CHAPTER TEN

POLITICIANS WHO LOVE TO SING AND POLITICIANS WHO DETEST SINGING

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Introduction

It is difficult for me to imagine Queen Beatrix or Queen Elizabeth bursting into an evergreen during or at the end of a public function. I can envision former Dutch Prime Minister, Jan Peter Balkenende, or George W. Bush singing hymns in a Protestant choir, but them joining a karaoke session passes beyond the bounds of my imagination. It is equally difficult for me to depict Gerhard Schröder, Tony Blair or Jacques Chirac turning a banquet in a singing session. And how about the then American Defense Secretary, Donald H. Rumsfeld, singing *My way* while he is having dinner in a restaurant? Prominent European and American politicians do not strike me as persons who make a hobby of singing popular songs in public. They go to bars and restaurants, but not to karaoke establishments. Socialist leaders may break into militant songs for sentimental reasons or as part of the political ritual, but when they do so they often appear uncomfortable and give the impression not to remember the lyrics. The 2003 annual conference of the British Labour Party held in Bournemouth confirms this impression. For the first time in years the conference was concluded by the party members who attended the conference singing in unison the militant song *The red flag* created by an Irishman, Jim Connell, in 1889. The tradition of closing Labour conferences with *The red flag* was abandoned by Blair in 1999 after he could be seen struggling to sing it. Part of the text might also have to do something with the decision. It is too wonderful not to cite here:

Look round, the Frenchman loves its blaze
The sturdy German chants its praise
In Moscow's vaults its hymns are sung
Chicago swells the surging throng

For those who did not remember the words the text was projected on a screen during the Bournemouth party conference. Nevertheless, it was

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reported that many delegates remained silent when a children choir struck up *The Red Flag*. Blair did sing along.

How different it is in Asia! When President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines went on an official visit to the People's Republic of China in October 2001 she knew what lay in store for her. The Chinese President Jiang Zemin had visited the Philippines five years before and on that occasion he had danced the cha-cha and had sung Elvis Presley's *Love me tender* in a karaoke duet with President Fidel Ramos. Aware of Jiang Zemin's love of singing, Arroyo displayed some apprehension in advance of her trip. She told journalists before she left that she was 'bracing for a round of karaoke' and that she would 'serenade Chinese President Jiang Zemin with a love song'.¹ The moment of truth came during the state dinner in Beijing when Jiang Zemin asked her if she sang. She apparently did. Accompanied by an accordionist Arroyo sang *Minamahal kita*. Jiang Zemin responded with *O sole mio* whereupon Arroyo again took the floor with *I have you to save my day*, a song by Karen Carpenter, the lead singer of the Carpenters. The singing session ended with a duet: *O sole mio*; in the English as well as the Italian version. Afterwards Arroyo confessed that she had been a bit nervous. She explained that she was not used to singing in public, especially not in the presence of such a 'good baritone singer' as Jiang Zemin was.² It appears that Arroyo got used to performing before a large audience. Occasionally on her tours to the province, she sings at the meetings she attends.

Nevertheless, Arroyo is not in the forefront of that special brand of karaoking and singing politicians and military officers who have emerged in South-East Asia in the last few decades.³ The ex-movie actor Joseph Estrada, her predecessor, was. He loved to sing and at dinners at the Palace frequently treated his guests to songs. One of Estrada's favourites was '*Endure I Will*', a song he wrote in the 1960s when he thought that he had lost a local election, though later this proved to be a wrong assessment. After he had become president, Estrada once even sang *Endure I will* accompanied by a 72-piece orchestra in front of a large audience.

¹ *Japan Today* 27-10-2001.

² *Manila Bulletin Online* 31-10-2001.

³ Their hobby extends outside Asia. At the conclusion of the annual meetings of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, in which the so-called ASEAN dialogue partners participate, a show is organized in which foreign ministers and other diplomats sing and dance. In July 2004 the US Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and five other American officials performed the Village People's song *YMCA*. Powell could be seen singing and dancing in a builder's outfit, complete with a hard hat and a hammer hanging from his belt. His Russian colleague sang the Beatles' *Yellow submarine*.

The song was also recorded on a CD which Estrada intended as a special gift for diplomats and distinguished visitors. Ordinary Filipinos were also given the opportunity to hear Estrada sing. He released a commercial CD - featuring the love song *Kahit* (Even though) and the folk song *Planting rice*.⁴ 'People Power' brought Estrada down. Accused of corruption and in jail, one of the points which were held out against him was that it was his wont to issue presidential decrees during nocturnal karaoke and drinking sessions.

Unlike Arroyo, a number of her cabinet ministers and presidential advisors love to karaoke and to perform as singers in public. During a two-day 'team-building workshop' of the full cabinet in Pampanga in October 2002, there was a lot of singing. It was reported that Arroyo was visibly touched when during luncheon on the second day of their trip her ministers and advisors sang to her *You'll never walk alone*. Dinner that evening turned into a full karaoke and singing session. The 'braver Cabinet members serenaded Mrs Arroyo with solo numbers, while others settled for group singing with the aid of the karaoke ...[o]ther Cabinet singers chose to be backed up by a keyboard player'.⁵ Arroyo herself did not sing at that occasion. She had a sore throat. During other visits to the provinces, ministers accompanying her may wander off to a place where they can karaoke.

At least three members of Arroyo's 2001–2004 government were ardent karaoke singers and from time to time struck up songs in restaurants and other establishments: the Minister of Internal Affairs and Local Government, Jose (Joey) Lina, the Minister of Defence, General Angelo Reyes, and the Minister of Public Work and Chairman of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Bayani Fernando. Their hobby won them an avalanche of publicity when the 'Manila's Three Tenors', as they called themselves, performed during a benefit concert, *Salute*, for the Free Legal Assistance for Good Cops (FLAG Cops) programme in Manila in May 2003. The songs they performed were popular songs from the 1960s and 1970s. Among these were Elvis Presley's *Wooden heart* and *Tonight* from the musical *West Side Story*. They also sang *Sana'y Wala Nang Wakas* and *Anak Dalita* and other Filipino love songs.⁶ Their performance was

⁴ See BBCNEWS 30-8-1999; *Asiaweek* 20-8-1999, p. 109.

⁵ PS 4-10-2002.

⁶ The three had the opportunity to rehearse during the 58th birthday party of Reyes on 17 March, 2003. Among the songs they sang in the presence of Arroyo was John Lennon's *Imagine*. Its text had been adapted to present-day worries in the Philippines. Reyes hinting at the brutal civil war which is fought in the south of the Philippines sang 'Imagine

judged a great success. The producer of the charity concert even booked them for a concert tour of Australia.⁷

Singing Politicians

In Indonesia the singing politician also has made his bow. A special initiative was made in August 2002. To commemorate the hundredth birthday of Indonesia's first Vice-President, Mohammad Hatta, a special video clip *Paduan Suara 'Indonesia pusaka!'* (The Choir 'Indonesia heritage land') was broadcast by three TV stations: TVRI, TPI, and ANTEVE. In the TV broadcast a range of politicians, businessmen, artists, and intellectuals sang a strophe from one of Hatta's favourite songs, *Indonesia (tanah) pusaka*, composed by Ismail Marzuki in 1944. The broadcast was symbolic in a number of ways. It honoured one of the founding fathers of the Indonesian Republic, expressed a love of one's country, and indicated the importance attached to patriotic songs by the leaders of the country. So that the clip would convey an additional social message, a *becak* driver and a refuse collector were also among those who sang a strophe of *Indonesia (tanah) pusaka*. Among those whom TV watchers could see perform were the Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri, her predecessor, Abdurrahman Wahid, Vice-President Hamzah Haz (a figurehead of fundamentalist Islam in Indonesia), the powerful Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs (and future President), Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Soeharto's daughter, Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana or more familiarly Tutut (and there could be no better indication that she still belonged to the Indonesian political elite), and Amien Rais and Akbar Tanjung, respectively chairman of the Indonesian People's Congress

there's no faction, among Christians and Muslims. No attacks, no beheading, no terrorism, too. Imagine all people, living in peace night and day.' Lina's rendering contained the sentence 'Imagine that all policemen are trusted by all men. No police brutality and no fatality. Imagine all law enforcers, clean living every day, ui-oo!' (*Philstar.com* 19-3-2003).

