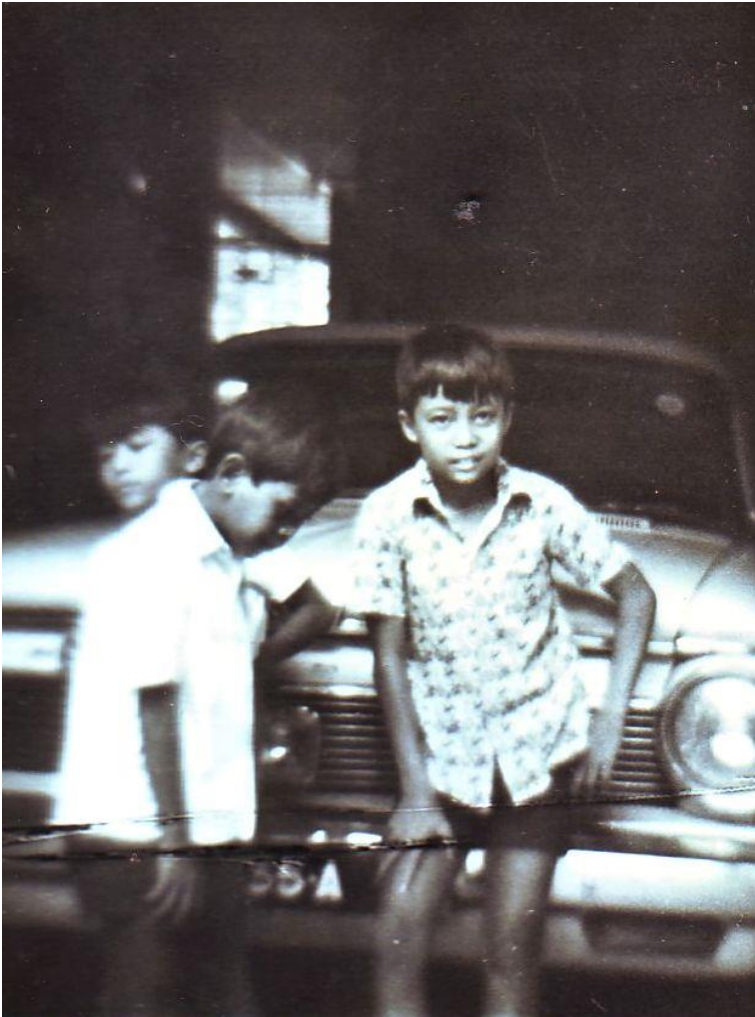
refers to as her “deficiencies” as a mother. While she remains reluctant to openly discuss these shortcomings, perhaps for obvious reasons, she readily talked about other aspects of family life.

When my kids were young, of course there were times when they misbehaved...most of the time it was because they got into fights or liked to cuss at school. When they got in trouble I usually tried to remain calm. I knew that it was because they were still young and didn't understand any better...they liked to swear because they didn't really understand what the words meant. Pak Bud and I didn't yell or scold the kids and tell them not to use this type of language, we merely kept quiet about it and once they figured out what those words meant and how others reacted to these words, at some point, they simply stopped swearing as much. Of course sometimes I had to be more forceful and ask who taught them to say this or that and they would tell me. Whatever I told them to do, the kids usually followed because I was like the queen.¹⁶⁰

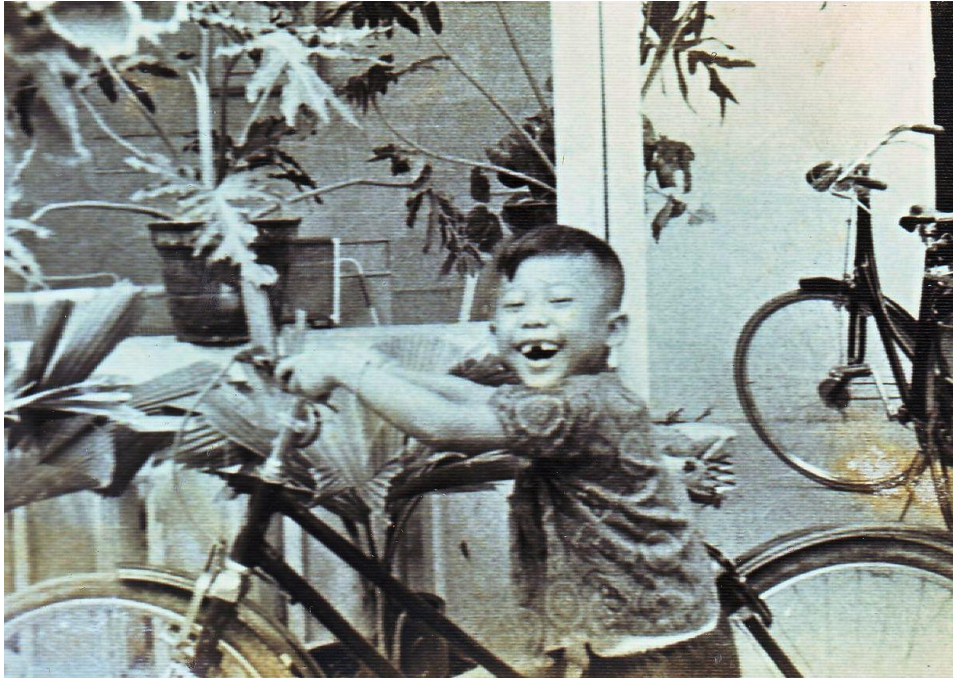
¹⁶⁰ Her exact words here are “*Saya wis koyo ratu, saya bilang apa semua anak manut*”—a mixture of Javanese and Indonesian, which was quite common for Waldjinah. At times I had to remind her that she needed to speak in Indonesian since I was not yet fluent in Javanese. She would chuckle and graciously acquiesce. About five or six sentences afterward, however, I often noticed Javanese words begin to trickle in again. Use of Javanese became especially prevalent when we discussed personal topics, such as her family or issues with her marriage—in these instances, she spoke entirely in Javanese likely because it was the most comfortable way she could express herself. Part of reason for this may also be that she is less comfortable speaking in Indonesian, since it is her second language, and she only uses it in “official” contexts (speaking in public, giving interviews), as is true with many Indonesians who commonly speak an ethnic/regional language at home or to their friends and Indonesian while at work or when conversing with people of other ethnic groups. In my experience, I’ve observed that even some friends of mine, who are non-Javanese *pendatang* (migrants) living in Central Java, tended to speak *ngoko* (low-level Javanese) to each other in order to “fit in” (as I have been told) with dominant Javanese culture.

My kids were smart. They knew that if I had a performance, I'd surely get paid. As soon as I returned home, they surrounded me and would call out all the things they wanted to buy. Once my eldest son, Bambang, even asked for a motorbike! After some discussion, his father ended up buying him one. They also wanted us to purchase a car really badly, and we agreed it would be a good idea. Pak Bud became fixated with Holden's (an Australian-made car) so I decided to save up for it by putting a little money away at a time in an old bread tin (kaleng roti) I had stashed away in my room. Every time I got paid for a performance, I threw a little bit into that tin can. Eventually we had enough to buy the Holden but before that I gave my kids a choice. I presented them with the option, "We can either get the car or we can buy a few scooters, what do you guys prefer?" They, of course, overwhelmingly chose the car, so that's what we got. The day it finally arrived at our home, we all took turns posing for photos in front of it!

I noticed Waldjinah began using Javanese in our interviews only after we had been meeting regularly for some time and also after she learned that I too was formally taking a class in Javanese language. At first, I (perhaps mistakenly) insisted she speak in Indonesian or I would regularly interject with questions in Indonesian. However, I quickly realized these questions disrupted the flow of conversation and stopped doing it. Eventually Hara and I devised an approach where I allowed her to speak in Javanese and he would, at opportune lulls in the conversation, provide a brief summary for me in Indonesian—it also helped that Hara almost always addressed her in Indonesian (although himself a native-speaker of Javanese), so even when I didn't catch the exact details of the conversation, I understood its direction generally. He also transcribed all of our interviews and helped me to translate and understand the nuances of sections where she used Javanese. We also regularly met prior to each interview to discuss topics I wanted him to cover as well as approaches we both felt would allow Waldjinah to feel comfortable talking about specific issues, especially the ones we identified as particularly sensitive to her. I am in deep gratitude to my friend and assistant, Hara, for his knowledge, expertise and patience with this project.



6.5 Her sons and the family's first car. Photo courtesy of Waldjinah.



6.6 One of her sons attempting to ride a bicycle. Photo courtesy of Waldjinah.

Despite often being away on tour, Waldjinah and Pak Bud, as parents, still encountered the mundane tasks of raising their children when they were at home. Waldjinah insisted that her children generally were quite obedient but when they did misbehave, she was not the one to discipline them.

Pak Bud usually dealt with disciplining the kids, especially since he was a teacher and accustomed to dealing with children at school. I sometimes got angry at him though if I felt he went too far (with disciplining our kids) but I would never undermine his authority in front of the them. I didn't want them to lose respect for him. They were close to both of us though...maybe a little closer to me because I always

bought them whatever they wanted (she laughs). I don't think I've ever really disciplined any of my children. From the time they were young, I couldn't bring myself to pinch them much less strike or hurt them. Sometimes I attempted to help with the discipline but even then I would scold and in response they just laughed at me. To be honest, I've never been truly angry with any of my children...not even once that I can remember. I don't think it's possible.

Conclusion: A Working Mother and the Household

Understanding the lived realities of the household, as Diane Wolf (2000: 94) writes, necessitates moving away from the naturalized and normalized language of economics, law and politics to “find out what bases our subjects use for defining and understanding their households.” By turning our focus to the “center” or dominating classes (middle class and elite households) we can better understand social class relations and the context of poor households which, according to Wolf, entails understanding the dynamics of intra-household relations in order to choose and develop a suitable vocabulary to describe these interactions. Essentially Wolf argues for a reconfiguration of how academics have studied and thought about households. As she puts it,

“Traditionally we have asked questions about how structural changes (e.g agricultural transformations, industrialization) affect households or women

(or both). A more interactive approach ‘beyond the household’ would encourage questioning how households or particular household relations affect extra-household configurations and processes, reversing the conventional uni-linear direction of academic questions (Wolf 2000: 99).

In this sense, it is worth considering the ways Waldjinah’s intra-household relations have affected how she has negotiated hegemonic forces such as capitalism and materialism—especially evident in how she chose to compensate her children, often materially, for the fact that she was often away from home. Household relations also suggest how Waldjinah’s role as a working mother, different from her own mother, parallels (or presages) shifting attitudes in Central Java toward a mother’s role in the household. Waldjinah’s career benefitted from the fact that she had a network of family members within her household to care for her children that allowed her to perform and tour more frequently.

This chapter began with an introduction to Rohayah, a keroncong singer and prostitute in the novel *Belenggu*, who, despite having a sense of humanity lacking in the other main characters, was never quite able to overcome the limitations of class. Although Waldjinah shared similar obstacles while growing up, her story represents a possible alternate ending to the novel, where instead of leaving Tono, Rohayah marries him and finds her way to fame, respectability and financial stability as a keroncong singer. Waldjinah, in this sense, was able to accomplish what Rohayah could not (or did

not want to), she was able to rise from the faceless multitude of keroncong singers in Central Java to become *the* keroncong singer known across Indonesia (as well as regionally in Singapore and Malaysia). She balanced the rigors of being a touring artist with the responsibilities of home life during a time when working mothers in her situation were far less common. In the process she financially provided for her entire family and continued to do so for most of her career. Midway through the 1960s, Waldjinhah was approaching her late twenties and married with five children. She was about to embark on what some in the Indonesian press later referred to as her “comeback,” a label usually reserved for performers much older than she but in some ways fitting of her situation. Despite bursting onto the Solo keroncong scene in 1958, Waldjinhah’s five year hiatus from performing essentially removed her from the public eye and there were no guarantees she would regain her previous stature, especially since she was no longer a teenage phenomenon. She needed to recapture the public’s attention. She needed to make a big splash. And in 1965, she managed to do just that.

Chapter 7—Bintang Radio: On the National Stage

*Freedom fighter fallen like a flower
Dropping fragrantly onto your mother's lap
Although you fell, selling your soul
Your name is forever noted nobly as a warrior
Magnificent blossom, oh flower of the nation
Majestic, truly triumphant, sacred
Freedom fighter splintered like a jewel
Spread over Indonesia's soil.¹⁶¹*

from "Lgm. Pahlawan Merdeka" (Langgam Freedom Fighter),
composed by Pandji Kamal in 1945

Nationalist music can elicit strong and often polarizing responses. While some are attracted to it for the collective patriotic fervor it stirs up, others detest it for the silences and destruction it imposes on the nation. More broadly, the idea that music, specifically the music of the masses, articulates and shapes the nation has driven our understandings of music's functional relationship to the nation for some time now. The lyrics above from the keroncong song "Pahlawan Merdeka" (Freedom Fighter) were written in 1945 as Indonesians struggled for independence from colonial rule against Japanese and Dutch forces. In a number of ways, they poignantly emphasize keroncong's intimate ties with nationalism and the national imagination during this and subsequent eras of Indonesian history. During this period, keroncong was favored by

¹⁶¹ *Pahlawan merdeka nan gugur sebagai bunga jatuh mewangi di atas pangkuan Ibunda. Walaupun kamu telah gugur membuang nyawa, namamu telah tercantum sebagai satria. Kesuma nan indah, oh bunga Negara aji jaya sakti nan sejati, pahlawan merdeka nan pecah sebagai ratna, terpencar terbesar di bumi Indonesia.*

some Indonesian nationalists as early as the 1920s, but it was not until the late 1930s and 1940s that the genre really became associated with the nationalist movement.¹⁶²

On my first visit to Indonesia in August 2008, I purchased a CD compilation entitled *Keroncong Perjuangan* (Keroncong of Struggle) released on the label *Gema Nada Pertiwi* (GNP) earlier that year. I actually found this compilation by chance while browsing in a local Yogyakarta cassette/CD shop. It was not located in the section devoted to keroncong, instead placed in a much smaller one designated as “*lagu patriotik* (patriotic songs)” —referring to Indonesian national and nationalist music. The CD’s cover collage of disparate images immediately piqued my interest combining a crudely sketched mass of people piled together to resemble a small hill, arms raised in defiance hoisting the red and white bars of the Indonesian flag. To the left of this is a contrabass, with only a set of hands visible grasping its neck and body with a backdrop of a cloudy early morning (or late evening) sky blending into a thatched wood design framing the bottom.

¹⁶² I’m basing this on the fact that most of the songs associated with the nationalist movement were composed during this particular era.



7.1 Cover of *Keroncong Perjuangan* CD. Photo courtesy of Gema Nada Pertiwi (GNP) Records, Jakarta.

The songs compiled on this CD represent some of keroncong's most renowned compositions and all are deeply associated with era of revolutionary struggle from Dutch colonialism (and Japanese occupation). Song titles include *Rangkaian Melati* (Bouquet of Jasmine), *Selendang Sutera* (Silk Scarf), *Sepasang Mata Bola* (A Pair of Eyes), *Pahlawan Merdeka* (Freedom Fighter) and *Gugur Bunga* (Fallen Flower). Poetic metaphors characterize lyrics addressing themes connected with war—among them sacrifice, loss, bravery, strength and fortitude.

Nationalist Music, National Culture

Themes and metaphors in the keroncong lyrics of this era established and historicized the heroic myths essential not only to an emerging Indonesian national identity but also to the processes of state formation itself. Revolutionary struggle represented in keroncong ultimately expressed important elements of a foundational value system on which Indonesia would be built as a nation (at least theoretically). As ethnomusicologist Philip Bohlman (2004: 12) writes (in the context of music and nationalism in Europe), music is malleable in the service of the nation not because it is the product of national or nationalist ideologies but rather because musics articulate the processes that shape the state. Music does crucial work for the nation: creating national myths and transforming them into national histories, marking national boundaries, just as it mobilizes those who desire to confound or dismantle boundaries, and music enhances sacred qualities of the nation—in other words, there is no single site where one experiences the interaction of music and nationalism (ibid).

Nationalist music, however, is incredibly divisive—as Bohlman (2004: 17) goes on to explain, “(it) embarrasses and infuriates us...we laugh at it and we become angry at it...almost perversely, we love to hate national music.” This is especially true when European folk musics were taken from their “pristine world and put on the stage of the nation,” as a part of a national collection, used in the repertoire of military ensembles or as “the competitive underpinning of folk-like hits” for national broadcasting companies (ibid). Association with each of these realms causes folk musics to subsequently lose

their luster of authenticity and “purity.” There are also reasons, according to Bohlman, why nationalism and music are simultaneously appealing and repulsive. For one, a general belief that music (and other forms of popular/folk art) should be autonomous from cultural and political contexts—nationalism disrupts the “real” functions of popular/folk music, whether ritual or entertainment, by drawing attention away from the music itself. Secondly, he notes that nationalism trivializes music by exaggerating what we find most ugly and repulsive about the state, essentially creating “new markers” of the state affirming its presence in aesthetic language. Lastly, music in service of the state can be dangerous and destructive, not only for the ways it can foster prejudice and racism under the guise of nationalism, but also because it often serves the state during times when its violence is greatest—especially in war where nationalist music silences internal others and foreigners, denying resistive voices.

Theorizing Nationalism and the Nation

Bohlman’s observations about music come in the context of broader discussions theorizing nationalism and the nation. Theorists have had much to say about nations and national identities ever since these terms have come about, especially since they have been associated with controversy and upheaval, as existing versions have continuously been challenged by competing alternatives (Day and Thompson 2004: ix-x). Over the last fifty or so years, a number of approaches to theorizing nationalism and

nations have emerged and for purposes here, I discuss the theories that have most informed the way I am thinking of nationalism.¹⁶³

Ernest Gellner (1964: 168) best sums up a modernist stance arguing that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.” Similar to other modernists, Gellner takes a skeptical view of nationalism seeing it as socially constructive and “entirely intelligible”—to him, the unsophisticated level of intellectual content of nationalism is exactly what makes it prone to error and deceit, therefore lending itself to abuse and extremism. Gellner argues that nationalism was a civilizing influence and more specifically “a way of behaving” or “being national,” in other words conducting oneself as a member of the nation-state or nation (Day and Thompson 2004: 43). Characteristic of other modernist theory, Gellner’s views also reflect the influence of Marxist thinking. Marking the

¹⁶³ Over the past fifty or so years, approaches to theories addressing nationalism and the nation have been placed in three main categories: modernist, primordialist and perennialist. While there are disagreements among theorists within and between groups, there are also fundamental ideas that are agreed upon. For modernists, nations themselves are products of modern historical developments; how this comes about, however, is subject to debate. The primordialist approach is best summed up by Anthony Smith’s (1991) idea of “ethnie,” essentially based on the idea that the basis of modern nations are human populations with shared ancestry, myths, histories and cultures, having an association with specific territory and a sense of solidarity (Day and Thompson 2004: 65-79). Smith and other primordialists have been significantly critiqued for exaggerating the degree of ethnic consciousness and solidarity among pre-modern populations.

Despite this, Smith questions how national pasts can be constructed without some form of ethno-history. He specifically cites how in Indonesia, the Malay language, although not the dominant language, became popular as a trade language and amenable to communication between ethnic groups and helping to unite the archipelago (ibid). However, I think he fails to take into account other political reasons for the use of the Malay language, as I discussed in an earlier chapter, it was not only used because it was a lingua franca that created solidarity. Overall, the primordialist approach, as I see it, tends to consider the continuously contested and negotiated boundaries of ethnicity and history much too simplistically as Smith and others argue for a “shared ancestry.” While it is possible for shared commonalities to exist (at least for a time), I am more interested in how such characteristics are reproduced as time passes. The last (and probably smallest) group of theorists is the perennialists, who have argued generally that nations are an enduring feature of “post-tribal history” (James 1996: 19)

economy as the basic mode of social organization, he argues that links between nationalism and the nation-state emerged based on a functional relationship between the needs of the modern economy and the need to create a uniform national culture.

Like Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm (1990) believes nationalism to have no inherent merit, requiring a general attitude of skepticism. Hobsbawm, drawing from Marx, argues that the social origins of nationhood tend to be located within a particular social strata and nationalism, therefore, represents an aspect of ideology employed in conscious and deliberate ways (Day and Thompson 2004: 27). Hobsbawm essentially suggests ways that nationalism has been invented or manufactured in order to serve purposes of the state and while any social group can take the reins in enlarging or reconfiguring a nation, certain layers of society, according to him, have a greater affinity for nationalist ideas and practices (ibid). One aspect that should be noted here is that, in Indonesia (as elsewhere), nationalism emerged as an anticolonial movement, different from the European models Hobsbawm and most other theorists rely on, and in this sense, nationalism articulated not only a desire to break free of colonial rule but also the aspirations and ideals that nationalists hoped would establish the foundations of a postindependent nation-state. Hobsbawm himself agrees that the spread of nationalism, beyond Europe, took on an increasingly negative and divisive aspect as colonial subjects took it as a force for emancipation from the old colonial empires as well as a force of democratization and popular inclusion.

Benedict Anderson (1983) is also often lumped in with the modernist camp although some of his ideas differ in shape and function. For Anderson, nations are the artifacts of cultural processes and their existence is preceded by the creation of a sense of nationality occurring in the imaginations of people, or in his terms an “imagined community.” The act of imagining allows people to identify with others whom they likely will never see or meet. Anderson argues that technologies such as print media and vernacular language were instrumental in fostering imaginations and crafting a unity across the expanses of time and space. Although nations existed in the imagination, they were conceptualized as real and solid communities through the apparatus of administration and territorial government prior to breaking away from European colonial powers (Day and Thompson 2004: 88). As someone who studied the politics and culture of Indonesia, many of Anderson’s observations are rooted in the conditions and historical events of the country.

Paul James’ critique of Anderson argues that although there is much to be learned from the framework of the “imagined community,” Anderson does not allow the idea of imagination to do enough theoretical work (James 1996: 5-6). James specifically points to the fact that Anderson does not distinguish between different styles of imagining, an important distinction to make considering Anderson himself points out that Javanese villagers “imagined particularistically” (Anderson 1991: 42-

43).¹⁶⁴ Critiques of Anderson also come at the level of socioeconomic class, namely questioning how exactly the imagined community extends beyond the literate classes (Day and Thompson 2004: 92). Anderson's approach to nationalism does not account much for class differences and according to some, pays little attention to how the nation develops from the bottom up. While the validity of this critique is debatable, it highlights how musics, such as keroncong, emerging from an urban underclass setting, played a role (perhaps even more significant than print media) in fostering an imagining.

By the early twentieth century, keroncong moved from a Eurasian music often played in a street setting to a more professionalized setting in Indies popular theater (see Cohen 2006, Yampolsky 2010).¹⁶⁵ Keroncong became associated with the Indonesian nationalist movement in the 1930s and 40s, helping to establish what James refers to as an "abstract community," that goes beyond kinship relations or attachment to a perceptible place by "(recalling) 'concrete' images of blood and soil (James 1996: 183)." In keroncong lyrics of this era, images of blood and soil were evoked, sometimes quite literally, in order to describe landscapes and heroic fallen warriors to create a sense of unity for a diverse and fragmented Indonesian population. As I discuss later on in this chapter, the imagery created in the lyrics of some keroncong songs were used by

¹⁶⁴ James (1996: 7, 184-185) instead assumes that people can act creatively and imaginatively and proposes the idea of an "abstract community," rejecting the idea that the imaginary is undetermined, James focuses on "the constitution of different forms of social practice." In other words, he is concerned with how these imaginaries are based in subjectivity and how they are created and differentiated within the discourse of the nation.

¹⁶⁵ These changes are discussed in Chapter 5.

nationalists to establish the myths, ideals and values that would later ground the nation after independence.

Some theoretical approaches to nationalism have taken into account the conditions of fragmentation, competition and, in some cases, open conflict existing in modernizing nation-states suggests that problems with essentialism have hampered past efforts to theorize the nation, especially in terms of the development of capitalism and modernity, whose rewards often are not disseminated evenly across societies and world regions, resulting in countries or world regions “lagging behind” trying to catch up with those ahead in the race (Day and Thompson 2004: 61).¹⁶⁶ Addressing the idea of essentialism, some argue classical theories of nationalism mistake “categories of practice” for “categories of analysis” and have, perhaps inadvertently, reproduced the idea of the nation as a unified group of people (see Nairn 1997).¹⁶⁷ This issue becomes especially apparent in ethnically diverse countries like Indonesia and regions like Southeast Asia, where political borders, often configured by European colonials, fail to account for actual geographic boundaries of ethnic groups.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Nairn (1981) has argued that unevenness characterizes the race to modernity and national identities tend to form around the fault lines of modernization. Nairn argues that an adequate theory of nationalism must have a country-by-country analysis and be based in the framework of world history in order to account for this unevenness (James 1996: 109-110).

¹⁶⁷ Instead of considering nations as “real entities,” Brubaker (1996) argues that we should treat them as institutionalized forms, practical categories and contingent events rather than “the determined outcomes of the machinery of social forces and structures (Day and Thompson 2004: 85).”

¹⁶⁸ Guibernau (1999:16) explains that that in some cases, these conditions have led to “nations without states,” defined as “nations, which in spite of having their territories included within the boundaries of one or more stable states, by and large do not identify with them.” Lacking a state of their own, members of these nations “maintain a separate sense of national identity generally based upon a common culture,

Beginning around the mid 1990s, approaches to theorizing nationalism have been less interested in developing general historical-sociological theories on the rise and development of nationalism (a concern of most classical theorists) and focused more on the temporality of nationalism, taking a “day-to-day” or “eventful” approach (Day and Thompson 2004: 15). Works from the past two decades or so have seen an increased engagement with ideas from critical theory, cultural studies, postcolonial theory and feminist social theory, which has highlighted the role of patriarchy in nationalist discourse and ideology. This turn away from the “grand narratives” of the past, partly based on the discourses of “globalization” and emergent multicultural and transnational identities, also unravels the different histories of nationalism, opening up spaces to theorize based on the idea that the nation is constituted differently in various times and places, often via competing discourse within that nation. My work here focusing on how *keroncong* and *Waldjinhah* specifically helped to create national culture in postindependent Indonesia furthers this approach taking into account Paul James’ (1996: 7) assertion we understand that national consciousness, nationality and nationalism “entail certain forms of subjectivity.” Part of this subjectivity involves understanding that a significant number of the classical studies have focused on

history, attachment to a particular territory and explicit wish to rule themselves (*ibid.*)” Guibernau gives Catalonia and the Basque country in Spain, and Wales and Scotland in the United Kingdom as European examples of nations without states. Indonesian examples include ethnic groups of West Papua and people of East Timor, who first declared their independence in 1975 but only became truly independent after the end of a twenty-five year occupation by Indonesia in 1999.

economic conditions and the mechanisms of industrialism in Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth century as starting point for analyzing nationalism.

Returning now to Bohlman, it is worth noting that his observations about music and nationalism also fall within a specific European context and quite obviously some of his observations pertain to the context of keroncong more so than others. Addressing his points, firstly, it is difficult to assume that keroncong was considered less “authentic” as it became incorporated as a national music, especially since the genre had already undergone significant stylistic developments as part of popular theater in Java in the early twentieth century.¹⁶⁹ Nationalists, such as Sukarno and Armijn Pane, identified the flexibility of keroncong as a strength that could be used to shape the fledgling nation-state, just as the state conversely shaped and “refined” keroncong into a national music. I also disagree that nationalism necessarily “trivialized” keroncong in the way Bohlman describes it. Many of the “new markers” expressed through keroncong lyrics contain nationalist undertones but are subtly framed in the context of shared values aspired to by all Indonesians. Metaphors of silk scarves, bouquets of jasmine, fallen flowers and broken diamonds are used in the service of the state, but done so in a way that consciously eludes the violence of exclusion.

Bohlman’s astute observation that music creates the nation by altering our perception of time is useful in understanding the relationship between keroncong and national myth. He argues that music, more skillfully and subtly than other forms of

¹⁶⁹ See Yampolsky 2010, Cohen 2006. I also discuss these developments further in Chapter 7.

artistic expression, “finds its way into the temporal boundaries where myth and history of the nation overlap to create complex myths about what we want a nation to be and what it is (Bohlman 2004: 23-24).” The flipside of this, however, is that a musical representation of the nation also

“constantly reminds us that there is a difference between national myth and history. Music allows for the juxtaposition of myth and history by insisting they cohabit the ways nations represent themselves to their own citizens and to others. Music multiplies and enriches the stories about the nation’s past (ibid).”

Keroncong compositions during the era of *perjuangan* (revolutionary struggle) chronicle sorrow and suffering. Images of loss and heroism depicted in lyrics, however, became even more potent in the years following independence as specters of the revolution, reinforcing legendary myths that have since become established parts of Indonesian folklore and history. Physically locating the *Keroncong Perjuangan* compilation in the “patriotic music” section rather than the general keroncong section serves as a subtle yet symbolically poignant reminder that *perjuangan* songs transcend the label of ordinary folk song.

A “Comeback” and Competing Ideologies

It may be slightly peculiar to think of a vocalist in her mid twenties making a “comeback.” We tend to associate the term with older performers whose career and popularity have dropped off significantly for any number of reasons. The “comeback” tag assumes not only a desire to regain a share of one’s popularity and audience but also a degree of stature presumably lost during an extended period of inactivity and/or decline. In popular culture of the West, it appears that comeback attempts are a regular pastime, some of the more notable (ie. “successful”) ones include Tina Turner and Roy Orbison in the 1980s, Johnny Cash in the 1990s and the most celebrated of all, a black leather-clad Elvis Presley in 1968. To describe Waldjinah’s return as comeback, after a five year hiatus to give birth and raise her children, is perhaps misleading. She was, after all, inactive for only five years and not out of the public eye for decades like some other popular artists. It is also questionable as to whether she achieved a level of fame prior to her hiatus fitting the criteria of a comeback. In either case, a number of magazine and newspapers articles ascribed the term “comeback” to this period of her career.

Considering the important period she was inactive, however, suggests a compelling argument for why the term “comeback” applies. Her hiatus from performing began not long after she won the *Kembang Kacang* vocal competition in Solo and placed as a runner-up in three consecutive regional *Bintang Radio* competitions as well as the national competition in 1960. Momentum and “buzz” surrounding Waldjinah steadily

built and some believed the teenage phenomenon was destined to be the next great keroncong singer. Her professional career was also on the rise based on success at these competitions—Waldjinah was now being paid to perform regularly around Solo and its surrounding areas. Of course, she was not content with her success at the regional level of competition. Her goal was to reach the pinnacle of national success and this meant hoisting the trophy at the national *Bintang Radio* competition in Jakarta.

In the years following independence, keroncong transitioned from a music associated with popular culture and nationalism to becoming incorporated into state-sponsored mechanisms meant to forge an Indonesian national culture. Part of this included the Bintang Radio vocal competition, which had been organized by the state radio network, *Radio Republik Indonesia*, or RRI (Indonesian Republic Radio), since 1951.¹⁷⁰ Although the competition was not held for most of the 2000s decade, it returned again in 2011 and since then, according to the official 2013 Bintang Radio

¹⁷⁰ *Radio Republik Indonesia* (RRI) was established on 11 September 1945 as a consortium of eight local stations previously in the network controlled by the Japanese during their occupation. During this early period, RRI played a crucial role in disseminating information about Indonesia's revolutionary struggle both domestically and internationally (Sen and Hill 2000: 82-83). By the time the New Order came to power, there were 39 stations operating around the country broadcasting to more than a million licensed radios. According to Sen and Hill (ibid), RRI stations were required to broadcast both national and regional programming including news and other designated special presentations. all relayed from Jakarta.

By the 1960s, RRI found competition in the form of amateur hobby radio stations, established in response to political instability and a general dissatisfaction with government radio. These smaller stations often played popular Western pop songs by artists such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones that had been earlier banned by the Sukarno government. Younger audiences flocked to these stations and as a result RRI lost control of the monopoly it had on the Indonesian airwaves. Sen and Hill (2000: 80) suggest that even though radio provided Indonesia with its first trans-border media technology, radio was defined by the New Order as essentially a local medium, different from film and television that were considered communication media on a national scale.

program, has continued in its goal of providing a venue for “children of the nation (*anak bangsa*)” to channel (*menyalurkan*) their artistic talents vocally (*bakat seni suara*).¹⁷¹ Long predating television shows such as “Indonesian Idol” (modeled after the popular “American Idol”), the Bintang Radio competition served as the country’s premier venue for young vocal talent to showcase their skills to the music industry both nationally or even internationally. Keroncong was included as one of the musical categories from the inception of this competition and Bintang Radio contributed to the popularity and proliferation of the genre, especially through regional competitions held across Indonesia starting in the 1950s.¹⁷² Keroncong’s incorporation into Bintang Radio shifted its purpose as a nationalist music, used to reinforce the cultural borders of the nation, to a national music, reflecting the image of the nation. Bohlman (2004: 82) argues that the main difference here is that national musics have the potential to shape national history and make it tangible and recognizable to those living in the nation by representing something *quintessential* about the nation (*ibid*, italics added).

¹⁷¹ The current owner of the well-known record label Gema Nada Pertiwi (GNP), Joko Susilo, told me that the interruption of this competition is a major reason why he remains hesitant to release new full-length albums by young keroncong vocalists. According to Joko, Bintang Radio promoted and created a market for rising stars, especially in the keroncong genre, and the absence of this mechanism has impacted and limited his ability to promote and sell these artists.

¹⁷² In addition to keroncong, Bintang Radio competitions also featured two other vocal categories: 1) “Pop” music, featuring popular Western and Indonesian songs of the era and 2) “*Seriosa*,” which literally translates to “serious” and is a category for, from what I’ve been told, is music that incorporates dramatic and “operatic” style vocals—one vocalist mentioned that it was music with influences from Italian opera. It’s possible, and perhaps likely, that vocal stylings and technique from *seriosa* also influenced keroncong, although none of my informants could specifically point to specific elements which may have come from *seriosa*.

How keroncong shapes national culture is often subtle and nuanced—most of it done through poetic lyrics that use recognizable symbols and icons as metaphors for Indonesian values and ideals composed working musicians rather than imposed by the government in a top down approach. Undoubtedly, these ideals work concurrently with those purported by the state. Lyrics to songs like “*Sumpah Pemuda* (Oath of the Youth),” composed by Mardjokahar in 1940, address the obligation young people have toward the “archipelago (*nusa*, ie. Indonesia)” and nation (*bangsa*), calling on them to fulfill their oath (*memenuhi sumpahnya*) as Indonesians. “*Hasrat Menyala* (Kindled Desire),” by the same composer but written in 1938, evokes similar imagery encouraging the youth to ignite the flames of revolutionary spirit, specifically saying “Now your desire has been kindled (*Kini hasratmu menyala*)/ Pride burns in your soul (*Tinggi membakar jiwamu*)/ Now by you alone are in heat of struggle (*Kini dirimu dalam api perjuangan*).” Lyrics for “*Pahlawan Merdeka* (Freedom Fighter),” composed by Pandji Kamal in 1945 celebrate and memorialize fallen soldiers as heroes of Indonesia, comparing them to “fallen flowers” –“Freedom fighter (*Pahlawan Merdeka*)/ Fallen like a flower (*Nan gugur sebagai bunga*)/ Falls fragrantly (*Jatuh mewangi*)/ Into the lap of the mother(land) (*Di atas pangkuan Ibunda*).”

Each of these songs suggest an obligation to the nation, one mentions it specifically as an “oath” to be fulfilled while the others refer to it more abstractly as “pride” burning within. Performing these songs today creates a sense of history for Indonesians, and reminds them of the revolutionary war era and the passion and

commitment required to win the war. It mythologizes this period in national history through the imagery of burning desire and obligation while continuing to reinforce the idea that these emotions and sentiments remain pertinent to Indonesia today. The performance of keroncong itself today elicits a sense of patriotic nostalgia commemorating that era in Indonesian history. Although keroncong musicians generally complain that the Indonesian federal government does not support keroncong (ie. financially), some perform revolutionary era songs (*lagu perjuangan*) as a way of “preserving” a national heritage and the ideals of the revolution. In this sense, they continue to use and negotiate the messages in these songs to shape Indonesian history for specific purposes today.

Regional competitions are not uncommon in promoting national musics, especially when incorporating a bottom to top approach emphasizing folk music/arts as the focus of national culture. As Bintang Radio participants, vocalists were expected not only to develop their own voices, in terms of learning proper keroncong vocal technique, but also to become voices of development for Indonesia. Young vocalists such as Pak John Maury, a man from Papua I introduced in an earlier chapter, learned the song repertoire of keroncong from Javanese civil servants working in Papua as well as through Bintang Radio competitions. His experiences are not dissimilar from other vocalists coming from various corners of the Indonesian archipelago, who also learned keroncong as a form of nationalized culture and took part in local, regional and national competitions as a way of voicing and embodying the ideologies of the nation. Previous

research reminds us that the idea of a national culture emerges from competing ideologies vying for status and recognition as a dominant national ideology (Li 2007, Askew 2002, Hatley 1994, Appadurai 1988). Writing in an East African context, anthropologist Kelly Askew suggests that in Tanzania expressions of a cohesive national culture proved (and continue to prove) elusive.

“Despite the confidence implied by continued references to “national culture” in policy statements outlining the means and strategies of its construction, conflicting and contradictory images reveal the fundamental ambiguity surrounding it. The process of selecting which music traditions should represent the nation has been fraught with competing agendas (Askew 2002:14).

In Indonesia, debates concerning the shape, direction and expression of national culture began in the 1930s and was later referred to as “the Cultural Debate,” a discussion chronicled mainly in two literary sources, one a journal entitled *Poedjangga Baroe* (The New Writer) and the other a compilation entitled *Polemik Kebudayaan* (The Cultural Debate).¹⁷³ William Frederick (1997: 55) notes that these literary sources provided a forum where “a vigorous exchange of opinions took place” exhibiting a confluence of agreement and disagreement among its participants. Although this debate has been

¹⁷³ *Poedjangga Baroe* was published between 1933 and 1941 and then again in a post World War II series retitled *Pudjangga Baru* from 1948 through 1954. *Polemik Kebudayaan* was originally published in 1948 but reprinted in 1986 by Dunia Pustaka Jaya in Jakarta (Frederick 1997: 81).

discussed in greater detail elsewhere (see Sutherland 1968, Teeuw 1979, Sumardjo 1983, Foulcher 1990), elements of this discussion inform the grounds for keroncong's inclusion into the nationalist agenda and later on the project of Indonesian national culture.