⁷ See *Philstar.com* 30-8-2003. Reyes was forced to resign in August 2003, after a soldier's mutinee in Manila's financial district Makati City on 27 July, 2003. The mutineers accused him and senior army officers of being behind the bomb blasts in a number of cities in the Southern Philippines in an effort to have the United States increase its military aid to the Philippines. After his resignation had been made public Reyes told journalists that he was contemplating pursuing a career as a singer. Instead, he was appointed ambassador-at-large on counter-terrorism, a function which carried Cabinet rank. He also became head of a National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force. One politician pointed out that people only remembered Reyes for his singing and dancing on stage and not for his combat record as a soldier. He could not see 'how a singing and dancing anti-kidnapping czar can install fear among ruthless criminals' (*Manila Times* 21-11-2003).

(MPR, Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat) and of the Indonesian Parliament (DPR, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat). Some gave a good performance, but others were less proficient.

For many of the politicians *Paduan Suara 'Indonesia Pusaka'* was a solitary departure from the norm. The video clip is also hors concours. *Indonesia (tanah) pusaka* is a romantic patriotic song. It belongs to a class of songs popular in certain circles and sung spontaneously on occasions which are of national importance. Though some may find it difficult to believe – the patriotic songs are also known as *lagu wajib*, compulsory songs, indicating that schoolchildren are obliged to sing them – a number of the patriotic songs are imbued with a high emotional content. This is especially true for songs created just before and during the 1945–1950 struggle for independence (see Van Dijk 2003). Patriotic songs may be sung by members of the political elite to highlight patriotic campaigns, but also by demonstrators telling that same political elite that they have lost all sense of patriotism and social justice, that they had become selfish, greedy and oppressive.⁸ Cassette tapes, and in recent years CDs and VCDs, reproducing such songs and also the less emotionally charged ones certainly have a market in Indonesia, but patriotic songs are not the type of music that concerns us here.

In the past occasionally Indonesian politicians sang at public political mass meetings. One such performer was Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana. She sang a song by Franky Sahilatua during a general election campaign meeting in Pasuruan in April 1997, at a time when it was rumoured that she was being groomed to succeed her father as president. She did so in duet with Basofi Soedirman, one of the few Indonesian politicians with music records to his name. At rare occasions, Indonesians could see and hear Megawati sing during her presidency. Like her friend and colleague Arroyo, Megawati, who initially refused to join in in the *Indonesia Pusaka* choir, is a modest public singer.⁹ The first time she sang in public was

⁸ In Indonesia demonstrators demanding Soeharto step down sang such patriotic songs. A comparable phenomenon could be observed during the People Power that brought down Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. Here the song that became the 'the anthem of the anti-Marcos movement' was *Bayan ko* (My country) which dated from 1896, the year Filipinos, under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo, rose in rebellion against Spain (Lockard 1991:100).

⁹ When Megawati visited China in May 2002, she was spared the fate of having to sing a duet with Jiang Zemin during the state dinner. Instead she danced with him. In *Tempo* (English edition 7-4-2002, p. 60) it was recorded that the 'extraordinary sight could be interpreted as a new milestone in Indonesia-China diplomatic relations' and that the six minutes 'could end up being six extremely important minutes.'

when she visited Papua in December 2002. As a 'Christmas gift' she sang a duet with a singer from Papua, Frida Meles, and *My way*. *My way*, one of the top hits in karaoke bars, is Megawati's favourite song, but in view of the fact that her performance as president was widely criticized, not the best choice.¹⁰ Her second public performance came in March 2003. After announcing the institution of a national Music Day and having been requested to sing, she caroled *Di wajahmu kulihat bulan* (On your face I see the moon), a love song from the 1950s.¹¹

Crooning Generals and Patriotic Police Men

There were also Indonesian politicians who did not hide the fact that singing is their hobby. In the days before karaoke burst into the world there was Police General Drs Hoegeng Imam Santoso, Chief of Police from 1968 till 1971, who played the ukulele and was a great lover of Hawai'ian music. He was lead singer of the 'Hawaiian Seniors', a band founded in 1968. The 'Hawaiian Seniors' regularly performed live on a private radio station, Elshintar Radio, and on the national TV station, TVRI, in those days still the only TV station. Soon Hoegeng was being dubbed 'the singing general' (Yusra and Ramadhan 1993:373). After he had turned dissident and had become a member of the 'Petition of 50' group, Hoegeng became a political pariah. One of the consequences of President Soeharto's wrath was that Hoegeng and his band were banned from TV. Their show was replaced by one with 'national music' in 1980 (Yusra and Ramadhan 1993:374).

Since the days of Hoegeng much has changed. Opportunities for people to grab a microphone and sing in public, then still rare, have multiplied. The emergence of mass tourism in South-East Asia in the 1970s and the growth of an affluent South-East Asian middle and upper class in the same period has encouraged the mushrooming of hotels and thus also of hotel bars where one could sing. Later, in the 1980s, the invention of karaoke expanded such opportunities to take hold of a microphone in public even more. In Muslim countries, such places are little bit suspect, but, especially in Indonesia, luxury hotels have become an integral part of the

¹⁰ Megawati shares this love of *My way* with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1981 till 31 October, 2003, who occasionally sings *My way* at parties.

¹¹ Hari Musik Nasional (National Music Day), is 9 March, the birthday of the composer of the national anthem, Wage Rudolf Supratman.

public life of the elite. And, for those who have no desire to set foot in such places or cannot afford to do so, there still are the karaoke cassette tapes on which it is possible to switch of the vocal rendering. On other cassettes some songs are recorded in a vocal version and in karaoke version. Such cassettes are a sure indication that also in Indonesia karaoke, or to use another term used in South-East Asia videoke, is a favourite pastime. It may be by chance, but almost all the VCDs I have bought in recent years are 'karaoke VCDs' or at least have subtitles.

The Indonesian politicians best known at present for their public performances as enthusiast singers all have a military background: Basofi Soedirman, Wiranto, Moerdiono and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Significantly, setting them apart from their Filipino colleagues, when they sing they prefer – but not exclusively so – to sing Indonesian songs. This preference is in concert with the trend that Western top hits are popular in Indonesia, but that Indonesian singers and bands usually release cassettes, CDs and VCDs with Indonesian songs. The same pattern can be found in Malaysia (Lockard 1991:73).

The trendsetter for the present generation of singing Indonesian generals was Basofi Soedirman, a retired major-general. Basofi Soedirman was Governor of East Java from August 1993 till October 1998, when the Armed Forces obstructed his re-election, giving preference to the candidacy of another retired officer, Major-General Imam Utomo. Basofi Soedirman appears from time to time as a singer on TV and released at least several cassette tapes in the 1990s. One is *Hanya kau yang kupilih* (Only you do I choose, a song composed by Leo Waldy). Another is *Tidak semua wanita* (Not all women, a song composed by Imam S. Arifin). There is no gender bias. The second tape also contains *Tidak semua laki-laki* (Not all men), written by Leo Waldy. It is Basofi's most popular song. His theme song as it was. When people write or talk about his musical exploits, it is almost invariably *Tidak semua laki-laki* they mention. Basofi Soedirman released a Karaoke VCD *Yang terbaik dari Basofi Soedirman* (The best of Basofi Soedirman) in 2000. His tapes and performances made him a well-known public figure. One of the consequences was that Basofi Soedirman is far better known by the ordinary people than Imam Utomo who succeeded him as governor. Many in the countryside of East Java even continued to think that he still was the governor of the province.¹²

The second singing general is the former Minister Secretary of State, Moerdiono. Moerdiono, a retired lieutenant-general, was one of the most

¹² *Kompas* 26-3-2003.

10.1. *Dari ulama untuk bangsa* (1999) a cassette recorded by Basofi Soedirman for the Islamic PKB party during the elections campaigns.

powerful politicians in the closing years of the New Order. He is a fervent singer and dancer on stage and is known as a promoter of the popular dangdut music genre. He even intended to institute a National Dangdut Day. Moerdiono was the man behind the *Pesta Rakyat Langlang Buana 95* (1995 Roaming People's Party), a dangdut tour travelling to twelve Indonesian cities to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Indonesian Independence. The festivities culminated in a mass concert at Ancol in Jakarta, *Semarak Dangdut 50 Tahun Indonesia Emas* (The Dangdut Lustre of the Golden 50 Years of Indonesia), on 17 August, 1995. At the concert Moerdiono himself did a duet with dangdut star, Elvy Sukaeshi. Maybe the tour was the reason why the weekly *Gatra* called Moerdiono *Bapak Musik Dangdut*,¹³ 'Mister Dangdut Music', in 1996. Moerdiono was awarded the 'Dangdut Figure of 1997' prize the following year (Bass n.d.).

¹³ *Gatra* 24-2-1996, p. 22.

10.2. the cassette *Untukmu Indonesia-ku* (2000) by retired Indonesian army general Wiranto.

General Wiranto, described in the British *The Guardian* as ‘a self-confessed karaoke addict’,¹⁴ is at present also retired. He was Minister of Defence and Security and Commander of the Armed Forces at the time when militiamen went on the rampage in East Timor. He narrowly escaped being tried in Indonesia and abroad for having committed crimes against humanity, but he did lose his job. After Abdurrahman Wahid had forced him to retire, Wiranto released the CD and cassette tape *Untukmu Indonesia-ku* (For you, my Indonesia) in October 2000. Of five of the twelve songs, a karaoke version is included. A video clip was produced of three of the songs. The proceeds of *Untukmu Indonesia-ku*—the cover promises a hundred per cent—were earmarked for domestic refugees, fleeing their homes in the many conflict-torn regions in Indonesia.

¹⁴ *The Guardian* 24-10-2000.

To underscore this aim, Wiranto sang two of the recorded songs against the background of a video showing refugees in slow motion when the CD was launched in the ballroom of the posh Shangri-La hotel in Jakarta in October 2000. Because of what had happened in East Timor, the event raised some eyebrows, especially outside Indonesia.¹⁵ After the launching of the CD Wiranto went on a tour through Indonesia to promote his CD and himself. He also appeared on TV shows, from time to time, as it was noted in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*¹⁶ with the national flag draped around his shoulders; a sight not unfamiliar in Indonesia and Malaysia when patriotic songs are broadcast on TV.

With an army general braking ground as a music star the Indonesian police could not stay behind. Police Brigade General Drs Alex Bambang Riatmodjo SH MBA PhD (or more familiarly, Alex Bram) came with the cassette tape *Anak bangsa bersatulah!* (Indonesians unite!) in July 2001. The title, and to a lesser extent also that of Wiranto's album, is an example of a new kind of patriotic drive that took shape during the domestic turmoil that followed the fall of Soeharto, calling for patriotic feelings, unity, and domestic peace.¹⁷ To strengthen this patriotic appeal the cover shows a picture of Soekarno and a quotation of one of his sayings *Kita kuat karena bersatu. Kita bersatu karena kuat!* (We are strong because we are one. We are one because we are strong!). *Anak bangsa bersatulah!* is one long eulogy about the police, and reminds me of a song from my youth, *De politie is je beste kameraad* (The police are your best friend). Songs have titles like *Do'a untuk polisi* (A prayer for the police),¹⁸ *Wewenang polisi* (The authority of the police) and *Kaki kiri di kuburan, kaki kanan di penjara* (The left foot in the grave, the right foot in jail).¹⁹ The texts are all

¹⁵ There had been even more indignation when Wiranto burst into Morris Albert's *Feelings* at a meeting of Army wives on 19 September 1999, just a fortnight after the carnage in East Timor had begun.

¹⁶ *Far Eastern Economic Review* 21-8-2003, p. 57.

¹⁷ Another avowed 'nationalist' is Abdurrahman Wahid. Reflecting the latter's position that the Indonesian Republic should remain a unitary state in which there is no place for separatist movements, a video clip was shown during 1998 election campaign gatherings of his party, the PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, Party of the Awakening of the Nation). The clip, which was entitled *Indonesiaku menyanyi* (My Indonesia sings), contained songs like *Satu nusa satu bangsa* (One land one nation) and *Maju tak gentar* (Advance fearlessly).

¹⁸ The prayer reads: *Oh ... Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* (Oh Almighty Lord), *Bimbinglah Bhayangkara ku sayang* (Guide my beloved Bhayangkara), *Lindungilah Polisi ku sayang* (Protect my beloved Police), *Juahkanlah dari kemalangan* (Preserve them from misfortune).

¹⁹ *Di Akademi engkau diperingati* (At the Police Academy you are warned of), *Risikonya seorang polisi* (The hazards of being a policeman are), *Kaki kirimu di kuburan* (Your left foot in the grave), *Dan kaki kananmu di penjara* (And your right foot in jail).

garnished with the same sauce. The refrain of *Polisi harapan masyarakat* (Police, society's hope) reads:

<i>Oh ... Polisi pelindung kami</i>	Oh .. the Police our protector
<i>Oh ... Polisi penayom kami</i>	Oh ... the Police our guardian
<i>Oh ... Polisi sahabat kami</i>	Oh ... the Police our friend
<i>Oh ... Polisi pelayan kami</i>	Oh ... the Police our servant
<i>Bertindak tanpa pandang bulu</i>	Act irrespective of persons
<i>Dan juga pilih kasih</i>	And without fear or favour

The Sound of Campaigning

The Filipino and Indonesian politicians who do karaoke and sing do so because they consider it to be fun. Their singing can also promote their career. They hope that their performances at election rallies may win them extra votes. Nevertheless, they also put much hope in the popularity of the bands and singers they engage to perform at campaign events. In Indonesia professional dangdut artists were and are the main attraction at political rallies. *Tempo Interaktif* even called dangdut the 'official music' of the 1997 general election campaign.²⁰ The magazine also noted that all top dangdut singers performed at rallies of the Golkar (the party which could bestow favours and which also paid the highest fees). Indonesians go to rallies during the campaign period before a general election to hear professional dangdut singers. They would be highly disappointed where they only to be treated to singing politicians, and for that matter they can get extremely angry when their idols change sides. The latter became evident when riots erupted in Pekalongan in March 1997 after it had become known that the immensely popular H. Rhoma Irama (or more intimately Bang Haji, Older Brother Hajji) would perform at a rally of the Golkar, the party associated with New Order and the Soeharto family, thereby 'betraying' the Islamic Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP, the United Development Party), the party he had campaigned for in the past.