The new and modern Indonesian culture, as envisioned by some at the time, was to be free. Not just in the political or nationalistic sense of liberation from colonialism, but also a national culture that inspired and facilitated social and intellectual freedom. Part of the process of realizing this freedom was “a *synthesis* necessary to resolve the contradictions which had to be faced in the process of becoming modern (Frederick 1997: 56).” Facing these contradictions meant overcoming dichotomies that framed the process: East and West, rural and urban, regional and national, elite and the masses, and finally tradition and modernity (*ibid*). The national, in this sense, was to be an expression of identity in the broadest sense based on the ideas of a small group of artists and politically-oriented figures who believed a unified and fixed nation required a unified and fixed culture. Based on this ideal, modern culture was to represent a whole society. Although intellectuals and artists were well aware that they belonged only to a minority sect of Indonesian society, they nonetheless aspired to creations mirroring society as a whole—specifically culture accounting for the lived experiences and tastes of the *rakyat* (the common people), which served as the basis of national culture as well as the nation.

Although ideas coming out of the Cultural Debate appeared readily applicable, many were not so easy to develop and implement later on. Attempts to work through the internal contradictions embedded in these ideas often resulted in failure. Some of these complex contradictions, as Frederick (2004: 57) observes, were difficult to get around—for instance, issues of individual freedom and a national movement for unified thought and action, a *rakyat* that was happy and complacent yet backward and ignorant, establishing a national identity in the face of growing Westernization, and perhaps most troubling, having to reconcile the modern with the continuing prevalence of superstition. As a music of the *rakyat* that became “modern” as it gained widespread acceptance in popular culture, some involved in the Cultural Debate such as Armijn Pané, promoted keroncong as a national music with the expectation that it could and would somehow overcome these contradictions. The burden of fulfilling these expectations, however, lay with individual artists and state institutions. As Bohlman (2004: 86) suggests,

“The movement of folk music along the path of the national journey does not simply happen. Human agents undertake the journey and bring folk music with them. Technologies streamline the path of the journey. Specific institutions, moreover, shape and reshape the ways in which folk music moves toward the center, and they do so by providing for the full modernization of folk-music practices (ibid).”

In the remainder of this chapter, I explore the processes and conditions of Waldjinhah's life and career that helped to make keroncong a modern national music. I begin with her victory at the Bintang Radio national competition in 1965, a fateful and tragically violent year in Indonesian history that saw her rise from regional star to national prominence.

Taking the National Stage

In early 1958, I won the Queen of the Bean Flower (Ratu Kembang Kacang) competition in Solo and later that same year entered the regional Bintang Radio competition where I finished runner-up. I entered Bintang Radio again the next year (1959) and finished as a runner-up again. In 1960, I finally placed high enough on the regional level to advance to the national competition in Jakarta where I was selected as a "prospective champion (juara harapan)." I wanted so badly to win but some people told me afterward that although my voice was good, I was still too young to win at the national level. At the time I was only fifteen and some were shocked that I was even able to place as high as I did, especially since I was up against experienced vocalists. In any case, I didn't win and later that same year (1960) I got married and by September was pregnant with my first child. In 1961, I didn't enter Bintang Radio because I was pregnant, same with '62, '63, and '64—I was simply too "large (ie. pregnant)" to even consider getting on stage. In 1965, I was pregnant again, only this time I was

determined to make it to the nationals in Jakarta because I heard President Sukarno, Indonesia's first president, would be handing out the championship trophy personally. Alhamdulillah I was able to win the regional competition that year and I advanced to Jakarta. I was so determined (nekad) to win in order to get the trophy from Sukarno. Even though seven months pregnant at the time, I was still determined to do it, and luckily for me, I was able to win the 1965 national competition, even with my huge belly. (She laughed heartily.)

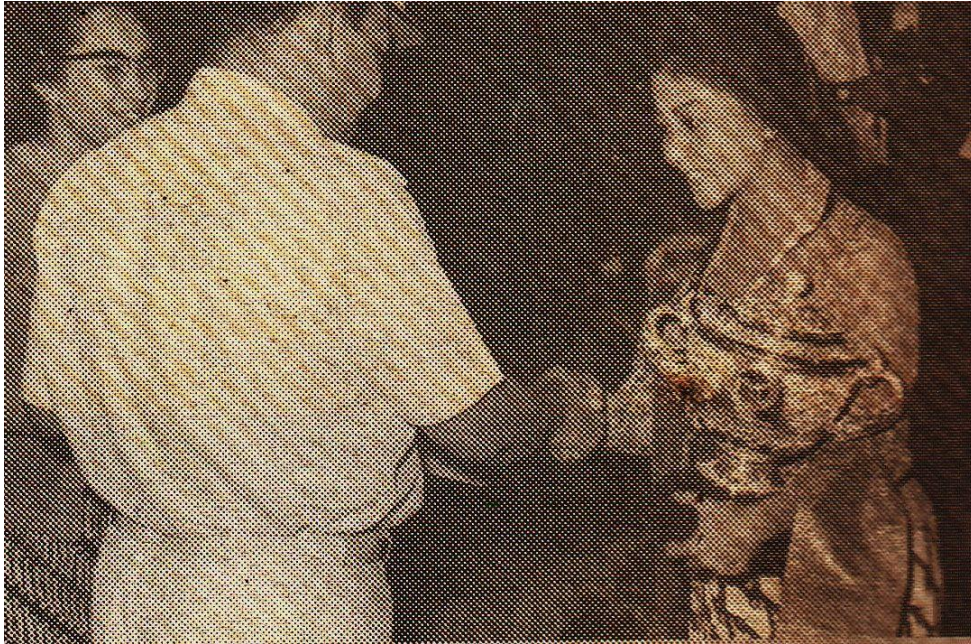
I was just so happy to be part of the Bintang Radio national competition again after five years away from it. That year it was held at the RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) hall in Senayan (a central district in Jakarta) and it was jam packed with people for each stage of the competition. The entire national competition took two weeks to complete: there was a first round, the semifinal and then the final. Thirty contestants in all participated representing various regions across Indonesia. We were all backed by the same keroncong band from Jakarta so after one stage of the competition was completed, we had a few days to practice with them. During the early rounds, I felt some nerves and maybe because I was pregnant, (the baby in) my stomach would often move since I felt so tense (tegang). After getting on stage the first time though, I calmed down and remained at ease for the rest of the competition.

Given the circumstances, I asked Waldjinhah how she felt on the final day of the competition; whether nerves crept in again knowing she was on the verge of finally

realizing her dream. She remembered feeling calm but little else that day. Perhaps it vanished in the blur of euphoria or just with age. Waldjinah did, of course, remember winning the competition and receiving the champion's trophy from none other than Indonesia's first president and icon of the revolutionary struggle, Sukarno.

I couldn't believe Bung Karno was actually handing me the trophy!¹⁷⁴ I felt as proud as I've ever been in my life to be standing beside him on stage as the national champion. It was absolutely extraordinary. He even touched my protruding stomach after handing me the trophy, can you believe that? I think it was because I was pretty...I heard Bung Karno liked to be around attractive people. (She chuckled.) Later, after the ceremony ended, he invited me to the presidential palace. I remember walking in and feeling like a country hick on her first visit to the big city. My eyes flittered around the room taking in as much as I could. It was amazing to think that I was actually in the presidential palace!

¹⁷⁴ "Bung Karno," is an affectionate title for Sukarno. The term "bung," means brother and is used as a title for some popular Indonesian leaders.



7.2 Accepting the 1965 *Bintang Radio* trophy from Sukarno.
Photo courtesy of NOVA, 17 September 1989.

Entering the waiting room, Sukarno immediately exclaimed, “Wow, your stomach is so large, and still you decided to take part in the competition!” To which I immediately remarked, “I entered because I wanted to receive the trophy from you, Bung Karno.” He smiled gently and then whispered, “Well, when your child is born, it should be given the name Bintang (Star).” Of course I followed his wishes and when my son was born, I named him Bintang. Bung Karno then asked about my husband and what he did for a living. He acted very respectfully; maybe it was because I was very pregnant at the time.¹⁷⁵ He then asked if I knew of a keroncong song entitled “Air Laut (Sea Water).” I

¹⁷⁵ Part of Sukarno’s cult of personality was a reputation for his sexual prowess—it was common knowledge that he had a number of mistresses around Jakarta (and elsewhere). At the height of his anti-

told him I wasn't familiar with it to which he jokingly remarked, "How did you manage to win Bintang Radio if you don't even know 'Air Laut'?" He continued, "Do you know that back when I was twenty-seven, I already had that song memorized?" To which I replied, "Sir, when you were twenty-seven, I wasn't even born yet!" He found my retort amusing and immediately broke out into laughter. Later on he invited me to the other presidential palace in Bogor (a city in West Java) under the condition that I perform the song "Air Laut" for him. Unfortunately, I never got the opportunity: 1965 turned out to be the first and only time the President of Indonesia ever presented the Bintang Radio trophy and it was the last time Bung Karno ever did.

Today the trophy she accepted from Sukarno sits prominently in the front room of her home in Solo, along with photos, plaques, other trophies and memorabilia celebrating important events and achievements. Despite an overwhelming display of visual material, the 1965 trophy stands out for, if nothing else, its sheer size. It sits alone on a glass display stand prominently housed in an ornate dark, reddish brown stained wood cabinet with gold trim and glass on each side to allow its contents to be seen from all angles of the room. Although other prized mementos fill the cabinet, the intricately grooved, black and bronze, goblet-shaped trophy remains a visual focal point.

American and pro-Communist rhetoric, the CIA made a pornographic film starring a man resembling him, meant to tarnish his character and discredit him. Instead the film had the reverse effect, adding to his reputation for "conquest" over the West (Vickers 2007: 149). Waldjinah's assessment of his gentlemanly behavior appears intended to contradict this well-known Sukarno stereotype while also protecting her own image given the circumstances of their encounter.

It sits directly beside the small couch Waldjinah uses when she meets with guests at her home—in this sense it is impossible to meet with her without catching a glimpse of the trophy she most values.



7.3 The 1965 *Bintang Radio* trophy housed in Waldjinah’s trophy case. Photo by the author.

An Impending Storm

In late September 1965, the Bintang Radio competition concluded with Waldjinhah being crowned its champion, a victory that helped launch her career as a professional artist and opened doors for her outside of Solo and central Java. It also came just days before the beginning of Indonesia's darkest and most brutally violent period in its history.

When I was in Senayan for the final days of the competition, I was awakened each night by what sounded like sporadic gunshots. I didn't know what to make of it and convinced myself I was dreaming. So I went back to sleep, pretending not to hear anything. Only after the 30th of September did I realize...

Historian John Roosa (2006: 6) suggests that the events surrounding 30 September 1965 (commonly referred to by the acronym G30S or Gestapu), "have presented historians with an unsolvable mystery."¹⁷⁶ According to Roosa, the limited evidence available is largely unreliable since the majority of it was concocted as part of a widespread anti-Communist campaign in the months following the movement. Due to its nature, actions connected with the movement were plotted clandestinely by military officers, intelligence operatives and double agents, "a historians usual sources of

¹⁷⁶ The acronym G30S, as well as Gestapu, refers to *Gerakan Tigapuluh September*, or the September 30 Movement. The acronym "Gestok" is also used by some who suggest the actual movement began on the first of October, therefore *Gerakan Satu Oktober*.

information—newspapers, magazines, government records, and pamphlets—are of little help (Roosa 2006: 7).” Merle Ricklefs (1981: 268) adds that the “intricacies of the political scene” and the “suspect nature...of the evidence” have made firm conclusions about G30S nearly impossible, while Cribb and Brown (1995: 268) note that the precise course of events remain “shrouded in uncertainty.” Given this ambiguity, I present here a brief synopsis and timeline of “facts” related to the events of G30S and the period immediately following.

On 30 September 1965 a group comprised of military officers from Sukarno’s elite guard, referring to themselves as a “Movement,” commenced what they called an action to defend the Great Leader of the Revolution. Based at Halim air force base in southern Jakarta, their intentions were to kill seven of the country’s top generals—three were shot at their homes and another three captured and brought to a place called *Lubang Halim* (Halim Hole) where they were executed. Only one, General Nasution, managed to escape the night time attack on his home, although an adjutant was killed and his young daughter wounded—she would pass away a week later, enough time for the Movement to unravel. Sukarno travelled to Halim the following day, 1 October to confer with leaders of the Movement to determine their intentions and after this meeting, which lasted most of the day, he immediately left the air base for the Bogor palace in the mountains south of Jakarta. For one reason or another, the group failed to remove the most senior ranking officer after Nasution, Major-General Suharto, and later speculation claimed this was done by design since Suharto was linked to the group.

Suharto, who would go on to rule Indonesia for the next three decades, vehemently denied these connections. This denial, of course, is the basis for the great mystery surrounding G30S.

Leading one of the military's elite units, Suharto seized control of key locations in Jakarta and denounced the Movement as an attempted coup. Immediately afterward the military began stirring up popular anger against the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, or PKI) through propaganda (Roosa 2006: 29). Ascribing the acronym "*Gestapu*" (taken from *Gerakan Tigapuluh September*) to the movement discursively associated it with the Nazi secret police while newspapers and radio broadcasts began spreading misinformation linking Gestapu with the PKI. These reports claimed the PKI were stockpiling weapons from China, preparing mass graves, compiling lists of individuals to murder, and collecting special instruments of torture. According to Roosa, the military "demonized and dehumanized millions of people by setting up a chain of associations: the movement *equals* the PKI *equals* every person associated with the PKI *equals* absolute evil (ibid)."

As Suharto consolidated his grip on power, the propaganda churned, fanning the flames of anti-Communist sentiment across the archipelago. Despite the lack of formal evidence linking the Communists with the movement, the campaign against the PKI successfully convinced both domestic and international audiences that a coup had occurred and that Suharto was taking appropriate defensive measures (Vickers 2005: 157). For decades afterward, foreign politicians continued to praise Suharto as the one

responsible for saving his country while Indonesians generally accepted the account that it was, in fact, a Communist-led coup attempt. The proverbial axe, therefore, fell solely on the PKI and those associated (or suspected to be associated) with them.

Suharto's military allies organized a demonstration in Jakarta where the PKI headquarters was burned down after documents of interest were removed. If there was at all confusion over who was or was not a Communist, the United States' CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) readily passed out prepared lists of party members to be arrested, some of whom were subsequently executed (ibid). The Communist purge quickly spread from Jakarta inland to the province of Central Java, a region where PKI leader, Chairman Aidit, had a base of support and was assumed to have fled. What followed was a mobilization of killing squads by the military government, primarily in Java and Bali, based on the assumptions that 1) a Communist coup was in motion and 2) that the PKI would kill them if they were not killed first (Taylor 2003: 357). Even after it became clear that it was the army, and not the Communists, who had taken control of the government, the squads continued to exterminate perceived threats to their lives and property. In some areas, outsiders stormed villages with their faces concealed, entering the homes of known communists and sympathizers while army units made rounds demanding lists of communists from village heads—once rounded up, these men were forced to dig their own graves and summarily shot afterwards (ibid). In other areas, members of Muslim and Roman Catholic "youth groups" were provided with

army trucks and knives to perform their own executions, often disposing of bodies in nearby rivers. As Vickers (2005: 158) aptly describes it,

“the expression ‘the rivers ran red with blood’ was more than just a metaphor. The waterways were clogged with corpses and people...recall finding human body parts inside fish. Whole quarters of villages were left empty by the executions. The houses of those killed or imprisoned were looted, and frequently turned over to military men.”

Official history composed by Suharto’s New Order government, as historian Jean Gelman Taylor (2003: 359) writes, “obliterated official memory of the killing,” resulting in the deaths of anywhere from 500,000 to one million men and women across Indonesia.¹⁷⁷

As with any great mystery, a host of plot twists and potential explanations exist for events of G30S and the ensuing atrocities it enabled. Until now the metaphorical smoking gun has yet to be uncovered, or more likely it has not been disclosed publically. Communism never died in Suharto’s Indonesia, Ariel Heryanto (1999) observes, because the regime could not allow it to—the New Order defined itself in dialectical relation with it, or rather the simulacrum of it. There exist numerous and complex scenarios and

¹⁷⁷ On the island of Bali alone, it is estimated that between 80,000-100,000 people were killed. The Indonesian military estimated that around 1 million people were killed in total across the country (Vickers 2005: 159).

theories comprising the theater of G30S, explanations ranging from the Movement as a pretext to Suharto's planned offensive against the PKI (Roosa 2006) to positioning Suharto as the reluctant commander appointed by Sukarno to restore peace and order (Wanandi 2012). Despite an overwhelming impulse to "clear up the facts," the events of G30S and the specters of Indonesian Communism are not only the stuff of historical and political analysis. The lives of millions, besides those murdered, were impacted by its aftershocks. This, of course, includes Waldjinhah, who only days before G30S, had achieved the greatest milestone of her burgeoning career.

Living Amid Rivers of Blood

On 5 November 1965 I gave birth to my son, Bintang, in Solo. By the time I went into labor the electricity in my neighborhood had been cut due to an imposed curfew. We were in complete darkness but I was determined to get myself to the nearby hospital. So my husband and I walked there using only a small flashlight to guide us. Thankfully we don't live too far! I was terrified walking through darkness.

I asked if many people from her neighborhood died during PKI massacre. Waldjinhah nodded and replied tersely, "Yes, many people here died." Her eyes stared through me, her facial expression blank, as if trying hard to simultaneously remember and forget the atrocities lodged in mind.

Being pregnant, I spent most days in the house. But my husband, since he was a male, had to be very cautious. Lucky for us, everyone knew he was a good guy so he was relatively safe. Other people in the neighborhood who were associated with the PKI were absolutely panic-stricken. They didn't know whether to hide in their homes or to run away. If they hid, whose house would they hide in? If they decided to run, where would they run to? It was a time of frantic confusion all around Solo. There were battalions of soldiers stationed around town and in our neighborhood, led by Sarwo Edhie Wibowo, former President Susilo Bambang Yudhono's father-in-law. Actually, on multiple occasions I was asked by Sarwo Edhie to entertain the RPKAD troops stationed in Solo.¹⁷⁸ At the time I was working at RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) in Solo as a vocalist. I was there for eight years (1960-68) but eventually left, even though it was a well-paying, stable job because they wanted me to perform exclusively for their events and nowhere else.¹⁷⁹ They told me that I couldn't perform anywhere except RRI sanctioned events...but I still did every now and again. I enjoyed working for RRI though. Every day I showed up for work and had to sign in, it was all so formal...almost like a desk job! We spent the day practicing for a live performance broadcast almost daily, every month we had about twenty-five performances at the station.

¹⁷⁸ RPKAD is the acronym for *Resimen Pasukan Komando Angkatan Darat* (the Regiment of Land Forces Commando Troops), the Indonesian army's special forces division. Sarwo Edhie Wibowo was the commander of this division and played an integral role in "securing" Jakarta immediately after the events of G30S and the subsequent killings of suspected Communists in Central and East Java.

¹⁷⁹ It is also possible (or even likely) that she left RRI after her song "Walang Kekek" became popular in 1968 and they did not allow her to tour extensively.

Once Sarwo Edhie and the military came to Solo, things changed rapidly. One morning I went to work like usual only to be stopped at the front door, where soldiers informed employees they were not allowed to enter. We weren't sure exactly who was inside the building, some speculated that the PKI had occupied it, but there were no broadcasts while they were supposedly there. After two days, we were allowed back in the building but carefully screened before entering. There were armed soldiers everywhere but I never spoke with any of them because I was too afraid.

PKI killings in Solo were rampant. Every night we watched packs of soldiers go out and hunt PKI members since one of the army's headquarters was located right here in my neighborhood, Mangkuyudan. Residents didn't interact much with the soldiers but eventually some of them began stopping by my house on nights we held keroncong practice. My home became well known among the soldiers as a place to listen to keroncong, and many came to relax and enjoy the music. There were other reasons though. They came also because they suspected some of the female singers in the group belonged to Gerwani.¹⁸⁰ One night a soldier pulled me aside and asked if I knew of any Gerwani members in the group. I told him that none of the singers I knew belonged to Gerwani, not a single one. Of course, what did I know? Maybe some of them did (she chuckled slightly), but whenever they asked I'd tell them, "these women are just singers, they don't know a thing about politics, much less Gerwani." Soldiers kept coming and asking anyway though. But actually there were singers in Solo that belonged to

¹⁸⁰ Gerwani refers to the Indonesian Women's Movement, or *Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*, which was affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party.

Gerwani, and I heard quite a number were caught and brought out to the camps to be executed, none were from my band. Soldiers never suspected me. They knew I was “clean” (bersih) because I worked for RRI.

In the period immediately following G30S, Waldjinah was grateful for her job at RRI because it provided her a sense of security and a regular wage. Other paid performances dropped off sharply during a period she incongruously described as a “quiet time (*waktu sepi*).” Although she continued to hold keroncong practice at her home weekly, there were no shows or performances outside of RRI for quite some time. Despite winning the Bintang Radio competition only months before, she was not able to take advantage of the momentum it generated and would patiently have to wait out the period of political upheaval. She remained busy, however, and “requests” were made on a number of occasions for her to entertain troops stationed in Solo and other parts of Central Java province.

After returning from the Bintang Radio competition in Jakarta, although I was extremely pregnant, Sarwo Edhie requested that I perform. I complied and followed instructions for wherever he needed me to go. I had no choice. I was twenty years old with a family of five children. Once I was asked to travel to a military camp on the outskirts of Boyolali (a small town in Central Java west of Solo) to entertain there. As I said, I was very pregnant and probably shouldn’t have even left the house. Still I found

myself, along with my husband and some friends, in the back of an uncomfortable army pick-up truck bouncing my way across the highlands of Central Java toward the camp!

I probably would have been more afraid had I known beforehand there was heavy fighting going on in that region. The camp was much deeper in the jungle than I imagined. On the way, I noticed logging operations all over but the foliage remained dense. When we arrived an officer told us we had to stay at the camp until the area was secure enough to travel home. They hadn't mentioned this to us this before! I pleaded with him, telling him I was pregnant and might give birth any day now. I couldn't stay at the camp! Only after a few days did they finally let us return to Solo.

Surveillance around the camp was especially tight because, as one officer told me, there were many PKI hiding out in this area. The camp wasn't very large, there were barracks constructed from wood surrounding an open field where we were to perform. Thick jungle surrounded us on all sides except for the camp area. In the late evening I performed for the soldiers but residents of the surrounding villages also attended. Everyone who came to show was checked carefully upon entering. The atmosphere around the camp was rather tense since nobody knew exactly who the PKI were or where they were hiding. As I stared out into the audience, I realized everyone, both soldiers and villagers, looked stressed. They needed entertainment, so that's what I gave them. As the music kicked in, I could see their moods brighten. During the camp performances I was backed by standard "rock band" instrumentation (ie., drum kit, electric bass and two electric guitars), although I still performed keroncong and langgam

jawa songs. Each night a good crowd turned up and they appeared to really enjoy themselves. Since the stage wasn't very large, the audience stood around us and once we got going, many began dancing happily, altering the tense atmosphere of the camp, if only for a mere moment.

It was a frightening couple of days staying there. The thick jungle engulfed us and the camp seemed so small in comparison. Most of the time, I felt on edge just like the soldiers and villagers, always expecting gunshots and fighting to suddenly erupt. When I was asked to perform there I didn't realize it was a PKI stronghold. Only after we arrived and started talking with soldiers did I understand how "red" the area was, hearing that made the hairs on my neck stand straight up!

On another occasion I was asked by Sarwo Edhie to perform at an army base located outside the city of Madiun (in Central Java) for a luncheon attended by Pak Harto (Suharto).¹⁸¹ We had to be at the event site before sunrise at 4am and waited around until noon or so to perform! Around 10am our band practiced in the middle of an enormous field in the middle of the base as the panzers circled around us in formation.¹⁸² Apparently they were practicing too! Arriving very early in the morning was common

¹⁸¹ While she referred to Sukarno as "*Bung Karno* (Brother Karno)," a term of endearment, Waldjinah did not apply the prefix "Bung" to Suharto, referring to him only as Pak Harto. I have been told that this reflects the closeness that Indonesians feel toward Sukarno, a feeling not ascribed to Suharto. While Waldjinah did not appear to dislike Suharto in any way, she certainly held Sukarno in higher deference. There may also have been other reasons for this, Sukarno likely cultivated the "Bung Karno" appellation since he saw himself as a man of the people (he was, after all, a national hero and knew it). Suharto, on the other hand, was a career soldier and came to power not by acclaim but by manipulation and, to some degree, brute force.

¹⁸² Panzer is a German word that refers to tanks or large armored military vehicles.

whenever I performed at the army bases, even when the event was to be held later in the evening. There was definitely a process to it. We would have to check in, receive a briefing about the event and finally we'd be given a room in the barracks to rest or prepare—usually there were chairs, tables with tea and snacks set up, and small cots to sleep in. It was difficult to do but I had to keep my energy up for the performance.

Waldjinhah's performances at military events after G30S and throughout the New Order era established associations with the nation far different from those of the Bintang Radio competition. As a performer, she at times literally experienced the violent purge of the PKI in Central Java directly on the front lines. Although Waldjinhah referred to Sarwo Edhie, a military commander who led the Indonesian army's special forces division (RPKAD), each time we discussed this period of her life, she never explained in any detail about how Sarwo came to know her—only that she was terrified of him and complied whenever he requested a performance. She also never once referred to him as "Pak Sarwo" like she was accustomed to for most other men, only as Sarwo Edhie—this also perhaps revealed her true feelings toward him and the fear he instilled in her. It is common for Indonesians to refer to G30S and the subsequent PKI massacre as a "dark period" of national history and some remain reluctant to speak openly about it. Many continue to adhere to official New Order history justifying the killings based on a Communist coup attempt and murder of the generals. Waldjinhah did not appear hesitant to discuss this period of her life, although undoubtedly, there are

profound silences marking the stories she recounted suggesting the fear that events of this era instilled in Indonesians who survived it and their collective reluctance to openly discuss the violence and the perpetrators of it.

A Regional Singer on the National Stage

It was also around the time of G30S that Waldjinhah became known as a vocalist specializing in langgam jawa. Although she won the 1965 Bintang Radio competition impressing judges with her vocal talent singing keroncong asli, langgam jawa was already an established part of her repertoire. Waldjinhah's decision to focus on langgam jawa after 1965, however, was not only based on her own choice but also on the preferences of fans requesting she perform more langgam jawa songs. As a subgenre of keroncong, langgam jawa combines elements of Javanese gamelan with keroncong instrumentation.¹⁸³ Keroncong bands in urban areas of central Java are accustomed to performing langgam jawa songs as part of their repertoire and this is especially common in Solo, where it is considered to have been (and continues to be) most popular.¹⁸⁴

Initially I began singing langgam jawa pieces strictly for my Javanese fans, or those familiar with the Javanese language. I sang keroncong asli for the fans who didn't

¹⁸³ I discuss musical elements of langgam jawa as well as keroncong in Chapter 5.

¹⁸⁴ My use of "central Java" here refers to the geographical area of Java and includes the special region of Yogyakarta (*Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta*) rather specifically to the province of "Central Java (*Propinsi Jawa Tengah*)" which does not.

understand Javanese. However, I realized soon enough that even non-Javanese people who didn't understand the Javanese lyrics were requesting langgam jawa pieces. They said to me "Oh, even though I don't understand what you are singing about, I still enjoy your voice and the way you sing those songs." I myself don't understand exactly why people found the langgam jawa pieces so captivating but after each performance there were requests for more langgam jawa. I remember performing for a military event in Solo in 1966 and a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives, named Pak Winarto, approached me afterward suggesting I focus on langgam jawa since, according to him, it was what I excelled in.¹⁸⁵ Pak Winarto heard me sing a few times before because he regularly stopped by for keroncong practices at my home. He was a fan of keroncong who also happened to be a close friend of Sarwo Edhie Wibowo.

¹⁸⁵ The Indonesian House of Representatives is known as *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (DPR)



7.4 The LP *Irama Sendja*, released on El Shinta Records. Photo by the author.

I took Pak Winarto's advice and began focusing more on langgam jawa since that was what I enjoyed singing most anyway. My thinking at the time was not that I would have a smaller audience if I chose to sing in Javanese but rather that I may expand my audience across Indonesia because of it. The way I see it, in Sumatra there are lots of Javanese people, in Kalimantan there are lots of Javanese people, in fact, all across Indonesia there are lots of Javanese people, so why shouldn't I be able to reach a national audience by singing in Javanese? I remember once performing the langgam jawa piece "Andhe-andhe Lumut" on national television and being critiqued afterward

about singing a Javanese song. My response to that was: there are Javanese people across Indonesia watching the program, why shouldn't I perform a Javanese song? After all, I also sang keroncong asli songs, which are in Indonesian. Furthermore, I knew from past experience performing in Sumatra that even non-Javanese people enjoyed hearing my langgam jawa pieces. I didn't have to create a national audience for my music because the Transmigration Policy already did it for me.

Relocating millions of people voluntarily and involuntarily from densely populated islands in Indonesia's political centers to sparsely populated islands began with the colonial government of the Netherlands East Indies in the early twentieth century. Besides having smaller populations, these islands also lacked the direct control and influence of the central governing authority and although both colonial and postcolonial governments explicitly declared the intentions of transmigration to be in the interest of social welfare, its implicit agenda has also been to construct a coherent and centrally governed state (Hoey 2003: 110). Transmigration has promoted a nationalist vision in a geographically and ethnically diverse space through deliberate community-building under the monikers of progress and development. As Brian A. Hoey (ibid) writes, "transmigration settlements are meant to be the material realization of a particular model of village and civic life conceived in the social/spacial engineering of Indonesian bureaucracy."

Although transmigration was conceived of during the late-colonial era, it was Suharto who refined it into a pet project during the New Order regime. Expansion of manufacturing and tourism sectors drew workers to Java and Bali, a development the government certainly did not care for, especially given that these were already two of the most densely populated islands in the world. Their solution was to resuscitate the transmigration policy.¹⁸⁶ Poor families, especially in Java, were offered incentives to move to destinations such as Sumatra, particularly the cities of Lampung and Jambi, Kalimantan and Sulawesi. Anxiety was high for transmigrants, especially since many had never travelled outside of their villages. Locations they moved to were usually isolated jungle wastelands and they were usually left only with the bare necessities to begin farming. The Achilles heel of New Order resettlement schemes was the disputed status of state land that “bore the physical signs and embedded memories of the labor invested by villagers previously resident” in the allocated areas (Li 2007: 82-84). New Order officials realized that state claims to land, however boldly stated, would not necessarily hold and in most cases, forced a compromise with locals in order to place settlers on land currently unused. The issue, however, as most transmigrants found out, was that uncultivated land usually was not suitable for intensive agriculture and although pockets of fertile land did exist in these areas, this land was already being used by local elites for farming and grazing purposes (ibid).

¹⁸⁶ Initial objectives aimed to move around 200,000 people per year, however, this turned out to be an unrealistic number and targets were regularly lowered significantly in order to report even modest success. The program was funded by the World Bank and considered part of development aid to Indonesia (Vickers 2007: 193).

Crop failure and disease plagued transmigration settlements causing the deaths of a large number of people but some who did persevere were rewarded with prosperity (Vickers 2005: 193). In certain cases, the New Order government pressured migrants into specific regions, such as East Timor, as a way of increasing the Muslim population in the area in effect “Indonesianizing” a province whose religious background was primarily Christian and pagan. In Kalimantan, an influx of transmigrants fed the workforce for expanding logging operations by companies given enormous concessions to produce pulp for Japanese paper mills—which has led to the decimation of forest lands and environmental degradation across Borneo generally. Migration to parts of Kalimantan also resulted in ethnic clashes between Madurese settlers and the local Dayak population based on a number of issues including land rights and representation in local government. Rather than overcoming obstacles (ie. disease, crop failure, cultural difference) through technical means, transmigration schemes adversely affected the people and areas they were intended to “improve.” For instance in rural areas of Central Sulawesi, arriving transmigrants were forced to learn how to survive there from locals. Dissatisfied with the low productivity of their crops and the government’s failure to provide the irrigation promised to them, many transmigrants abandoned or sold their land and resorted to wage labor (Li 2007: 84).

On the Campaign Trail

Waldjinhah popularized langgam jawa in the late 1960s after her recordings of “Walang Kekek” and “Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang” became popular. Some musicians I spoke with recalled gathering around a radio in their village in order to listen to Waldjinhah’s latest song. Although her popularity has declined since this period, it has remained relatively consistent over the years. Today, she remains keroncong’s biggest star and is one of Indonesia’s iconic vocalists. I was mildly surprised when, on one of my weekly train rides to Solo, a group of women in their early twenties, excitedly gushed about how much they loved listening to her. Waldjinhah’s career, however, has outlasted many of her peers not only due to her versatile vocal talents but also because of choices she made as a performer.¹⁸⁷

When I began incorporating langgam jawa into my live repertoire, there weren’t many other keroncong singers at the time (if any) who did that. Of all the keroncong singers during the 1960s and before, I was the only one singing langgam jawa regularly. Only after I made it popular did other singers begin singing langgam jawa as well. Some of my langgam jawa songs became hits and eventually audiences began identifying me with it. A music scholar at one of the Indonesian art institute schools even complimented me once saying, “langgam jawa not sung by Waldjinhah is not langgam jawa.”

¹⁸⁷Further discussion of Waldjinhah’s ability to “stay current,” often by entering different genres, such as pop and *campursari*, and through collaborations with other (younger) artists, can be found in Chapter 10.

I think my popularizing langgam jawa actually saved keroncong (as a genre) because by the late 1960s, its popularity was already beginning to decline. People began listening to langgam jawa and some liked it better than keroncong asli.¹⁸⁸ This was especially true around Solo and Central Java. Even today, if you go to the wet markets around town and ask the sellers to sing a famous langgam jawa piece like “Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang (If There are Stars in the Sky),” I’m willing to bet many of them would be familiar with it.¹⁸⁹ If you ask them to sing a famous keroncong song, like “Keroncong Morisko,” they won’t know it.

Her presence on the national stage beginning with a victory at the 1965 Bintang Radio competition, continued during New Order era performances at political rallies for *Golkar*, or *Golongan Karya*, the political party linked to Suharto’s government. From its inception, *Golkar* was formulated to include the “Functional Groups” of Sukarno’s Guided Democracy, which included all civil servants and members of the military. Since workers were no longer considered a separate class, employers, employees and all unions were subsumed into a single entity answerable to the New Order government. Waldjinh emphasized that she was only a paid performer at *Golkar* political rallies and

¹⁸⁸ It is worth noting here that although Waldjinh probably was not the first langgam jawa vocalist, she certainly was the one who popularized it in the late 1960s and emerged as the artist most associated with it during that period. She also makes an important point here that langgam jawa sparked renewed interest in keroncong at a time when its popularity was beginning to wane—especially since keroncong, by that time, had already been relatively popular for about forty or more years.

¹⁸⁹ *Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang* (If There are Stars in the Sky) is a song she made popular during the late 1960s.

had no official party affiliation. As proof of this, she claimed to have never worn the yellow blazer emblematic of the party—however, I noticed that in some of the photos she shared with me, she wore a yellow *kebaya* on occasion. Her support for Golkar and Suharto was unmistakable given the sheer number of rallies she performed at over the course of Suharto’s thirty year reign.

My first Golkar campaign performance came in 1971 and for that they rewarded me with my first car! That year I performed at quite a few Golkar rallies...I can’t remember the exact number but there were many. I was the main attraction (daya tarik) and my role was more as a campaign worker (juru kampanye) than as a party member. I was never called on to speak or say anything in support of the party. I was there as an entertainer meant to draw a crowd and entertain Golkar supporters. They never asked me to wear the yellow jacket but I did record a cassette of Golkar-themed songs for them—each was a popular dangdut, keroncong, langgam jawa or Indonesian pop song whose lyrics were altered to promote Golkar. At most rallies, I warmed up the crowd, performing before the main speakers took the stage. Usually the regional party office provided me a schedule of where and when the rallies would be held, along with the Golkar politician I’d be supporting—I usually traveled to the venue the day before or day of the rally depending on distance from Solo.

At one rally I was scheduled to support Pak Harmoko, who at the time was Minister of Information, in (the city of) Purwodadi. I showed up at the hotel early in the

morning, hours before the rally was to begin and met with his campaign spokesman. He told me there would changes in schedule and that Pak Harmoko usually preferred to bring his own performers from Jakarta—since he couldn't bring as many this time, he “settled” for having me on the bill. I was somewhat irritated by the comment but decided not to let it agitate me. The spokesman never mentioned what time I was to perform so my band and I remained at the hotel until we got word. While waiting there we heard news that soon after the rally started, the crowd began picking up small stones and pelting the stage with them! After clearing that up, Rhoma Irama began performing but within minutes a large section of the stage collapsed causing minor injuries, so he immediately had to stop. I sat there waiting and thinking maybe this was a sign from God. When I saw Pak Harmoko later on, he was absolutely irate at how the rally was turning out.



7.5 On the Golkar campaign trail in the mid 1990s. Photo courtesy of Waldjinhah.

Waljdinah supported Golkar and Suharto, as she put it, “from the beginning until the end.” Unlike some of her peers, she claimed to have resisted jumping from party to party supporting whoever paid her the most. Among the reasons she remained loyal to Golkar was that she feared being “threatened” (*terancam*), especially since some of her family members and friends worked as civil servants. Waldjinhah never specifically mentioned a case where any such “threats” were explicitly made toward her but only that the possibility existed. Incentives were also provided for her to remain loyal, not only was she given a car but also expensive musical instruments and opportunities to perform at presidential and other state-sponsored events nearly every year Suharto was

in power.¹⁹⁰ It is possible, and perhaps likely, that there were other rewards for her loyalty but these few Waldjinh mentioned specifically. Her support of Golkar, however, did not mean she was able to steer clear of New Order policies that directly affected her as a performer. On a number of occasions, she discussed censorship and “blacklists” she had been on over the course of her career.¹⁹¹ The most significant (and surprising) was Waldjinh’s ban from the state-owned television station TVRI (*Televisi Republik Indonesia*), which until 1989 was Indonesia’s only station.

I was banned from performing on television because they found out that I sang “Blitar” at my shows. Blitar is the name of a city in East Java, but it’s also the birthplace and hometown of Bung Karno (Sukarno). It’s also where he’s buried and nowadays the city has an established industry catering to tourists who visit his gravesite monument. The song “Blitar” honors Sukarno as our first president but apparently someone in the New Order government took offense to it and banned me. It was only after the

¹⁹⁰ She fondly remembered performing at the presidential palace for then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell and singing the Righteous Brothers song, “Unchained Melody.” She distinctly remembered others making fun of her afterwards for her pronunciation of English words in a heavy Javanese accent. To this day, she remains reluctant to sing songs in English.

¹⁹¹ For instance, Waldjinh was blacklisted for supporting the losing candidate in a local Solo mayoral race in the 1990s. As a result she was not permitted to perform anywhere in the city of Solo and she received no financial support from the city government for two years—prior to this, her band regularly performed for events held at city hall and received financial support from the city government. She also briefly mentioned to me that she knew of artists who were blacklisted nationally for having possible ties to LEKRA (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* or the Institute of the People’s Culture), the literary and social movement associated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

privately-owned station, RCTI, went on the air that I was able to perform on television again.

I asked why she chose to perform “Blitar,” knowing the possible consequences for it.

Yeah I knew some people may take issue with it but Pak Anjar Any (the renowned langgam jawa composer who wrote “Blitar”) issued me a challenge. He brought the song over one day and asked whether I was brave enough to perform it. I responded, “Bung Karno was the founding father of this country, why shouldn’t I be brave enough to sing this song honoring him?” It was the early 1980s and people were still terrified to even mention Bung Karno’s name, much less sing a song honoring him. His name was still tied to the PKI and that struck fear into many people. I felt that I wanted to honor Bung Karno because he acted bravely as Indonesia’s first president. So why shouldn’t I be brave enough to sing “Blitar?” I knew the risks but I wasn’t afraid. I saw how fearful people had become of acknowledging him and there was so much fear surrounding his name. Performing “Blitar” would be one step toward acknowledging him.

Finding out I was banned from television didn’t worry me either. By that time, I was already an established artist having released a number of recordings and I’d even performed on television a few times. I wasn’t worried that being banned would affect my career because I still was being invited to perform regularly and could still release new recordings. Also, the ban didn’t extend to radio, so my songs were still played on

RRI. In fact, I continued to sing “Blitar” for years after the ban and audiences really enjoyed it. During a concert held in the town of Blitar, when I broke out in the opening verse of that song, everyone (and I do mean everyone) in the audience roared with approval, jumped up and started dancing. The place erupted...it was amazing to watch it happen as I sang!

As Waldjinhah recounted “Blitar” stories, I wondered about the ramifications of blatantly disregarding a clear message sent to her. Her response to the ban in a way exemplified the firm will Waldjinhah employed to overcome obstacles in her life generally. “*Nggak papa* (no problem),” she replied when I asked if she feared the consequences of singing “Blitar” after the ban. Her combination of nonchalance and bravado, typified how she chose to perform her self-image—in this particular instance, openly daring those who imposed the ban to prohibit her from singing the song in other performance settings. Other indications, however, may have caused her confidence in defying New Order authorities.

I wasn’t afraid of being kidnapped or that I would suddenly “disappear” for continuing to perform “Blitar.” I didn’t feel like the situation was that tense. After all, Pak Harto (Suharto) continued to invite me to perform at his 17 August (Indonesian Independence Day) celebrations each year I was banned. So this made me realize that the ban didn’t necessarily come from him but possibly from someone else within the

government who had a personal issue with me.¹⁹² If I remember correctly, the year I was banned from TVRI, I performed at an event held in the presidential palace. Pak Harto (Suharto) had no problem inviting me. Eventually I even recorded “Blitar” for an album that was released on cassette and nobody did anything to stop me. My thinking was, “what else can they do to stop me? I’m already banned from television!”¹⁹³

I also continued to sing “Blitar” because it had a good message. It was mainly about Sukarno, but also described how he carried out the visions of the Majapahit empire and Indonesian heroic figures like Gajah Madah and Ken Arok. The song was about uniting the Indonesian archipelago, which was what Bung Karno did. Maybe people call me brave now, but at the time, I didn’t feel brave...I wasn’t trying to insult Pak Harto (Suharto) but I simply felt proud and wanted to honor Bung Karno (Sukarno).

¹⁹² Waldjinhah insinuated that it was perhaps Harmoko, a New Order Minister of Information, who was behind the ban. Harmoko’s dislike of weepy, soppy songs (*lagu cengeng*), which he once described in a speech as “appealing to low taste, weakening the spirit of the people, making them defeatists and sapping their commitment to the national effort for progress (Yampolsky 1989).” Throughout the 1980s, however, a constant stream of young, mainly female, solo performers were produced by the cassette industry performing the sentimental ballads popularized through television and constituting one of the Indonesia’s most lucrative pop genres (Sen and Hill 2000: 169). TVRI banned such songs, but the ban only lasted a few months, and despite Harmoko’s disapproval, the commercial dominance of heartbreak and love-themed songs proved enduring.

¹⁹³Her indifference to the ban may also stem from the fact that she was not the only artist being censored or reprimanded by the New Order government. Prominent artists such as Rhoma Irama, dangdut’s king, and folk-rock troubadour Iwan Fals and a host of politically conscious underground rock and hip-hop/rap acts also received bans from television and live performances during the 1980s and 90s. Bans for these artists, however, did not extend to recordings, in this sense, reflecting the New Order’s philosophy which emphasized controlling public performances and expressions of communal dissent (see Bodden 2005, Sen and Hill 2000). Furthermore, given Indonesia’s vast market for pirated recordings, it would have been more difficult to effectively ban recorded materials from circulating—it appears, however, that what the government feared most was dissent and affective response generated during live performances.



7.6 At the Presidential palace in Jakarta, late 1970s. Photo courtesy of Waldjinhah.

Moving Beyond Solo

When Waldjinhah began recording with the Lokananta record label in 1958, she was a teenager who had recently won her first major vocal competition. Lokananta itself had only opened about three years earlier in 1955 and in addition to being a recording studio and one of Indonesia's first record labels, it was also a national (ie. state-sponsored) pressing plant for vinyl records and a repository for records played on the national radio station, *Radio Republik Indonesia* (RRI). While Lokananta specialized in Javanese music, it also serves as an archive for various kinds of Indonesian music ranging from nationalized genres to regional musics from regions across the country. Today, Lokananta claims a collection of well over 40,000 recordings (some of them quite

rare), including speeches by Sukarno, early recordings of the Indonesian national anthem and works by some of the country's most prolific artists and composers.

Despite its stature and contributions to Indonesian national culture, the last fifteen or so years have seen Lokananta fall into a state of physical disrepair and financial mismanagement.¹⁹⁴ When I first visited the Lokananta complex in 2008, I was surprised to see more activity on the adjacent athletic field than in the actual Lokananta building itself. Later on I found out that in order to raise money to keep Lokananta in business, the field was rented out as a venue for *futsal*, a variant of soccer played on a smaller field and usually indoors. Although the building contained a fascinating

¹⁹⁴ An article from the Jakarta Post dated 3 December 2012 lists “budgetary issues” and “limited human resources” as two of the main reasons for Lokananta’s struggles (“RI’s Oldest Recording Studio Struggles to Survive,” *Jakarta Post*, 3 December 2012, accessed 13 October 2014, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/12/03/ri-s-oldest-recording-studio-struggles-survive.html>). Prior to declaring bankruptcy in 2011, Lokananta had been placed under the Ministry of Information. After the ministry was dissolved in 2000, it was taken over by the Indonesian state printing company (*Percetakan Negara Republik Indonesia*, or PNRI). During this transition period, according to the article, there were complications with necessary paperwork that would have allowed Lokananta to receive financial aid from the federal government and therefore, it has had to support itself financially since that time.

Another article published in the Jakarta Post two days later suggests the Solo (Surakarta) city government was stepping up to help Lokananta by “improving access to and from the state-owned studio” and helping to “promote it” (“Surakarta Administration Ready to Support Lokananta,” *Jakarta Post* 5 December 2012, accessed 13 October 2014, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/12/05/surakarta-administration-ready-support-lokananta.html>). The article also quotes Pendi Heryadi, the head of the state printing company (PNRI,) as claiming that his agency has not been able to promote Lokananta due to lack of funding. Although, as Heryadi suggests, the studio is fully capable of producing “modern recordings” in its current condition. While this may be true, from what I have seen during multiple visits to the Lokananta facilities, its outdated appearance and equipment certainly may make it less appealing for current artists to record. However, the nostalgia associated with recording in a studio as old as Lokananta is a draw for some younger bands. Recently, popular “indie” rock band White Shoes and the Couples Company recorded an album of regional songs (*lagu daerah*) at Lokananta, because, according to their guitarist, Rio, of the “historical value (*nilai sejarah*)” attributed to the studio and its past releases of regional musics (from “White Shoes and the Couples Company Rekaman di Lokananta,” *Kompas* 9 October 2012, accessed 13 October 2014, <http://entertainment.kompas.com/read/2012/10/09/06312984/White.Shoes.The.Couples.Company.Rekaman.di.Lokananta>).

collection of old recording equipment, photos and stacks of vinyl, cassette and CD recordings, only a few employees were around and the atmosphere in the complex was unexpectedly serene. The Lokananta complex resembled a ghost town, a shell of its vibrant and productive past. Among the reasons for this, has been a lack of funding and I learned that some of the Lokananta recording equipment had to be sold off around 2005 to keep the studio afloat amid financially turbulent times. In the last two to three years, there have been pledges, coming from various levels of government, to resuscitate Lokananta and make it a functioning recording studio again—something akin to Indonesia’s version of London’s famous Abbey Road studios. There has also been talk of turning the complex into a museum with cafes and retail shops in the hopes of drawing a younger crowd—some current bands are now choosing to record at Lokananta again based on accumulated nostalgia associated with the studio.

Lokananta also played an integral role in making Waldjinh a national artist, as a state-owned company it dominated the domestic recording industry from the mid 1950s until the late 1960s, releasing a number of her most popular albums, including *Ngelam- ngelami* (1967), *Djago Kate* (1968), *O Sarinah* (1970), *Katju Biru* (1971) and the most popular one, *Enthit* (1971).¹⁹⁵

When I began recording in Lokananta during the late 1950s, the place was tiny and cramped, not at all what you see there today. Only later did they expand into a

¹⁹⁵ See Sen and Hill 2000: 165

much larger space. Nowadays they record digitally but back then they only had an analog two-track machine. So basically the vocals were recorded on one track and the entire accompanying band was on the other track. If anyone made a mistake we had to do another take entirely, it wasn't like today where you can just go back and fix one instrument or one part of the song. There was more pressure back then to get it right because you didn't want to do too many takes. Sometimes we'd be there for hours trying to get just one song recorded correctly.

Lokananta was the best place in Indonesia to record at that time. The sound engineers there were the most knowledgeable around because many of them studied recording in the Netherlands and some even worked in Dutch recording studios before returning to Indonesia. Those guys really knew how to make my recordings sound good. Over the years Lokananta continuously upgraded the studio with new and better equipment—they got a four-track machine, then eight and so on. Today with the digital process you can have an unlimited amount of tracks...so different from when I started!

I got to know many of the Lokananta sound engineers while recording and as I became more familiar with them and the equipment, I became more involved in the process of recording, mixing and arranging my songs. Most vocalists I knew went into the studio simply to record their parts and then left everything else to the engineers. I took more of a hands-on approach—which included being involved with listening to each recorded track carefully. I started with arranging songs and later I provided input concerning vocal aesthetics or the backing instrumentation. Of course they were more

expert than I was about the technical aspects of recording but I also wanted to have a say in making my records sound good.

My Lokananta recordings still sound good today because of how they were recorded. We went into the studio having practiced extensively because we didn't want to do many takes. I've seen some singers in the studio now who record a song line by line because they don't know it well enough or feel that they need to strive for perfection. I think this method of recording causes a song to lose its feeling and furthermore this process makes their voices sound "thin (tipis)" due to repeated takes.¹⁹⁶ Because I use the upper registers of my voice, I'm very conscious of my recordings sounding too thin. I've also noticed today that vocalists are afraid to make mistakes so they're afraid to (or feel they can't) sing a song in a single take. Many of my best recordings for Lokananta were done in one or two takes, after that we'd immediately move on to mixing it.

Many of Waldjinh's Lokananta recordings are generally regarded as classics in the keroncong genre, although technically the majority of her full-length albums for the label are langgam jawa songs. Being associated with Lokananta early on in her career helped establish Waldjinh as an artist worthy of national recognition—especially after winning the 1965 Bintang Radio vocal competition. These were not, however, the only factors involved. To this day Waldjinh continues to describe herself as a “regional

¹⁹⁶ Sounding “thin” here refers to a singer's voices lacking resonance or fullness. Other instruments, such as a guitar or piano, can also be described as possibly sounding thin.

artist,” referring to the fact that her repertoire consists primarily of Javanese language songs, falling under the category of regional songs (*lagu daerah*). This label can also refer to an artist’s geographical location, or more specifically in Waldjinah’s case, where she has chosen *not* to reside.

I have never lived in Jakarta, actually I’ve never lived anywhere outside of Solo. Because of this I’ve been called a “regional singer (penyanyi daerah),” a label that honestly does not bother me. I am considered a regional artist because I never moved to Jakarta, which is where most of the famous Indonesian performers and artists live. Or else, it’s where people go if they aspire to become famous. I haven’t thought this way. I’ve always been content and happy living in Solo, so maybe I am just a regional person (orang daerah) and so my mindset has been that of a regional person.¹⁹⁷ (She laughed heartily.) I don’t mind though, sometimes my husband even makes fun of me for being so country but it doesn’t bother me. I know I’m just a regional singer at heart. I’ve never left Solo, even though I could have run away to Jakarta many times.

As the economic and political capital of Indonesia, Jakarta, located on the northwest coast of Java, is also the center for nationalized arts and culture—often

¹⁹⁷ The way she’s using the term “regional” here implies “being country,” which in US English carries connotations of being from the rural areas, provincial, or even less “sophisticated.” Rather than using the Indonesian word *kampungan*, which carries a low class, low brow connotation, Waldjinah has chosen instead to describe herself as an *orang daerah* (a regional person). Although the two terms imply different identities, there are subtle overlaps in meaning.

disseminated through various mass media outlets based in the city or its surrounding suburbs. Despite the inconveniences of living in overpopulated and congested urban sprawl, many Indonesians venture to Jakarta seeking employment they hope will result in furthering career aspirations. For some up-and-coming performers and artists hoping to reach a national (or even international) audience, establishing a presence and “making it” in Jakarta is essential in marking success. Although Waldjinh discussed having never lived anywhere outside of Solo, her statements downplayed (or overlooked) the significant amount of time she spent both in Jakarta and Surabaya (Indonesia’s two largest cities). Without dismissing her identity as a lifetime resident and artist based in Solo, it is worth pointing out that throughout her career, Waldjinh continuously travelled back and forth from Central Java to Jakarta, and lived in Surabaya for approximately five years while working in a nightclub there. While this has not altered her identity as a “countrified” singer from Solo, it was necessary for her to regularly perform in Indonesia’s two largest cities, especially Jakarta, if for no other reason than better opportunities and financial compensation. This center-periphery dynamic meant Waldjinh had to maintain a presence in Indonesia’s urban centers even if she did not physically choose to reside there permanently.

The difference between being a regional and a national performer is that in order to reach the national level, you must go to Jakarta. If you stay within your own kampung (village, neighborhood), then you’ll always be considered just a regional performer. If

you want the possibility of a national audience, you must go to Jakarta. If you want the possibility of an international audience, you have to start with Jakarta. There's no other way. Of course the money is also an attraction. Over the course of my career, I tried not to make financial gain my only objective but I can't say money has had no influence whatsoever. After I became famous, the invitations to perform in Jakarta flowed in and there was often good money offered...but I didn't accept as many offers as I could have.

I never really considered moving to Jakarta because I don't enjoy the lifestyle there. The traffic jams are constant; the cost of living is significantly higher (than Solo). A car is a necessity, you can't go anywhere in Jakarta without one. Even when I was younger, unlike some of my friends, I never dreamed of moving there. Maybe part of the reason was because I was still young and all I knew was Solo. I saw a life for myself and my family here in Mangkuyudan. My dream was to one day buy my neighbors plot of land and build a bigger house for my family to live in. I saw my future here.

I avoided going to Jakarta for long time when I was younger. Sometimes I feel like I still avoid going there today. The main reason I'm afraid of going to Jakarta is because I don't feel comfortable there (aku tidak nyaman di sana). Even when I was young I didn't feel like I fit in with the Jakarta lifestyle and people there. Pak Bud, my first husband, encouraged me to accept some of the invitations to perform (in Jakarta). He was much braver than I was and it was because of him that I began traveling there regularly. As Pak Bud would say, "In Solo you're the biggest fish in a small pond, there

are only a handful of singers here who can compete with you.” Going to Jakarta offered me greater possibilities and challenges.

Over the course of Bintang Radio’s history, a number of keroncong vocalists have been crowned champions, some have even gone on to record for Lokananta. None, however, attained the stature Waldjinhah enjoyed. When I met and interviewed some of these previous champions, a few of them, like Waldjinhah, discussed a reluctance to leave central Java after winning the Bintang Radio competitions. Instead, they were content with civil servant positions in the state radio station or found careers outside of music. To be clear, Waldjinhah’s willingness (however reluctant) to regularly perform in Jakarta, did not ensure a path to success. Undoubtedly there were other intangibles (marketability, appearance, talent, charisma) and even luck, involved—the infamous stars that did not align for other Bintang Radio champions did so for her, establishing a path toward legendary status. It is unlikely, however, that she could have achieved this next level without first accepting the reality of having to venture beyond Solo and central Java.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Some of these circumstances continue today. When I interviewed Sruti Respati, a young vocalist from Solo who studied with Waldjinhah, she mentioned that since embarking on her professional career, she has traveled to Jakarta nearly every week, returning to Solo on weekends, if possible, to see her children and husband. Sruti told me that although she would prefer to reside in Solo, her opportunities to perform would be seriously limited and the type of lifestyle she could offer her family would be drastically different.

Commuting regularly from Jakarta to central Java is not uncommon for people in other fields of employment as well. There are now “bedroom communities” in upscale areas of Yogyakarta where residents who live in Jakarta on weekdays fly to central Java to enjoy the weekend away. In other instances, I have heard of families moving to smaller cities in Java (some for lifestyle or educational

Conclusion: In the Line of Fire

A March 2012 issue of *Tempo* magazine, modeled after *Time* in the United States, featured a five page memoir of Waldjinhah's life and career to date. It happened to be published while I was in Indonesia conducting my own research and after receiving a text message from a friend, I remember hurrying to the local newsstand to pick up a copy. The article was primarily a chronology of Waldjinhah's life and career achievements, presented not as an interview but as a retelling from a first person narrative viewpoint—but clearly paraphrased by journalists. Different from articles I have previously read about her, this one explicitly discussed her performances in military settings. In a section entitled "From the Jungle to the Battlefield (*Dari Hutan hingga Medan Tempur*)," the article specifically focused on memories of a teenage Waldjinhah entertaining throngs of soldiers in Bumiayu, Central Java during the *Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia (DI/TII)* rebellion.¹⁹⁹ She recalled an incident when riding in the rear of a military truck on her way back to Solo, her convoy came under gunfire attack by rebels. She and the other singers desperately hid underneath the truck's axle

purposes) while having one or both parents live and work in Jakarta during the week. Children are cared for by live-in nannies or by extended family members.

¹⁹⁹ The *Darul Islam* rebellion was led by a Javanese mystic named S.M. Kartosuwirjo, who commanded groups of Islamic militants intent on establishing an Indonesian Islamic state (referred to as *Darul Islam* or in Arabic *dar al-Islam*, the house of Islam) based on Islamic law and administered by Islamic leaders (*kyai*). Although supposedly a religious movement, most of its local support came because of Kartosuwirjo, who followers believed to possess supernatural powers (Rickeffs 1994: 228). The movement began in West Java in the early 1940s as a fight against the Dutch but eventually spread into Central Java and became "difficult to distinguish from simple banditry, extortion and terrorism on a grand scale (ibid)." It survived for two decades, mostly by controlling the countryside of West Java, until Kartosuwirjo was captured and executed in 1962.

as they heard bullets whizz by like flies around them. Early on in her career, Waldjinah became wary (*jera*) of the dangers of performing in areas of conflict.²⁰⁰ It would not be the last time she would do so, however. When I asked her about the incident, she recalled her mindset during that period.

I was still a young girl (at the time of the DI/TII incident), I wasn't married, I wasn't even menstruating! I was too young at the time to understand the context of that performance. Now I do. It still terrifies me to think of some of the places I performed during the DI/TII conflict and the Communist killings. For years afterward, I never talked about those performances openly. I never revealed (membeberkan) anything about them whatsoever in interviews. Only now that times are more secure and tranquil (aman dan sentosa) am I brave enough to talk about it.

The article pointed to the different avenues leading Waldjinah to stardom but also alluded to some of the broader themes I cover in this chapter, namely state oriented nationalism versus regionalism, national trauma and keroncong and nationalism. While it makes sense to suggest that winning the 1965 Bintang Radio competition propelled her to fame, there were certainly other smaller steps taken toward becoming a national artist, especially as a vocalist for the state-run radio station and performing for Indonesian military events. Her journey created a better

²⁰⁰ Rafiq, Ahmad. "Dari Hutan hingga Medan Tempur." *Tempo*. 26 March – 1 April 2012.

understanding of how keroncong was used and incorporated into the state mechanisms meant to create a national culture, and more importantly how Waldjinah weaved her own sense of regional identity into a national identity through performances and her recordings. Bohlman (2004: 11) reminds us that nationalism (and the nation) no longer enters music only from top-down trajectories directed by state institutions and ideologies—according to him, “(nationalism) may build its path into music from just about any angle, as long as there are musicians and audiences willing to mobilize cultural movement from those angles.” Waldjinah’s path to national prominence points to some of these differences and overlaps between state-oriented nationalism and regionalism. Although she became a national artist over the course of her career, Waldjinah continued to identify primarily as a regional artists, especially as vocalist specializing in langgam jawa, proudly asserting her inland Javanese roots even when it made her appear “countrified” in the eyes of some. Part of this focus on maintaining a regional identity was also a subtle yet pronounced resistance to being completely subsumed into the centralized, Jakarta-centric realm of Indonesian national culture, especially prominent during the reign of the New Order. While she understood the importance of maintaining a presence in Jakarta (performing in the capital city regularly throughout her career) in order to be considered a national artist, Waldjinah refused to relocate her family there, like many of her peers, and instead chose to remain in Central Java. Further evidence of her commitment to a regional identity came after criticism arose for performing langgam jawa songs (whose lyrics are in Javanese) on national

television, seen by some as an overt and excessive display of Javanese cultural hegemony.²⁰¹ Waldjinhah's response to such accusations was consistent for most of her career: there are Javanese people living throughout Indonesia, so she continues to perform songs in the Javanese language as well as Indonesian.

Keroncong today, however, continues its deep associations with nationalism, especially since most of its popular songs, especially the "songs of struggle (*lagu perjuangan*)," were composed during the years immediately preceding independence (during the late 1930s and into the 1940s). These songs continue to do the work of the imagined nation creating a social memory that emphasizes and upholds the values and ideals of the nation while reminding its people that a willingness to sacrifice helped establish Indonesia and continues to be an essential component to its success.

Performance of keroncong *lagu perjuangan* expresses the heartfelt sorrow of lovers tearfully embracing and exchanging mementos, possibly for the last time, on the deck of a train station as one heads to battle, or tributes to fallen heroes incorporating metaphors of nature (flowers, mountains, diamonds, etc.) as recognized symbols to shape mythologized pasts so that they continue to serve purpose in the present.

Waldjinhah's experiences performing for the Indonesian military during the period of Communist extermination in the mid 1960s placed her at the heart of national trauma, giving her grounded insight into the massacre afforded to few other artists. Her

²⁰¹ I noticed that whenever langgam jawa was performed on TVRI (the state-sponsored television network), lyrics were translated into Indonesian, so that it was not only Javanese speakers who could enjoy them. This was also done for some of the other performances of regional musics, although not all.

reluctance to openly discuss these experiences, until only recently, paralleled a broader silence in Indonesia regarding the darkest and most brutal episode in its history. Many Indonesians continue to be silent or uneducated about events of that era and a significant number adhere unquestioningly to the official story that it was, in fact, the Communists who were entirely at fault for the upheaval and violence. Waldjinhah's own true feelings regarding the politics of what happened remained somewhat unclear, although fear and anxiety were certainly evident in her recollections. Although not reluctant to discuss G30S, Waldjinhah also was careful to stay clear of either assigning blame or exonerating those involved. Similar to other Indonesians who lived through that period, Waldjinhah tried to maintain some semblance of normalcy in her life, even as events and acts of violence around her spiraled into the wickedly abnormal. As Waldjinhah suggested, being a young mother and a rising star nationally, who happened to be living in a part of Java where some of the most intense killings took place, made her accept, albeit unwillingly, the role given to her by the military. This also indirectly provided her an avenue toward becoming a national artist much different from the established routes chartered by national competitions. In the process of establishing herself as Indonesia's most celebrated keroncong singer, however, Waldjinhah also found opportunities and audiences beyond national boundaries.

Chapter 8: “Going International”

*The blue handkerchief floats away, adrift in the breeze
Flying east, it splashes down into a river...*

From “Kacu Biru” (Blue Handkerchief),
composed by Gesang in the 1940s

Since the late 1960s, the name Waldjinh has been synonymous with the hit song “*Walang Kekek*” (Grasshopper).” Even now she is referred to affectionately by the nickname “The *Walang Kekek*” (*Si Walang Kekek*) in the Indonesian press. The song itself is an old Javanese folk tune some claim originated in East Java. Waldjinh, however, wrote the lyrics for the version that she popularized and based them on her own experiences growing up in a polygamous marriage, especially watching her mother struggle to provide for her family in the absence of her father. “*Walang Kekek*” draws on the allegory of a grasshopper bounding from place to place as a warning for men not to wander from their wives , girlfriends or significant others. The song’s caveat is if they do so, they risk hardship and suffering later on.

“*Walang Kekek*” (lyrical excerpts translated by the author)

Grasshopper perched on a basket
Fly off again into the rice paddy
Don’t belittle me with other women
If later you are left, you’ll suffer the hardships

É ya i-yé, ya yé I ya
É ya I yé, ya i-yé, ya-i-yo ya-l-yo

“*Walang Kekek*”, menclok nang tenggok
Mabur maneh, menclok nang pari
Aja ngenyek ya mas, karo wong wedok
Yen ditinggal lunga, setengah mati

É ya i-yé, ya yé I ya
É ya I yé, ya i-yé, ya-i-yo ya-l-yo

| | |
|--|---|
| A <i>sriti</i> bird enters the water Dreaming at night, meeting during the day | Manuk sriti kecemplung banyu Bengi ngimpi awan ketemu |
| Red grasshopper perched on a seed | Walang abang menclok neng koro |
| Blue grasshopper, white grasshopper You're a bachelor again, but you can't leave You have grandchildren, yet you don't return home | Walang biru... walange putih Bujang maneh yam as, ora ngluyura Sing wis duwe putu, ra tau mulih |
| É ya i-yé, ya yé I ya É ya I yé, ya i-yé, ya-i-yo ya-l-yo | É ya i-yé, ya yé I ya É ya I yé, ya i-yé, ya-i-yo ya-l-yo |
| You can play the <i>gambang</i> , you can play the <i>suling</i> ²⁰² You can see, you can gaze, but you can't get near | Bisa nggambang yo mas, ora bisa nyuling Bisa nyawang, ora bisa nyanding |
| Grasshopper, wood grasshopper, Wood grasshopper lands on the ground If you want to, you can follow me If you accept this, then I say you must take care of your home | Walang ireng, mabur brenggengeng Walang ireng, dawa suthange Yen padha seneng yam as, aja mung mandeng Golek ana ngendi omahe |

I recorded the song “Walang Kekek” (Grasshopper) for the first time in 1968.

The following year I recorded it again in Jakarta and when it was released it went to the top of the charts nationally. The song became an immediate hit and I consistently

²⁰² *Gambang* refers to a wooden xylophone most commonly played in Javanese gamelan and the *suling* is an end-blown bamboo flute. The lyrics for “*Walang Kekek*” are written in the Malay poetic quatrain form known as *pantun*. Some of the lyrics carry a dual meanings meant to address not only a cheating spouse/significant other but also reference Waldjinhah’s own experiences. As an example the following line “You can see, you can gaze, but you can’t you can’t get near” is also intended as a warning for male audience members not to approach her with inappropriate (ie. sexual) advances. I further discuss how lyrics such as these are related to gender and the control of her public image in Chapter 9.

toured around Indonesia. Besides doing live concerts, my tours included performances on television and stops at many amateur (ie. private) radio stations in order to conduct interviews and promote “Walang Kekek.” Back then there were many amateur radio stations and one in particular named “Nalo” was probably the first to start playing “Walang Kekek.” That’s where it all started. They played the song and it got such a good response from listeners that it quickly became the most popular song played on the station and eventually got the attention of other stations and the music industry in Jakarta.

“Walang Kekek” became more popular than I ever imagined. I was happy and flattered people liked it and proud that I wrote the lyrics. At the same time I didn’t want to become big-headed and arrogant because of the song’s success. I heard that even [President] Suharto’s wife, Ibu Tien, said she enjoyed the song and its message—she also actively spoke out against the practice of polygamy. I thought of my mother’s struggles with our family and my father when I wrote the lyrics. The lyrics express my own feelings on the matter. Only when the song became popular did I realize how the broader message of men respecting and appreciating the women in their lives also resonated with lots of other people. “Walang Kekek” is one of the only songs I perform that I actually feel an emotional connection to because of the subject matter.

It is not surprising that “Walang Kekek” carries such strong significance for Waldjinah, especially given that for much of her childhood and early adulthood, she

resented the fact that her father had taken a second wife, started another family and moved out to live with them.²⁰³ The emotional impact this period had on Waldjinhah was reflected by the vehement stance she took against polygamy and despite the numerous times she has sung “Walang Kekek” over the course of her career, on rare occasions she still reminisced about her mother while performing it. In addition to the song’s lyrical subject matter, the song also differs musically from the other langgam jawa songs she recorded at the time. As I mentioned before, “*Walang Kekek*” was based on a Javanese folk tune and therefore differed in musical form from other langgam jawa songs representative of the subgenre. Its catchy chorus comprised of vocables “É ya i-yé, ya yé I ya, É ya I yé , ya-i-yo ya-I-yo” are quite different from standard langgam jawa compositions, many of which do not include a chorus section. This combined with it being shorter in length than standard langgam jawa also meant that it fit into pop radio format. Combined, these characteristics contributed to making “*Walang Kekek*” the song that would launch Waldjinhah’s career.

In this chapter, I continue to examine the reasons and conditions for Waldjinhah’s rising popularity as performer. In contrast to the previous chapter, I focus primarily on various aspects of touring domestically as well as internationally, where she often played the role of cultural ambassador for Indonesia. Part of this chapter also addresses how Indonesian musicians I spoke with used the term “go international” (they literally used the English phrase) to describe an artist who has performed outside Indonesia and

²⁰³ This is discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

achieved an international audience. In a different context, Elizabeth Martyn (2005: 150) observes that the international political activities and activism of Indonesian women's movements have largely been ignored in scholarly literature because they are viewed as somehow less significant than domestic objectives. Martyn (ibid) argues that international activities and activism must be considered as an area of mobilization for national movements, "especially with regard to what they show about how women define themselves to the wider world." Under the New Order regime, Diyah Larasati (2013: 6-7) suggests that Indonesia's reformulated national identity was promoted both domestically and internationally, sometimes using "dancing women as a vehicle of expression" and political purpose, especially since the power of women singers and dancers to draw large, attentive crowds was not lost on the emerging state and longstanding patriarchal establishment. Although Waldjinhah's performances abroad were not formally associated with any organized political movement, women's or otherwise, her "going international" did do important work not only in terms of establishing an image for Indonesia as a nation but also for modern Indonesian women. Furthermore, "going international" helped to validate her status as an iconic performer among domestic audiences. In some ways, all of this began when the song ""Walang Kekek"" became a hit nationally and Waldjinhah chose to tour incessantly in the aftermath.

Touring in Java

Waldjinhah's rising popularity also meant extensive touring and an increased level of security and comfort—something she was not yet accustomed to. She described feeling uneasy at the time about how rapidly her life was changing after “Walang Kekek” became popular. Although she had already won the 1965 *Bintang Radio* (Radio Star) national keroncong vocal competition, Waldjinhah had yet to establish herself as a performer who had a national audience.

It was the first time in my career I had done extended tours and at first I felt like the president or some big shot being chauffeured to hotels and concert venues with security guards escorting me everywhere. It felt different than before when nobody knew of me. After “Walang Kekek” topped the charts, the amount I could command for concerts increased. Before that I was only a regional artist who couldn't earn as much, but when people in Jakarta knew of me, my wages shot straight up!

It seemed like anywhere I went, I had to have security accompanying me. Having an entourage around constantly somehow made me feel a sense of accomplishment. I had overcome many obstacles in my life to get to this point and now it appeared there were no boundaries to where I could go. I, Waldjinhah, a child born into poverty, with only a limited education, had managed to reach this level of success. I felt proud of what I had achieved, but I had a feeling it was only the beginning.

Early tours were filled with activity and excitement. Fans waited eagerly to catch a glimpse of Indonesia's newest star, and all the exhilaration surrounding her at the time was something Waldjinah and her band had yet to encounter on previous tours. Not only were crowds larger at the shows but, for the first time in her career, she experienced first-hand some of the downsides of fame—especially a loss of privacy in her personal life.

There are so many memories of that first tour in Java, most of them good but definitely not all. Our first stop in Malang (a city in East Java), was memorable because two people died due to overcrowding at the venue. Apparently the owners allowed so many people into the hall that it became too crowded for anyone to move. After I performed, the police came in and had to clear the place out. The crowd began jostling one another, people pushed and shoved everywhere until a fight broke out. Later on police found two audience members trampled to death, their bodies found face down on the ground. On our next stop in Madiun (another city in East Java), we performed in a large open field and this time an audience member died after falling out of a tree he had climbed to get a better view.

In Purwokerto (a city in Central Java), I was trapped inside my hotel because throngs of fans had blocked the front entrance. Eventually additional security arrived to escort me through the crowd. They told me it would be best not to go through the front entrance so I crawled out a side window. As soon as I made it out, some of the fans saw

me and rushed over screaming my name. People grabbed and tugged at me while madly screaming “Waldjinah! Waldjinah!” I pushed and struggled forward toward the car. When I finally stumbled into the back seat, I found the entire back of my blouse had been torn to shreds!

As I finished a concert in Wonosobo (in Central Java) and descended from the stage, a young noticeably pregnant woman stood waiting for me with her toddler. As I passed her walking from the stage, she asked me to touch her stomach and give her my blessing so that her unborn child would grow up also to be a famous singer. Then she told me her son, who was standing beside her, was quite ill and requested I spit on his head so he would recover quickly. I obliged and spit on the child’s head and as I gently rubbed his moistened scalp while we recited Al-Fatihah (an Islamic prayer).

Even today whenever I head down to Klewer Market (Pasar Klewer) in Solo, people still ask me to pose for photos with them. I take as many as I can but usually get tired and have to run away (she laughs hesitantly). It makes me happy that people still remember me and even though I may not be as wealthy as some of the stars today, I still feel truly happy. Back then a large portion of the money made from our concerts went toward rebuilding the town or city where the concert was being held because of the damage and destruction caused during the PKI era killings. I usually shared a percentage of the proceeds made from door admissions in order to help out. Audiences paid 500 rupiah for a ticket to stand at the concert. If they wanted a seat, the cost was around

one thousand rupiah. Most of the concerts back then were held in the large town square (alun-alun), and we usually made enough that I didn't mind sharing the profits.

People seemed to show up no matter the weather. Once, in Pati (a town in Central Java), a heavy thunderstorm suddenly blew in late one afternoon and the promoter considered canceling the show because of extensive flooding all over town. By evening the rain had let up a bit and I insisted on going ahead with the show. Truthfully though, I didn't think many people would actually turn up. When I took the stage, I was pleasantly shocked to gaze out into a sea of rain-soaked umbrellas and colorful ponchos waiting for me. It was really inspiring to me because those people in Pati were truly diehard fans that night!

When I asked Waldjinhah to recall some of her favorite memories of touring she looked at me and immediately began laughing. "I don't know," she chuckled, "there are so many, where do you want me to start?" Over the course of listening to her recount these stories, I realized not only how much she enjoyed touring but also how these early tours helped to shape her stage persona. Unlike keroncong singers who performed mostly in large urban areas like Jakarta and Surabaya, Waldjinhah travelled extensively across East and Central Java performing in an array of settings from enclosed halls to open fields in more rural areas. These types of large concert settings required her to incorporate a stage persona that included interacting with audiences differently than the detached stoicism associated with some keroncong singers. Circumstances required

Waldjinah to become more animated and engaging during concerts, especially with large crowds where most people may not have been familiar with her songs. This aspect of her performance, which differed from most other keroncong singers I have observed, emerged from Waldjinah's bubbly personality and was honed during this early part of her career after "Walang Kekek" became popular.