For Wiranto his singing was clearly also a means to an end. His ambition was to become president. For this, he needed first to gain support of the Golkar chapters, to have that party nominate him as its candidate in the 2004 presidential election. He deliberately used his musical talents to better his chances, singing songs at the mass meetings when he toured the country to boost his popularity. It did help. In the evaluations of

²⁰ *Tempo Interaktif* 27-5-1997.

Wiranto's chances of being selected by the Golkar as its presidential candidate, at times his singing was mentioned as a factor counting in his favour. Wiranto indeed succeeded in becoming Golkar's candidate for the Presidency. As the Golkar was one of the largest parties in Indonesia this made him one of the favourites in the race for the presidency.

There were many elections Indonesia in 2004: first in April for the legislative bodies, thereupon in July for the presidency in which parties which had received at least a minimum percentage of votes in the election for the national parliament could field a candidate, and finally – because none of the candidates had gained 50 per cent of the votes in the first instance – a second round with the top two of the July election contesting each other in September.

The run-up to the general election for seats in the representative bodies of 2004 still showed the familiar pattern, or as a journalist of *The Straits Times* observed, it was 'dangdut or song and dance time in Indonesia'.²¹ Political parties tried to lure voters to rallies by hiring dangdut musicians, and when they stressed their religious background also, or exclusively so, groups performing Islamic music.²² The party leaders themselves – Megawati, Wiranto, Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and Amien Rais – also sang their songs and danced along on the tune of the music by the bands hired. Abdurrahman Wahid and fellow PKB politicians even got in some trouble with local religious leaders in Bogor. In accordance with the rules a campaign location had been assigned by the municipality, but it had been overlooked that there was a mosque nearby. The rally had to be disbanded after protests that the music was too loud and disturbed the quiet of the mosque. The day before the same had happened with a rally organized by the equally Islamic-oriented PPP.

The campaign preceding the presidential election was of a somewhat different order. In the first round of the presidential elections two of the candidates threw their singing into the fray. One was Wiranto. The other was an outsider: Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who after a row with Megawati had left the cabinet and within a short period of time had succeeded in acquiring great popularity all over Indonesia. As it happened to be Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was also an ardent singer who unlike Wiranto or Moerdiono had not made a public display of his hobby before

²¹ *Straits Times Interactive* 30-3-2004.

²² This time Rhoma Irama did not offer his services exclusively to one party but performed at rallies of different ones, singing at rallies of the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS, Prosperous Justice Party), the Partai Bintang Reformasi (PBR, Reform Star Party, a splinter off of the PPP), and the PKB.

he decided to run for president. With Wiranto and Susilo both being considered strong candidates with a good chance of beating Megawati and both being singers the first leg of the presidential election turned into a kind of singing contest between the two.²³ Both even appeared as guest performers in *Akademi fantasi Indosiar* (AFI), the Indonesian version of American Idol, complete with comments by members of the jury, and other TV programmes.²⁴ The phenomenon of 'crooning' generals bursting into love songs while campaigning was observed with some curiosity by foreign journalists. The Australian ABC television programme *Foreign correspondent* of 1 July 2004 spoke about 'the battle of the singing generals'.

There appears to be a great difference between Hoegeng and the later singing generals. Hoegeng links the 'Hawaiian Seniors' with tempo doeloe; the good old times. Its members all played in *Hawaiian* bands before World War II (Yusra and Ramadhan 1993:372). Pictures of him and his wife, Mery, appearing on TV, in his autobiography are also moving because of the Hawai'ian shirts and leis Hoegeng wears. There is nothing macho about his musical performance. An ukelele is not a macho musical instrument. The state of the play with the present-day prominent cabinet members and retired army officers in the Philippines and Indonesia it is different. They may sing for fun or try to increase their popularity, but their performances create the impression that the singing of popular songs also has something to do with power, with high political and social status.

Politicians may use their hobby, singing, as a political instrument to attract voters, and parties may hire singers and bands to lure people to their mass meetings, but the state also at times turns to singing as a political tool. In Indonesia patriotic songs are a means to foster nationalist sentiments. At the same time they are an expression of them. The remark is equally applicable to Malaysia; though contrary to in Indonesia a market for such songs is virtually absent there. In both countries the drives to promote nationalism through music involve patriotic songs, songs explaining the political principles of the country, and songs singing the praises of the nature, the population and (with respect to Malaysia) its economic achievement. This raises the question why the reception of

²³ Once again Wiranto who escaped being tried by an international tribunal for the 1999 carnage in East Timor hurt some feelings. To raise funds for his campaign Wiranto, who had as his running mate Solahudin Wahid, deputy chairman of the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights organized a gala dinner on 12 May. He said that he had done so deliberately to commemorate the killing of four students of the Trisakti University on that date in 1998.

²⁴ Other politicians at times also appeared in TV programmes singing songs. In one of these, *Tribute to Indonesia*, Amien Rais preferred to read poetry.

patriotic songs in Malaysia is so different from that in Indonesia. Partly it is because a number of the Indonesian song are related to the Indonesian War of Independence and may be rather romantic in tune and in lyrics. Another reason may be that, whatever bashing of the Indonesian military took place after May 1998, things military have continued to exert a great attraction in Indonesia. Small children just happen spontaneously to imitate a military parade step, while the members of the many para-military groups, which secular and Islamic political parties and organizations have established often are dressed in camouflage uniforms or semi-military outfits.

In Singapore, the efforts to promote good citizenship and patriotism and to make people proud of their country go beyond what is done in Indonesia and Malaysia. Songs praising the country and (especially so) its achievements are released, but in Singapore it is not only the message that counts. The underlying idea in Singapore seems to be that music is good for the spirit and that a singing citizen makes a happy citizen. This policy has its roots in the period just before Singapore became independent and for a short period of time formed part of Federation of Malaysia, created in 1963. What happened then is one of the examples which demonstrate that singing and making music can become an integral part of a political battle. The later President of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, writes in his memoirs that he 'believed music was a necessary part of nation-building. It uplifted the spirit of a people' (Lee Kuan Yew 2000:301). Lee Kuan Yew makes this remark when he recounts the events in a kind of music war between him and the Federal Government in Kuala Lumpur which had forbidden the police band of Singapore to perform on Singapore State Day in June 1964. Lee Kuan Yew hit back a few months later. A visit to Brussels, where he attended a meeting of the Socialist International gave him the inspiration. Impressed by the 'great array of bands' which marched in a parade organized by the Socialist International, Lee Kuan Yew decided 'to form them in our schools and the People's Association' (Lee Kuan Yew 2000:300).²⁵ Consequently, a 'crash programme for brass