The island of Java was familiar ground to Waldjinah, especially Central and East Java, areas considered to be the Javanese ethnic homeland. The core of her audience was based in these two provinces and being a langgam jawa singer, her music naturally resonated more deeply with the predominantly Javanese speaking populations in these regions. As her popularity grew, she knew that performing only in Central or East Java limited her reach as a performer, and perhaps more importantly, her ability to earn money touring other parts of Indonesia. After all, as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, large Javanese populations also exist on other islands and touring in these areas offered the opportunity of expanding her audience to other ethnic groups as well.

I spent a lot of time touring Java but I also traveled to other regions of Indonesia, especially Kalimantan, Sumatra, Bali and Sulawesi. The only place I've yet to perform is West Papua because I was concerned about the continuous unrest there.²⁰⁴ Invitations

²⁰⁴ People of West Papua (Irian Jaya) have struggled for self-determination for the last fifty or so years. After World War II, the Dutch, who originally colonized the resource-rich region, were prepared to liberate it, however, Indonesia continued to lay claim to West Papua. In 1961, Papuans declared their

to Kalimantan came quite often for events celebrating the anniversary of a business or factory, mostly in the lumber industry.²⁰⁵ Usually I was invited to perform by a private company and afterwards we'd travel on our own to perform in large cities in Kalimantan like Banjarmasin or Samarinda. One time the band and I flew into Samarinda and then drove two or three hours inland finally stopping near a river where the company had hired a boat to bring us upriver to the factory. I looked at the small, rickety boat they sent and began getting anxious. Here I was already dressed up glamorously ready to go on stage but instead I was standing in the middle of a jungle, monkeys all around eyeing my every move, about to board a decrepit boat heading deeper into the jungle. After I gingerly boarded the boat, the driver warned us we were headed into a known crocodile infested area of the river and that I should stay clear of the edge of the boat. As if I wasn't worried enough before...Now I was terrified! Fortunately the boat ride was smooth but I felt nervous the entire time. Other regions in Indonesia, like Sumatra, where I've performed a number of times, appeared similar to Java. Maybe it's because there were so many Javanese people living there as well.

independence and soon thereafter, the Indonesian military invaded (financially backed and armed by the Soviet Union). Fearing the spread of communism and having mining interests in the region, the United States (under United Nations supervision) intervened and brokered the New York Agreement in 1963 which ceded control of West Papua to Indonesia. Since then there have been minor insurgencies carried out by militant groups, such as the Free Papua Movement (OPM), and claims of mass atrocities carried out by the Indonesian military. West Papua is currently the highest militarized region of Indonesia and some estimates suggest that as many as 500,000 Papuans have died since the military occupation began.

²⁰⁵ A large number of Javanese were relocated to islands such as Kalimantan as part of the Transmigration Policy during Suharto's regime. For a further discussion of this see Chapter 7.

Although she admitted that the crowds for some of her concerts outside of Java were not as large, Waldjinah felt confident that she appealed to more than just her Javanese fans. Despite making it a point to perform keroncong asli songs with lyrics in Indonesian, she also featured much of her langgam jawa repertoire which, somewhat to her surprise, also appealed to non-Javanese audiences. She remembered non-Javanese fans at many of her concerts approaching her afterward telling her how much they enjoyed her singing langgam jawa. Part of this response may have been based on langgam jawa simply sounding “exotic” to non-Javanese Indonesians who likely had never heard it before and associated it with far off areas they might never visit. This type of orientalist listening worked in Waldjinah’s favor, especially since her stage costumes, hair style and overall appearance accentuated a sense of ethnic Javanese-ness. Although Orientalism, as Edward Said (1978) conceives it, applies specifically to how the West (namely Europe and the United States) have experienced and “come to terms with the Orient,” I am using it here in the context of how different ethnic groups within Indonesia may view each other. Inequalities of power inherently figure into this equation and Said (1978 [1994]: 3) notes how Orientalism doubles as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.” This configuration of power also figures into Javanese political and cultural domination of Indonesia, especially during the New Order regime. As the dominant ethnic group in Indonesia, the Javanese are considered by some to be domestic colonists, particularly in the sphere of national culture, where scholars have argued, “official culture”

represented a form of exclusion and thinly veiled hegemonic Javanese culture, promoting elitist Javanese values (see Hefner 2005, Kahn 2001). Waldjinhah's reluctance to perform in West Papua, I believe, were not only based on fears about political instability in the region but also a deeper distrust of Papuans generally—sentiments shared by some other Javanese people I encountered in central Java as well. In this sense, Waldjinhah, as the voice of Indonesia, also embodied some of the racialized (and racist) discourse used by Javanese people to discuss certain minority ethnic groups in Indonesia—it also inherently shaped the narrative that she presented to me.

Discourse used by New Order government officials during the era of the Transmigration Policy emphasized that transmigrants should not identify as Javanese (or any other ethnic group) but rather as “Indonesians” (Hoey 2003: 112). Such discourse, of course, benefitted regime objectives by downplaying Javanese authority and the idea that Javanese settlements on outlying islands furthered a (Javanese-centered) nationalist vision. Waldjinhah visiting islands, such as Sumatra, with large Javanese transmigrant settlements not only helped popularize Javanese music and culture but hearing such positive response also gave her further confidence that she could (and would) find a national audience even while identifying as a regional singer. It is possible in this case that Waldjinhah identifying as a regional singer situated her beyond the realm of “official” or national culture and allowed some local audiences to embrace her as artist.

Concert Settings

Over the course of her career, Waldjinah performed in an array of venues, including stadiums, large halls and television studios. The majority of her concerts, however, took place in open air outdoor settings such as large fields or town squares with make-shift stages erected before her arrival. This was not necessarily uncommon for many performers in Indonesia and in some ways Waldjinah saw links between the settings she performed in the past and similar ones for popular music concerts today.

My concerts were not entirely different from some of the dangdut shows you see now. A stage was erected in a large soccer field and lots of people from the town and surrounding areas came to watch. Crowds back then however, were much calmer than the ones at dangdut shows today. Rarely, if ever, did fights break out or did the police have to show up. Dangdut concerts today are known for drunken audience members who become rowdy and start fights. This wasn't the case at my concerts back then. Maybe it's because keroncong music sounds so refined that it actually calms the audience. Who wants to fight at a keroncong concert right? (She laughed.) Most of the crowd sat on straw mats and simply enjoyed the show...As the singer, I felt truly respected.

Back then if anyone was getting drunk at keroncong performances it was the vocalists! But there was apparently good reason for it. Because microphones weren't as good quality then, keroncong vocalists were constantly searching for ways to make their

voices project more effectively. Singers, especially males, began drinking ciu (a sugar cane derived alcohol) because they believed it would make their voice clearer (melantangkan suaranya) and allow them to reach higher registers—which appealed to the female vocalists as well.²⁰⁶ Well, what ended up happening was that some singers became accustomed to drinking ciu before each and every performance, and a number of them drank excessively. There was a period of time, especially early in my career, where quite a number of keroncong singers staggered on stage tipsy or sometimes just flat out drunk! Fortunately drinking ciu before shows eventually became less common among keroncong singers.

When recalling this particularly humorous and telling anecdote, Waldjinah was certain to add that she was not one of the vocalists indulging in *ciu*, instead asserting that she had no problems projecting her voice, even in large outdoor venues. Although I would not speculate about the veracity of this claim, I felt she mentioned this specifically to dissociate herself from behavior that would be discouraged today, especially given her tendencies toward pious Islam in the latter period of her life. Her recalling this story did, however, place keroncong performances in a less formal and *halus* light similar to *dangdut*, pop, rock or other Indonesian popular music concert

²⁰⁶ Waldjinah explains that vocalists believed the alcohol helped to “warm” the throat and would therefore allow the voice to be more distinct and project better. She never explicitly mentioned whether she drank *ciu* before shows, only that others would. Although she did say that it was her band’s (*Orkes Keroncong Bintang Surakarta*) policy, not to drink *ciu* or any alcohol before a show, and only beer would be permitted afterward. She was also careful not to incriminate all keroncong vocalists in the practice of drinking *ciu*, only saying that “some” of them did.

settings today.²⁰⁷ Her story also brought out the importance of improvements in microphone technology, which was revolutionary in a broad sense but in this case, allowed keroncong vocalists to be less concerned about projecting their voices and more focused on using the dynamics and range of their voice in front of large audiences.

Modes of Transport, Ways of Moving

Reliable transportation has always been an important aspect of touring. In the United States, local “underground” bands and other musicians in recent decades have traversed freeways in small vans establishing networks of musicians cities and towns across the country. The exploits of travelling via the “band van” are synonymous with touring and some of the stories of adventurous travels have reached near mythic proportions. In a much different context, modes of transportation have also been an important factor in how Waldjinhah has toured Indonesia over the past five decades. Her use of various modes of transport in touring over the course of her career paralleled the ways that Indonesia developed and modernized its infrastructure since beginning her career. Going from the steam powered trains, ferries, boats and buses to trucks, motorcycles, vans and airplanes, Waldjinhah travelled to performance venues using nearly every form of transportation available to her.

²⁰⁷ Weekly television shows such as “Gebyar Keroncong” in Jakarta and “Kopiku” (Keroncong Pilihan Ku,” or “Keroncong of My Choice],” in Yogyakarta, which allowed viewers to phone in and choose songs from a preselected list) broadcast on national television (TVRI and its affiliates) also situate keroncong in the realm of Indonesian popular music today, often featuring stylishly dressed young vocalists and more innovative styles of keroncong.

Early on we didn't own a bus, van or car so we traveled across Java primarily by train. The band, my husband (Pak Bud) and I boarded at Purwosari station, Solo's main train station, and headed west toward Purwodadi (a city in Central Java west of Solo) where we would transfer. The trains were absolutely ancient! They still had steam shooting up from the engine car. Can you imagine? That's what we'd be riding across Java! I didn't mind traveling by train though, mostly because I have no problems whatsoever sleeping on trains. The minute I set foot in the car and it began moving, gently rocking back and forth, I'd be like a baby resting in her mother's arms. We often traveled by train early on in my career so I became quite accustomed to it. Even later on when flying to Jakarta became an option, I still chose to travel by train. I feel much more relaxed traveling this way. If I have a choice, I still take the executive air-conditioned train to Jakarta instead of flying. But I am, of course, more comfortable with the idea of flying now.

I have also traveled quite a bit by bus, especially to towns that couldn't be reached by train. From the early 1960s through the 1980s, we usually toured using a combination of trains and buses. Although I preferred the train, we began using the bus more regularly because of the sheer number of band members traveling. Also we had to bring instruments with us—it was not as convenient or easy to haul instruments via train. On one tour the Indonesian air force allowed me to borrow one of their large air conditioned buses. It was probably one of the more comfortable vehicles I've ever

toured with. In the 1990s I decided to buy a large van specifically for the band. They would travel in the van and I, along with my back-up singers, traveled by car. I've had a few cars over the years, the first was a Holden, an Australian car, followed by a Peugeot, a French car, and then an Isuzu Panther, a Japanese SUV. Touring became much easier when we had our own vehicles, before we'd spend hours simply waiting for buses and trains.

Becoming a Cultural Ambassador

Touring Java and other parts of Indonesia helped to establish Waldjinhah as a national artist but beginning in 1971 she began receiving offers to perform outside Indonesia. From East Asia to Europe and South America, she performed in an array of contexts and settings ranging from international music festivals to private weddings. International performances, according to Waldjinhah, were divided into two main categories. "Arts missions (*misi kesenian*)," described as performances as part of international exhibitions promoting Indonesian cultures, usually sponsored by the local Indonesian embassy, and invitations from private individuals or organizations, which had no direct affiliation with the Indonesian government.²⁰⁸ The majority of her

²⁰⁸ All of Waldjinhah's trips abroad have been funded either by Indonesian embassies or by private organizations or individuals. In most cases, flights and lodging are covered and in some cases food costs and other expenditures are included as well. Although, according to Waldjinhah, the actual amount covered depends on the individual promoter or organization and the event. For instance, for her trip to the Netherlands to perform at the Tong Tong Festival in 2013, promoters told her that meals would not be included for her and her band, however, there would be a small kitchen provided in the bungalow they would be staying in. Therefore, she planned to bring food materials so that they could cook their own meals while visiting.

international performances came in the context of the latter. However, even when she did not officially represent Indonesia, Waldjinhah always served as a type of cultural ambassador for her country. After listening to her recount various tales of international performances, I asked if she considered herself an unofficial cultural ambassador for Indonesia.

Yes, actually I do consider myself an ambassador of sorts because when I go abroad I'm asked to sing keroncong, people in turn associate keroncong with Indonesia. So in that sense I'm not just a keroncong artist but also an ambassador for Indonesian culture. Whether or not I'm there officially representing my country, foreigners see me in this way. I've played the role of cultural ambassador many times my career. Actually, the first time I ever traveled outside Indonesia was during my first "arts mission" to Singapore in 1971. I went there as an entertainer for an exhibition held by the Singapore government. The entire trip was essentially a reward from Golkar (the political party of the New Order government) after they won the national election earlier that year. I was the only singer chosen to go, probably because I performed at so many Golkar rallies that year. Going to Singapore really made the band and I feel like wong ndésó (country hicks) in the big city.²⁰⁹ It started on the plane ride from Jakarta, which was the first time I had ever traveled by plane. It was also notable because our cello completely split in half due to cold temperatures while flying. When we arrived I sent one of the band

²⁰⁹ She uses the Javanese term *wong ndésó* (*orang desa* in Indonesian), which literally translates to country or village people.

members to buy some white masking tape and he proceeded to tape the cello back together. Although it sounded fine, we ended up with a cello that looked like it had zebra print on it!



8.1 Waldjinhah, Gesang and another vocalist (left to right) performing in Singapore, 1971. The taped up cello is visible on the far left. Photo courtesy of Waldjinhah.

The exhibition was held at the Singapore Hilton, by far the largest and most luxurious hotel I'd stayed at up to that point. The morning after we arrived we all went down for breakfast starved. Unfortunately we looked out at the breakfast spread and all they had was Western-style breakfast. We are Javanese people accustomed to eating rice for breakfast, so we all looked at each other in deep disappointment and slightly

confused as to what we should do. No rice meant no breakfast! Eventually we decided to just eat the pastries, toast and other foods being offered but all through breakfast we ate like birds pecking at seeds. All of us were eyeing the front entrance, looking for a way out to find some rice.

After eating, a band member decided to find food outside the hotel so instead of taking the elevator upstairs with us he took the stairwell down to the first floor. Unfortunately, he chose a stairwell where all the doors (including the first floor) were locked so he ended up having to walk up thirty flights of stairs to the very top floor. I finally got a call from the front desk saying one of my band members was sitting on the top floor exhausted next to a vending machine complaining about not having enough money to buy a drink. We laughed at him for days after that!



8.2 Gesang (in foreground), Waldjinah and the band relaxing at the hotel (Singapore, 1971). Photo courtesy of Waldjinah.

Another adjustment for us at the hotel was living with air-conditioning. Being country folks, few of us were accustomed to air conditioning, especially sleeping at night in such cold temperatures. On the trip to Singapore, I invited my friend, Gesang Martohartono, to perform with us and he had biggest problem adjusting to the air conditioning. Pak Gesang complained about not being able to sleep at night because he shared a room with a band member who was one of the few who loved air conditioning and had it blasting at its coldest setting. In the end, we had to find Pak Gesang a room by himself because he kept shivering and couldn't sleep at all.



8.3 Gesang (right) singing in Singapore, 1971. Photo courtesy of Waldjinah.

Smoking was also prohibited in rooms because of the air-conditioning. Since most of the musicians smoked regularly, they had to trek downstairs to do it outside the building. Additionally, many of us also had trouble figuring out how to use the hot and cold water in the showers, the hotel elevator, and none of us could speak English, much less understand Singaporean English. We were reduced to pointing and gesturing crudely, like Tarzan. All of this made us feel even more like hicks and completely out of place in Singapore.



8.4 Waldjinhah interviewed on Singaporean television, 1971. Photo courtesy of Waldjinhah.

Nevertheless the trip was a memorable one. Not only did we perform as the backing band for a large fashion show, afterward we were whisked off to a television station where I also gave my first international interview and we performed again for a nationally televised program. Later that evening at the hotel, we watched ourselves on Singapore television! Despite being unaccustomed to the hotel, walking around Singapore at that time didn't feel entirely different from Jakarta. Based on my own

impressions, I'd say Jakarta, at that time, was developing just as fast (or even faster) than Singapore or Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia). Jakarta might have been the prettier city because of all its trees, back then it seemed much greener than Singapore. Nowadays it appears to be the other way around. Since then, we Indonesians have fallen behind.

Waldjinah describing herself and her band as *wong ndéso* ("country hicks") framed this retelling of their first experience travelling outside Indonesia. Although she may have described a similar feeling traveling to a large Indonesian city like Jakarta, her lack of familiarity with urban life combined with being a foreigner accentuated her feelings of "backwardness." This sense of backwardness came mostly from being out of step with the modern space she and her band were required to inhabit in Singapore. Cold air-conditioned rooms, a hotel resembling a giant labyrinth and unfamiliar cuisine opened her to ways of living vastly different from the world she grew up in Mangkuyudan.

It also made Waldjinah aware, however, that what she saw and experienced in Singapore, represented a direction modern Indonesia also would be headed. Looking back on that first trip, she realized that since that time Indonesia had "fallen behind" its neighbors and implied that it needed to catch up. Indonesia's revolutionary path to statehood, according to Anthony Reid (2012: 7), distinguished it from its Southeast Asian neighbors and the cost of this struggle was a damaged economy, especially during the period of 1945-70 where Indonesia fell far behind Malaysia and Thailand. In recent

years, there has been reason for optimism, especially in terms of the country's economic growth performance. Although Reid (2012: 4-6) is wary of over-optimism, he observes fundamental economic indicators that show Indonesia to have "structural advantages" over its Asian neighbors, namely a drastic reduction of birth rate, growth in domestic consumption (derived from an expanding middle class), and a seemingly successful democratic transition since the fall of the New Order regime in 1998. There remain, however, significant challenges and uncertainties facing Indonesian modernity. Widespread corruption, declining infrastructure, an unwieldy bureaucracy and poor press freedom continue to be obstacles. Furthermore, Indonesia's education system, while having successfully produced a shared political culture internally, has left Indonesians relatively ill-equipped to understand or deal with the world externally, or what Reid argues is "the relative absence of cosmopolitan global citizens" in the successful creation of Indonesia's national identity.²¹⁰ However, these assertions do not necessarily imply that Indonesians have not engaged with the world beyond their borders. A performer such as Waldjajah, who has extensive experience performing internationally, is evidence to the contrary. However, Reid's critique does perhaps

²¹⁰ Reid (2012: 8-9) argues that revolutionary nationalists forcibly silenced dissent during the years of the war and immediately following independence. Some Eurasians, Chinese, Europeans, Arabs, Jews and others placed outside the national conversation essentially felt they had to leave Indonesia post-1945. Internationally-oriented Muslims, who justified anti-imperial violence in favor of an Islamic state, were killed or silenced along with some of Indonesia's most inquiring and innovative minds on the political left. Reid cites these historical circumstances as indirect reasons why Indonesian scholars who study abroad tend to focus on their own country, and yet ninety percent of writing on Indonesia itself is done by people not based in the country (ibid).

address some reasons why she has continuously emphasized her local Javanese (and specifically Solonese) identity throughout her career.

Reaching the Javanese Diaspora in Suriname

Suriname, a small country located on South America's north coast, has a sizable Javanese population originally brought over when the Dutch established it as a colony in 1667. In addition to bringing over workers from their own East Indies colony, the Dutch also, as a result of the 1871 Anglo-Dutch Treaty of Sumatra, were allowed to ship contract laborers from the British colony of India in exchange for the surrender of the Gold Coast of Africa (Rickleffs 1993: 144). Hindustanis now represent the largest ethnic group in Suriname comprising almost forty percent of Suriname's population with the Javanese around fifteen percent. Javanese language (but not so much Indonesian) is commonly spoken among ethnic Javanese in Suriname and the community also has retained elements of Javanese culture, among them music. Waldjinhah was not entirely surprised to find out in the early 1970s that some of her recordings, including "*Walang Kekek*," had become popular hits on Suriname's radio stations as well. She developed a loyal following in the South American country and made trips in 1972 and 1991 to perform there.

A year after traveling to Singapore, a man named Pak Amat invited me to tour in Suriname in 1972. We decided not to bring the entire band this time because there were

already keroncong musicians playing in Suriname. I did, however, bring along a violinist and a back-up singer as well as my husband, Pak Bud, of course. We stayed in Suriname for an entire month and performed in various towns with large Javanese populations. During that month, I was given an honorarium of one million rupiah, which at the time was quite a sum of money. With it I came back to Indonesia and was able to renovate our old house in Mangkuyudan into what you see today. I really enjoyed visiting Suriname, the audiences at concerts were enthusiastic and very receptive; many non-Javanese people even came to my concerts. People of Suriname were quite generous with us. Everywhere we went people offered us food and gifts.



8.5 Suriname, 1972. Photo courtesy of Waldjinah.

Visiting Javanese communities across Suriname made me realize that their art forms remained recognizable to what existed in Java, especially in terms of folk arts like jathilan and keroncong. Farming techniques there were similar to Java. They even grew similar crops, like cassava (singkong), petai and sugar cane.²¹¹ There were many sugar cane processing factories that also made Suriname appear more familiar to us. The main difference was that the Javanese people there usually had more money than we did here in Indonesia, especially before Suriname declared its independence. After that I heard that quite a number of wealthy Javanese followed the Dutch back to the Netherlands. Javanese people in Suriname didn't speak any Indonesian, instead most spoke ngoko (informal Javanese). That's probably why "Walang Kekek" and some of my other langgam jawa songs became so popular. Audiences really enjoyed the Javanese language songs, especially the humorous songs (lagu jenaka), which are all in ngoko.

²¹¹ *Petai* (or *pete*) is a tree that produces beans with a pungent odor, which can be eaten either raw or cooked.



8.6 Waldjinhah and her band in Suriname, 1972. Photo courtesy of Waldjinhah.

Waldjinhah's performances in Suriname are best understood within the context of diaspora and transnationalism. As George Lipsitz (2007: 29-32) observes, music genres like hip hop and reggae have created long-standing connections between Caribbean and US-born Blacks, while the influence of prominent musicians, like Jamaican reggae superstar Bob Marley, promoted pro-Black messages that resonated not only with Caribbean audiences but also with Caribbean diasporas in large North American urban centers like New York City. Although Waldjinhah's popularity came in a different context, her music nevertheless helped to reinforce historical cultural connections between

diasporic Javanese in Suriname and their original homeland in Indonesia. Her concerts also gave ethnic Javanese audiences abroad an opportunity to see Waldjinah perform live, essentially giving her a tangible presence more “real” than the voice fans heard on the radio or through recordings. Had she never once visited Suriname, she might still have had some level of popularity, however, the result of her first tour in 1972, helped establish her as an enduring icon of Javanese culture—a legacy that continued on nearly twenty years later when she was invited to perform there again.



8.7 The crowd looks on (Suriname, 1972). Photo courtesy of Waldjinah.

I was well received in Suriname, after my second tour there I heard they even named a street after me. In Paramaribo (the capital city) there is a “Waldjinh Street” somewhere in town. During my stay I stopped into a number of beauty shops run mostly by young Javanese women and some of them later wrote to inform me that they had named their newborn daughters after me. So now there are a few more women named “Waldjinh” running around Suriname as well!

The “Queen of Java” in Japan

Of all the countries Waldjinh visited, her favorite by far was Japan. It was also the country she visited the most over the course of her career—a total of seven times to perform at events and to record. One of the reasons she most enjoyed performing in Japan was because of how appreciated she felt, nowhere else, according to her, have audiences hung on every verse of a song the way they did in Japan. On one occasion she was deeply surprised by a gesture of appreciation people showed after a performance in 1995.

I was completely stunned when the audience rose and gave me standing a ovation after completing my last song. They stood and clapped for nearly five minutes while I watched speechless and unable to move. It was the first time in my entire career that an audience has done that for me and it’s a moment I’ll always remember and

cherish. Even in Indonesia, I've never received such a warm and enthusiastic response from a crowd.

Compared to some of the other countries she visited (or even Indonesia for that matter), Waldjinhah also enjoyed how organized Japanese promoters were. This allowed her and her band to focus more on the performance itself and less on the logistics of travel.

Each time my band and I arrived in Japan, the event organizer was at the airport to welcome us. Our instruments were retrieved from the baggage claim by his staff and loaded onto vehicles without anyone in the band lifting a finger. We were driven to our hotel, instruments were brought to our rooms and the organizer presented us with a schedule outlining performance and practice times. Everything was done in an orderly and efficient way.

Despite the hospitality and overall graciousness she received while in Japan, she also had to maneuver through instances of awkwardness.

While being interviewed by Japanese television once, the reporter asked how I felt about Japan's occupation of Indonesia during World War II. At first I was taken aback by the question and confused as to how I should answer. I immediately thought to

myself: Is there a “correct” way to answer to this question? Eventually I just blurted out something about being born after the occupation and not remembering much about it. Of course, I do remember the stories I heard growing up about the cruelty of the Japanese military and the hardships they caused Indonesians but how could I talk about these things on Japanese television? I decided I’d better keep my mouth shut or risk never being invited back to Japan again. (She laughed.)



8.8 (from l to r) Nuning, Gesang and Waldjinah on stage in Tokyo, 1995. Photo courtesy of Waldjinah.

What she perceived to be a sensitive topic was in retrospect perhaps not quite as sensitive as she imagined at the time—especially since the reporter’s question came at a time when people in Japan were finally openly discussing some of the atrocities

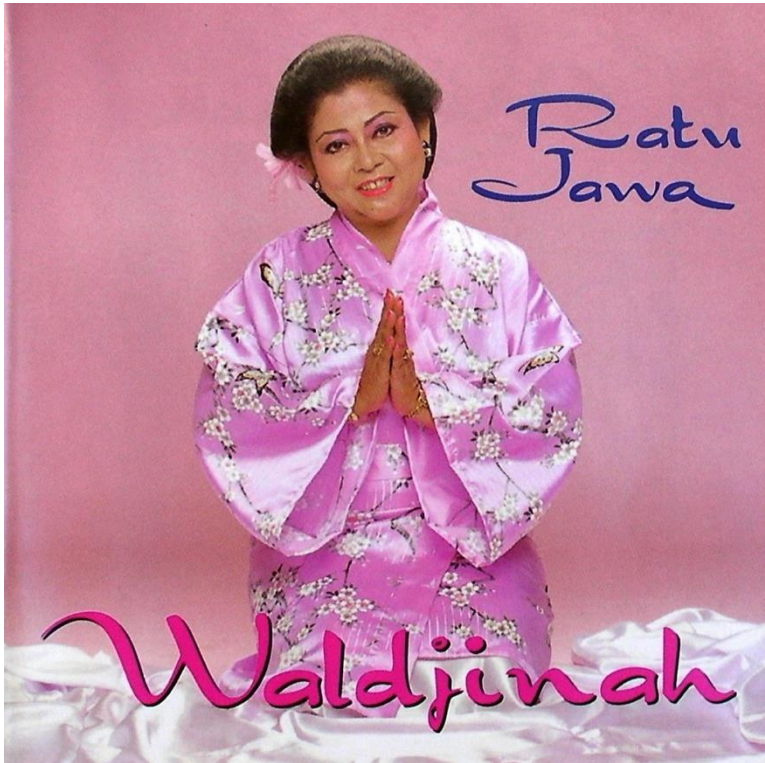
committed in Southeast Asia during World War II. Waldjinh's careful response also suggested an astute awareness of her Japanese audience as well as a desire to keep the door open for future opportunities to perform and record in Japan.

The *Ratu Jawa* Album

One such opportunity resulted in her recording the album, "*Ratu Jawa* (The Queen of Java)," which she completed over a series of trips in the late 1990s. Originally the album was released only for the Japanese domestic market, but was later re-released in Indonesia and for Western markets in 2004.²¹² If keroncong represents a unique *mélange* of East and West, *Ratu Jawa* takes this idea several steps further incorporating elements of musical syncretism unheard of in previous keroncong recordings. Bringing together an array of musicians from Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brazil, the album weaves together the textures and timbres of Brazilian samba, Okinawan pop, 1990's style hip hop, Indonesian *campursari*, Afro-Caribbean percussion and more into the idiom of keroncong and *langgam jawa*.²¹³ The cast of musicians on *Ratu Jawa* experiment with these elements in order to reinterpret Waldjinh classics like "Walang Kekek," "Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang," "Tanjung Perak," and others.

²¹² "*Ratu Jawa*" was released on UK label Rice Records in 2004.

²¹³ *Campursari* is a music that Waldjinh helped to popularize in the mid to late 1990s. It combines elements of keroncong, Javanese gamelan along with other musics like dangdut and Indonesian pop.



8.9 The *Ratu Jawa* album cover. Courtesy of Rice Records, 2004.

While remaining familiar, each of these songs is given new treatment with unusual combinations of instruments, tempos, rhythms and other aesthetics. For instance, “Walang Kekek” here eschews strictly traditional keroncong instrumentation adding electronic programmed beats, an accordion, a Brazilian *bandolim*, synthesizers and a lush, reverb-drenched backing chorus by popular Okinawan female vocal group, Nenes. *Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang* includes the familiar langgam jawa instrumentation (cuk, cak, guitar, flute, violin) and rhythms, however the most noticeable characteristic of the song is an early 1990s era hip-hop beat, creating a backbeat generally not associated with langgam jawa. The inclusion of a *kendang* drum also adds textural

variation and a distinct Javanese gamelan element, but unlike in most gamelan or campursari recordings, the kendang's rhythmic function here is subordinate to the more pronounced hip-hop beat. A rap interlude in Indonesian inserted midway through the song makes the syncretic blend of hip-hop and langgam jawa even more obvious while perhaps also (at that time) signifying the emergence of hip hop culture as a worldwide phenomenon.

"*Tanjung Perak*" is one of the few uptempo songs in Waldjinhah's repertoire. On the *Ratu Jawa* version, its bouncy samba-inflected rhythms, performed on *cavanquinho*, banjo, snare drums and other Brazilian percussion instruments, make "Tanjung Perak" sound like musical accompaniment at a Carnival parade in Rio de Janeiro. Besides samba influences, a distinct horn section comprised of saxophones, trombone, tuba, flute and piccolo, recalls the origins of Tanjung Perak's melody in the music of late colonial Dutch brass bands.

Musical syncretism continues to be theme of the album on "Kumanthil Neng Ati" and "Shina No Yoru," both of which are Japanese songs. "Shina No Yoru," according to album liner notes, was a popular song in Japan dating back to World War II and eventually made it to occupied Indonesia, where Waldjinhah recalls hearing it as a girl. The lyrics for this version are translated from Japanese to Javanese and it musically incorporates elements of Spanish classical guitar and Brazilian *musica nordestina*.²¹⁴ Even more fascinating is that the song "Kumanthil Neng Ati" was originally known as

²¹⁴ From the liner notes to the album 2004:7

“Hana” and composed by Okinawan singer Shoukichi Kina in 1980.²¹⁵ “Hana” remains one of Okinawa’s best known songs and it later crossed over to other Asian audiences in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, where versions were sung in local languages. “Kumanthil Neng Ati” features the melody of “Hana” but has lyrics in Javanese (as well as some Japanese), penned by Indonesian composer Anjar Any, who was chosen by producer Katsunori Tanaka because of his musical background in langgam jawa.

Liner notes in *Ratu Jawa* give credit to Tanaka for being the impetus for the ideas on this album and “holding everything together.” It describes Tanaka’s experience working not only with Indonesian but also Malaysian, Brazilian and other Latin American musicians, producing records in each of these countries along with others in the Caribbean, Latin America and East Asia. A description on UK label Rice Records’ website describes him as “a huge ball of energy on the Japanese world music scene... (having) done more than anyone else in Japan to open that music crazy nation’s ears to sounds from across the globe.”²¹⁶ While Tanaka certainly deserves credit for the rich palette of musical textures and influences brought together on *Ratu Jawa*, Waldjinh’s involvement in the project was more than just another musical contributor. Not only is she the person who gives voice to the work, Waldjinh is also pictured prominently sitting on the album’s cover in a kneeling position dressed in a pink cherry blossom print

²¹⁵ The full name for the song “Hana” in Japanese is “Subete no Hito no Kokoro ni Hana O,” roughly translated as “Flowers for Your Heart.” The song appears on Kina’s 1980 album *Blood Line*, which features Ry Cooder on guitar. Waldjinh’s recording on “Kumanthil” includes accompaniment by Malaysian musicians S. Atan on accordion and pianist Mac Chew.

²¹⁶ From *ricerecords.co.uk*, 1 November 2004, captured 28 August 2014)

kimono, with her hair styled up, evoking both Japanese and Javanese traditions, and her hands held together in a respectful pose reminiscent of a geisha. At the time of the recording, Waldjinhah was in her late 50s with an established reputation as Indonesia's most renowned keroncong singer. In other words, she did not need to participate in a project so different in design and concept from her previous recordings. She did it because she felt it was a novel way of (re)interpreting her music that might possibly gain her some new fans internationally. Besides, extending the boundaries of keroncong was what she had done throughout her career, first with *langgam jawa* in the 1960s and then *campursari* in the late 1990s.

On my first visit to Waldjinhah's home in 2008 I remember her showing me a copy of *Ratu Jawa* and describing it as "innovative keroncong" (*keroncong inovasi*). She was certainly happy with the album and perhaps proud to be thought of again as a keroncong innovator. The album was also Waldjinhah's first released specifically for an international audience. Although the album's production quality and overall aesthetic reflects some of the syncretic tendencies found in the "worldbeat" genre generally, it retains a distinctly Waldjinhah-esque quality due to the distinct timbre of her voice—a quality that made this and each of her other albums instantly recognizable to listeners. Her decision to record this album also suggests a prevailing attitude among some keroncong musicians who have in recent years sought to "preserve" keroncong by reshaping it for current audiences.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ I explore this topic in further detail in Chapter 10.

Conclusion: On an International Stage

Indonesian artists generally consider performing internationally to be an immense source of pride—they refer to it using the English phrase “going international.”²¹⁸ The phrase circulates in an array of contexts ranging from film stars to professional pop artists and even lesser known artists in “heavy music,” such as hardcore punk and metal bands. The term is also imbued with complex meanings based on these differing contexts. To my understanding, “going international” not only means that an artist has reached foreign audiences, it also bestows a form of validation from Indonesian audiences, in a sense affirming (or reaffirming) that s/he has reached a standard of quality “good enough” for export. The status afforded to artists who “go international” differs based the type of foreign audience one achieves. For instance, I have observed that touring or establishing a fan base in neighboring Southeast Asian countries may invite some level of regional status but not quite the same level as gaining recognition in the West. This, of course, is more challenging for Indonesian artists for any number of reasons including financial costs and an overall lack of access to Western markets.

²¹⁸ I have been told by Indonesian musicians that using the English phrase, as opposed to Indonesian, symbolically represents engaging with the rest of the world in a common language.

Waldjinah has performed internationally on a number of occasions since 1971.²¹⁹

In addition to the trips to Singapore, Suriname and Japan I discussed in this chapter, she also performed in China, Greece, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Malaysia. Although cultural missions were not uncommon (many other Balinese, Javanese and Sundanese artists have also performed internationally), Waldjinah was unique in that few keroncong performers achieved international acclaim. I once asked about the possible impact on her life and career if she had not been able to “go international.”

Even if I had never left Indonesia I still would feel good about what I've achieved in my career. I still would have been able to support my family and would have had enough money to send my children to school and college. I do, however, feel a certain level of pride in having performed internationally so many times because during that time, there were so few Indonesian vocalists doing it. Very few Indonesian performers generally, much less keroncong vocalists, have been able to do what I've done. Nowadays there are many more vocalists (and performers) who “go international,” especially those sponsored by Indonesian embassies around the world. I was one of the first Indonesian vocalists to perform abroad and I often did it without help from the government. Singers who perform abroad today make much more money than I ever did but I'm still proud of what I've achieved. I've had so many rewarding experiences on

²¹⁹ Based on an estimate, she counts at least fifteen international appearances from 1971 until her most recent appearance at the Tong Tong Festival in the Netherlands in May 2013.

various trips. Alhamdulillah (Thanks be to God) that I've been able to see so many different parts of this world!

Waldjinhah has had opportunities to perform and record internationally afforded to few other Indonesian artists of her era. In turn this helped to solidify her iconic status in Indonesia, as well as forge connections with diasporic Javanese. Her travels abroad also allowed her to experience modernities beyond Indonesia, which in turn provided her with perspectives to evaluate Indonesia's overall development, particularly in relation to its Southeast Asian neighbors. These accumulated experiences encouraged Waldjinhah's cosmopolitan tendencies, especially in her willingness to experiment (with new styles, instrumentation and so on) as an artist—a tendency that continued well into the latter portion of her career. Payments from her international performances have also had a significant impact on her and her family's financial stability—for instance, the single honorarium from a concert in Japan that essentially allowed her to build a new home in Solo. Although Waldjinhah considered her performances internationally primarily as important "life experiences," these performances also established her as a national artist in Indonesia.

Chapter 9—Solo Girl: Gender and Image in Print Media

Roro Mendut with a kind and friendly heart, her beauty blinds the eyes of men, leaving them bewildered and dazed from morning to night.

From the song “Roro Mendut,” named after a female heroine in a Javanese legend

As an iconic keroncong vocalist and public figure in Indonesia, Waldjinhah certainly was no stranger to media coverage, nor does she shy away from it. Given her popularity over the years, it was not uncommon to see reporters, journalists, television crews or even fans arriving at the front gate of her home in Solo’s Mangkuyudan district. Her surprisingly modest home has been the site of countless interviews given to Indonesian media over the course of her career. The following excerpt, from an article in a local newspaper, describes a reporter’s experience meeting Waldjinhah for the first time.

“I arrived to find Waldjinhah already at the front gate of her home in Mangkuyudan late one afternoon. After explaining that I had come to interview her, I asked if we could chat briefly. Waldjinhah smiled, flashing pearly white, evenly set teeth. When I began snapping photos though, she left hurriedly, entering the house and leaving me behind to wait in the beautiful guest parlor room. Five minutes later, she emerged, this time sporting blue jeans and a checkered blouse reminiscent of a cowboy. For a moment there, I couldn’t believe it was really Waldjinhah, the true Putri Solo.”

(an excerpt from an article published in *Lembaran Minggu*, late 1960s, translation by author)

I begin with this vignette as a way of discussing how the public, especially Indonesian mass media, have constructed gendered images of Waldjinhah over the course of her career, and how she, in turn, has negotiated her own public image as a female performer, a mother and wife. Although brief, the excerpt passage above is packed with visual imagery of a young Waldjinhah: pearly white teeth, blue jeans and checkered blouses, cowboys and the archetype of *Putri Solo* (Solonese Girl). Putri Solo, a subject I return to later in this chapter, is also the title of a keroncong song, taking its name from Waldjinhah's hometown of Solo, with lyrics describing the appropriate behavior and appearance of an idealized Solonese woman. Waldjinhah's reaction to this reporter is not entirely unusual, she may have been caught off guard by his arrival but appeared willing to do the interview. When the reporter began snapping photos, Waldjinhah immediately realized she was dressed inappropriately and left to change. What she chose to wear, however, surprised the reporter, perhaps because the "cowboy" look he attributed to her blue jeans and red checkered blouse combination contradicted the established feminine image of her as an iconic Putri Solo. There are a number of ways to interpret his comments. For one, there is a local/foreign dichotomy. Waldjinhah chose an outfit the reporter attributes to a Western cowboy rather than the usual Javanese attire she is known for wearing on album covers and during live performances. Secondly, his comments reference an expectation of what she *should* look like based on gender. The reporter is shocked to see Waldjinhah blurring the lines of femininity by dressing like a "cowboy," representative of a Western masculinity. The

cowboy, in this sense, forms a distinct other to the Putri Solo not only in terms of foreignness but also in how it challenges the image of Waldjinah's "true" femininity.

The passage also suggests that Waldjinah wished to control her public image. She simply did not allow the reporter to snap photos of her dressed in a way she was uncomfortable with. This is not necessarily usual, but for a performer of Waldjinah's stature, the exchange between her and the reporter did explicitly show how she attempted to control her image. During the early part of her career, Waldjinah honed her skills not only as a vocalist but also in crafting her public persona. Like other public figures, she engaged in a performance of self on various levels, and often taking on different characteristics depending on context. I am thinking here of Richard Bauman's (1984: 5) assertion that, "(performance) sets up, or represents, an interpretive frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood, and that this frame contrasts with at least one other frame, the literal." Bauman's observation can also be understood in the multiple contexts of public personas created by and for Waldjinah. Some of these personas adhere to common archetypes of Indonesian femininity, such as the attractive and fierce *Putri Solo*, the sexually charged "bombshell," and the responsible, nurturing and family-oriented mother. Other personas attributed to Waldjinah contradict and complicate stereotypes of femininity—for instance, the "cowgirl" described in the passage above, her "tomboy" image as a youth or even as a touring performer who spent much of her time away from home.

Each persona elicits different types of framing and I am not assuming that she approaches them all in the same way.

The performance of selfhood creates the opportunity for framing, which, as Sally Ann Ness (1992: 4-6) observes, becomes a “choreographic phenomena.” Describing how she came to understand the interconnections of “I” as a dancer/performer and the “I” of ordinary life, Ness observes that this choreography as “a dimension of human experience becomes more vividly accessible, more available to representation and study than...any other form of symbolic action (ibid).” As a dancer, Ness goes on to explain that “nobody, or *no-body* (originally italicized), can learn an unfamiliar neuromuscular pattern without willing to acquire a new or perhaps startling insight into who they actually are—that is to say, a truly plural being or figure.” This plurality of being not only informs how Waldjinhah chose to frame her encounters with the public but also her reasons for doing so.

Part of this framing involves the recurring trope of arrival at her home, which, over the period of time I interviewed her, became quite familiar to me. Unlocking the front gate, removing my shoes, knocking on the door, being met by Waldjinhah’s maid and then waiting for her to emerge from the back of the house in the parlor room all became part of a weekly process. These types of interactions are actually quite common when visiting Javanese people in their own home. What is important is that cultural protocol establishes an etiquette and puts the host, in this case Waldjinhah, in control allow her to establish the persona she wishes to present. How she presents

herself also allows her to convey and control the type of information she wants to share with guests. This type of symbolic action, described by Ness, also follows Victor Turner's (1982: 8-9) observations about the power of symbols in human communication. Turner notes that this power exists not only in shared lexicons and grammars of spoken and written language but also in the use of symbols that go beyond words, using the entire sensory repertoire to convey messages: manual gesticulations, facial expressions, bodily postures, tears, prescribed silences and so on. As I discuss in the remainder of this chapter, much of Waldjinhah's performance of selfhood was negotiated through an array of interrelated mechanisms constructing gender and sexuality in Indonesia implicating discourses of the state, religion (especially Islam), and mass media.

Hierarchies of Gender, Discourses of Sexuality

Female performers in Indonesia have generally held a socially ambiguous status, usually conferred by the male audiences they are expected to entertain and entice. They are simultaneously maligned for associations with sexual freedom and prostitution, yet revered for having mystical and supernatural powers. In actuality many negotiate desired identities based not only their own choices but also the agencies of others, which include a host of abstract and gendered forces (eg. media, religion, government) as well as influences from their quotidian lives: parents, siblings, spouses, extended family members and friends.

The first part of this chapter examines what I consider “portraits” of Waldjinh in Indonesian print media, referring not only to literal photographs but also to articles spanning the course of her career. Rather than consider these articles as merely two-dimensional representations in mass media, I prefer thinking of them as temporalized and spatialized scenes in her life, corresponding to specific places, events, images and periods described in the articles. These scenes essentially articulate specific types of gendered images of Waldjinh. I am also interested in how processes of gendering contribute to gender ideologies promoted by the state that have employed specific types of discourse to create disparate images of Waldjinh ranging from sultry siren to compassionate mother and loyal wife. As Susan Blackburn (2004: 3) reminds us though, despite the importance of the state, we must be wary of attributing too much power to it, especially since women are implicated in gender relations only partially determined by the state. Blackburn also notes that “power relations between men and women are produced and perpetuated by beliefs and practices about the appropriate behavior and treatment of men and women in a particular society at a particular time (ibid).” It should be understood that these relations of power take shape on an individual level and are influenced by other socioeconomic and cultural forces outside the control of the state.

I am also interested in what causes (or prevents) change in gender relations over time and for this reason I have chosen to explore how scenes of Waldjinh in print media varied as she grew older. Interviews I conducted with her, also emphasized her

own efforts to transcend the stereotypes attributed to some female performers while also revealing tactics she used to manage her public image. Part of my discussion includes looking beyond Waldjinah's public image and into her personal life, especially in regards to relationships both with her previous (now deceased) husband and her current one. More specifically, I examine how changing dynamics within these relationships parallel other broader shifts in gender roles and ideologies in Indonesia, especially as New Order representations of women moved from "housewives" to career women (*wanita karier*) in order to promote the image of the professional woman as emblematic of Indonesian modernity (see Brenner 1998, Sen and Stivens 1998).

Although representations of females in Indonesian popular media are generally quite diverse, some female performers continue to be sexualized. Addressing *dangdut*, another Indonesian popular music, Andrew Weintraub (2010: 24) writes, "tabloid stories about sex and scandal attach to dangdut singers, especially women, more than any other genre of music in Indonesia...the grouping together of 'female,' 'dangdut' and 'singer' conjures images of sexual pleasure and seduction." While these terms can signify a range of possibilities including sexual freedom, economic potential or even Muslim identity, the enduring image of the gyrating, scantily clad young, female dangdut singer remains a tool used to market the genre to a nationalized and predominantly male audience. Female performers, however, are not necessarily helpless victims in this scheme. Some performers, for instance in dangdut and dance

traditions such as *lènggèr*, actively collude in their own sexualization, especially for financial gain, and therefore exploit their sexuality on stage.

Sexualization of female performers, however, is not necessarily a new or recent phenomena in Indonesia. Female vocalists in Javanese gamelan ensembles, known as *pesindhèn*, have long been considered to possess supernatural powers of attraction stemming from earlier singer-dancer traditions in Java associated with sexual freedom, prostitution and other social misconduct (see Spiller 2011, Walton 1996, Cooper 1994, Sutton 1987). In certain cases, the overt sexuality associated with dance traditions, like *lènggèr*, *tayuban* and *ronggèng*, create a social ambiguity for female performers, stigmatizing them well into their old age affecting relationships within families and their ability to earn income even after they stop performing (Lysloff 2002: 4). For these and other reasons, some men remain reluctant to allow their wives and daughters to dance in public settings (Spiller 2011: 10).

Adding historical perspective to this narrative, Evelyn Blackwood (2010: 36-39) argues that the “deployment of gender” by those in power was used as a way of normalizing messages of sexuality first during the Dutch colonial period and later during the New Order era. Blackwood (2010: 40) observes that “New Order discourses were not directed at sexuality per se but at the creation of properly gendered, reproductive citizens situated within heterosexual nuclear families.” In the United States and other parts of the world, the term “sex” refers to the physical genitalia of males and females while “gender” refers to the social attributes of being men or women. In Indonesia, the

two are not distinguished but rather operate in a single discursive framework where gender is conflated with the “nature” of sexed bodies. Deployment of gender during the New Order meant a consistent and comprehensive discourse defining the proper positions of women and men in the Indonesian state. While men were considered the heads of household and leaders of the state, terms left open to wide interpretation, women were narrowly defined according to their nature and subsequently to national duty, interpreted as marrying heterosexually, becoming mothers, raising families, and nurturing others generally. Historian Barbara Andaya (2008:147-148) notes a recurring overarching metaphor of the state as a family in Southeast Asian countries generally. According to Andaya, such ideas were based in other notions about the relationships of husbands to wives, parents to children and fathers to mothers all “embedded in the power distribution on which authority rested (ibid).” Andaya also points to old Malay codes asserting that father, mother and king are considered to “take the place of God” in this world while the depiction of the ruler as “father and mother of his people” extends to other figures of authority as well. Although it should not be assumed that discourses of hierarchy and gender were received and reproduced evenly, their dominance created a widely accepted model of gender where women and men were encouraged, or even required, to think of themselves as distinct and unequal with different attributes, capabilities and sexual privileges (Blackwood 2010: 43). Discourses of marriage and reproduction created an understanding of gender based on the “natural” attributes of men and women and their god-given abilities to reproduce within

a heterosexual marriage. Understanding gender entails also understanding one's sexuality and observing its proper practice. Rather than the deployment of sexuality, the New Order government carried out a deployment of gender "ensuring the proper development of reproductive citizens through a rigid gender binary that obviated the need for legal restrictions on non-normative sexualities or gender transgressions (Blackwood 2010: 63)."

The influence of Islam in configurations of gender and sexuality also must not be overlooked. Tom Boellstorff (2005: 575) writes that "Islam in Indonesia is not just personal belief and prayer, it constitutes a public sphere that includes the nation itself." Despite being the overwhelmingly predominant religion in Indonesia, Islam is just one of the five world religions officially recognized by the state, the others being Protestantism, Buddhism, Catholicism and Hinduism—all are established world religions rather than localized animist beliefs. Despite a focus on national unity, Muslims comprise nearly ninety percent of the population and the Islamic ethos filters into every facet of nationalized culture. Islamic discourse arises from numerous sources in Indonesia, among them: political parties, national Islamic organizations, educational institutions (including private Islamic boarding schools known as *pesantren*), religious courts, state-sanctioned religious bodies (such as the Council of Indonesia Religious Studies or *Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) and the government's ministry of religion (see Hefner 2007, Hooker and Lindsey 2002). Similar to state discourse, Islamic doctrine establishes and enforces strict lines of difference between men and women based on

the body, namely men's "strength" and women's ability to bear children.²²⁰ Given this fundamental difference, many Muslim scholars tend to agree that men and women have different dispositions and different social and cultural obligations and responsibilities. Men and women are each considered having their own *kodrat* (nature) determined by Allah. Although some Islamic scholars are willing to support women's rights to education and career, this support is conditioned on a woman's ability to fulfill duties as a wife and mother. Boellstorff (2005: 578) suggests that in Islamic thought in Indonesia (and elsewhere) the central concept organizing sexuality is heterosexual marriage, which has historically been considered a contract not just between two individuals but rather families.

As I alluded to in earlier chapters, some of these ideas have deeply influenced how Waldjinhah has conceived her roles as mother and wife as well as how she has constructed her public image. From a young age, Waldjinhah became conscious of stereotypes attributed to some female performers and understood how negative aspects of these stereotypes could affect her later in her career. Becoming a well-known performer, however, allowed her to challenge some of the norms and conditions associated with female performers and being a woman in Indonesia generally. In this sense, her experiences foreshadowed developments in public discourse toward gender roles and sexuality in postcolonial Indonesia. This is not to imply or assume that she was free from the constraints of gender roles constructed and enforced by state, religious

²²⁰ See Hefner 2000

and other figures of authority. In various ways, the identities she created for herself as a female performer, a wife and a mother, fall distinctly within the parameters of what a “good” Indonesian woman should be. Circumstances, however, did provide her a degree of financial independence and freedom that altered (or at least challenged) existing hierarchies of gender and gender roles in her own household and family life.

Sexuality, *Halus*-ness and Gossip

Different from some female performers in singer/dancer traditions of Java or popular music genres like *dangdut*, aspects of performance, such as bodily movements and dress, are usually considered less overtly sexual for female keroncong vocalists. Many of the performances I observed featured female singers conservatively dressed in *kain kebaya*, a traditional blouse and dress combination worn by some women in Indonesia (as well as Malaysia and Singapore), who preferred slow, deliberate and constrained movements considered to be *halus* (refined or genteel).²²¹ *Halus* female movements required legs to remain relatively close together and arms to remain down and held close to the torso—generally speaking, it was considered unseemly for women to have their legs far apart and arms raised to allow a profile view of her torso and breasts. Waldjinah generally represents the ideal of a *halus* keroncong vocalist. This

²²¹ Specifically, *kain* refers to the cloth worn as a wrap-around, ankle-length skirt made of cambric-based batik, or lurik (in Java), cotton interwoven with silk or metallic threads (in Bali) or heavy silk interwoven with gold and metallic threads (in Sumatra). If the edges of a kain are sewn together it is called a *sarong* (or *sarung*). *Kebaya* refers to the long-sleeved blouse worn over the *kain* (see Stevens and Schmigall-Tellings 2010: 436-437,460)

comes especially from her coquettish, high-pitched vocal delivery and the way she projects herself both on and off stage. Part of this *halus*-ness also derives from her distinct fashion sense which nearly always includes an ornately decorated, fitted *kain kebaya*. The visual imagery associated with the iconic vocalist is inextricably linked with the *kain kebaya*, a style of dress she has proudly worn her entire career during performances in Indonesia as well as internationally.

"I wear the kain kebaya because it symbolizes Indonesia...but also because keroncong is considered to be a refined music. I have to dress in an appropriate and well-mannered (sopan) way, the kain and kebaya works because it's formal but not overly formal. Some kain I wore had a long slit running up the side to expose a portion of the thigh, which really gets people's hearts pounding (she laughed heartily), but actually you want to make sure you don't expose too much."

Her comments suggest that Waldjinhah considered an element of sexuality integral to her live performances—an aspect decidedly more pronounced earlier on in her career. She realized, however, that sexuality, at least in her case, had to be balanced with an overall *halus* appearance, it cannot outweigh it. Essentially, getting “people’s hearts pounding,” refers to her male fans and controlling how she presents her sexuality which in this case is deeply implicated with protecting her image as a performer. Part of maintaining this balance is the *kain kebaya* itself. Key characteristics

when choosing a good *kain kebaya*, she told me, are that its colors are striking (*mencolok*), its appearance makes you look slim (*langsing*), and that it is constructed from material with elasticity (*mulur*) so that it wraps well around all areas of the body, especially the chest, waist, buttocks and legs. Waldjinhah's loyalty to wearing the *kain kebaya* certainly associates a sense of "Indonesianness" with her appearance and "traditional" fashion sense. Batik, however, also has more intimate connections with her own family background, and her choice of batik-themed *kain* may actually have more to do with local Solonese identity and her own upbringing than expressing national pride or refinement. Having grown up near Laweyan, a district in Solo long famous for the prodigious production of high quality batik, both Waldjinhah's parents worked as batik-makers. Most of her memories growing up around batikmakers were tied to her parents, especially her mother, which may be one reason she continued wearing it.²²²

"In order to support nine children, my mom worked both as a batikmaker and as a vegetable seller in the market, she would go to the market at dawn each morning and

²²² Over the centuries, Indonesians have made batik into a truly exquisite art form and nowadays it is generally considered an important aspect of national culture. The resurgence in the popularity of batik, especially in recent years, has also drawn the interest of foreigners. For instance, UNESCO designated Indonesian batik as an "Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" in October 2009 and with this comes funding from the world organization to continue efforts to "preserve" batik-making as an indigenous practice (Jakarta Post, accessed 2 October 2014, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/10/02/tracing-indonesia-s-very-own-living-art.html>). Some Indonesians I spoke with, however, remain somewhat skeptical about its recent resurgence. For instance, a musician once mentioned to me that he thought recent interest in batik came from the fact that foreigners have validated it as an "authentic" Indonesian art form.

come home to start making batik at a neighbor's house in the afternoon, many people in our neighborhood worked there. Sometimes I tagged along with her and tried to help out, especially after my sisters got married and moved away, but I mostly got in the way because I was still young and too playful. My mother often worked late into the night."

Besides being known for her keen fashion sense, Waljinhah's popularity as a performer and the longevity of her career also made her a model for other keroncong, pop and dangdut singers (male, female and transgender) to emulate. As a renowned vocalist in Indonesia for some time now, she has not, however, escaped the stereotypes associated with some female performers. During the time I spent visiting Waljinhah, I usually knew (or was made aware of) when an article about her appeared in either a local or national newspaper or magazine. After arriving at Waldjinhah's home and sitting down on a small couch in her ornately decorated parlor room, she would hand me a folded up newspaper or magazine and gently ask, "So, have you seen this?" Most of the time, I sheepishly grinned and admitted I had yet to see it and immediately asked if I could possibly borrow and copy it. I asked her once if she often read what was written about her in these articles, to which she replied "sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't...I try to stay clear of the gossip."

While reading through my collection of newspaper and magazine articles, many of which Waldjinhah had collected and allowed me to copy, some broad themes and issues emerged—among them: sexuality, aging, career, family life and religion. A few of

these articles, some dating back to the 1960s, were written in a style that could easily be perceived as tabloid “gossip.” Waldjinah, of course, had long been aware of this and understood the profound and often damaging effects gossip can have on a female performer’s career. In response, she spent much of her life consumed with ways to avoid becoming ensnared in it. In some cases, this resulted in a cautious and vigilant attitude toward socializing in public spaces such as restaurants and nightclubs in order to avoid stirring up potential gossip. Instead Waldjinah preferred socializing with friends in the privacy of her own home because it is where she felt at ease. When she did choose to socialize in public, it was usually in the company of friends or family, so as to avoid being seen with unfamiliar people, especially men, she did not trust.

I’m afraid that if I go out I’ll invite “talk” (ngomong), if I’m seen even speaking with a man, later they’ll say, ‘Oh, are they a couple now? Is she with another man?’ I don’t want to be seen as a woman who likes to go around randomly flirting with men, that’s why when I go out I prefer to travel in my own car, surrounded by my girlfriends or people I know...never alone. I’m mostly afraid of the “talk” that will ensue if I’m seen with unfamiliar men. That’s my biggest fear and that’s why I feel more secure in public when I’m surrounded by friends. If people ask me to go out and socialize with them on my own, I usually say no. It’s not that I don’t want to socialize but I’m afraid of how it may be construed.

Without implying that Waldjinah's attempts to elude gossip have induced a degree of subconscious paranoia, it is evident that, whether directly or indirectly, this avoidance has had a significant impact on her quotidian life. A hyperconsciousness about image influenced mundane choices regarding where, when and how she was seen in public, and even determined her social circle. Potentially most damaging to her reputation were unfamiliar men and primarily male fans of wealth and political power, who throughout her career, have regularly approached her offering rides to hotels, dinners, gifts or other enticements. This is not to assume that these offers always concealed unseemly or ulterior (sexually driven) motives, or even that most of her male fans resorted to this type behavior. However, enough have done so to warrant Waldjinah's vigilance. Over the course of her career, she became well aware how the simple act of accepting a gift or ride can lead to *ngomong* ("talk" or gossip) that could potentially cause irreparable damage to her image. Even as she grew older, Waldjinah remained concerned that her reputation could potentially be damaged by gossip if she was not careful. She once mentioned that even though gossip was less of a worry for her later in her career, she still preferred to stay clear of public areas and socialized only with a small circle of friends. In various ways, these behaviors intended to prevent gossip have become a naturalized way of being for her.

In most cases, she is not only conscious of her own behavior but also how "they" will interpret and write about it. Of course "they" refers here to the Indonesian press and other mass media outlets which, especially earlier in her career, created images of

Waldjinah that contradicted or challenged how she chose to represent herself in public. Although this is not necessarily an uncommon issue for some public figures in Indonesia, for Waldjinah it fed into (or perhaps even initiated) a hyperconsciousness of image that continued well into the latter part of her life. Some of these articles also created diverse images of Waldjinah showing processes of “gendering,” which as Stephen Smith (1992: 303) explains, is less about transcribing sex into character than making “representations *about* sex—about the significance of our endowment of sexual difference, about sex-linked regularities in everyday practice.” Waldjinah’s situation suggests that gendering in print media included an array of processes combining New Order/state and Islamic ideologies of gender as well as localized Javanese ideas about gender roles and aging. Before getting further into this, it is worth examining representations from scenes taken from articles at different points in her career.

Scene 1: “Bomb Sex”

A grainy photo in the tabloid *Sinar Harapan* (Rays of Hope) shows Waldjinah holding a classic condenser microphone dressed in an elegant, form-fitting kebaya. The caption below it reads:

After causing a commotion at Wisma Indonesia in Singapore, Waldjinh returned to Jakarta for a special performance for her Solo fans. Some have referred to her as a “sex bomb.” Hopefully there are no objections, especially from Waldjinh herself.

(translated by author from *Kompas/Sinar Harapan*, around 1971).²²³



9.1 Performing at a nightclub in Jakarta, early 1970s. Courtesy of *Sinar Harapan*, 1971.

²²³ “Waldjinh beberapa waktu jalan menggegerkan Wisma Indonesia di Singapura, kemudian menghibur secara khas Solo para penggemarnya di Jakarta di New Myraca Supper Club. Ada yang menamakannya “bomb sex.” Semoga tidak ada yang keberatan, khususnya Waldjinh sendiri.”

As a talented, young vocalist, the sexualized “bombshell” was one of the images attributed to Waldjinh early in her career. In Indonesia it is not uncommon for some young female singers, especially now in the genres of Indonesian pop or *dangdut*, to be portrayed as “sex bombs.” After all, this image reinforces a feminine ideal that simultaneously establishes an identity as a performer and can easily be marketed to male audiences. In today’s context, some may think that as a keroncong vocalist, Waldjinh being called a sex bomb seems somewhat unfitting, especially given the sense of refinement and nostalgic “tradition” now attributed to the genre. Even in my own experience, the image of the “sex bomb” did not immediately enter my mind while watching keroncong vocalists. As the caption suggests, however, keroncong vocalists were not always viewed this way. Back when the genre was more ingrained in the Indonesian pop music milieu, it did not seem quite as strange that an attractive, young keroncong singer like Waldjinh would be considered a sex symbol—similar to some female pop and dangdut singers today. Over the years, fans and performers tried (successfully) to rehabilitate keroncong by gentrifying it and transforming it into a national culture. Waldjinh’s being labeled a sex bomb, in this case, had implications far beyond her personal reputation, this labeling had the power to smear the entire genre.

Part of the bombshell image, however, also carried with it innuendo suggesting a moral looseness and sexual freedom partially based on a desire by media sources to stir up drama and celebrity gossip while titillating readers and fans. Even today, celebrity gossip shows in Indonesia are some of the most popular programs on television and are

broadcast on most networks daily. These infotainment shows essentially dish out “hot gossip” on Indonesian celebrities and quite a number have proved commercially viable by maintaining high ratings over an extended period of time (Yulianto 2008: 133-136). Tabloid newspapers, which in some cases predated these television shows, also continue to have traction in Indonesian popular culture and represent a significant market share of the celebrity gossip industry.²²⁴ Although the Indonesian celebrity gossip industry was less pervasive earlier on in Waldjinh’s career, it had an impact on creating a public image of her that, at times, was less than flattering, or perhaps even slanderous. One tabloid newspaper from the early 1970s, for instance, ran the headline:

“Is it true that Waldjinh is an out of wedlock pregnant widow? Wait for next week’s edition of Eljaya.”²²⁵

²²⁴ The success of celebrity gossip television programs in the mid-2000s such as *KISS (Kisah Seputar Selebritis)*, *Silet*, *Kabar-kabari*, *Gossip*, *Halo Selebriti* and a host of others, led to widespread imitation. The popularity of celebrity gossip shows reached both male and female (but especially younger female) audiences and became a daily subject of conversation, or as Yulianto (2008: 134) describes it, a “people’s spectacle (tontonan masyarakat), despite having low intellectual content. Yulianto (2008: 142) argues that these gossip shows have actually had a deleterious effect on its predominantly female audience creating passivity and constituting “a new kind of return to the domestication of women.”

²²⁵ *“Benarkah Waldjinh janda hamil diluar nikah? Tunggu Eljaya minggu depan.”*



9.2 Headline from the tabloid, Eljaya in the late 1960s. Courtesy of Eljaya, late 1960s.

Another tabloid from around this same time featured a photo of her again dressed in form-fitting kebaya, this time holding a small video camera. Beneath is a caption posing a pointed question:

*“If the beautiful Walang Kekek is already working behind the camera, will it make producers or directors brave enough to expose her in SEX scenes?
(from Eljaya, late 1960s)”²²⁶*

²²⁶ The nickname “Walang Kekek” has been used by the Indonesian press since early on in Waldjinah’s career. The nickname was given to her based on her hit song in the late 1960s. The caption below the



WALDJINAH

Kalau si WALANG KEKEK jg
tjantik ini sudah bertugas dibelakang
kamera, akan beranikah
producer2 atau sutradara2 mem-
buat dan meng expose adegan2
SEX?

(Photo Purnama/Mtc)

9.3 Another tabloid headline from *Eljaya* (late 1960s).

These representations, perhaps reflecting a brand of sensationalistic coverage associated with certain weekly tabloid newspapers, suggest that Waldjinah could not

photo reads: "Kalau si WALANG KEKEK yang cantik ini sudah bertugas dibelakang kamera, akan beranikah producer-producer atau sutradara-sutradara membuat dan mengexpose adegan-adegan SEX?"

escape the world of gossip circulating in print media. Writing in the context of eroticized Western female pop stars, Sheila Whiteley (2005: 30-33) argues that what is sold to the public is their image or “a simulacrum which has the power to arouse but not, in itself, assuage desire...image and culture of the young are appropriated for the high pleasure quotient they evoke...youthful allure and sexual titillation as marketable commodities.” Age undeniably factors into the allure of the sex bomb, but for a performer like Waldjinah, who was already a mother of five in her mid twenties, blatant allusions to sexuality came in a slightly different context than a young single performer. In one sense, being a young, attractive performer allowed Waldjinah to be viewed and marketed as a bombshell type female performer. Being a mother, however, created a distinctly different set of circumstances that helped balance her public image and shield Waldjinah from any real harm caused by mass mediated gossip. Selling the image of sexuality became part and parcel with selling her image as a mother and family woman, who despite her age could not be viewed the same way as the average young starlet. As Waldjinah aged, a shift in how she was portrayed in print media became especially apparent and in certain ways allowed her to transcend the image of “sex bomb” and respond to some of the sexually-charged gossip associated with her earlier.

Interestingly enough, the issue of film roles with “sex scenes” returned later in her life in a 1996 newspaper feature where a now mature Waldjinah reflected on offers to be in films: “I refused [the roles], because how would my kids feel if they saw their mother in these forbidden scenes... for the future of my children, I turned down films

like that.”²²⁷ She continued on discussing how her status as a *haji*, indicating she has performed the Muslim ritual of travelling to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, now carries the responsibility of protecting “the image of my religion in my profession as an artist (ibid).” In addition to the drastic change from sultry bombshell to a devout Muslim and responsible mother, this article, similar to others, provided Waldjinhah an opportunity to not only refute slanderous gossip but also recast her public image as something befitting the changing ideal image of an Indonesian woman as defined by state and religious authorities. Although I never asked her about it directly, it is possible (or even likely) that she paid these publications to allow her a forum to reconfigure her image, especially given that she had performed hajj and wanted to establish her image as a pious Muslim woman who happened to be a famous singer. A 1989 article begins with Waldjinhah lamenting, “For a long time now I’ve dealt with gossip linking me to other men and even spreading rumors about my own premature death...as a singer, I’m used to dealing with hardships like this.”²²⁸ More importantly, as she states, has been her husband’s positive attitude in dealing with slanderous rumors. She explains, “He’s calm, so why should I worry?”

²²⁷ “*Saya pun sering ditawarkan main film, tapi karena ada adegan seks saya menolak. Bagaimana perasaan anak sayak kalau lihat ibunya main film dengan adegan terlarang. Demi masa depan anak, saya menolak main film seperti itu. Apalagi saya sudah haji, berarti saya mengemban dua tanggung jawab, hajjah yang penyanyi, dan penyanyi yang hajjah. Artinya saya harus menjaga citra agama saya dalam profesi sebagai seniman* (from *Solo Pos*, “Sejak Tahun 1971, Terjun ke Politik [Since 1971, (She has been) Involved in Politics], 7 May 1996).”

²²⁸ “*Lama-lama aku terbiasa juga menghadapi gosip. Baik yang menyangkut namaku dengan pria lain maupun yang mengabarkan kematianku. Kiranya sebagai artis penyanyi bukan aku sendiri yang terkena musibah seperti itu. Jadi buat apa terus memikirkannya? Apalagi melihat suamiku tenang-tenang saja, kenapa aku mesti susah?* (in *Nova*, 8 October 1989)

Despite this seemingly nonchalant response, my own experiences with Waldjinah lead me to believe she was anything but casual in her response to dealing with rumors and slanderous gossip. In actuality, this type of harmful gossip affected her on a much deeper emotional and psychological level than perhaps even she was willing to admit (or was conscious of). Avoiding gossip led her to take calculated preventative measures in even the most mundane of activities to ensure there was nothing at all for tabloid journalists to use as fodder.

Scene 2: Loving Mother, Loyal Wife

Despite the sexually-charged gossip prevalent early on in her career, Waldjinah was more than just a bombshell—she was also known as a mother and wife. Unlike some of her peers during that era, she enjoyed fame as a performer only after becoming a mother, and a number of articles, as I discussed in an earlier chapter, refer to a “comeback” in her late twenties after having put her career on hold to start a family. These articles describe characteristics of her family—a husband, children, a “reasonably good” home in a peaceful neighborhood and her husband’s profession as a local high school teacher—and address aspects of Waldjinah’s life without actually exposing any real or revealing truths about her as a person. In this sense, they share the same level of superficiality as current Indonesian infotainment television programs. This type of ambiguity I believe is less about the writing styles of journalists and more about how she has tried to control and configure her own public image. In any case, constructing

diverse and interrelated images of her as a keroncong singer, a wife and a mother possess a value beyond simply marketing her as a performer. After all, rarely do the images of the “sex bomb” and the mother of five fit together so easily.

An important component of these constructions was how they portrayed Waldjinhah as a modern Indonesian woman by incorporating New Order era ideas of the ideal Indonesian woman with Western ideologies of bourgeois domesticity (woman as a consumer-housewife), and local “traditional” ideologies of femininity (woman as self-sacrificing wife and mother), and a bureaucratic role of dutiful citizen (woman as regime supporter).²²⁹ The blending of these characteristics correspond to what has been referred to as “State Ibuism,” an idea institutionalized throughout the New Order bureaucracy defining women’s roles according to hierarchy—specifically as appendages and companions to their husbands, procreators of the nation, mothers and educators, housekeepers and as members of Indonesian society (Suryakusuma 1996: 101-2). State Ibuism embraced the “family principle” as an image of the state incorporating a paternalistic order combining elements of Javanese feudalistic values with those of military authority. The effect of New Order policies was essentially to legally restrict women from involvement in the public sphere while returning them to domestic roles and constructing an ideal of femininity and masculinity that served the regime’s purposes (see Yulianto 2008, Wierengga 2002, Dzuhayatin 2001).

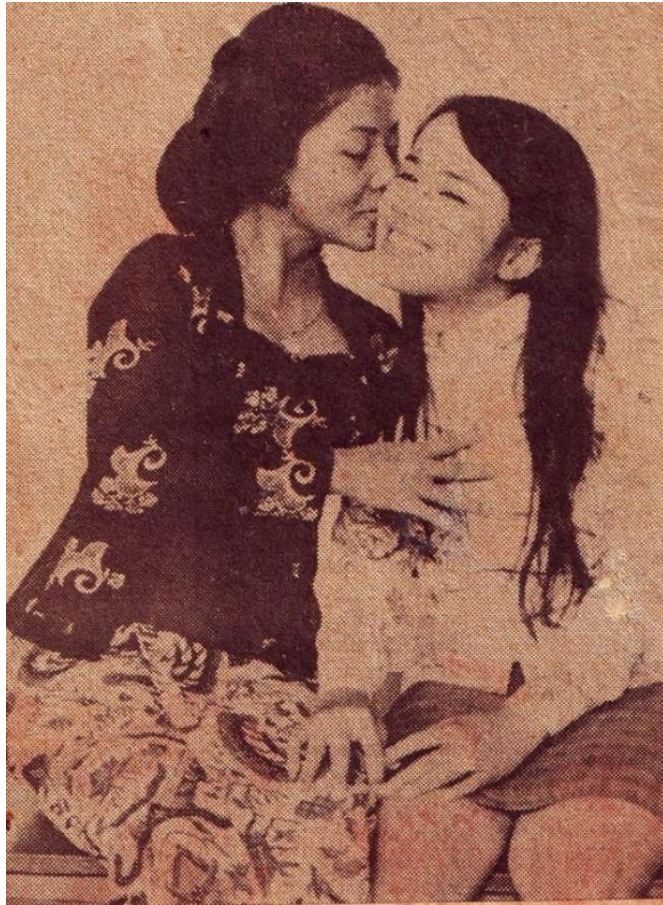
²²⁹ See Brenner 1996: 678-9

The complexities of how these ideologies were interpreted and negotiated became evident, however, when I discussed with Waldjinah how she balanced being a mother with her career. Despite touring and being away from home regularly, she stressed her responsibilities as a mother and (financial) provider for children, husband and extended family. Despite my attempts, never once did she engage in discussing the prospect that she had in any way neglected her responsibilities as a mother.²³⁰ Part of the reason for this, as I mentioned in a previous chapter, is because it is common in Javanese families for older brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles and other extended family to help care for young children, especially when parents are away from home working. In this sense, Waldjinah did not worry about whether her children were well cared for. She certainly was, however, aware that her busy schedule kept her away from her children, which in turn made her role as a mother exceedingly different from many other young mothers at the time. Another reason Waldjinah was tentative to discuss certain aspects of her family life could be because of she felt a degree of regret (or even guilt) about not fitting the stereotype of the domestically-oriented, nurturing housewife promoted by New Order and Islamic ideals. Although she did not talk about her feelings on this topic in much detail, it became clear that the death of her daughter, Dwi, at a young age continued to weigh heavily on Waldjinah many years after. During

²³⁰ On one occasion I remember talking to Waldjinah's son, Pak Ary, about his childhood and her often being away, while Waldjinah had stepped out of the room to answer a phone call. When she returned, she immediately looked at me (perhaps she overheard part of our conversation) and asked accusingly, "What are you guys talking about?" Understanding her tone, Pak Ary changed the subject and we proceeded onto another topic.

the time of Dwi's passing, Waldjinhah was often away from home and the loss of her only daughter left her with a deep lament that underscored the inadequacies she felt as a mother. When I asked her about her fondest memory of her daughter, she tearfully recounted her daughter's interest in music. "She was going to be a singer," Waldjinhah said, "even at that young age, her voice was already better than mine."

While today it is more common for some Indonesian women to find employment away from their home and family (either in different cities in Indonesia or internationally), Waldjinhah's experiences as a career-oriented mother came at a time when such ideas and practices were far less common. In this regard, it put her at the forefront of changing dynamics in gender roles in the Indonesian household, especially for women like her who had to balance the responsibilities of motherhood and career.



9.4 A “motherly” Waldjinah. (From the newspaper, *Darmo Kondo* (early 1970s))

With me, however, she was somewhat reluctant to discuss the challenges she faced in this aspect of her life. Over the course of interviewing her, my assistant, Hara, and I remained patient and gave her numerous opportunities to speak about her role as a mother. In most instances she chose to reiterate previous statements about being a financial provider or else she diverted attention to other aspects of her family life. While these topics resulted in fascinating discussion, it was clear Waldjinah’s silences and subtle yet explicit expressions of unease (which I perceived through facial and

bodily gestures), meant there was much more she could not (or would not) elaborate on. This had less to do with her not wanting to disclose the dynamics of relationships with her children—it was already clear she spent a significant amount of time away from them—and more to do with upholding an ideal of Indonesian womanhood to which Waldjinhah did not entirely conform. Upholding this image in mass media, however, did important political work, not only for Waldjinhah, in terms of her own image, but also more broadly in the context of supporting the nation-state and New Order ideologies that used female public figures like Waldjinhah as tangible models of an imagined ideal.