²⁵ The People's Association was established in April 1960, when bitterness among the Chinese-educated community was one of the main causes of concern for the government. It had been founded by Lee Kuan Yew in his effort to mobilize the citizens of Singapore to counter Communist agitation and was intended as an umbrella for all kinds of social organizations. The People's Association is chaired by the Prime Minister and, according to its legislation, aims at 'the organisation and the promotion of group participation in social, cultural, educational and athletic activities for the people of Singapore in order that they realize that they belong to a multi-racial community, the interests of which transcend

bands in secondary schools' was launched (Lee Kuan Yew 2000:301). The drive was successful. School bands and a band of the People's Association marched through town on Singapore State Day in June the following year. Music was again resorted to in the aftermath of 11 September and the discovery of a terrorist plot in Singapore. The holding of a marathon karaoke session was one of the many initiatives undertaken to foster integration between the Muslim and non-Muslim citizens and to ensure that the Chinese, Malay and Indian community did not grow more widely apart after being informed of plans of Singapore members of the Jemaah Islamiyah to bring to explosion seven truck-bombs of the size that had been used in the 1995 Oklahoma bombing in the United States.²⁶

10.3. The VideoCD *A place in my heart: Sing Singapore* that was released in 2003.

Even today, to get its citizens singing is still among the many campaigns run by the Singaporean government. In 1988 the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts (MITA) launched *Sing Singapore*. In 1995 the National Arts Council (NAC) took over. *Sing Singapore* wants 'to promote national bonding through group singing of national and community songs'. Another aim is 'to discover and promote songs written by Singaporeans for Singaporeans, while developing a love for music and singing and thereby

sectional loyalties' (Vasil 2000:71). Among its activities is also the management of community centres all over Singapore.

²⁶ In the southern Philippines, a 'Singing for Peace in Mindanao' Contest was held in General Santos City in February 2003, in which members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Army, Police and jail management participated. The contest was won by a member of the MILF.

cultivating a greater sense of togetherness among Singaporeans' (www.singsingapore.org.sg). A *Sing Singapore* CD with songs in English and in Mandarin, Malay and Tamil, the languages of the three main communities in Singapore, is released each year. The titles and also the lyrics of part of the songs make it clear that it is not just singing that the Singaporean government wants to promote: *One people, one nation. One Singapore, tanah airku* (My fatherland), *One (We are one)*. Singaporeans should consider themselves to be citizens of one Singaporean nation instead of being members of one of the three communities first. They should also be proud of what that nation has achieved since it became independent.

Those Who Detest Singing

At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who want to ban much singing and making music. Such persons can have political or religious reasons for opposing specific music genres and the two sources of motivation at times may meet when both are also inspired by anti-Western sentiments or when the Western influences are considered a threat to the people's own culture. Bans can range from the specific, when offense is taken to the lyrics of particular songs to the general, when a whole genre of art is forbidden.²⁷ With the present upsurge of hard-line strict Islam in South-East Asia, at the moment those most active in the field of censorship are fundamentalist Muslims who want to purify society. Such Muslims want to forbid a whole range of activities: oral sex, anal sex, pre- and extramarital sex, the being together in a closed room of a man and a woman not married to each other and not connected by close family ties, homosexuality, women (even with a headdress) on billboards, crop tops (in October 2000 the spiritual leader of the fundamentalist Muslims in Malaysia, Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, admitted that his own faith could be weakened by the sight of an exposed female navel), lipstick, shaved chins, and so forth and so on.²⁸ It would be a miracle were making music, singing and dancing to escape unscathed.

²⁷ A recent Indonesian example of the first is the castigation by KH Ali Yafei, at that time chairman of the MUI, of the singer Desy Ratnasari, for singing the song *Takdir* (Fate), the soundtrack of the *sinetron* of the same name in 1998. He accused her of blasphemy and demanded a public apology from her for singing the line *Takdir memang kejam, tak mengenal perasaan* (Fate really is cruel, it has no compassion), because the text implied that God was cruel and had no compassion, as fate was God's will.

²⁸ It goes without saying that the desire for prude legislation is not confined to devout Muslim circles. Oral sex is a crime in Singapore. Though not mentioned explicitly prosecution

In Indonesia this movement is pursued under the aegis of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, the Indonesian Council of Ulama), created by the New Order government as its interlocutor with the Islamic community and its different streams. The MUI issued and issues *fatwa*, religious rulings, but whether Muslims follow such *fatwa* depends on their own affinity with the religious ideas those issuing a *fatwa* espouse. Before 1998, the MUI in part served the interests of the New Order and its elite. After May 1998 the council unexpectedly transformed into a body preaching puritanical ideas. The MUI issued a fatwa against *pornografi* and *pornoaksi* in August 2001 and emerged as one of the organizations which spearheaded the campaign against what its members consider pornography in newspapers, magazines and on TV, that is of women showing a little bit of cleavage and too much of their legs. The showing of *Baywatch* was a thorn in the flesh of its members. A similar reaction was elicited by *Dansa yo dansa* (Come let us dance), a TV show showing the public performing mainly ballroom dances interspersed with the dancing of *Assereje*, which at that moment was immensely popular in Indonesia and elsewhere in South-East Asia. *Dansa yo dansa* was described in one newspaper as showing 'old Indonesian couples embracing one another in ballroom dancing competitions on television'²⁹ and in another as 'a sentimental showcase for ageing couples to twirl around the dance floor'.³⁰ Nevertheless, men and women were dancing together, and worse were holding each other; a way of behaving unacceptable in the eyes of some strict Muslims. The protests uttered by the MUI seem to have had some effect. *Dansa yo dansa* was not broadcast during the Fasting Month of 2003. Nevertheless, a comparable programme *Kenangan tembang* (Musical souvenirs) was.

Another thorn in the flesh of the MUI was the dangdut singer Inul Daratista and (especially) her *ngebor* (drilling) hip movements, and, in fact its displeasure expanded to anybody else who took up this kind of performance (see Wallach, elsewhere in this volume).

A Theological Approach to Music

Recently in Indonesia a number of books have appeared about Islamic law and music which represent a very strict uncompromising point of

can be based on Section 337 of the Penal Code dealing with voluntary intercourse 'against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal'.

²⁹ *Straits Times Interactive* 3-6-2002.

³⁰ *Japan Today* 17-3-2002.

view, and which propagate views definitely not shared even by a large part of the Indonesian fundamentalist Islamic community. They base their ban of almost all singing and making music on the Traditions about the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Among the authors of such books are Syaikh Muhammad Nashiruddin al-Albani (2002), Muslim Atsari (2003), and Abdurrachman al-Mukaffi (n.d.). Their views amount to a near complete ban on singing and dancing; thus also excluding popular genres as Islamic pop, dangdut, and nasyid singing the praise of Islam and its institutions. One section of Al-Mukaffi's book deals with devilish music and singing on radio and TV.³¹ It states that listening to a female singer is *haram* (and it has to be assumed that he has men in mind as the public, but this is not completely clear) and harms religion. Al-Mukaffi calls the lyrics of songs 'mantras of unlawful intercourse' (*zina*) and 'verses of the devil' and their tunes the 'flute-playing of the devil'. It goes without saying that he fulminates against the body movements of male and female singers make (Al-Mukaffi n.d.:67, 72). He and others give the impression that they consider singing a greater sin than drinking: 'The drug of singing and music on TV and radio unites the soul of singers, musicians, and listeners. Because of this they can do something that is more dangerous than drinking alcohol' (Al-Mukaffi n.d.:67). He explains what he means by this obscure observation. The bonding of singer and listener holds the danger of *syirik*, polytheism. It often cannot be ruled out that a listener adores the singer more than he loves God. A listener also may be lured into committing 'cruel' things.³²

Atsari (2003:43–52) goes to great pains to demonstrate that it is no sin to destroy musical instruments, except when they are used to play *rebana* music, and then only on two occasions: women singing at marriages and little girls singing on days of religious festivals. Atsari (2003:68) also allows for some exceptions. He states that singing without a musical accompaniment is still acceptable, providing that the lyrics are not sinful and do not follow the rhythm of music of unbelievers and wicked people. Albani is more extreme. In his view there are no exceptions to a total ban on singing. Albani concludes that singing with and without music is forbidden. From this it follows that he also does not want to hear about Sufi music, Islamic *nasyid* or Islamic songs (Albani 2002:183, 211). The whistling and clapping which are part and parcel of Sufi music will influence the soul.

³¹ Of course, there is also a section on showing the *aurat*, that part of the body that should remain covered.

³² The author is also sure that murder often takes place at concerts (Al-Mukaffi n.d.:77).

It can make people more drunk than alcohol (Albani 2002:193). His translator, Abu Umar Basyir, fully agrees. He leaves no doubt about his position: singing and music are *haram*. There is no such thing as Islamic music (Albani 2002:vi). 'Missionary activities with music? How about missionary activities by means of drinks? Missionary activities by means of unlawful intercourse? Missionary activities by means of extortion?' (Albani 2002:vii). Putting singing and dancing on a par with drinking seems to have struck a favourable chord in Indonesia. A recent book by Suhardi (2003) condemning Inul is entitled *Inul lebih dari segelas arak* (Inul worse than a glass of brandy). The first part of the book is given the title *Ngebor pintu neraka* (Drilling is the gateway to hell).

Such – often translated – literature is no basis for judgment. The strict fundamentalist Indonesian publications are as indicative as they are not. There are still only a few such books on music and their number pales into insignificance compared to literature about Islamic dress codes for women which have been published in Indonesia in the last few decades (books about dress codes for men are conspicuously absent). The attire propagated in some of these publications, black head-to-toe dresses (and skirts no trousers, wearing trousers is dressing like men, which these authors also abhor) often but not always without a face-concealing veil has never become popular in Indonesia. What did emerge as a *vogue* are Islamic fashion shows, which are a contradiction in terms for strict Muslims. Nevertheless, the number of publications indicates that there are people who are interested in the subject, that money, much of it probably coming from abroad, is available to publish these books and booklets, and also, though especially in the Soeharto era it was difficult to gain an impression about this, that there are people who agree with the life-style these books propagate.

Malaysian Morals

In Indonesia the assault on un-Islamic singing and indecent dancing is not part of mainstream Islam. For a time Inul gained immensely popularity. At the height of the craze she appeared regularly on TV and her shows attracted huge crowds, among whom some women with headscarves can be observed. After she had come under fire from Muslim circles, a number of influential people rallied to Inul's defense. One of them was Abdurrahman Wahid, leader of one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, the Nahdlatul Ulama, and at that time already former

president. On one occasion he even said that he would mobilize the Banser, the para-military organization of the Nahdlatul Ulama, if people – and he specifically mentioned Rhoma Irama – were to take action against Inul (Suhardi 2003:174). Abdurrahman Wahid explained that he came to the support of Inul not because he liked her dancing, he did not, but because individual freedoms and human rights were at stake.

In Malaysia the situation is different to that in Indonesia, almost the opposite in fact. Compared to Indonesia many more women dress in a strict Islamic style, but paradoxically Malaysian publications on Islamic dress prescripts are rare. The same observation can be made about singing and dancing in Malaysia. Few books deal with the subject but opposition to certain genres of music and certain types of dances and other art forms is far greater and more institutionalized than in Indonesia.

One of the groups in Malaysia amongst whom a revival of Islam in its more puristic form first manifested itself in the late 1970s and early 1980s was university students and graduates. One of the consequences of this was that in the 1980s students were in the vanguard of the protests against what strict Islamic circles consider practices which violate Islamic norms. Students who adhered to such ideas frowned upon secular entertainment. Among the contemporary fundamentalist student organizations was the Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Universiti Malaya (PMIUM, Union of Islamic Students of the Malaya University), a close ally of the Parti Islam seMalaysia (PAS), and an Islamic political party which propagates a scripturalist form of Islam. The PMIUM, which aspired to an Islamic Republic, had a great following among the students of the Universiti Malaya in the 1980s. In 1985 it spearheaded a protest against a concert to be given at the campus by the male singer Sudirman Haji Arshad. The PMIUM wanted to enforce a strict segregation of men and women and one of the transgressions which upset its students and also members of the university staff was that Sudirman appeared on stage in the company of women. Dress, of course, was also an issue (Anwar 1990:42–4). Sudirman's concert had to be cancelled, but the Malaysian Federal Government (and at that time Mahathir was already Prime Minister), somewhat alarmed by the wide support fundamentalist Islam had gained among university students and staff, could not agree with what had transpired. Kuala Lumpur saw to it that Sudirman could give a concert at the university later on in the year. In the years that followed, the female singer Sheila Majid (in 1989), and the male singer, M. Nasir (in 1994), had similar collisions with conservative Islamic radicalism (Metzger 1996:40–1).

Purist Muslims got the change to enforce some the rules to which they aspire in wider society in the 1990s when the PAS achieved a position that enabled it to act as the main custodian of scriptural Islamic morals in two Malaysian states. It became the ruling party in Kelantan since the end of 1990 and was in power in Terengganu between 1999 and 2004. Constituting the government meant that the PAS could implement its strict Islamic concepts in these two states; though the Federal Constitution gives the federal government the authority to set limits to a full implementation of an Islamic society as the PAS sees this. PAS rule had far reaching consequences for the entertainment sector. Karaoke bars and discos, and 'un-Islamic' traditional as well as modern music and dance performances were forbidden. The implementation of such bans is a different matter, but the fact that they were issued is indicative of the mentality of the leaders of the PAS, while it should also not be forgotten that by stressing fundamentalist Islam, PAS hoped to lure away Malay Muslims from the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the party that was in power in the other states and controlled the Federal Government.

When the PAS came into power in Kelantan, traditional art forms such as *makyong*, *dikir barat*, and *wayang kulit* were banned.³³ Implementation of such bans is a different matter, and in Terengganu, even PAS leaders organized *dikir barat* performances. Thai Buddhists living in the area were allowed to perform their manora dance, but only in temples, not in public places. The Malay *makyung* dance-drama performed by women was also forbidden in Terengganu when the State was under PAS administration. The reason given for the ban was that 'the dresses of the female dancers are revealing'.³⁴ It goes without saying that dangdut, especially when it involves 'mixed dancing' was also abhorred. The Malaysian Minister of Entrepreneur Development, Nazri Aziz, earned himself much disdain in PAS circles for dancing with a dangdut singer at a Putri UMNO charity event for victims of the Iraq war in June 2003. The PAS monthly *Harakah* published a picture of the two dancing contrasting it with a photo of Nazri Aziz wearing a skullcap during a discussion about Islamic

³³ In March 2003 the Kelantan administration lifted its ban on *wayang kulit* (frowned upon because of the Hindu influences), providing that the performances were stripped of un-Islamic elements. So, no Ramayana and Mahabharata stories. Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat explained that the plots should be based on real life. The sort of subjects he preferred were propagating learning and combating the use of drugs.