Scene 3: Changing Faces, Facing Change

Beginning in the early 1970s, Waldjinhah's association with the New Order government became increasingly intimate as she performed regularly at campaign rallies for *Golkar* (the acronym for *Golongan Karya*), the political party of the civil servants and technocrats closely linked with the New Order. She would continue to do this for the next twenty or so years and although not officially a civil servant, her involvement on the campaign trail associated her with Golkar very publicly.²³¹ Perhaps

²³¹ Despite performing for Golkar campaign events, Waldjinhah told me that she never officially was a member of the party. As evidence of this she pointed out never having worn the yellow jacket symbolic of the party, although she did at times wear yellow clothing during performances on the campaign trail. At the same time, as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, Waldjinhah benefitted from gifts and other forms of support provided by Golkar: her first car, music instruments, opportunities to perform at high-profile international and local events, and so on. Undoubtedly ties to Golkar provided benefits that perhaps were not afforded to other artists. However, Waldjinhah distancing herself from the party, especially during the period of time I spent interviewing her, appeared to be politically expedient and perhaps tied to her image as well. After all, in the post-New Order era, the bitter taste of its oppressive policies and corruption lingered and continued to attach itself to Golkar candidates, especially because it represented

coincidentally, some of the articles in print media dated around this time also began to present her in a different light, downplaying her “sex bomb” image and focusing more on a wholesome family-oriented image. One such article representing this shift begins by mentioning that Waldjinhah had recently turned thirty while describing her personality as “accommodating (*peramah*)” and her face as “showing signs of age (*diwajahnya telah berada dijenjang ketuaan*).”²³²

Generally speaking, Indonesian media played an important role in configuring and reinforcing state gender (and other) ideologies during the Sukarno and subsequent New Order era. It was considered inappropriate, during this era, for the press to act as a watchdog of the government, an established ideal in most Western countries. Instead the New Order kept to the philosophy of viewing the press as a partner of government in the process of nation-building (Romano 2003: xii, 44). Sukarno famously explained this philosophy stating, “ours is not a watchdog press in the Western fashion...a watchdog must stand guard outside the house...we prefer to keep our press inside (the house) along with the rest of the family.”²³³ The New Order installed an intricate web of security restrictions and introduced draconian legislation controlling the press and moderating messages it sent out to the public—stepping out of line, in most instances,

the political arm of the New Order. In this sense, Waldjinhah also realized that it was no longer politically astute to openly support Golkar, even if she continued to do so privately.

²³² From *Swadesi*, the exact date of the article is unknown although it mentions Waldjinhah having just turned thirty, so I would guess that it is from the early 1970s. The reference to age in this article also seems to imply that she is maturing into middle age, and not necessarily that she looks old in terms of her appearance.

²³³ From *Asia Watch* 1988: 207

resulted in an uncontested ban and financial disaster (Hill 1994: 11-12). Envelope (*amplop*) culture, a practice where journalists received an envelope containing money to cover “costs” or express “appreciation” for coverage, became increasingly prevalent during this period. What started as an informal, occasional gift, soon became the norm as many journalists began to see the envelope as *wajar* (natural or proper), while most sources began to consider it a “service fee,” whether implied or directly stated, for a journalists to either write or not write about certain topics (Romano 2003: 151-152). In some cases, journalists were even officially placed on the payroll of government programs (ibid). As a popular public figure associated with Golkar, representations of Waldjinh in print media were expected to create specific images of what constituted a “good” wife and mother by reinforcing patriarchal ideologies of hierarchy that governed the state and household. In an interview with the national newspaper, *Kompas*, in 1994, Waldjinh discussed her philosophy about the relationship between wife and husband stating that “Even if a husband has nothing, we (his wife and children) still have to respect him because we live under the same roof...for instance, right now, I’m doing well, so I have more money (than my husband), however, as a man, he remains the pillar of the household (*tiang rumah tangga*).”²³⁴ In another article, she adds to this sentiment that, “Although my husband is younger than me, he’s still my husband...as a

²³⁴ “*Saya kurang sependapat dengan prinsip ‘ke sorga ikut, ke neraka terbawa’ (she used the phrase in Javanese: swargo nunut neroko katut). Saya masih menghargai itu, tapi yang saya ambil ‘umpamanya suami tidak punya apapun, kita harus tetap menghormati (in Javanese she said: ‘paribasane wong lanang dengkul diiket-iketi, tetap kita ngajeni’). Karena kita berumah tangga. Misalnya sekarang yang top saya, misalnya duit saya lebih banyak, tetapi tetap lelaki menjadi tiang rumah tangga (Kompas, 17 April 1994).*”

Javanese woman I view my husband as a prince of the palace and someone to be respected. I'm afraid of being cursed (*kuwalat*) if I challenge my husband."²³⁵ She echoed similar sentiments in an interview with me where she insisted, "Although I'm the one who works (ie. financially supports the household), I continue to respect (*menghormati*) my husband because my parents taught me to be this way...and so I remain obedient to them."²³⁶

Waldjinah's comments about her roles as a wife fall firmly within the ideologies and hierarchies upheld by New Order policies, Islamic religious authorities and local Javanese conceptions of gender. Although it is uncertain if one of these has influenced her thinking more so than the others, it is clear that specific views of gender and status drive her understandings about respect and deference in a marital relationship. Suzanne Brenner (1995: 22) cautions, however, against a simple reading of this relationship that "emphasizes certain prevalent, generally male-focused gender ideologies, while paying scant attention to less systematically articulated conceptions of gender, especially those that are voiced more often by women." Gender ideology in

²³⁵ "Suami saya memang lebih muda dari saya. Tapi ia adalah suami saya. Sebagai wanita Jawa saya memandang suami sebagai pangeran katon yang harus dibekteni, dipepundi, di hormati. Saya takut kuwalat bila berani menentang suami (Cempaka, 16-22 October 1991)." As a sidenote, the magazine's slogan is: "the image of the happy family (*citra keluarga bahagia*).

²³⁶ "Ya itu karena dari orang tua kita kan di wuruki (*diajari*) oleh orang tua dulu: "kowe nek karo bojo ora keno wani, iya tho...tidak boleh begini...walaupun bojomu iki dengkol diiket-iketi, dengkol dikei iket, paribasane bojomu iki goblok banget, tapi kowe kiye ora keno wani karo bojomu" (*kamu kalau dengan suami tidak boleh berani iya kan...tidak boleh begini walaupun suamimu lututnya diikat-ikat...istilahnya suamimu ini bodoh sekali tetapi kamu tidak boleh berani dengan suamimu*). Itu dari orang tua itu, maka sama saya alihkan walaupun bagaimana aku yang bekerja tapi saya tetap menghormati suami saya...terus ngikuti ibu bapakku. (interview with Waldjinah, 4 May 2012)."

Indonesia, as Susan Blackburn (2004: 9-10) points out, often is “incoherent and inconsistent, reflecting the preoccupations of different segments of the state and pragmatic responses to pressure applied from different quarters.” In this case, Waldjinhah’s statements should not be understood superficially but within the context of conditions in her life and more specifically within a particular period of her life. While her statements appear to fit neatly within dominant discourses constructing gender hierarchy, in actuality, Waldjinhah’s life has been rife with instances when she has transcended established hierarchies in order to further her professional career and act as a mother. Societies in Java have been characterized as being bilateral (see Blackburn 2004, Errington 1991), with a greater degree of equality between the sexes with women playing a significant role in commerce and agriculture. Conversely, women have generally been excluded from public life and efforts to change this have so far been largely unsuccessful.²³⁷ Focusing on gender equality in Java tends to downplay how the dynamics of power within individual households, especially in marriage, complicate and challenge these presumptions of equality. Without using Waldjinhah’s case as a reason to necessarily generalize about “women in Indonesia,” I examine the dynamics of her marital relationships as a way of understanding these complexities as well as how she interprets and negotiates broader Indonesian discourses of gender.

²³⁷ Yulianto (2008: 142) notes that in the years following the fall of the New Order, which as we know was stiffly patriarchal in their approach to governance, Indonesian presidents Abdurrachman Wahid, Megawati Sukarnoputri and Susilo Bambang Yudhono have all shown increasing support for women’s roles in public affairs. However, the majority of these efforts have fallen short. For instance, the new legal requirement of a thirty percent quota for females in parliament is often ignored and not enforced.

Waldjinhah has been married twice in her life. Her first marriage, to her teenage sweetheart, Budi (or Pak Bud, pronounced “bood”), took place shortly after winning her first keroncong vocal competition in 1958.²³⁸ It was an elopement of sorts, mostly because neither set of parents gave the couple their consent. Differences in socioeconomic class, social status and religion were among the issues. Pak Bud came from a well-to-do Catholic family and his father held a regional government position as mayor of a small town not far from Solo. Waldjinhah came from a large Muslim family of the *rakyat* (the common people) and her father was a batik-maker while her mother was a local vegetable seller. The headstrong teenagers decided to marry despite serious objections and managed to live comfortably for the most part until Pak Bud passed away in 1985 from complications due to diabetes. Until that point, in addition to being Waldjinhah’s constant companion on numerous tours in Indonesia and abroad, Pak Bud also managed her band, *Orkes Keroncong Bintang Surakarta* (the Surakarta Stars Keroncong Orchestra, or *OK Bintang Surakarta*). Pak Bud’s death left a considerable void in Waldjinhah’s life, not only was he—as she described it, “her one true love”—his passing also left uncertainty about who would replace him as manager. Although a gifted vocalist, Waldjinhah herself admits to being less knowledgeable about the business side of her career and therefore she relied on Pak Bud extensively for his expertise in this area. Anxiety also arose about not having a trusted male companion with her while on tour. Waldjinhah feared gossipmongers in the media who she suspected would ruin

²³⁸ See Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of this period in her life.

her image by linking her to various male fans—this anxiety also partially emerged from a change in status from sexually unavailable married woman to a now sexually available widow. She mentioned that shortly after Pak Bud’s passing, men began describing her using terms such as *janda kembang*, an attractive young widow, and *janda kuaci*, a term younger men use to describe an older widowed woman who remains “physically attractive.”²³⁹

People called me a janda kembang because at the time I was forty-one and still quite attractive. A young widow has to be very careful though. Soon after that I began hearing some men referring to me jokingly as a janda kuaci, meaning that I was someone they hoped to “bite into (menggigit)” I wasn’t at all interested in getting involved with anyone though, instead I thought it better to visit Mecca and perform Hajj.”

Following the death of her first husband, Waldjinah considered remaining a widow for the remainder of her life but said she eventually tired of the unwanted attention from male fans. Although she and Pak Bud planned to perform Hajj together before he passed, her emphasis on this part of the story showed deep concern for how this particular period of her life would be remembered. Waldjinah was quite aware of this and would intermittently remind me at the end of interviews that the stories she

²³⁹ The word *kuaci* (or *kwaci*) refers to a dried watermelon or pumpkin seed eaten as a snack.

shared should be written about within the context of her entire life story and not presented as idle gossip. The *janda kwaci* represents another sexualized scene in Waldjinhah's life, in a sense returning her to the imagery of the "sex bomb" twenty or so years earlier. Despite the apparent unease surrounding this label, she continued to celebrate her sexuality, especially in her sartorial choices. One day she showed me an album filled with photos of her dressed in various *kain kebaya* and explained her fashion sense and approach to style.

Even as I got older, I still preferred to wear the tight-fitting kebaya that would accentuate my curvy figure on stage. If you look at this photo (she points down toward the album), you'll see that my body is still petite but I'm definitely bigger than I was earlier in my career. My kain, however, still fits snugly all the way from my legs to my thighs up through my stomach and chest. At the time, singers (and most other women) wore them more loose-fitting but I preferred to go tighter, even if my body was changing. Back then nobody taught me how to wrap the kain in the fitted way. Essentially by trial and error I taught myself how to do it properly. I had to make sure I didn't make it didn't show off too much or make it too tight around the mid-section because as a singer I needed to flexibility in this area to breath properly.

Awareness of her sexuality and age heightened after Waldjinhah became a widow. Although she did not want to drastically alter the way she dressed or behaved,

she soon realized that as a widow and popular female performer, the male gaze of fans and media differed now that her husband had passed away. She entered unfamiliar terrain—especially since her career as a performer essentially began as a married woman. She also understood the challenges faced by other female vocalists generally (both single and married) over the course of her career who, as she explained it, were “brought” (*dibawa*) into improper or extramarital relationships with older, wealthy and powerful, usually married, male fans.

During one interview she explained the process of how female keroncong vocalists were “brought” or “taken” by a male fan. As Waldjinah described it, the male fan either approached the singer himself or had someone else do it immediately following a performance. If the female vocalist agreed, she would afterward be taken by car to a local hotel where she would usually wait for him to arrive. The arrangements for the hotel were usually handled by the male fan, including the exchange of money and/or gifts after arriving at the hotel. Eventually the male fan would arrive at the hotel and meet the female singer in his room. Waldjinah never revealed how she came to know some of these details but it is fair to assume that over the course of her career these types of encounters, according to her, “were quite common” among female keroncong vocalists—some of whom were her friends. In fact, these encounters created such stigma among female vocalists that she made it a policy in her band, *Orkes Keroncong Bintang Surakarta*, that all members were forbidden to carry on romantic relationships while involved in the band.

Although she tried to stay away from scandal in order to protect her integrity and image, Waldjinah has experienced being pursued by male fans holding positions in government and the military even while she was married. Over the course of her career, she recounted at least three instances when she was “pursued,” or perhaps more accurately stalked, by male fans who apparently did not care that she was married and had a family. As she told me these stories, Waldjinah was deeply concerned that I understood she did not entice these men in any way, and she wanted to make sure that I myself would not retell the stories in a way that suggested idle gossip about her extramarital love life.

For many years, Waldjinah was pursued by a military official, a man she first encountered during the mid 1960s PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) killings when he was stationed in Solo. Later he would go on to become a ranking official in the Jakarta provincial government and eventually entered the Indonesian parliament (DPR). Over the course of twenty or so years, he intermittently visited Waldjinah at her home, often under the guise of paying a friendly visit. Waldjinah told me that on more than one occasion he quietly propositioned her about having an affair, despite the fact he knew her husband, Pak Bud. She mentioned that this man was actually quite jealous of Pak Bud and would often try to build himself up to her by talking about the number of suspected PKI members he had killed—he sometimes even pulled out his gun for effect to graphically describe some of the killings. This man also attended her concerts and regularly approached her before each show.

It seemed like every time I sang at Sriwedari (a historic concert venue in Solo) he would turn up and hand me an envelope filled with money and the words “Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang” scribbled on a separate piece of paper. He made a spectacle of it, often walking up to the stage just as I was about to go on. Eventually it became quite embarrassing. My friends began referring to him jokingly as the “kid general” (anak jendral) and would ask me about his “requests.” I had to remind them that I was a happily married woman with a family I did not intend to compromise.

Once, after a concert in Jakarta, he followed Waldjinah and Pak Bud as they traveled by train back home to Solo. He sat in the same car as them a few rows back and when he saw her lay her head on Pak Bud’s shoulder, he became incensed and walked outside the train car to fire a few shots from his handgun into the air. While I cannot necessarily verify these accounts and Waldjinah did not tell me this person’s name (nor did I ask), her sense of fear and anguish as she recalled these stories was quite real. She mentioned being deeply afraid that this man, who she assumed to be mentally unstable, might one day murder her husband (or have him killed) because of his inane jealousy. None of this came to pass and although Pak Bud knew about this man, he pretended not to. Pak Bud and Waldjinah never openly discussed the situation. This secrecy carried on into our conversations, where Waldjinah would not address this topic (or talk about any of her other male stalkers) when her son, Pak Ary, was present.

She mentioned to me that she was okay with me writing about this particular incident on the premise that it would be done respectfully.

Walang Kekek (Grasshopper) is not only Waldjinah's biggest hit, the song also carries a not so subtle message in a verse warning male fans and would-be harassers to enjoy her performance on stage but not to approach her afterward—or as she put it bluntly, “Look but don't touch!” Her experiences suggest reasons why it was difficult for her to remain single and continue to pursue a career as a keroncong vocalist. Waldjinah became increasingly concerned that the type of attention she was drawing was beginning to erode a reputable public image. More importantly she felt that the lack a male figure, as a manager and companion, while on tour created unforeseen difficulties, not only in terms of gossip and innuendo, but also in dealing with the complicated logistics of touring.²⁴⁰ These issues, of course, did not surface until after the death of her first husband. Although in various ways Waldjinah embodied the epitome of a strong-willed and self-sufficient female artist, she also felt comfortable within the structure of a heterosexual marital relationship, even if she did not necessarily “need” a husband. As I mentioned previously, she initially considered not remarrying but eventually changed her mind.

²⁴⁰ Some of these responsibilities were taken on by her son, Ary Mulyono, who after his father passed away, assumed responsibility of managing Waldjinah's band. According to Waldjinah, Ary managed the band while her second husband, Didit, (whom I will discuss shortly) managed the business end of her career.

After the death of my first husband, I wasn't sure if I wanted another one. But I thought maybe it would be better if I had one, especially being a singer and being a hajjah (a female who has performed pilgrimage to Mecca). I was also afraid of encountering "issues" that weren't right.²⁴¹ It turns out there weren't any, but until today I'm still married.

Scene 4: A Second Marriage

Waldjinhah married her second husband, Didit Hadiano (Pak Didit) about three years after she became a widow. She knew of Pak Didit through the keroncong scene and they became reacquainted after he dropped by her home after Pak Bud's death to pay his respects. Pak Didit, at the time, owned a furniture business in Klaten, a city not far from Solo, and was himself going through a divorce. He was also about three years younger than Waldjinhah and did not have an especially close relationship with her sons or her friends. When she told her sons about her intention to remarry, they strongly urged her to reconsider.

I asked my sons: How is your mother going to continue traveling around and performing without having a husband? I'd been seen in the company of all sorts of different men, and even been driven around by them. And to make things worse, I've performed the hajj. What was I supposed to do? That's what I tried to explain to them.

²⁴¹ "Saya takut kalau ada isu-isu (yang) tidak benar. Tapi kenyataan tidak. Setelah saya menikah sampai sekarang."

Her second marriage, similar to her first, was an elopement of sorts. Her sons refused to consent to the marriage but she and Pak Didit went ahead with it anyway and were married by a *kyai*, an Islamic teacher or scholar, in Demak, a town on the north coast of Java. As Waldjinhah described it, Pak Didit and her sons never quite warmed up to each other and throughout their marriage, she has been the one caught in the middle.²⁴² The period I spent interviewing her was one of transition and although she did not immediately inform me of it, she and Pak Didit had already been separated for a number of months. I noticed something different in their relationship after not seeing Pak Didit for the first two months visiting her—whenever I asked about him, Waldjinhah usually brushed aside the question claiming he was in Jakarta helping to care for his newborn grandson. Only after six or seven months did she reveal in a customarily Javanese, half-joking manner that she was concealing the truth from me. From that point onward, she was more truthful about her relationship with Pak Didit and openly discussed more than I ever imagined (or hoped) she would. She also revealed to me that she had yet to make this news public but gave her permission to include it as part of her life story. Essentially she provided access to aspects of her personal life she discussed with only one or two of her closest friends. All Waldjinhah asked in return was that I not present it as superficial gossip about her personal life. What I have chosen to

²⁴² During holidays, she once told me, her sons (who lived outside of Solo) only visited when they were certain that Pak Didit had gone to visit his children in Jakarta. This practice has continued on for many years and although Waldjinhah has accepted it for the most part, it has, needless to say, deeply complicated her family life since her first husband passed away.

include here simply provides insight into Waldjinhah's understanding of marriage, gender roles and motherhood—and how she negotiates these understandings as a successful keroncong singer.

In her statements to me, Waldjinhah continued to echo sentiments similar to the ones published in print media over the course of her career. One of the things she discussed was that for most of her second marriage, she had trouble expressing herself to Pak Didit, especially when they disagreed over financial issues. Waldjinhah once lamented, “If I wanted to say something, I wouldn’t be able to. It was as if he had some sort of power over me and I would just lose my voice and ability to speak openly.” Hearing this I could not help but reflect on the irony of a renowned vocalist describing another instance where she had figuratively “lost her voice.”²⁴³ As scholars have written elsewhere, the trope of the “voice,” derives from the idea of the voice as a right of expression, and has often been deployed as a metaphor for vocality, cultural agency, political autonomy and both individual and collective power (see Hellier 2013, Hayes 2006). The voice as metaphor, in this sense, becomes the interface between the literal singing voice and the voice of agency, one that enables the singing voice to be enacted as an instrument of power. For Waldjinhah, the power of her singing voice did not always translate into a voice of agency, especially over the course of her second marriage.

Although not entirely passive in this relationship, she openly discussed the power Pak

²⁴³ Chapter 2 of this dissertation also describes other instances when Waldjinhah has encountered a “loss of voice.” For instance, during the course of recovering from ill-health or earlier in her career when she encountered “black magic (*ilmu hitam*)” and was unable to sing before or during a performance.

Didit held over her in determining especially financial aspects of their relationship.²⁴⁴

The loss of voice related to these controlling tendencies is particularly compelling given how, as Ward Keeler (1987: 52) has observed, the dominant representation of how Javanese conceive of the relationship between husband and wife is in terms of “his authority and her financial control.”

As research in anthropology has established, regardless of occupation or social class, women have generally controlled household finances in Java (Brenner 1998, Hatley 1990, Keeler 1987, Siegel 1986). In most cases this phenomena is attributed to men not a being especially adept at managing money and as a result, are expected to turn over most, if not all, earned income to their wives. Women’s control over household finances, however, has not necessarily resulted in higher status—men continue to be seen as having more spiritual potency, based on their “self-control,” while women, who apparently lack self-control, also lack the potency and prestige attributed to males. Brenner (1995: 33) observes however, the self-control attributed to men does not always apply, especially in the case of *nafsu* (desire, lust), which can take on various forms but is most dangerous in the form of desire or lust for money and sex.²⁴⁵ According to Brenner, Javanese belief that men have an innately greater sexual

²⁴⁴ As time passed, she did become slightly more comfortable asserting herself. On one occasion, after a flare up between Pak Didit and her band while on tour, she told him, “In your own office you may be the boss but here among us musicians, you’re not!”

²⁴⁵ As Brenner (1995: 25-26) explains, the idea of status is always relative and functions within a complex set of considerations, which include, but are not limited to age and seniority, noble descent, education, occupation, wealth, ethnicity, place of origin (eg. city versus rural) and gender. Status can also be based on less tangible features (eg. degree of cultural refinement, linguistic etiquette and social skills,

desire than women in some ways contradicts the ideology of their potency and suggests a possible reason why women manage household finances—since men are presumably more likely to squander money away on gambling, sexual indulgence and other irresponsible acts creating financial burdens for the family. The idea that women lack spiritual resources because they lack self-discipline is also unfounded, given that some women tend to engage in asceticism as much or even more so than most males. An ability to exercise control over *nafsu* for some women is not only vital to keeping safe the family's financial resources, but involves a form of asceticism that accrues abstract benefits. While asceticism for some men is often oriented toward achieving personal goals, a woman's is typically carried out on behalf of her family (if a child is sick, or is taking exams in school, etc.). At the same time, although women have a greater degree of economic power and control over the household, they fall short of men in the realm of prestige based on presumed biologically inborn characteristics that confer on some women a lower status in life no matter how much money they earn or how much power they wield within the household (Brenner 1995, Hatley 1990, Keeler 1987).

Waljinah's individual experiences pose compelling and complex instances that simultaneously correspond to and deviate from the generalized ideas attributed to "men" and "women" in these previous studies. From a young age, Waldjinah has been

possession of spiritual skills, etc.) which also can be tied to the concept of prestige, which is sometimes separated from other determinants of status. For instance, Brenner notes that some occupations such as palace retainer, Muslim religious leader, or some civil servant positions, are not well paid but carry a certain level of status. On the other hand, some wealthy Chinese Indonesians are sometimes disrespected by some Javanese people because they are seen as unrefined, greedy or unable to master the linguistic etiquette of Javanese language—or simply because they are irrationally racist against Chinese.

accustomed to financially contributing to both her immediate and extended family—one of her proudest achievements was having put not only her own children through college but also some of her nieces and nephews. She has also financially supported each husband respectively for the duration of their married life—a rigorous touring schedule over the years required both to relinquish previous jobs in order to accompany her. In this sense, it was not her husbands turning over a significant amount of their income to her but, instead, the other way around. After separating from Pak Didit recently, Waldjinhah expressed deep regret (*gelo*) in having married again, stating that she would be far better off financially if she had not had to support him for the tenure of their marriage.²⁴⁶ She specifically lamented about having to give him fifty percent of her net income over the course of time they were married.

“He (Pak Didit) decided on a fifty-fifty split early on in the marriage. I didn’t like it at all but stayed silent. I kept it all on the inside for all these years. It was like I was under his control. I couldn’t bring myself to say no to him. Despite my close friends telling me I was being used, I didn’t want to listen. I never actually sought out the advice of others though. Who could I talk to? Where would I go? If I told him I wanted to meet with someone, he’d probably end up going too. He’d be the one driving me there. It irritated me that I had to give so much of my money to him. I could sense my growing hatred toward him but I had to control myself. I had to control myself from telling him

²⁴⁶ To express regret and disappointment she used the Javanese word *gelo*, which carries a similar meaning to the Indonesian word *kecewa*.

to leave...to just get out! I couldn't bring myself to utter those words. So I buried it inside. I buried it all until it made me physically ill."

A number of complex factors exist in understanding the dynamics of Waldjinah's marital relationship with Pak Didit and I do not profess to understand them fully. However, after extensively interviewing both Waldjinah and Pak Didit (to a lesser degree) individually, it is evident that a significant part of their relationship was built around the functional and gendered roles that positioned Waldjinah's career squarely at the center of their marriage. Without necessarily assuming it was a relationship based solely on "convenience," Pak Didit's supporting role as a manager and more importantly as a husband and trusted male companion, was crucial to Waldjinah's career during a period that she had become increasingly anxious about the idea of continuing to tour as a widow. She was well aware that her own public image as a performer was dependent on how well he performed his role as a husband (at least publicly). To some degree, Pak Didit understood his role and performed it to his ability and therefore believed he should reap some of the financial rewards.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ When I interviewed Pak Didit, he mentioned that over the course of her career, he helped create opportunities that otherwise would not have opened for Waldjinah. Although it is difficult to speculate about the impact these opportunities had on Waldjinah's later in her career, the role that Pak Didit played in helping to prolong and develop Waldjinah's career cannot be overlooked entirely, despite the fact that Waldjinah downplayed them during our interviews.



PANJI ANGGARA/JAWA POS

LEGENDARIS: Hadijanto mencium sang istri, Waldjinhah, di rumah mereka di Solo.

9.5 A photo printed on the front page a local newspaper some months after Waldjinhah and her husband had separated. The caption reads: “Legendary: Hadiyanto kisses his wife, Waldjinhah, at their home in Solo.” Photo courtesy of the *Jawa Pos*, 25 October 2012.

Waldjinhah continued to embrace the idea that respect for one’s husband was essential to being a “good” wife. Or perhaps it was more important that she was portrayed as a good and loyal wife. As Ward Keeler (1987: 53) notes, “a man’s authority requires a wife defer to him in his expectations and demands, that she address him in some degree of refined language , and that she conduct herself generally in ways befitting his (and therefore their) status.” Not telling him to “just get out” had less to do with weakness and more to do with a desire to maintain her own status and sense of prestige. Waldjinhah acted in her own self-interest by not instigating conflict within the

marriage—after all, a key factor in marrying a second time was having a male figure to deflect the gaze of unwanted (male) attention. The idea of controlling *nafsu* is pertinent, not only in terms of sexual desire, but also in controlling desire to instigate conflict and therefore damaging one’s status through impulsive actions. In this case, Waldjinhah’s control of *nafsu* was not only about managing or conserving financial resources of the family but to protect herself. It is also likely that some of the animosity she expressed during interviews with me appeared more concentrated and intense given that she had only recently separated from Pak Didit.

Scene 5: Conceptualizing *Putri Solo*

Ideas about femininity and masculinity in New Order Indonesia were narrowly defined based on idealized images that benefitted regime ideologies. In terms of femininity, the *Putri Solo*, an image derived from local Javanese culture, served as an archetype for some of these ideals. The term itself translates into English as “Solonese girl” and is an idealized female character exhibiting the feminine characteristics attributed to some Solonese women. *Putri Solo* also was one of the images attributed to Waldjinhah early on in her career and she has been associated with it ever since. While searching through articles, I noticed one published in a local newspaper not long after the fall of the New Order featuring Waldjinhah as an example of an iconic *Putri Solo*. A section defined *Putri Solo* according to common characteristics. According to the article, she is foremost a hard worker (in comparison to the men of her life). Secondly

she is soft and tender yet has the potential “to be fierce like a hungry tiger” if provoked.²⁴⁸ Finally, Putri Solo is physically attractive, agreeable in demeanor and gentle (*lemah-lembut*). Given the context of when the article was written, predominant New Order ideas about gender roles undoubtedly continue to inform the inclusion of these particular characteristics. As an iconic Putri Solo, Waldjinhah describes different component to this image.

“My mother taught me that a wife must respect her husband. She said that however angry you may be at him, don’t ever leave home. Women who leave home are indecent. According to a Javanese proverb, even if he’s dumber than you and makes less money, he still has to be respected. Now as time has passed these lessons are no longer taught in families or schools...instead they are replaced by values from television soap operas.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ “Kalau digoda dia bisa berrrr...galak. Ya...persis macan kelaparan (If disturbed, she can be grrrrr (sound of a tiger)...fierce. Yes, exactly like a hungry tiger.”

²⁴⁹“Sebenarnya citra sebagai wanita yang lemah-lembut dan ngajeni itu merupakan sifat dasar Puteri Solo, seperti halnya citra wanita Sunda yang dikenal dengan bodinya yang nggitar. Karena hal-hal seperti itu diajarkan para ibu di Jawa kepada anak wanitanya. Saya masih ingat dulu ibu mengajari saya bahwa seorang istri harus menghormati suaminya. Walaupun kamu dimarahi sebesar apa pun oleh suamimu, jangan sampai pergi dari rumah. Ngak perlu purik (a Javanese word) atau minggat...menurut ibu, wanita keluar dari rumah itu saru. Pun ada peribahasa Jawa: ‘Wong lanang iku, dengkul diiket-iketi, tetap malati.’ Peribahasa itu mengajarkan kepada para istri, seperti apapun suami mereka: lebih bodoh, penghasilnya lebih kecil, dan sebagainya, dia tetap harus dihormati. Sekarang karena kemajuan zaman, pelajaran seperti itu sudah tidak lagi diajarkan para ibu. Orang pengen maju neng malah kemajon. Pendidikan keluarga mengenai nilai-nilai sudah sangat berkurang, di sekolah pun sudah tidak ada lagi pelajaran budi pekerti. Pelajaran yang dipetik pun lebih banyak dari sinetron-sinetron atau telenovela-telenovela di televisi. Sehingga gaya hidup dan nilai-nilai yang dianut sebagian besar keluarga Jawa pun mengikuti gaya hidup dan nilai-nilai sinetron-sinetron dan telenovela-telenovela (an excerpt from an article entitled “Prasangka (Prejudice)” in *Solo Pos* 26 March 2000).”

By adding characteristics such as respect and loyalty to the previously mentioned list, Putri Solo, as an idealized Javanese woman, closely conforms to New Order era ideals. Waldjinhah's quote also suggests that such ideals were not promoted by the state exclusively but also had a basis in how gender was conceived of in Javanese culture—which in turn contributed to New Order ideologies. Part of what she discussed here may also relate to discourses circulating in Indonesian Islam addressing what some perceive to be hegemonic secularized, Westernized and Jakarta-centric values antithetical to, or out of step with core "Islamic values." Such concerns were publicly expressed during the rise of popular dangdut singer Inul Daratista in the early 2000s, who, according to some, epitomized a sense of moral and social corruption, decadence and the Western-styled modernity Indonesia had adopted (Heryanto 2008: 18). During this same period, Islamic organizations like the National Council for Ulama (MUI) issued edicts of war against widespread pornography while urban militias, who donned Middle Eastern style clothing and claimed to be defending the honor of Islam, took to the streets attacking groups (eg. gay activists and human rights advocates) and public places considered morally corrupt or "anti-Islamic" (eg. sites of prostitution and/or gambling, night clubs, restaurants open during fasting hours and so on) (ibid). Although Waldjinhah's comments in no way approach the level of religious conservatism endorsed by these groups, my point here is to provide a context in which her comments can be

interpreted, especially as they may relate to a broader discourse about Islam in Indonesia and given her turn to increased orthodoxy in her own religious belief.

Another reason I bring up the image of the Putri Solo is because it also is the title of a popular keroncong song. Despite the fact that the song's lyrics are in Javanese, it is a *langgam keroncong* piece (not a *langgam jawa*) and follows its thirty-two bar form.²⁵⁰

The following is an English translation:

Putri Solo (Solo Girl)²⁵¹

Putri Solo, her beauty is real

Putri solo, ayunéke pàrà nyàtå

Indeed she's clever in her style
That's Putri Solo
Wearing a silk flowery shawl
Hanging over her shoulder
Her hairpin is a Jasmine flower
To complete her beauty

Pancen pinter aleléwå
Dasar Putri Solo
Nganggo sléndhang plangi
Sumampir åå pundhaké
Cundhuké kembang mlathi
Dadi lan pantesé

She moves like a hungry tiger (slow and elegant)
Thong sandals on her feet
Making a klinking sound
Her earrings sparkle

Melakune kåyå macan luwé
Sandhal jepit penganggoné
Kiyet-kiyet swarané
Kelap-kelip yo suwengé

That's Putri Solo
When she laughs, you'll see her dimples
Dark and sweet is her skin
That's Putri Solo...

Dasar Putri Solo
Yèn ngguyu dhekik pipiné
Ireng manis kulitané
Dasar Putri Solo

²⁵⁰ For a discussion about the difference between the two, see Chapter 7.

²⁵¹ My thanks to Anna Widiastuti, my Javanese language instructor in Yogyakarta, and Rene T.A. Lysloff for helping me with this translation.

Although brief, these lyrics help to portray some of the physical traits associated with Putri Solo—for instance, she exhibits a graceful stylishness, refined movements, cordialness and evenly tanned brown skin. Searching Youtube for videos of the song, I came across a particularly interesting one featuring a live performance by popular keroncong/pop vocalist Sundari Soekotjo an event in Solo in August 2008. This performance not only featured the elegantly dressed Sundari but also a host of other female performers joining her on stage including musicians, kain kebaya-clad dancers and, perhaps most interestingly, characters portraying predominant female roles in Indonesian society—for instance, a veiled woman who resembled either a nurse or teacher, another woman sporting black pants, a white-collared shirt, a black tie and a bright yellow construction safety helmet (presumably a safety inspector), a young casually dressed female college student and another woman who resembled Indonesian feminist icon R. A. Kartini.



9.6 Keroncong singer Sundari Soekotjo (holding the microphone) performs the song “Putri Solo.” (From <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ION-GP49Fdg>, accessed 31 January 2015).

By juxtaposing the more “traditional” femininity of Sundari and her background dancers with the female characters dressed in work or school related clothing, the performance presents a distinctly modern and updated version of the Putri Solo. Although she remains a genteel and refined feminine ideal, her role as a functioning member of Indonesian modernity is especially emphasized here. Noticeably absent from the female roles staged in this performance is that of the mother, another important figure in New Order era characterizations of the ideal Indonesian woman. Without assuming that motherhood has necessarily been devalued, this performance consciously highlights an expanded role for women beyond the household, and more specifically as contributors to the national economy, a push that began in the postindependence era

and continued during the New Order regime (see also Martyn 2005, Blackburn 2004). Although ideas about what constitutes femininity (and masculinity) in Indonesia remain, for the most part, narrowly defined, this performance engages with changing attitudes by portraying a woman dressed in a decidedly “male” outfit of slacks, tie and safety helmet. At the same time, however, slow physical movements combined with an ever-present smile exhibit the presumed refined and gentle demeanor associated with Putri Solo (and also perhaps female passivity). In this sense, the message remains clear: whatever shape or form Putri Solo claims, the feminine ideal she embodies continues to be her hallmark. While some suggest that the significance of this ideal appears to be waning, others insist that it remains a relevant and appropriate model for young Indonesian women, especially those continuing to aspire to the ideal of Putri Solo—an ideal inextricably linked with Waldjinhah.

Scene 6: Performing for the Media

Indonesian media has created an array of gendered representations of Waldjinhah over the course of her career. Despite how these representations have shaped her public image, it should not be assumed that they have necessarily been imposed on her. She also has played an active role in advancing certain types of images of herself and has negotiated the parameters of what she is and is not willing to share with the media. During the time I spent interviewing her, I occasionally had the opportunity to observe interviews she conducted with newspaper, radio and television

reporters who dropped by her home. Most fascinating to me was the dynamic interplay between her and the interviewer, an aspect I myself was very much conscious of during our interviews. The idea of the interview framed as a form of self-performance was especially apparent, and I paid attention especially to her posture, hand gestures, facial expressions, choice of dress and most importantly, how she chose to answer questions. The context of performance here of course differed from what I had seen during her live performances—especially in terms of how she carried herself in front of reporters versus concert audiences.

Whenever Waldjinah expected a visit from the media, she usually dressed more formally. Rather than the loose-fitting housedress she wore on a regular basis, she put on a batik or floral print blouse with pants and she always wore make-up. Waldjinah's demeanor around reporters was genuinely cordial and she was often quite expressive and animated when discussing her activities. Often she began talking excitedly before a question was even posed to her—in other words, she established a direction of conversation based on what she determined was worth sharing. Once reporters began asking questions, without obvious changes to her demeanor, she spoke slower and more deliberately in her responses—especially when questions meandered to family, health or other personal issues. Having interviewed her extensively myself, I became well aware of sensitive topics and how she reacted to them. Hara, my assistant, referred to Waldjinah as showing characteristics of “a true Javanese woman,” one who masked actual feelings in order to protect her image and stature.