³⁴ See BBC 6-6-2000. An opposite trend could be observed in Johor where the Chief Minister initiated a cultural conservation programme to revive traditional music and dance such as *ghazal* and *zapin* in 2003. The initiative gained the full support of the successor of Mahathir, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, at that moment still Deputy Prime Minister.

schools (a hot issue as the Malaysian government wants to get rid of the Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR), the People's Religious Schools because of the fundamentalist religious ideas and anti-government propaganda taught at part of them).

The music the PAS allows is Islamic music. When there is musical accompaniment it has to be by percussion instruments. Wind and string instruments are taboo in the religious views adhered to in PAS circles. To prevent any other form of art being performed and to guard morals, bans were instituted in Kelantan and Terengganu. An Entertainment and Places of Entertainment Control Enactment (with a maximum punishment of five-year imprisonment and/or a fine of 20,000 ringgit) has been in force in Kelantan since October 1998. The Act forbids any form of entertainment which in the view of PAS leaders goes against Islam, or more particularly against the puritanical views they hold about the social interaction of men and women. Pop groups may perform, but only in hotels, and providing that the bands are all male. Female artist are only allowed to sing and dance before a female public. Only girls under the age of 12 are allowed to perform before a mixed public. To justify this decision, Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat said that he deplored the use of female artists to attract a public. Such behaviour was an aberration which had come into existence under British rule and had survived even though the colonial period had already passed long since (see for a historical perspective, the contribution by Jan van der Putten in this volume). A halt should be called to such exploitation of women for commercial ends. Women should not be treated as objects of men's desire.

It took some time before the entertainment act was strictly enforced. In May 2002 an official of the Kelantan administration announced that in future only nasyid, Islamic music, would be allowed. Pop music would be strictly forbidden. The following month Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat explained to protesting artists that concern about declining morals was the reason behind the ban. He promised that non-Muslim female artists would be allowed to perform before a mixed audience, but only when this was made up of non-Muslims.

Similar legislation and restrictions were issued in Terengganu. A state-owned hotel in Terengganu, the Primula Beach Resort, banned stage performances and no longer allowed its guests to dance in the hotel in July 2003. Initially the hotel management had also stopped the sale of liquor, but it revoked this decision after it realized how much income this would cost the hotel. Chinese residents had already protested. They had pointed out that at wedding receptions and other occasions proposing a toast was

'an important cultural practice' and that disallowing toasts was an infringement of the rights of non-Muslims.³⁵ The lifting of the ban on alcohol came just in time. A few days later, an East Coast Senior Citizens Karaoke Contest with sixty participants and organized by the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) could proceed as planned in the hotel.

The decision of the Primula Beach Resort to prohibit dancing seemed to signify a new state-wide policy. The then Chief Minister of Terengganu, Abdul Hadi Awang, who also is President of the PAS, indicated that he was in favour of outlawing the consumption of alcoholic drinks and 'social dancing', including traditional Indian and Chinese dances in which both men and women participated, even in privately owned hotels.³⁶ Drinking and dancing (and on one occasion Abdul Hadi Awang indicated that this could only concern cultural activities allowed by the religions adhered to in the Chinese and Indian communities, such as the dragon dance) should only be allowed on premises owned by Chinese or Indians. He also said that the same regulation would come into force in all states in Malaysia where the PAS should come to rule, and eventually throughout the whole country, should the PAS succeed in controlling the federal government.

In February 2004 the MCA openly accused the PAS of harming racial harmony when the Terengganu administration refused a permit to stage a multicultural Chinese New Year Show. The MCA, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism were among the organizers. The formal reason for the refusal was not only a ban on the public performance of female dancers and singers, but also, or even especially so, that the State's Entertainment and Places of Entertainment Enactment of 2002 forbade entertainment in schools and during Muslim evening prayer-time.³⁷ Abdul Hadi Awang explained that non-Muslims were allowed their entertainment but that they should not invite Muslims. Backed by the ministry and with a police permit the three-hour show went on, but started after evening prayers. The event was reportedly attended by 40,000 people.

What was being fought out was not just confrontation over entertainment. The conflict between the PAS and UMNO concerns the whole

³⁵ *Sunday Star* 3-8-2003.

³⁶ *Berita Harian Online* 14-8-2003, 15-8-2003.

³⁷ See *New Strait Times Online* 5-2-2004; *Straits Times Interactive* 6-2-2004. A similar show had also received no permit in Kelantan, but notwithstanding this had also still been held.

fabric of society, with each of the two trying to blacken and pester the other, wherever and in whatever field they can. UMNO and PAS are contesting the nature of an Islamic state. Both say they have the blueprint of a ideal Islamic state. PAS leaders favour strict scriptural rules. UMNO politicians stress modernity and claim that they have succeeded in transforming Malaysia into an affluent, modern Islamic state. They accuse the PAS of wanting to establish a Taliban-like Islamic state in Malaysia. It is a bitter conflict. There are wars of words between politicians of the two parties, while with certain regularity video clips are broadcast on state TV designed to blacken the PAS. The conflict centers on the question of whether *hudud* sentences and *qisas*, 'an eye for an eye' rules should be applied in the States under PAS control. Hudud concerns sentences of crimes mentioned in the Koran and Traditions about the life of the Prophet Muhamad which 'require public punishment of convicted offenders which include the public mutilation of limbs, *rejam* or stoning to death, crucification, and lashing' (Othman 1995:31). Legislation introducing such sentences has been gazetted in Kelantan and also in Terengganu when that State was still under PAS rule, but the federal government has so far prevented its implementation. Religion is the preserve of the individual states, but the Federal Constitution decrees that criminal law falls under the authority of the Federal Government.

The arts is one of the sectors where the battle rages between PAS and UMNO about who represents the right form of Islam. One of the ways for the PAS to question the ideas about Islam as promoted by the UMNO is to attack it for permissions to have Western pop artist perform in Malaysia.³⁸ Arts is also one of the fields in which the central government claims it and not the administrations of the individual states has the final authority to take decisions. In Kuala Lumpur, the federal Minister of Culture, Art and Tourism, Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, reacted to the ban on social dancing in Terengganu by stating that the administration of Terengganu did not have the right to ban dancing and singing, especially not when it concerned traditional Malay dances and Malay cultural performances linked to the royal courts. This was the preserve of the Federal Government. Nevertheless, Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, made one exception. State administrations were entitled to forbid performances which

³⁸ Other examples are concerts by and Mariah Carey in February 2004 and the rock group Scorpions in September 2004. Opposition to these two concerts was the greater as that of Carey had been planned on Islamic New Year and after being moved forward took place on a Friday, while that of the Scorpions was held on Isra Mi'raj, the Ascension Day of Prophet Muhammad.

were indecent, provocative and insulting to people's feelings; which, of course are exactly criteria on which PAS and UMNO cannot agree.³⁹

The Federal Government does not only assert its power to protect the arts or make it possible that artists still perform in PAS-controlled regions. Where dance and music are concerned the impression is created that the UMNO and the Federal Government deliberately act to irritate PAS leaders and followers. One of the occasion when this happened took place in May 2002, when Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and his cabinet ministers in Kelantan refused to attend the closing ceremony of the national water month festival. There were conflicting reports about what the PAS leaders had detested most: the singing and dancing of women on stage or men and women performing at the same time. Whatever the reason, PAS blamed Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir for adding the contested performances to the programme at the last moment. After a second similar incident in September, Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat threatened to issue no more licenses for live entertainment, not even to art institutions and hotels. It seems that he had been enraged by a performance of artists from Kuala Lumpur, among them women, and this in the Islamic month of Rajab, the month of Isra Mi'raj, the Ascension Day of the Prophet Muhammad. Similar 'confrontations' were reported from Terengganu. In May 2002 an angry crowd of about one hundred protestors carrying banners on which was written *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great) demonstrated against a charity concert organized in Terengganu by the police (a federal institution) because it was in violation of the strict segregation of the sexes. Abdul Hadi Awang considered the holding of concerts by the police as serious as the refusal by the police to enforce the hudud legislation in Terengganu and Kelantan after it had been gazetted. The government of Terengganu threatened to take the state police to court for violation of the entertainment legislation in December 2002.