This was also true of most interviews I observed—reporters only had access to the small slice of information Waldjinhah was willing to share with them. Generally speaking, she was careful about what and how much she discussed with them. Since she discussed certain topics in greater detail with me, given my frequent visits and the significant amount of time I spent building rapport, I had the somewhat unusual perspective of observing interviews conducted by others while concurrently determining what she held back. It also was evident that when talking about her personal life, Waldjinhah kept to a very specific mental script of events and topics to be covered, not uncommon for someone who probably has recounted her life story almost as many times as she has sung her hit song “*Walang Kekek*.” This narrative was well established and the script provided a type of skeletal framework of important life events that emphasized the challenges she overcame in order to convey a compelling story of survival recognizable to the average Indonesian reader. Scripting her life story in this way, was both a necessary and convenient technique for Waldjinhah to accommodate reporters. She succinctly and effectively outlined her life story in way that made it easy for them to write about.

There is another possibility, however, and it emerges from an impulse to control an “official” and consistent account of her life. In other words, although Waldjinhah willingly and openly discussed an array of topics, the script helped her not only to remember important aspects to cover, it also established limits for how deep into a story she would go or how much she would actually reveal. The extended period of

time I spent interviewing her allowed me to experience both the frustration of trying to get beyond these parameters and the satisfaction of getting her to eventually “open up” in order to, metaphorically-speaking, fill in the gaps from her more scripted responses. While silences in this story undoubtedly remain, the time I spent was a luxury not afforded to reporters who visited her. This accounts for why many articles written about Waldjinah in print media, despite coming from an array of sources and across different periods of times, all primarily discuss similar events in roughly the same amount of depth. This enabled Waldjinah to establish uniformity in each retelling allowing her to control (and alleviate) the potential for gossip, speculation and misrepresentation in the media.

As a performer who has endeavored to maintain a reputable public image, Waldjinah has employed specific approaches and tactics in crafting her public image. One such tactic involves taking preventative measures to avoid attracting unnecessary gossip.²⁵² For instance, whenever she performed outside of Solo, Waldjinah insisted on having her husband present. This, of course, limited the possibility of her being seen in the company of what she referred to as “strange men.” After each performance, if possible, she also insisted on immediately traveling home, even if a performance ended late into the night—this practice eventually became standard policy not only for her but also her entire band. Prompt departures allowed her to avoid uncomfortable interactions with some male fans, who, as I mentioned earlier, typically approached

²⁵² I have already discussed one such tactic (limiting the amount of time she spends socializing in public areas) earlier on in this chapter.

female performers with sexual offers immediately following the show. It also prevented speculation about where (and with whom) she would spend the night, since she customarily travelled with her husband, her band and friends.

Another tactic employed to control the type of information she divulged to the public was to have either her son, Pak Ary, or her husband, Pak Didit, present during all interviews. She insisted it was good having one or both around just in case she overlooked anything important. Her assertion appears sensible given both have their own areas of expertise in keroncong—Pak Ary as an accomplished instrumentalist and leader of Waldjinhah’s band, and Pak Didit, having experience with other aspects of her career and being a knowledgeable fan of keroncong. Both men also are experienced in dealing with mundane facets of Waldjinhah’s career that she was less familiar with. Their presence and participation during interviews, however, was not as passive as she made it out to be. During some of our interviews, questions addressed to Waldjinhah were frequently answered directly by the man accompanying her. Understanding this dynamic is more complicated than merely assuming Pak Didit and Pak Ary were speaking for her. In another sense, there does appear to be an element of control involved ensuring that clear and “correct” messages are conveyed and she willingly followed the lead on statements put forth by either Pak Ary or Pak Didit. I noticed also that on more than a few occasions, Pak Ary casually redirected conversations away from sensitive (or potentially sensitive) topics by interjecting anecdotes to steer discussion to safer topics. In one such instance, I asked Waldjinhah about why Pak Didit was away

from Solo for such a long period of time (this was before she revealed they had decided to separate), to which Pak Ary immediately interjected that Pak Didit was in Jakarta visiting his family. He immediately followed this statement by telling me about an upcoming keroncong concert in a nearby city. Although Pak Ary was not maliciously trying to undermine the question, he knew it was a topic Waldjinah was not ready to discuss and immediately redirected the conversation.



9.7 Waldjinah and her son, Ary Mulyono, during an interview (16 December 2011).
Photo by Vito Mahaputra.

Given that I visited her so regularly, there were chance instances when neither Pak Ary nor Pak Didit was around and I had a chance to speak with Waldjinah alone taking the opportunity to ask about the reasons for their involvement in her interviews. She reiterated her earlier statement about often forgetting details and “not getting the story right.” After letting her know I was less interested in her being accurate about certain details than her being able to express herself honestly and directly, I requested she conduct interviews with me (and my assistant) alone. She appeared hesitant at first, perhaps wanting to be careful about being alone with two men, but after repeatedly trying to convince her, she eventually agreed which resulted in some of our most productive and revealing interviews. This was not the case when conducting interviews with mass media though. For many reporters, as well as researchers (or anyone else), the process of interviewing Waldjinah meant not only gathering information directly from her but also having information filtered through those closest to her—in this sense, she alone did not bear the responsibility of protecting her public image.

Conclusion

Publications by ethnomusicologists addressing gender, as Ellen Koskoff (2005: 96-98) has observed, slowed during the decade of the 1990s in comparison to scholars studying non-Western popular music in other fields ranging from musicology and cultural studies to human geography. Koskoff argues that part of the reason for this decline is based on shifting trends in locating the “field” in ethnomusicology. Interest in

studying and theorizing the globalization of musics through mass mediation and commodification put less emphasis on what ethnomusicologists tend to do best— knowing an entire musical realm from the ground up by conducting fieldwork with individuals (see Weiss 2008: 38-39). Issues such as gender appear less pertinent when real or lived experiences of people are neglected.

Understanding lived experiences becomes especially valuable in the case of public figures like Waldjinah, especially since they are known primarily through convoluted webs of mostly two dimensional images in print media. The time I spent interviewing her helped me better understand how she negotiated her identity and balanced her roles as a professional keroncong vocalist with those outside her career (ie. as a mother, wife, family breadwinner). Hearing about the challenges involved in balancing each of these roles, many of which overlapped in numerous and complex ways, also suggested reasons why Waldjinah, for the duration of her career, has been so consciously focused on controlling her public image. Ideas about gender in Indonesia generally have been filled with inconsistencies and contradictions, especially regarding what Islamic religious teachings have had to say about the appropriate behavior for men and women (see Blackburn 2004). What is remarkable about how gender is conceived and thought about in this country is just how limited this range of thinking has been in comparison to society at large. The New Order state was especially influential in developing an ideology of gender that has pervasively carried over to the women's movement as well as religious and other social movements. All of these factors filter

into Waldjinah's own thinking about self-performance and the stereotypes attached to some female performers in Indonesia. On one hand, her thinking about gender and gender roles has fit rather neatly into the ideologies espoused by the state, local Javanese culture and Islam. Her position as performer and public figure, however, created instances in her quotidian life (especially early on in her career) where Waldjinah deviated from established gender norms—most notably as a mother who spent an extended amount of time away from her children. The conditions in her life signaled broader societal shifts that have since become normative for a huge number of families across Indonesia.

One of the challenges I faced conducting interviews with Waldjinah was the amount of time it took to build rapport with her in order that she could (or would) share her story in greater depth with me than she did with Indonesian mass media and others who have previously interviewed her. Time also provided me an opportunity to listen to details of lived experience that elicited other contexts for the gendered media representations of Waldjinah that went beyond what could be interpreted from strictly textual analysis. Sarah Weiss (2008: 39) suggests that the extended time-frame for completing fieldwork figures heavily into understanding gender and may be yet another reason that fewer ethnomusicologists have focused on it. As Weiss writes,

“Ethnomusicologists are often learning an entirely new culture: music, ways of being, constructions of gender identity are all certainly different in palpable ways

to one's own experience. To reach the point of being able to say something significant about the construction of gender...requires fieldwork time and then at least the same amount of processing time required to think about any of these issues in a culture or historical period with which one is already familiar."

The extended time-frame attributed to both fieldwork and the period of "processing time" afterward can also be a reason why ethnomusicologists effectively contribute to the field of gender studies. After all, this period of time often creates a nuanced understanding of individual performers that can allow for a theorization grounded in, as Koskoff suggests, the real experiences *of* people rather than *about* them.

Chapter 10: *Mati Suri* and Reinvention

Shouting my calls out into the distance, no longer are they heard.

From “Stb. Kecewa” (Stambul Disappointed),
composed by Gesang and Samsidi in 1942

Keroncong musicians referred to the decade of the 1990s as a time of *mati suri*. The term *mati suri* translates as “apparent death” or “suspended animation” (Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings 2010, Echols and Shadily 2006) and is used to describe a period when keroncong’s popularity declined to a point where cassette sales were low, media coverage was essentially non-existent and there were few young musicians interested in learning to play. In actuality, *mati suri* began in the late 1980s, following a spike in keroncong cassette releases and sales in the early half of the decade, and continued on through the 1990s and into the 2000s. As a popular/folk music genre that has existed in the Indonesian musical landscape for well over a hundred years, and some say much longer, this was not the first *mati suri* keroncong encountered in the course of its history.²⁵³

This chapter addresses issues of preservation and sustainability as they pertain to keroncong—especially in terms of how musicians, like Waldjinah, have adapted to changing tastes and times by introducing new styles of playing and blending keroncong with other musics to add new influences to a genre already rife with syncretic qualities.

²⁵³ See my discussion on other periods when keroncong declined in popularity in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, Yampolsky (2010) also mentions at least two earlier periods.

I am also interested in what musicians have recently done to renew interest in a flagging genre nostalgically associated with *tempo doeloe* (the old days), particularly how they have incorporated new media, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Internet radio in order to establish new audiences and encourage interaction and create community among musicians. They have used these technologies not only as a form of interpersonal communication but also to create and maintain a community of keroncong musicians who assert the genre's earlier connections with Indonesian nationalism.

Times of Transition

Although keroncong has experienced multiple periods of *mati suri* over the course of its history, this one, which some claim began in the 1980s, represents a general and sustained decline in popularity that the genre likely will not recover from. Despite a resurgence of activity, based on the resourcefulness of some musicians and fans beginning around 2005, keroncong's popularity has declined to the point that it now exists only on the fringes of Indonesian popular music. Although it has been more popular in the past, keroncong now exhibits certain characteristics associated with music subcultures and "scenes." However, similar to some traditional music or even underground rock, electronic, hip hop and other popular musics, keroncong exists in a space somewhere between mainstream pop (Indonesian and international) and obscurity. The term, "underground," in itself, connotes a style or category that is neither static nor bounded—what comprises the underground is an ever-changing sea

of trends and styles, tastes and practices, often positioned in contradistinction to what is perceived as “the mainstream.” The term has been used generally to refer to artists working outside the corporate music industry (ie. not signed to a major record label but possibly signed to an independent label) and can implicate a variety of established popular music genres. In this sense, what I am referring to here are multiple “undergrounds” as opposed to a monolithic, all-encompassing fixed entity. In the case of keroncong, a good number of people in Java remain familiar with it and in certain ways, its legacy has been passed on in the form of slow tempo sentimental Indonesian pop ballads featuring syrupy, romanticized lyrics—common to the soundscape of public spaces like malls, banks and restaurants across Indonesia. Keroncong’s influence on Indonesian pop began as early as the 1960s and 70s when well-known bands like Koes Plus and others began incorporating elements and influences from keroncong into their rock and pop sound.

Indonesians I spoke with generally were familiar with keroncong, or at least thought they were. When I probed further I realized they were usually unfamiliar with musical characteristics of the genre—for instance some people categorized it as “ukelele music” but could not necessarily differentiate it from other types of music featuring ukuleles, such as Hawaiian music. Others referred to it quite literally as “that Portuguese music” associating it as a type of cultural relic that came to Indonesia via pre-colonial trade routes. Although this characterization is not entirely incorrect, it does overly emphasize its European roots and foreignness while ignoring what is uniquely

Indonesian about it. Part of this misrecognition may also be because keroncong is old enough that some people have grown up hearing keroncong (eg. on the radio, parents cassettes and so on) without actually listening to it. In any case, keroncong now is a music simultaneously known and unknown, familiar and yet unfamiliar in Indonesia.²⁵⁴

Keroncong's decline affected a nearly all musicians. Even icons of the genre like Waldjinhah, who brought keroncong back into the national spotlight after she popularized *langgam jawa* in the 1960s, saw a substantial decline in album sales and live performance opportunities in the 1990s. In Waldjinhah's case, her status as a performer coupled with the ability to sing various genres of music allowed her to seamlessly transition her career in other directions. Specifically, she became a guest vocalist with the gamelan in Javanese shadow puppet theater, sang Indonesian pop and spearheaded the explosion of *campursari*, a music that emerged in the 1990s combining mainly elements of keroncong and Javanese gamelan but also other musical genres like *dangdut* and standard Indonesian pop. Less known keroncong musicians were less affected by the *mati suri*. For instance, Pak Jimbo, the bassist for *Orkes Keroncong Kadin (OK Kadin)*, a local Yogyakarta band, explained, "it was hard to get any gigs, paying or otherwise back then but mati suri was mostly about keroncong disappearing from

²⁵⁴ This also appears to be true when I asked people in Malaysia, Indonesia's neighbor and also a country where keroncong once had a significant listening audience. Some Malaysians referred to keroncong as a "Malay music," perhaps not knowing its origins and basing this mainly on keroncong's lyrics being in Indonesian/Malay. More knowledgeable musicians and fans knew its history and generally considered it a music from Indonesia.

mainstream media, we're still here playing anyway."²⁵⁵ While most musicians soldiered on, *mati suri* also meant declining financial support from the government and combined with *keroncong* becoming less popular and marketable generally, also led to a decline in audience, new (ie. young) musicians, media exposure and performance opportunities.

As someone who had spent the majority of her life singing *keroncong*, Waldjinah perhaps saw the proverbial handwriting on the wall as early as the late 1970s when she began searching for other opportunities as a performer beyond her accustomed circumstances. Part of this, as I discussed in an earlier chapter, involved accepting jobs outside of Solo and central Java that kept her away from her home and family for prolonged periods of time.

*I signed a contract to perform regularly at a club in Surabaya that meant I had to be away from Solo for about six years starting in the mid 1970s. The club itself was a strange place—upstairs there were striptease performers for the men and downstairs, where I performed, was a restaurant with more of a family atmosphere. I can't complain though, they paid me three hundred thousand rupiah a night and that was very good pay at that time. Because I performed only at night, my schedule freed me up to record on a regular basis during the day. I recorded quite often during that period. After I returned to Solo in the 1980s, I noticed that *keroncong* was becoming less popular. By the 1990s, *keroncong* was dead (*keroncong itu mati*) because there were no more big*

²⁵⁵ Interview with Pak Jimbo, 9 June 2011

events (perhelatan) where it could be performed. Furthermore there were no more new vocalists being featured in new album releases.

Some of Waldjinhah's complaints were echoed by other musicians who also pointed out that this trend continues until today where record labels no longer release keroncong music by young vocalists. This could be construed, in some ways, as the death of the genre—especially given that there is little chance today that a young keroncong singer could become a pop star, like Waldjinhah did in the 1960s. I posed this question to Djakawinata (Djaka) Susilo, head of Gema Nada Pertiwi (GNP), one of the few labels releasing keroncong music in Indonesia today, and he told me that it was difficult from a business perspective to expect a return on investment on a young and unknown performer, especially a keroncong vocalist.²⁵⁶ In the past, they relied on the national state-sponsored *Bintang Radio* (Radio Star) vocal competition to help new vocalists establish a name for themselves before they were signed, but since the vocal competition shifted its emphasis toward the pop music industry, young keroncong vocalists have lost a major support system. Pak Djaka's response is not uncommon among record industry executives; his hesitance to take a chance on a young, unknown keroncong vocalist is based on a general understanding of keroncong's market share where the core demographic for the genre was aging. So far, there has been no indication that enough young people are becoming interested in keroncong to warrant

²⁵⁶ Personal correspondence via email, 4 March 2014.

releasing albums featuring new and younger singers. This is not to imply that interest in keroncong does not exist; it simply has not been cultivated among younger audiences. There does, however, appear to be a push by older musicians now to renew interest in keroncong, which they refer to as *regenerasi* (regeneration)—whether or not this results in an audience large enough to attract interest from the music industry remains to be seen.²⁵⁷ As a label that has consistently supported keroncong over the course of its existence, Pak Djaka insists that GNP continues to support young vocalists by adding them to compilations with older, more established ones. These instances, however, are rare and young keroncong vocalists, besides possibly appearing on local television or being featured in print media, rarely, if ever, receive the type of visibility afforded to up and coming pop artists.

Persevering in New Directions

Despite keroncong's overall decline in popularity, Waldjinah managed to prolong her career and retain a degree of her overall popularity by moving toward shadow theater (*wayang kulit*) as a guest vocalist with Javanese gamelan groups beginning in the mid 1980s. This shift did not necessarily mean she trained to become a *pesindhèn*, a Javanese gamelan vocalist, instead she continued to identify as a keroncong/langgam jawa vocalist who happened to perform in *wayang kulit*. Part of this transition entailed

²⁵⁷ I return to the topic of *regenerasi* later on in this chapter.

bringing some of her repertoire, especially from langgam jawa, into the idiom of gamelan and wayang kulit.

Beginning in the 1980s there was a wayang “boom” (spike in popularity) because Pak Harto (Suharto, Indonesia’s second president) announced that everyone associated with the New Order government were strongly encouraged to attend wayang performances, from village chiefs (lurah) to generals in the military and everyone in between. I started searching for opportunities to perform in wayang and found them regularly, sometimes as many as thirty a month! Although I performed with the gamelan I never considered myself a pesindhèn. I’m not a pesindhèn...I’m a keroncong singer. I felt my role was only a guest vocalist while pesindhèn were the regulars. I usually sang one of my own songs, like Yèn Ing Tawang Ana Lintang (If There are Stars in the Sky), Tanjung Perak (Cape Silver) or other langgam jawa. Dalang (puppeteers) loved it when I would accompany them because they knew that I attracted a large crowd. Instead of having just male soldiers or villagers, mothers and children would often attend wayang where I performed. It got to the point where some dalang would only perform in certain towns on the condition that I would be there, their attitude was “if Waldjinhah isn’t there then the crowd won’t show up!”

One of the aspects she enjoyed most about performing in a wayang setting was that it allowed her to interact with audiences differently than at keroncong concerts—

this type of informal banter between her and spectators often took place before the play began. Given that dalang rarely engage with spectators (although they do engage indirectly with their sponsors and invited guests) since it would be construed as unseemly and unprofessional, Waldjinah's role in the performance was unique. Being an outsider (ie. not a *pesindhèn*) allowed her more latitude in addressing spectators directly. She often joked around and asked audience members if they had song requests—which they usually responded to enthusiastically. During this period of her career, Waldjinah was able to exhibit her dexterity as a performer, this was done not only in terms of expanding her vocal repertoire into gamelan but also in how she captured an audience's attention in a setting and context far different from the one she was accustomed to. While she genuinely enjoyed performing in wayang, her transition was not without difficulty. As I discussed in an earlier chapter, some members of wayang troupes were shy and reluctant to interact with her, most likely because of her celebrity status. Her position in the overall environment of wayang performances also was not conducive to establishing close friendships—her performance schedule was actually quite regimented: after a rigorous all-night performance, she was paid, went home to sleep during the day, got up in the afternoon and followed this exact routine the following night. There was little downtime during the actual performance to strike up conversation or really get to know anyone. Besides this, there were also some *pesindhèn* who refused to converse with her, perhaps jealous of her stature and concerned that her regularly performing meant they might soon be out of a job. These

circumstances amounted to an environment that was new and stimulating yet awkward and isolating for keroncong's biggest star.²⁵⁸

In addition to career transitions, Waldjinah also had to deal with the death of her husband, Pak Bud, in 1985 due to complications from diabetes. Like many other Indonesians, Pak Bud was addicted to sugary foods and had trouble controlling his diet even after he was diagnosed as a diabetic. Pak Bud's condition eventually led to complications with his liver, but not before he met with a serious motorcycle accident. His extended stay in the hospital was a difficult stretch for Waldjinah and her family in general. Beyond the emotional stress, she lamented about the financial impact his ill health had on the family—"money flowed away like water in a river," she explained. Pak Bud's passing was the second premature death in Waldjinah's immediate family, the first being the death of her young daughter, Dwi, from sudden illness in 1972. Waldjinah claims it was the single most difficult thing she had to overcome in her life. Although heartbroken, she left for a tour of Suriname only days after her daughter's death. When she returned home to Solo, Waldjinah laid in bed for weeks in an almost paralyzed state distraught about her daughter. She emerged only after her sons sat by her bedside and tearfully pleaded with her to get up.

²⁵⁸ Waldjinah also claims that certain aspects of wayang performance came about or developed because of her. For one, the use of a small stool, known as *dingklik*, that she began using because it was simply too uncomfortable for her to kneel for the duration of an entire wayang performance. She also suggests that some of the langgam jawa songs that she regularly performed are still performed today in some wayang performances. Finally she suggests that some *dalang* and *pesindhèn* now tend to interact with each other more because it was common for her to do so when she joined wayang troupes. Although I cannot verify or reject any of these claims, I feel it important to note them here as a way of showing how Waldjinah believes she impacted performative practices in wayang over the years she was involved with it.

Many people came to visit me but I just didn't want to see anyone. At that point I didn't know how I would find the energy to go on with my life. One day my sons filed into my room one by one. They silently knelt down beside me in bed and finally one of them asked, "Mom if you can't sing anymore then who will feed us...how will we eat?" I laid there for a moment and thought about the question. I knew they were right. It was time for me to get up and go back into the recording studio.

Waldjinah, of course, did manage to find the energy to continue after the deaths of her daughter and husband respectively. Undoubtedly though, the loss of two people so close to her had a significant impact on her life thereafter. When she recounted the story of her daughter's passing to me, she broke down into tears repeatedly and there were long pauses where she had to compose herself. It was the most emotionally intense interview we had and one I will not soon forget. Unlike other topics she intermittently returned to in subsequent interviews, we never again discussed her daughter's death after that day. The challenges posed during this portion of her life were overcome because of Waldjinah's strong will, her sense of determination as well as the support of her family. It also ushered in an extended period where she moved away from the world of *langgam jawa* and *keroncong* that she had grown so accustomed to. After becoming involved in shadow theater she also began performing *campursari* around 1998. Her collaborations with a Javanese musician named

Manthous during this period helped popularize *campursari* similar in some ways to how she popularized *langgam jawa* in the 1960s.

I was there when campursari emerged in the late 1990s. Manthous and I made it quite popular. I remember him inviting me down to Gunung Kidul (a town in the southern part of central Java) to attend a practice at his home, and that's where it all started. I asked some of my keroncong musician friends to accompany me and we collaborated with him and some gamelan musicians down there. At that point keroncong had already been in decline (mati suri) for some time and I really didn't have many (paid) opportunities to sing keroncong anymore so this was a chance to create something new. After campursari became popular, I regularly received invitations to perform again.

One of Waldjinhah's greatest assets as a performer, beyond her talent as a vocalist, has been her ability to remain relevant in the realm of Indonesian popular music. Part of this can be attributed to good instincts and a willingness to experiment beyond her comfort zone as a performer—a characteristic apparent early on when she spearheaded innovations in *langgam jawa* and then again with *campursari*. Her contributions to each of these musics, both of which can arguably be interpreted as Javanized subgenres of *keroncong*, showed not only creativity but also a sense of timeliness as both emerged during periods when *keroncong*'s popularity was flagging.

Although Waldjinah may not have necessarily planned to resuscitate interest in keroncong through langgam jawa or campursari, she not only prolonged her career and cemented her status as a keroncong legend but also sparked further interest in “preserving” the genre.

Revival and Regeneration

After years of *mati suri*, keroncong eventually experienced a small “revival” around 2005. Whether or not it can actually be called a “revival” is disputed somewhat—especially given that keroncong today continues to exist on the fringes of Indonesian popular culture. In most cases it is performed in urban areas of Java—although there are also bands active in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Bali.²⁵⁹ Furthermore many keroncong musicians contend that they continued playing even after there were few opportunities for paid live performance. Interest in the genre, however, was sustained primarily because of the tireless efforts of musicians and fans—many formed bands, organized performances and music workshops and created (cyber)spaces enabling online social interaction. As possible evidence of renewed interest in keroncong, record labels also began releasing CD versions of their keroncong back catalog over the last five or so years. While reissues of old recordings may have established keroncong as “retro-hip” and helped it find new audiences, the thrust of the

²⁵⁹ There may also be a bands in cities like Ambon (Moluccas islands), Manado (in north Sulawesi) or even other parts of Indonesia, however active bands are known to exist in on the islands I mention here.

revival was (and is) based in the community of keroncong musicians who not only continue to perform but also search for innovative ways to promote and preserve the music.

Among the driving forces behind keroncong's revival were two people living in the city of Bandung, West Java. One of them, Adi Wiratmo, was an information technology specialist by profession who also played contrabass for the band *Orkes Keroncong Jempol Jenthik* (Thumb and Pinkie Finger Keroncong Orchestra) and published a newsletter called *Tjroeng* (pronounced “ch-roong” as in the sound made by strumming the strings of a *cuk*) that was circulated around Indonesia entirely through musician and fan networks.²⁶⁰ In a way, *Tjroeng* was like a keroncong fanzine—there were articles about musicians (some more well-known than others), reviews of performances and recordings, the genre's history, explanations of playing technique and musical terminology, advertisements for instruments and so on. Although it was available in scanned PDF form, the printed version appeared to be more popular and Pak Adi oversaw each edition of *Tjroeng* that was released.

²⁶⁰ The spelling of *Tjroeng* uses the “oe” of old Dutch influenced orthography as opposed to the “u” of modern Indonesian. This I suspect is done purposefully to emphasize the sense of nostalgia associated with keroncong generally. The *cuk* is one of the Indonesian ukuleles found in a keroncong ensemble, for a more detailed description of the *cuk* and other instruments see Chapter 5.



10.1 Four covers of *Tjroeng* magazine.

Beyond his activities as a musician, Pak Adi administered the Yahoo! Keroncong email listserv, established the “Keroncong Cyber” Facebook group and linked musicians

and fans through WhatsApp, a mobile device application—all have served as vital portals for communication that established an online community of keroncong musicians across Indonesia. As ethnomusicologist Rene Lysloff (2002: 236) argues, online communities often are as “real” (or imagined) as those offline and are based on a shared sense of belonging not necessarily dependent on proximity. More importantly, Internet technology made possible communities and new social practices unimaginable before providing new materiality for social interaction and group formation and allowing new possibilities for subjectivity and group identity to emerge. On-line communities helped to solidify “real” communities as communication via the Internet led to the organization of performances and events bringing together musicians from across Indonesia. In this sense, Internet forums have helped to forge a nationalized identity for fans and musicians—expressed in the popularity of slogans (often worn on t-shirts) such as “Keroncongers Indonesia” and “Save Indonesian Heritage, Play Keroncong Music.” It is no coincidence then that all of this was initiated by Pak Adi, whose interest in Internet technology led him to establish the Yahoo! and Facebook online groups just to meet others who shared his interest in keroncong. Interestingly enough the “revival” also coincided with a period when Indonesians began having greater access to the Internet—when I was in Indonesia, it was common for keroncong musicians and fans to meet online and I, too, met many of my informants through the Keroncong Cyber Facebook site.

Another person integral to keroncong's revival was a man named Partho Djojodihardjo, a stocky middle-aged man who worked for a radio station in Bandung called "*Lita FM* (or Light FM)," specializing in Indonesian and Western adult contemporary "light rock" and "easy listening" pop. Pak Partho hosted a weekly keroncong show where he played older recordings as well as those of current bands from across Indonesia—the show was broadcast over terrestrial radio in Bandung and also streamed live online. He was also an archivist of sorts, often traveling to keroncong performances across Java (as well as other islands) and posting photographs and reviews of what he saw and heard on the internet. Since most current bands did not have studio recordings of their music, Pak Partho recorded live performances to play on his radio show and in some cases he even distributed CD compilations of these recordings to other musicians and fans free of charge. Although not a musician himself, Pak Partho's dedication as a fan and his contribution to the keroncong scene was immeasurable—he not only actively documented performances but also was instrumental as an arbiter of changing tastes, often playing innovative new styles of keroncong on his weekly radio program.²⁶¹

Both Pak Partho and Pak Adi have both used the Internet to create keroncong communities as "real" online as they are off. The efforts of both men are characteristic of others working to ensure that keroncong continues to exist in Indonesia. Much of the discourse circulating among musicians and fans during the recent revival period has

²⁶¹ I will return to the topic of recent musical developments in keroncong later in this chapter.

been about preservation and legitimacy. Specifically they stressed the importance of “preserving” keroncong (*melestarikan musik keroncong*) or, in other words, educating younger musicians, attracting financial support from the Indonesian government and introducing keroncong to a larger audience, both in Indonesia as well as internationally. Some believed that keroncong “going international” and finding an audience outside Indonesia, would also lead to greater interest domestically. Discourse about preservation is not necessarily new—Indonesian artists and scholars have long taken on the project of situating presentational dances within broader contexts of emerging Indonesian nationalist performing arts so as to legitimize them and their histories (Spiller 2010:18). Legitimacy and preservation in the context of keroncong are intertwined, especially since many Indonesians from the older generation still remember its role in the nationalist movement that spawned the Indonesian republic during the late 1940s. The issue for most is not about whether keroncong should be preserved but rather *how* it will be preserved.

Crafting a National Culture, Curating a Genre

The process of preserving brings into question exactly what is being preserved. As I discussed in an earlier chapter, keroncong as a genre had already undergone a series of stylistic developments over the course of its history prior to the 1950s. During this period immediately following independence, as the Indonesian government sought to solidify a national cultural identity, Sukarno, the country’s first president, along with

other nationalists promoted keroncong as the music that could effectively cross diverse ethnic, linguistic, geographical and class lines. As a further bonus, its “flexible” repertoire already included nationalist-themed songs and folk tunes from various regions of Indonesia (*lagu daerah*). Over the next twenty or so years, Archipelago Radio of the Republic of Indonesia (*RRI Nusantara*) not only broadcasted keroncong but also cultivated a specific keroncong “sound” by airing bands and vocalists it considered creative and having a certain level of quality (Harmunah 1987: 38). As a curating council (*dewan kurator*), both RRI and the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture determined aesthetic *standards* of quality that were then applied as criteria for judging keroncong vocal competitions for up-and-coming singers.²⁶² Essentially these curating councils polished and codified a street music formerly associated with lower class Eurasians in urban Jakarta into a form fitting the criteria of a national culture. Keroncong competitions were (and continue to be) judged according to the guidelines established during this era—specifically song delivery, individual technique, cohesiveness and balance, song arrangement, appearance and choice of patriotic themes (see Harmunah 1987: 38-41). Songs performed in national competitions were categorized according to musical form (ie. *keroncong asli*, *langgam keroncong* and *stambul*) and instrumentation was standardized (ie. *cuk*, *cak*, cello, guitar, contrabass, violin and flute).

²⁶² See Ganap 2010: 141-145

Keroncong asli, the style that emerged during late 1940s and early 50s, continues to inform how the music is performed and taught today. For instance, many of the keroncong bands I observed were comprised of, what most musicians referred to as, “traditional” instrumentation and continued to play songs from the classic repertoire associated with the era of *keroncong asli* in the late 1930s through the 1940s.²⁶³ Although there certainly have been developments in the genre since that time, namely the emergence of *langgam jawa*, “kroncong beat,” pop keroncong, “congrock” and *campursari*, standards of the keroncong asli era remain dominant in determining genre boundaries. Pak Wartono, the vice president of the keroncong musicians association in Solo (*Himpunan Artis Musik Keroncong Republik Indonesia*, or HAMKRI), once mentioned that preserving the “core elements” of keroncong was essential to “creating identifiable characteristics so audiences can identify keroncong when they hear it.”²⁶⁴ By “core elements” here, Pak Wartono is referring to the ones codified during the RRI era, which most would simply consider as “standard” today. As someone who organized and promoted events, Pak Wartono realized the importance of having set and identifiable genre characteristics and boundaries—in other words, he felt audiences to some degree should know what to expect when they attended a keroncong concert. At the same time he also understood that genre boundaries were fluid based on the aesthetic choices of individual musicians. When booking events Pak Wartono sometimes included “non-traditional” sounding bands but labeled their music

²⁶³ See chapter 7 for further discussion on this topic.

²⁶⁴ Interview with Wartono in Surakarta, 4 April 2012.

“innovative keroncong” (*keroncong inovasi*)—some of the bands I saw included non-standard instrumentation (ie. electrified instruments, various types of auxiliary percussion, electronic beats and so on) or else strayed from the standard interlocking rhythmic patterns of keroncong asli.

While these bands may actually represent future trends in the genre, according to Pak Wartono, it is not what people considered “keroncong.” The *keroncong inovasi* label, in this sense, reinforces genre boundaries by discursively positioning the musical styles and influences incorporated by some musicians as outside of core characteristics comprising the tradition. Furthermore this reinforced the idea that musical characteristics of keroncong asli represent the standard that future developments in the genre should be based on. Part of the issue here also is that this overlooks other styles of keroncong (besides newer bands labeled *inovasi*) such as the older style of keroncong performed by the Eurasian musicians in *Kampung Tugu* in northeast Jakarta, which differs in instrumentation, rhythm and repertoire from most other bands in Java.²⁶⁵ A further question raised here is perhaps not only about how keroncong is being preserved but also *by whom?*

²⁶⁵ See Chapter 1 for a further explanation of these differences.

***Pakem* and Preservation**

Since the mid 2000s (and perhaps earlier), some young musicians have questioned the divide between “keroncong inovasi” and keroncong asli. Many of them have joined the Facebook forum Keroncong Cyber. Since becoming a member of the group myself about five years ago, I have had an opportunity to observe online discussions, learn about performances and events, and listen to new recordings by other members. I have even met and interviewed a number of the members that were living in Yogyakarta and Solo as well as a few from Bandung and Jakarta. Among these musicians, I found that interpretations of keroncong tend to be flexible and open to a variety of musical influences and instrumentation—some mentioned that there should be no “rules” restricting how to play or sing keroncong. Sruti Respati, a vocalist from Solo who studied with Waldjinhah, told me about how she despised keroncong vocal competitions because judges tend to select winners with specific types of voices and, as she put it, promoted a process that strips vocalists of individuality and creativity, essentially encouraging everyone to sound the same.²⁶⁶ Mbak Sruti is certainly not alone in her rejection of this imposed sense of stylistic uniformity. After all the keroncong asli style at one time considered innovative and new, now is referred to as *pakem* (standard) among musicians in central Java.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Interview with Sruti Respati in Surakarta, 17 February 2012

²⁶⁷ Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings (2010) define it as “norm, rule.” I am translating it as “standard” because it fits the context used by my informants.

Some musicians now are consciously moving beyond *pakem* by adding different instrumentation (as I described above), incorporating rhythmic flair from hip hop, rock, salsa, bossanova and jazz while performing current Indonesian and international pop hits in the keroncong idiom. Such developments are not entirely new to keroncong. As a genre it has continuously incorporated new elements and been influenced by other popular musics (both Indonesian and international), especially over the last hundred or so years. In this sense, musicians today are continuing to invoke the type of flexibility associated with the genre over the course of its history. What is different now is that some musicians have realized that preserving keroncong means reinterpreting some of the longstanding practices associated with it. In addition to updating keroncong's sound by incorporating new instrumentation and other musical elements, there is also a conscious effort to encourage young musicians to play keroncong, and part of this process includes allowing them to dress more casually during performances and reconfigure keroncong's sound. For instance at the 2013 Solo International Keroncong Festival, I watched a band comprised of around fifteen musicians (nearly twice the size of a standard keroncong ensemble) playing saxophones, trumpets, electric guitar, a conga and *djembe* drum as well as a full drum kit. Additionally, they featured standard keroncong instrumentation, however their sound was anything but standard, not only in terms of sheer volume but also in how they combined standard keroncong rhythms and melodies with interludes featuring funk-influenced basslines, hip hop beats, rhumba-style drumming, fuzzed-out, reverb-drenched guitar distortion (reminiscent of 1960s

psychedelic rock) and the dissonant skronk of a horn section conjuring Eric Dolphy and Ornette Coleman inspired free jazz. An American friend of mine later described the performance as “a beautiful mess” and not necessarily a bad one either. I thought of it as a type of “keroncong free jazz” representing a deliberate reconfiguring of keroncong evoking the spirit and intent of free jazz musicians like Dolphy and Coleman (along with others in the 1950s and 60s such as Sun Ra, Albert Ayler, Archie Shepp and so on) who attempted to expand, rework or simply break down jazz convention by abandoning standard chord changes and tempos. Bands such as this one represent a different approach to preserving keroncong, one that perhaps loosened genre boundaries while continuing to evoke past tradition.²⁶⁸

At the same time, approaches toward preservation cannot simply be divided into simple binaries of “old versus young” or “traditional versus modern,” especially since the majority of younger musicians today have learned to play and sing keroncong based on the aesthetics and repertoire taught by older musicians, most of whom learned the principles of keroncong asli. In most cases, young musicians learned from older musicians by observing them at band practices. In a neighborhood adjacent to the train tracks at Lempuyangan station in Yogyakarta, I attended weekly practices of *Orkes*

Keroncong Surya Mataram (OK Surya Mataram) at the home of Sri Hartati (or Bu Sri as I

²⁶⁸ Besides the influence of jazz, other bands I watched, such as “the Light Keroncong Orchestra,” from Yogyakarta, directed by composer Singgih Sanjaya, explicitly featured keroncong accompanied by a full orchestra. Most of Pak Singgih’s compositions for this ensemble draw heavily from his Western classical music background and studies in contemporary music, which he combines seamlessly with his love of keroncong. The band itself features mostly students from the Art Institute of Yogyakarta (ISI Jogja) where Pak Singgih is a teacher.

knew her), the band leader and a three-time RRI keroncong national vocal competition champion.²⁶⁹ Bu Sri was not just a band leader and respected vocalist, she was also a keroncong vocal teacher and the band's weekly practice doubled as her classroom. Since keroncong has not formally been introduced into the curriculum at the Indonesian conservatory-styled art institutes,²⁷⁰ band practices such as Surya Mataram's served as important sites of learning where new musicians honed their skills under the watchful guidance and tutelage of the more experienced.