What is still permissible in the eyes of its leaders can be gathered from a PAS-style pop concert held Kuala Lumpur in October 2004. It was a feeble effort to revamp the party's image. The PAS had performed poorly in the general elections held a few months earlier and had lost Terengganu to the UMNO. Party leaders realized that one of the reasons for the defeat

³⁹ Because the UMNO is also striving for an Islamic society, albeit a different one to that which the PAS envisages, at times Kuala Lumpur also acts when artists violate Islamic rules. The Malaysian government urged its Muslim citizens in 1981 not to listen to, or buy cassettes of, the Singaporean singer Anita Sarawak because she wanted to marry an Indonesian Christian singer, Broery Marantika. She was also banned from performing in Malaysia. In the end Broery Marantika converted to Islam (see Metzger 1996:39–40).

was that the PAS had failed to gain the support of young voters, especially of those who had voted for the first time. It was even admitted that the UMNO strategy to use 'immoral entertainment' had been successful.⁴⁰ In the audience men and women were segregated. The *New Straits Times Online* reported that '[n]early 2,000 people sat sedately and watched an all-male lineup perform pop, blues and Islamic music that preached family values and worship mixed with poetry and parable recitals.'⁴¹ The organizer, explained that the aim of the concert was 'to show that there is entertainment in Islam' (NSTO 5-10-2004). A leader of the PAS youth wing spoke about 'non-controversial, clean entertainment that is allowed in Islam'.⁴²

Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and Abdul Hadi Awang do not have their own way completely. As the controversy over the charity concert indicates the federal institutions are beyond their reach. The concerts which cause them so much grief are still organized. In April 2003, the PAS Youth of Kota Bharu protested against the holding of a float procession and the staging of concert to celebrate the 53rd birthday of the Sultan of Kelantan. In advance the Kelantan administration made it clear that it did not object to a procession of floats or a concert providing that no women artists were involved. Nevertheless, women participated in the floats and performed traditional dances. At the arts and cultural show that was organized by the Kelantan People's Action Council females also did sing and dance. The chairman of Karyawan, the Malaysian Artists Association, Zaenal Abidin Omar, saw in the many people who came to the show an indication that the Kelantan people 'were being deprived of entertainment'.⁴³ The following day, the Municipal Council of Kota Baru lodged a complaint at the police station against the People's Action Council for violating the Entertainment and Places of Entertainment Control Enactment of 1998. The president of the council, Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman, claimed that the license for the show had held the stipulation that singing and dancing for female artists was forbidden.

Performances of the *dikir barat*, the popular competitive jesting chorus performance, first introduced in Kelantan in the 1940s, are also used to get under the skin of the PAS. The Ministry of Youth and Sport organized a three-day *Dikir Barat Carnival* in Kota Bharu in Kelantan in October 2003.

⁴⁰ *New Straits Times Online* 2-11-2004.

⁴¹ *New Straits Times Online* 5-10-2004.

⁴² *Straits Times Interactive* 3-10-2004.

⁴³ *New Straits Times* 15-4-2003.

Sixteen *dikir barat* groups (including one female one) competed for the prize for the best performance. The themes they had to improvise on were also enlightening: *Keranamu Malaysia* (Because of you Malaysia), *Mahasiswa gemilang negara cemerlang* (Brilliant students means a bright nation), *Muafakat membawa berkat* (Consensus brings blessings), and *Belia ceria tanpa dadah* (A healthy youth without drugs). At UMNO political meetings in Kelantan the *dikir barat* is at times also performed.

The UMNO can present itself as the custodian of traditional arts and modern entertainment but it is a tricky policy. The aversion to some forms of singing and dancing is not confined to the PAS community. UMNO was even placed in a difficult position when some of the most important spiritual leaders in the country spoke out against a series of concerts organized by a local TV station in August 2004. Spearheaded by the Mufti of the State of Perak, Datuk Seri Dr Harussani Zakaria, the highest religious functionary in the State, they denounced these as encouraging vice and weakening the character of the Malay population, especially of school-age children. In the same breath they condemned Malaysian Idol (also detested by the PAS for its name, for promoting a culture of glamour and emotionalism, and for making people who were practicing for the show neglect the daily prayers) and a number of other TV shows as being in violation of Islamic law and Malay culture. The considerations for them to plead for a ban of the concerts were the free mingling of boys and girls who in the narrow crowd touched each other, the indecency of the dresses of the performing artists, the advance of Western culture, and also the suspicion that young boys and girls who went early to the detested series of concerts did not perform the sunset prayer.⁴⁴ Confronted with such opinions the Malaysian Minister of Information, Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said that there was nothing wrong with the concerts and that they were 'wholesale family fun'.⁴⁵ Malaysia's Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, pointed out that the Mufti of Perak had expressed a personal opinion and had not issued a binding fatwa, and that it thus was not necessary to start a debate about the issue.

⁴⁴ Earlier, in April, the rumour had already spread that after one of the contested concerts organized by TV3, held in the stadium of Kedah, more than 500 condoms had been found. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, had dismissed the rumour by saying that it was impossible to have sex in a packed stadium (*Straits Times Interactive* 10-8-2004).

⁴⁵ *Straits Times Interactive* 5-8-2004.

Conclusions

Malaysia has its PAS and related groups. In Indonesia a number of Islamic political parties and religious organizations aim at propagating a strict Islam and detest Western influences, at times deliberately singling out those in the field of entertainment. At times, the MUI acts as a religious watchdog, while various other organizations and para-military groups propagate the full implementation of Islamic law. 'Wahabism' is gaining support among Muslims in South Thailand and in Cambodia, while in the southern Philippines the Muslims fight for an independent Islamic State. Of the (recently deceased) leader of Abu Sayyaf, another insurgent group operating in the south of the Philippines, Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, it was said that he 'disapproved of TV, movies, dancing, songs on radio, even laughing with bared teeth.'⁴⁶ Singapore also has its strict Islamic community. With the advance of such fundamentalist Islam groups in Southeast Asia conflicts over music and dance may well become more frequent in the future. The implementation of harsh Islamic criminal law and dress codes are often mentioned as the most conspicuous issues which set hard line fundamentalist Muslims apart from the rest of society. The entertainment sector, even the traditional and national ones, is a third bone of contention. Singing and karaokeing politicians and military officers do not seem congruous with politicians out for a ban on all un-Islamic art forms. In Kelantan they would even have little change to indulge in their hobby as karaoke outlets are banned there. The capital of Terengganu is also off limit for them. A ban on karaoke centres remained in force in Kuala Terengganu after the UMNO had regained the State. And, would as a gesture to the Chinese inhabitants of the two States, permission be given for karaoke outlets Filipino politicians could go there to sing, but the establishments would remain off limit for the Indonesian singing retired officers and to all other karaoke loving Islamic compatriots.

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⁴⁶ *Asiaweek.com* 5-5-2000.

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