²⁶⁹ Founded in 1975 by Sri Hartati's late husband, Pak Juwari, *OK Surya Mataram* is known to be one of the oldest active keroncong bands in Yogyakarta. Bu Sri also has a number of albums (either featuring her or on compilations with other singers) released mostly on small cassette labels based in central Java. For one reason or another, she has never reached the level of popularity of other female vocalists like Waldjinah, Titiëk Puspa, Sundari Soekotjo or Hetty Koes Endang. Part of the reason for the reason for this is because Bu Sri has remained content working for Yogyakarta's RRI branch, which Waldjinah also did early on in her career, and has not toured extensively or had much of a presence performing in Jakarta, the capital city. This, however, does not diminish her accomplishments whatsoever. A significant number of vocalists I interviewed in Yogyakarta (both males and females of various ages) reminisced about learning from Bu Sri while attending OK Surya Mataram's practices. In this respect, Bu Sri claims an entire lineage of keroncong vocalists in Yogyakarta (as well as beyond) and due to her distinguished reputation as a teacher, new aspiring vocalists continue to show up for practice at her home each week.

²⁷⁰ These are known as *Institut Seni Indonesia* (ISI) and are located in large cities around Indonesia.



10.2 Sri Hartati performs at an OK Surya Mataram practice in Yogyakarta. Photo by the author.



10.3 Students practice under the Sri Hartati's (on the far right) guidance. Photo by the author.

Bu Sri had a number of vocal students ranging in age from 16 to 45. She taught essentially the same techniques she learned from her teacher, Kusbini, a composer/vocalist from East Java (but a Yogyakarta resident for much of his life) known to be one of the architects of the keroncong asli sound in the 1940s and 50s. Musicians around town told me that OK Surya Mataram epitomized keroncong asli on a number of levels—combining the “traditional sound,” repertoire and, of course, Bu Sri’s vocal technique. Her students were generally well-versed in the technical aspects of keroncong vocals and were considered textbook examples of what a keroncong singer should sound like. As I mentioned earlier, however, some younger vocalists critiqued this approach of emphasizing technique and proper ways of singing as creating an overall homogeneity among vocalists at the expense of what they considered most crucial to performance: creativity and individuality.

Despite these critiques, many of the same musicians who sought to modernize keroncong also spoke reverently of older musicians and the need to continue performing classic keroncong repertoire. The same was true of some older musicians who understood the need for developments even if personally they were content staying within the tradition (as they understood it). Similar to other genres, calls for development in keroncong did not inherently represent an obvious break from the past but rather a process of creative reinterpretation based on a continuous dialectic with the tradition. No keroncong artist has exemplified this approach better than Waldjinah, who over the course of her career, repeatedly introduced new styles and influences

while remaining true to the keroncong idiom generally. Inspired by her approach, musicians today continue on in this spirit of renewing and reshaping keroncong to make it relevant to current audiences in Indonesia.

Leading the Keroncong Musicians Association

When I asked Waldjinhah about her thoughts on the future of keroncong she expressed concern about how it could (or would) survive. She remained optimistic though. “Of course keroncong must be preserved,” she interjected vehemently, “not only is it great music, it’s an important part of our Indonesian culture and national history. We can’t afford to let it go extinct (*punah*).” Now as a distinguished elder stateswoman approaching the end of her performing career, Waldjinhah was actually in a position to help ensure its survival. Beginning in 2005 she assumed some of the responsibility as the head of the Solo and Central Java chapter of the keroncong musicians association (*HAMKRI Solo/Jawa Tengah*)—accepting this position coincided with her decision to end her involvement with shadow theater and return to performing keroncong again. HAMKRI, a national organization founded during the reign of the New Order, had chapters in large urban areas predominantly in Java—some musicians told me small chapters also existed on other islands such as Bali and Sumatra but it was unclear whether these were still active.

As the head of the Central Java and Solo chapter, Waldjinhah’s main objective was to revive regional interest in keroncong. To do this she helped organize and support

performances and events financially and increased exposure by having keroncong acts appear on local television or featured in newspapers. Additionally, she took it upon herself to ensure that musicians were well groomed for performances, in some cases even accompanying them to the hair salon hours before a show. Financial support for these activities came mostly from the provincial or Solo city government. It was her job as chapter leader to disburse funds to smaller towns and villages to support the activities of local bands.

When I led HAMKRI Solo, the main office was located right here in my home. We not only held practices here but it was also a place that the keroncong community of Solo could congregate. Events here were quite festive and lots of people would show up. As the leader, I also made sure that there were lots of women involved...and there were during my tenure. I often invited all the female singers in town over to my house and we would have a great time hanging out. HAMKRI Solo was dominated by the women! Nowadays, I hear there's not so much of that going on anymore.

Without explicitly criticizing HAMKRI's current leadership, Waldjinah's tone of voice hinted at the rifts that emerged between her and certain individuals in the organization. After relinquishing leadership, she distanced herself from the organization and its events as a subtle form of protest. When I told her that my keroncong band from the United States would be performing at the 2013 International Solo Keroncong

Festival (organized by members of HAMKRI Solo), she emphatically responded, “I’m glad you’re playing but I won’t be attending this year, I’m taking a break from it.” Rather than pass judgment or blame, Waldjinah explained that the reason she had chosen to step down was because she “was getting too old and too tired” for the position. Although this might have been the case, especially given her recent bouts with illness, the way she described the situation suggested other reasons that had nothing to do with age or ability. When she spoke more openly in one of our later interviews Waldjinah told me that her reasons for leaving HAMKRI stemmed from issues of financial corruption. Some of what she discussed reflected a much larger institutional problem of corruption in Indonesia, one that remains common practice among governmental agencies and private businesses on all levels.

As perhaps a case study exemplifying this type of corruption, Waldjinah explained that during her tenure as leader of HAMKRI Solo the chapter’s yearly budget was about forty million rupiah (around US\$3,100). However, that was not what she received, especially after politicians in the Indonesian House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* or DPR) received their cut. Her final budget was only around fifteen million rupiah (around US\$1,200), less than half of the initial amount. Most members of HAMKRI Solo, according to her, were unaware of the exact amount of money taken by the DPR politicians and some began suspecting her of siphoning off funds for herself. Apparently there were witnesses and even some paperwork outlining how much “the cut” (*potongan*) was to be yet nothing was done to curtail it. Separate accounting books

were kept to ensure nothing would appear on the budget should it be made public.

Waldjinhah was unsure of how to handle the situation and feared possible retribution for whistleblowing if she had chosen to speak out. Waldjinhah said nothing openly about the role she played in this scenario. It is possible that in her position she had little power to act (as she seemed to imply). However there also exists the possibility she received a sum of money to remain silent. In either case, Waldjinhah repeatedly asserted that she accepted no money and, although she believed her tenure as chapter head was generally successful, it was marred by disagreements and apparent accusations of mishandling funds—such squabbling is common among these types of organizations in Indonesia mainly due to lack of transparency . Even after HAMKRI Solo’s budget shifted from the provincial governor’s office to the Solo mayor’s office, the House of Representatives retained the power to approve it and therefore continued to take a significant chunk of it each year. For this and other reasons, people who worked for HAMKRI Solo, including Waldjinhah, received no official compensation for their positions—there were even instances where she paid musicians out of her own pocket to preserve the chapter’s funds.

I tried to attend as many performances as I could when I was HAMKRI leader. Besides, I knew that if I attended, then a larger crowd would also turn up. Regional organizers often telephoned me before an event to ask if I would attend. Most of the time, I replied, “Sure what time do you want me there?” I tried to support keroncong

related events as much as possible traveling all around Solo and other towns and villages in Central Java to support musicians. I've even used my own money for all of this travel because I was so afraid people would accuse me of using HAMKRI money for my own purposes.



10.4 Waldjinh (in the middle) and friends during her stint as president of HAMKRI Surakarta. Photo courtesy of Waldjinh.

Waldjinh's fear of being labeled as corrupt weighed heavily on her throughout her tenure as HAMKRI's leader, especially as someone very much concerned with her public image in general. Some of the issues she addressed, as I mentioned, were not exclusive to her position alone but indicative of how corruption works throughout

Indonesia. Despite being one of the leading economies in Southeast Asia, Indonesia continues to suffer from pervasive corruption, especially in the nation’s House of Representatives (DPR), its police force, and judiciary system—considered to be three of the more corrupt institutions in the country today.²⁷¹ Ultimately, as is usually the case, the Indonesian public suffers the brunt of this corruption and in this case, keroncong musicians had to make do with a sizably smaller budget due to systematic dishonesty. A general complaint I heard among musicians was that keroncong music was not being “supported” financially by either the federal or local government. To the contrary, as illustrated by the case in Solo, funding does in fact appear to be available, at least in principle. The issue, however, was that the vast majority of it failed to reach the organizations that supported musicians—a problem certainly not exclusive to this keroncong association. Although funding is always an important issue, it was the only factor in determining whether HAMKRI was effective—for instance, Yogyakarta musicians complained that the head of their local chapter was lazy and incompetent because he did not organize and promote enough events. These are among the reasons why the contributions of individuals, both financially (for the more wealthy) and in terms of personal time, have played an integral role in reviving keroncong during the past decade. Organizations like HAMKRI and the federal government play a decidedly

²⁷¹ Indonesia ranks 114th out of 177 countries in terms of the most corrupt nations according to a survey conducted by Transparency International (*New York Times*, 3 July 2014). Despite efforts by the Constitutional Court and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK)—both institutions were established following the demise of the New Order regime in 1998 as part of the process toward democratization—corruption remains rampant on federal and regional levels.

less important role in sustaining keroncong than the grassroots efforts of musicians and fans like Waldjinah, Pak Adi, Pak Partho and a host of others.

Conclusion: Preservation and Music Cultures

Music genres, although having boundaries and apparent fixed characteristics, are by nature relatively open to continuous negotiation and dynamic change over time. Despite this fluidity, fixed elements of genre also define identity for some musicians, and preserving these basic elements are equivalent to preserving the genre itself. Having these identifiable and fixed characteristics are essential in validating its existence as a genre while also differentiating it from other genres (or even subgenres). In a sense, my goal in this chapter was not only to point out how keroncong is changing, because it is and has been for some time now, but also to examine some reasons why it may *not* be developing.

As musicians continue to push forward the project of preserving keroncong, they face an array of challenges, among them: searching for funding, attracting younger musicians and audiences, developing new repertoire and musical influences and lastly, finding a way for keroncong to formally enter the music curriculum at schools and universities. As I mentioned earlier, efforts to preserve keroncong, up to this point, hinged on the efforts of individual musicians and fans. While this has resulted in a renewed interest in keroncong among some young musicians, this approach also had its drawbacks, especially as musicians grew older or no longer had the energy to continue

in their efforts. In keroncong's case this resulted in an uneven approach in efforts to sustain the genre despite a fervent desire on the part of musicians to do so. Likewise, nationally recognized associations like HAMKRI theoretically could do more in helping to formally organize musicians and promote keroncong in Indonesia, given adequate funding and capable leadership. It is possible that introducing keroncong into the music curriculum at Indonesia's conservatory styled art institutes could help to "preserve" its place in national culture, similar to programs that currently exist in these institutes with *karawitan* (Javanese gamelan). However, even if these options were successfully implemented, it may not halt the decline of keroncong as both remain contingent on whether interest in keroncong is drummed up by musicians beyond institutional settings.

Interest in cultural sustainability extends beyond keroncong musicians in Indonesia. Ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon observes that international projects, such as the Australian-based "Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures," are intended to protect certain music cultures deemed to be "endangered resources," targeting areas such as musical content and structure, learning and transmission of music, and social and cultural contexts of music traditions.²⁷² The outcome of this project is a website and manual that would create partnerships between culture workers and community members seeking sustainable futures for their music cultures. Part of it also involves a

²⁷² See Titon's blog site www.sustainablemusic.blogspot.com , accessed 21 January 2012

systematic approach to identifying specific elements of music cultures in order to document and preserve them. This approach therefore implies a form of curation involving taste arbiters and the need for framing, interpretation and selection—ultimately establishing a discourse of preservation centered on characteristics or qualities considered representative of a music culture. Curation also creates tangible boundaries for a music culture while essentially determining what is or is not preserved. The act of preserving, however, requires addressing competing discourses within music cultures that advance marginalized or emerging viewpoints. As I have shown above, different discourses may agree with the overall goal of preserving, but they offer competing ideas and approaches in terms of how it can be accomplished or even how to define genre in terms of its musical characteristics.

For keroncong musicians, ideas regarding preservation are often driven by a combination of individual taste and nostalgia, simultaneously determining the boundaries of the genre while reconfiguring them. As an artist, Waldjinah has exemplified this type of development over the course of her career. Although she helped establish new subgenres like *langgam jawa* and *campursari*, she continued to identify as a keroncong singer—in a sense, establishing the idea that these new subgenres exist within the larger genre of keroncong. In recent years, Waldjinah attempted to resuscitate the genre again (just as she had tried to revive her own career), but this time in a capacity as the leader of the local keroncong musicians association. In this position she played the role of a taste arbiter promoting and

supporting the musicians she enjoyed, and was again in a position to reinvigorate keroncong and help steer a course for its future.

Chapter 11

Postlude: Keroncong after the New Order

“There are degrees to the alterations a person experiences...Whatever we once were is now completely different and will continue to change as we move perpetually on from one place to another, half of us in one world, half in another.”

--Umar Kayam, from *Bawuk*²⁷³

My dissertation has interweaved four main threads: 1) a life history of Waldjinhah, 2) a narrative of keroncong, 3) a narrative of postcolonial Indonesia as a modernizing nation, and finally 4) my own subjectivity as a researcher and keroncong musician. In the broadest sense, this study has focused on how Waldjinhah attained her stature as a national artist, the challenges she faced in doing so and the mechanisms that enabled her to succeed. Each of the latter three threads I explored primarily within the lifeworld Waldjinhah experienced as a performer.

As others have aptly noted, history is a process continually remade and repositioned in relation to new truths or memories based on shifting temporal and political orders.²⁷⁴ It is often the case that presenting history is more about presenting configurations of power and validating “real” representations of the past—it emphasizes certain narratives while silencing others. The emerging genre of historical memory in recent years “acknowledges the intertwined yet discontinuous aspects of

²⁷³ Kayam, Umar. 1983. “Bawuk.” In *Reflections on Rebellion: Stories from the Indonesian Upheavals of 1948 and 1965*, translated by John H. McGlynn and William H. Frederick. Athens, OH: Center for International Studies, Ohio University.

²⁷⁴ See Schwenkel 2009, Truillot 1995.

individual and social processing in shaping representation of the past in the present (Zurbuchen 2005: 7-8).” Historical memory, according to Mary Zurbuchen (ibid), “embraces not only fixed texts or other ‘sites of memory’ but also processes of configuring memory, moments when the past can be reshaped and outcomes remain unresolved.” Personal memory, although full of possible pitfalls and repercussions, counters the idea that national history is the sole terrain of governments and elites, and that ordinary people are not authoritative sources. Personal memory provides possibilities for new histories rooted in the lived experiences of individuals. The narratives presented in this dissertation engage with processes of history-making and in this process have been remade and reconfigured by at least two people: Waldjinah and me. In the course of selection and editorializing, these narratives remain unresolved in a number of ways and the glaring silences of the unsaid are, in some instances, readily apparent. Telling one’s life story is always a performative act and what Waldjinah chose to discuss (or omit), and even how she framed particular stories, had much to do with crafting a public image that presumably included both a domestic and Western audience. The telling of stories constructs specific portraits in her life: her upbringing and early family life, her life as a professional vocalist, mother and wife, how she learned to sing keroncong and even her political affiliations. These scenes weave together a particular narrative of Waldjinah’s life and include silences in her own story—as the voice of the modern Indonesian nation-state, some of them are also silences of the nation. Instances of racism, intolerance and injustice were carefully maneuvered, I

sense, because she felt unease or perhaps unqualified speaking about such topics in detail. She wanted to avoid any missteps in a narrative that would sully her public image, and for this reason, forgetting became just as important a tool as remembering. During our interviews, Waldjinhah was often concerned about forgetting important dates and overlooking important “facts” (a reason why she insisted on having her son or husband present early on). I repeatedly reminded her that I was less concerned with her forgetfulness and more interested in what she remembered.

Forgetting has been crucial to the creation of the Indonesian nation historically. The 1928 Youth Pledge (*Sumpah Pemuda*) called on people from regions and ethnic groups across the archipelago to forget their disparate origins in order to become modern citizens of a newly imagined Indonesia.²⁷⁵ This pledge created “a myth and a power” to be sustained in the present as “the forgotten” returned with a vengeance—especially in the context of the Communist killings in the mid 1960s (ibid). Questions about how to remember also elicit invitations to forgetfulness in representing the past. As an example, Waldjinhah’s recollections of the 1965 Communist killings, which I discussed in Chapter 5, adhere mostly to official accounts endorsed by the New Order government—accounts that set up strict binaries between Communists and non-Communists, evil versus good, and traitors versus heroes. More than fifty years after the killings, Indonesians have only begun to speak openly about the atrocities leading to

²⁷⁵ See Mohamad (2001)

the disappearance of hundreds of thousands of relatives, parents, neighbors and friends.

In re-creating post-genocide Indonesia, vanished bodies were replaced by a simulacra to cover the holes of what remained as experience and disappearance was systematically erased from view (Larasati 2013). Waldjinah's recollections about this brutally violent era showed how she too was attempting to reconcile a turbulent period of her life, especially in terms of how she could discuss it and perhaps even more importantly, how she would remember it. Although she vehemently denied associating with Communists, Waldjinah later admitted to not knowing for certain if some members of her band were or not. This ambiguity led to silences about the people she knew and reasons why she felt it necessary to protect them. Clearly, this was done not only in the interest of her friends but herself and her family as well. In either case, Waldjinah insisted she was "clean" and had nothing to do with anything remotely "Communist." This stance is not unlike other Indonesians who distanced themselves from that era and who, until today, have trouble discussing the killings openly. In fact, much of the Indonesian body politic continues to find the 1965 killings "indigestible" (Zurbuchen 2005: 14) and like Waldjinah, their hesitance (or inability) to openly discuss these events suggests both a lack of framework about how to remember the era of the Communist killings along with an enduring fear regarding this dark and ambiguous period in Indonesian history.

In addition to telling Waldjinah's life story, one of my objectives has also been to recast and decolonize the dominant narrative of keroncong to focus less on what makes it "Portuguese" and "hybrid" and more on how local musicians have shaped and reconfigured it into a distinctly Indonesian art form. Throughout its history, keroncong, as a cultural phenomenon, has been difficult to locate—at various points simultaneously belonging to no one and yet everyone. Like the Malay language, it was considered a musical *lingua franca* by some Indonesian nationalists, who promoted keroncong as a national culture believing it capable of unifying a diverse archipelago by crossing ethnic, geographical and class lines. In the years immediately preceding independence, keroncong came to epitomize the modern—it had a "buzz" that inspired young musicians like Waldjinah and Gesang to form bands and compose songs in Indonesian—the language of the emerging nation. Metaphors and themes presented in the lyrics of keroncong songs from the late 1930s through the 1950s historicized heroic myths essential to a burgeoning Indonesian national identity and to the processes of state formation itself. Revolutionary struggle represented in keroncong lyrics ultimately expressed important elements of a foundational value system on which Indonesia would be built as a nation (at least in theory). Keroncong's rise as a form of national culture was not only a way of envisioning an emerging modernity but also became a way of listening to its specific timbres, instrumentation, rhythms and syncretized musical elements, which I refer to as "audalities."

Given its steady decline over the past thirty or so years, some of my informants suggested that continuing to perform keroncong was in itself a political act—not only in terms of preserving the genre but also the ideals closely associated with it, namely unity, nationalism and love (both sentimental love and love of country) espoused in lyrical song texts. Keroncong, in this sense, was more than musical nostalgia inextricably linked to an earlier era of nationalism and the struggle for independence. Keroncong invoked a specific past that continued to work for the nation and its people, primarily by reminding Indonesians of the ideals they had struggled for and the hardships endured by previous generations. In this sense, keroncong is a (post)colonial art form created both within and against the colonial experience, and just as its emergence as a national culture signified the end of formal colonial rule, its decline paralleled the end of postcolonial Indonesia—especially since cultural life in Indonesia should no longer be understood or interpreted against the backdrop of past colonial experience. For some, keroncong also represented further possibilities and a hope for Indonesia’s future. By invoking past associations with the independence movement, musicians also invoked its past function as a way to reinforce connections binding the diverse nation in the post-New Order era, especially as it confronts new and ongoing challenges associated with democratization, Islamization, corruption, decentralization, inequality and economic expansion.

The Voice of Modern Indonesia

As Indonesia's most renowned keroncong vocalist, Waldjinh's life story implicates these abstract forces just as the arc of her career paralleled keroncong's rise and decline as a national culture. This trajectory also placed her at the forefront of developments in the keroncong genre as well as in broader societal shifts in a rapidly modernizing Indonesia. Waldjinh's popularity as teenage vocalist in the mid 1950s corresponded with keroncong's emergence as a national music. She later established herself by popularizing *langgam jawa* in the late 1960s, infusing new life into a stagnant keroncong genre. As an artist, Waldjinh straddled the line between regional and national, known primarily for singing *langgam jawa* (in the Javanese language) while achieving a national audience after her song "Walang Kekek" became popular. Her rise to fame also came within mechanisms of the state intended to establish keroncong as a national culture. Waldjinh's victory at the 1965 *Bintang Radio* vocal competition, where Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, personally handed her the trophy, launched a long and illustrious career. Her involvement campaigning for Golkar, the political party associated with the New Order government, and performing for the Indonesian military, particularly during the 1965 Communist killings, also helped to facilitate her rise as a national artist. After being encouraged to develop her own singing voice in local competitions, Waldjinh came to symbolize the socioeconomic improvements and envisioned progress as defined by the New Order—in this sense, she and others became "voices of development." The term "development (*pembangunan*)" itself was (and still

is) highly charged in Indonesia alluding to New Order rhetoric of modernization, economic progress and political and social stability, often positioned in contrast to terms like “tradition” and “ritual.” Although Waldjinhah’s music was deeply influenced by older styles of keroncong and Javanese music traditions (such as gamelan), she symbolized a new and decidedly modern direction for Indonesia in the 1960s and 70s.

Part of this relates to broader discussions of the voice as metaphor often related to issues of individual subjectivity, agency and representation.²⁷⁶ For some female vocalists, close associations between the voice, identity and other social processes create literal singing voices that are empowering and enabling, even if constrained or bounded by various forms of control.²⁷⁷ Virginia Danielson’s (1997) “voice of a nation” metaphor implicates performers within specific configurations and ideologies of power and the nation, and in this context I argue that Waldjinhah is the voice of the modern Indonesian nation-state—especially in how her identity as a performer simultaneously functioned on regional and national levels enabling her to traverse either category.

New Directions

As keroncong declined in popularity, Waldjinhah, like other great artists, managed to steer her career into new directions. In addition to keroncong, she began singing Indonesian pop and *dangdut* and performed in shadow theater (*wayang kulit*) as a guest

²⁷⁶ See Chapter 3.

²⁷⁷ See Hellier 2012

vocalist with Javanese gamelan ensembles. In the 1990s, she resuscitated her career and interest in keroncong by helping to popularize *campursari*, a music that blended elements of keroncong and gamelan (as well as other musics). Raised in Central Java and closely identifying with her Javanese heritage, Waldjinhah brought music in the Javanese language to a national audience and in this sense, her rise signified the Javanization of national culture during the New Order. Although hit songs like “Walang Kekek” and “Yen Ing Tawang Ana Lintang” reached a national audience, Waldjinhah becoming a national artist also had as much to do with the bureaucratic power held by the Javanese (the largest and most dominant ethnic group in Indonesia) in the New Order. Although keroncong originated in urban, lower class Eurasian communities of Jakarta, it moved inland and took root particularly in the Central and East Java (areas that until today represent Waldjinhah’s primary fan base) as well as in large Javanese settler communities that formed on other islands as a result of President Suharto’s support for the Transmigration Program—another important factor in Waldjinhah reaching a national audience.

Despite being known nationally (and internationally), Waldjinhah continued to identify as a regional singer from the city of Solo for the duration of her career. This aspect of her identity corresponds to her recording output where langgam jawa comprised around ninety-four percent of her officially released keroncong recordings.²⁷⁸ Although she is best known for her recordings on Lokananta (Indonesia’s first national

²⁷⁸ See Sukanti 2002: 57

record label) from the late 1960s through the early '70s, the emerging cassette industry and smaller regional labels also contributed significantly in establishing Waldjinh nationally—especially by expanding the reach of her recordings, both in affordability and geographical distribution. Over the course of her career, Waldjinh released well over two hundred albums and more than fifteen hundred songs not only on nationally distributed labels like Lokananta, Remaco and El Shinta but also smaller regional ones such as Budaya, Nirwana, Kencana and Rexona.

Gendered Portraits

From a relatively young age, Waldjinh became aware that some female performers in Indonesia are sexualized and stigmatized based on stereotypes attributed to them. These stereotypes were often conferred by male fans and gained further traction through state and religious discourse on gender and sexuality—a practice initiated during the Dutch colonial period and continued by the New Order regime. Throughout her career, Waldjinh attempted to stay away from gossip and innuendo damaging to her public image and to a large degree, this has shaped her attitudes and behavior toward mundane activities such as socializing in public and the friends she confides in. Her desire to avoid gossip and scandal was part of the reason Waldjinh preferred having her husband, or in some cases a close female friend, accompany her whenever she toured or socialized in public. This did not, however, prevent her from becoming entangled in sexualized gossip disseminated by mass media outlets, especially

early in her career. As she grew older, Waldjinhah embraced her Islamic faith and became more spiritually inclined—not unlike many other Indonesians. In Waldjinhah’s case, however, invoking the image of an older pious Muslim woman allowed her to recast her public image and refute the sexualized, licentious gossip attributed to her previously. Part of establishing this pious image, a discussion I will return to later in this chapter, involved a shift toward Islamic orthodoxy that compelled Waldjinhah to alter her own Islamic practice while enabling her to fit in with a broader contemporary Islamic movement in Indonesia—a change that reflects a turn toward Islamic orthodoxy among Indonesian Muslims in general.

Although Waldjinhah came from a working class background familiar to most Indonesians, her being a well-known touring artist, a mother, wife and primary breadwinner made her situation quite distinct from other women of her neighborhood (and perhaps Indonesia at the time). Her efforts to balance career and family life came at a time when the concept of a career-oriented mother, who spent significant periods of time away from her children, was less common in Indonesia than it is now. As a public figure, Waldjinhah was portrayed as a “sex bomb,” a loving, obedient wife and a mother of five rolled into one, and in this amalgamation embodied the modern Indonesian woman. This construction, of course, was based not only on ideals promoted by New Order and Islamic religious authorities but also included Western bourgeois ideologies of domestication, femininity and sexuality. New Order bureaucracy also ordered gender roles according to hierarchy based on principles of the

state (along with Javanese feudalistic values) that defined women's roles primarily as mothers, companions and educators. Some of these ideas deeply affected how Waldjinhah conceived of her roles as mother and wife and how she constructed her public image. Although becoming a well-known performer allowed her to challenge some of the norms and conditions associated with female performers and being a woman in Indonesia generally, she was not entirely free from the constraints of gender roles constructed and enforced by state, religious and other figures of authority. Generally speaking, the identities she created for herself as a performer, a wife and a mother, fall within the definition of what a "good" Indonesian woman should be.

Despite keeping a busy schedule most of her career, Waldjinhah made sure to point out that her responsibilities as a mother were never overlooked. She proudly discussed putting her children (along with some of her nieces and nephews) through college and as a working mother, Waldjinhah managed to almost singlehandedly raise the socioeconomic status of her family from working class to one of decidedly middle class status in single generation—a trajectory that perhaps parallels the growth of the Indonesian middle class generally in the postindependence era.

Although Waldjinhah traversed stereotypes and gender roles in a various ways, her experiences suggest complex instances when her behavior has adhered to and deviated from generalized ideas attributed to Indonesian "men" and "women" in previous scholarship. For instance, despite being a confident and self-sufficient woman, Waldjinhah's views on marital roles and specifically the respect she believed wives were

required to have for their husbands, suggests her thinking conformed to both New Order ideals as well as older Javanese conceptions of gender. Further evidence of this came from a willingness to share a sizeable portion of her income as a performer with her now estranged second husband for the duration of their marriage—a practice she could not question as a “good” wife, yet now truly regrets.

Age and the Voice

In May 2013, Waldjinah took the stage for what likely would be her final international performance. In the months prior, she spoke enthusiastically about recovering from her second stroke and the prospect of singing again at the Tong Tong Festival in the Netherlands. A testament to her own will, Waldjinah recovered in time to limp on stage with the help of friends and sing three songs. Although this performance was triumph given the state of her health, her shakiness on stage also served as a visual metaphor for the tenuous state of keroncong in general. It was further proof that she was no longer what she was before and neither was keroncong. Ill health in the latter portion of her career limited Waldjinah’s ability to sing the langgam jawa songs she was known for and even hampered activities in her daily life. After I met her in 2008, she suffered two consecutive strokes that weakened her significantly and put her in a state of *de facto* retirement. If, as a young vocalist, Waldjinah embodied the promise of keroncong and Indonesian modernity, today she represents the culmination of that project—a proud and resourceful musician who has, for the better part of her career, been a symbol for the nation in its triumphs and its shortcomings. Much like Waldjinah,

keroncong as a genre will itself onward today with little formal support from the government. Older musicians impress upon younger generations the importance of keroncong in Indonesia's history, although much of it falls on apathetic deaf ears. Preserving keroncong was of the utmost importance to many of the musicians and fans I met, and while all agreed that keroncong should be preserved, fewer agreed on how to do it. As a performer approaching the end of her career, Waldjinh continued to carry the legacy of keroncong on her back, perhaps as her mother carried vegetables to market. She often spoke about the importance of young singers (and especially young female singers) continuing to learn keroncong vocal technique, even if they intended to sing other genres of music. Although the future of keroncong, at this point, remains dubious at best, what is clear is that that Waldjinh along with a host of other musicians are determined not to let it disappear entirely from the musical landscape of Indonesia.

As we concluded our interview on one of my first visits to her home, Waldjinh sat on a wooden bench on the front porch and as I slipped on my shoes, she quietly spoke, "I'm not a wealthy person, but I'm rich in experiences."²⁷⁹ During our final interview I asked her to revisit that statement and explain it further.

Almost all of the best experiences in my life have happened because I chose to become a professional singer. I began my career traveling to many of my concerts in

²⁷⁹ "Aku nggak orang kaya tapi aku kaya kan pengalaman."

trucks...now I fly comfortably on airplanes or in my own air-conditioned van. Whatever personal wealth I've accrued has come because of music. Thankfully I've never had to find another job...being a vocalist has filled my life with all sorts of experiences. At this point, I don't know what sort of legacy I'll have. Will people remember me fondly or at all? I don't know. I've always tried to be honest and generous with my family, friends and people in general. I've never felt jealous of others in terms of material wealth, I'm grateful for all I've received. I don't know what the future holds for me, but one thing is for certain, if I'm able to, I will be up on a stage singing somewhere.

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Appendix 1. A Selected Discography of Waldjinhah's Recordings

Note: Some of these albums are compilations of multiple vocalists. If a number in parenthesis appears below, it represents the number of songs credited to Waldjinhah for that particular album.

| Year Released | Album Title | Label | Format |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------|
| 1959 | Kembang Kacang | Lokananta | LP |
| 1965 | Putri Solo | El-Shinta | LP |
| 1967 | Ngelam-ngelami | Lokananta | LP |
| 1968 | Walang Kekek | El-Shinta | LP |
| 1968 | Keroncong Irama Senja | El-Shinta | LP |
| 1968 | Djula-djuli Surabaya | El-Shinta | LP |
| 1968 | Djangrik Genggong | El-Shinta | LP |
| 1968 | Odjo Sembrono | Silver | LP |
| 1968 | Djago Kate | El-Shinta | LP |
| 1968 | Irama Sendja | El-Shinta | LP |
| 1969 | Ayo Ngguyu | Lokananta | LP |

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------|
| 1970 | O Sarinah | Lokananta | LP |
| 1970 | Temanten Anyar | Lokananta | LP |
| 1970 | Mahesa Djenar | El-Shinta | LP |
| 1970 | Ketek Ogleng | Media | LP |
| 1971 | Enthit | Lokananta | LP |
| 1971 | Katju Biru | Lokananta | LP |
| 1971 | Kembang Kacang | El-Shinta | LP |
| 1972 | Soyang | Lokananta | LP |
| 1972 | Keroncong Cah Ayu | Media | LP |
| 1972 | Irama Segar Indonesia | ILP | LP |
| 1973 | Lara Mendhut | Lokananta | LP |
| 1973 | Nawang Wulan | Lokananta | LP |
| 1974 | Onde-onde | Lokananta | LP |
| 1974 | Kacang Bawang | RLL | Cassette |
| 1974 | Mete Goreng | RLL | Cassette |
| 1974 | Cobowo (5) | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1974 | Ngalamuningati (6) | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1975 | Dangdut Jawa | Wisanda | Cassette |
| 1975 | Candhik Ayu | Wisanda | Cassette |
| 1977 | Witing Tresna | Wisanda | Cassette |
| 1978 | Tlingsingan (8) | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1978 | Witing Tresna (5) | Puspita | Cassette |

| | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------|----------|
| 1978 | Ager-ager Tjao (7) | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1978 | Kenya Sulistya | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1978 | Langgam Jawa Populer (5) | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1979 | Amplop | P2NC | Cassette |
| 1979 | Gandhul Geyong | P2NC | Cassette |
| 1980 | Campursari Bengawan Solo (6) | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1981 | Satame Dangdut | P2NC | Cassette |
| 1981 | Rahayu Campursari | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1982 | Jaipongan, Vol. 1: Kacang Asin | P2NC | Cassette |
| 1982 | Mbulan Ndadari | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1983 | Glenak-glenik Langgam Jawa dan Kroncong Dangdut Spesial | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1983 | Tanjung Perak | Lokananta | Cassette |
| 1983 | Campursari Langgam Lela Ledung | Lokananta | Cassette |
| 1983 | Ketanggor | Borobodur | Cassette |
| 1983 | Keroncong Dangdut Waljinah | Pusaka | Cassette |
| 1983 | Nostalgia Langgam Jawa Terbaik | Borobodur | Cassette |
| 1984 | Pir Kecipir | Borobodur | Cassette |
| 1984 | Joged Dangdut | Borobodur | Cassette |
| 1984 | Ijo-ijo Nostalgia Langgam Jawa Pilihan | Pusaka | Cassette |
| 1984 | Suwe Ora Jamu/Gambang Suling | Pusaka | Cassette |
| 1985 | Tanjung Perak | Samudera | Cassette |
| 1985 | Piye-piye | Samudera | Cassette |

| | | | |
|-------------|--|-------------------|----------|
| 1986 | Tembang Jawa Cantik | Samudera | Cassette |
| 1986 | Mahesa Jenar | Samudera | Cassette |
| 1987 | Umar Mayo | Samudera | Cassette |
| 1987 | Adipura | Samudera | Cassette |
| 1987 | Luntur | Kusuma | Cassette |
| 1987 | Baju Biru | Kusuma | Cassette |
| 1987 | Nawala | Kusuma | Cassette |
| 1988 | Larabranta | Samudera | Cassette |
| 1989 | Pancasila Mandraguna | Samudera | Cassette |
| 1990 | Kasmaran Waljinah Vol 1 & 2, Seleksi Langgam Jawa | Gema Nada Pertiwi | Cassette |
| 1991 | Tembang Apik, Putri Gunung, Campursari Volume 1 | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1992 | Seleksi Tembang Cantik Langgam Jawa, Volume 2 | Puspita | Cassette |
| 1994 | Walang Kekek: Nostalgia Langgam Jawa Pilihan | Keraton | CD |
| 1995 | Album Emas Pop Jawa | Gema Nada Pertiwi | Cassette |
| 1995 | Album Koleksi Ratu Kembang Kacang | Gema Nada Pertiwi | Cassette |
| 1996 | Kacu Biru (Edisi Super) | HDX | Cassette |
| 1996 | Lagu-lagu Karya Manthous, Campursari Waljinah | Gema Nada Pertiwi | Cassette |
| 1997 | Anoman Obong | Gema Nada Pertiwi | Cassette |
| 1997 | Classical Keroncong | Gema Nada Pertiwi | Cassette |

| | | | |
|-------------|---|-------------------|----------|
| 1997 | Waljinah dalam Karya Legendaris Gesang | Gema Nada Pertiwi | Cassette |
| 1999 | Langgam Jawa/Campursari Waljinah | HDX | Cassette |
| 1999 | Raja dan Ratu Campursari, Mus Mulyadi dan Waljinah | Gema Nada Pertiwi | Cassette |
| 2000 | Gendhing Langgam Kembang Kacang | HDX | Cassette |
| 2000 | Langgam Jawa Campursari | HDX | Cassette |
| 2000 | Lagu-lagu Keroncong Terpopuler | HDX | Cassette |
| 2004 | Ratu Jawa | Rice (UK) | CD |
| 2011 | Nawala, Luntur, Aja Lamis, Bengawan Solo, Kembang Kacang, Setya Tuhu, Lara Branta, Baju Biru, Ngimpi, Walang Kekek (all reissues) | Kusuma | CD |