

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ASSUME THE POSITION: PERFORMATIVE STYLE AND THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY

A series of themes emerged from the analysis of the 1992 program on *Tat Twam Asi*. We examined the differential relationship between the authority of Mr. Bagus and the young men; their collective articulation as members of ‘the Hindu community’; the more general linkage of traditional religiosity with modernity and patriarchal domesticity; the figure of the sacred scriptures as a source of timeless wisdom; and the overarching ideal of social solidarity transcending the superficial divisions between religious communities. These themes are developed further in this chapter through an analysis of broadcasts recorded over a period spanning roughly two years on either side—namely from September 1990 to March 1995. Discussion is organized around the five primary genres or performative styles that were characteristic of these programs—from address monologues to situation dramas—to argue that one may discern a regularity in the position from which statements of *agamic* truth were enunciated on television under the New Order. However, before going any further, a few words must be said about the archived television materials and what was entailed in working with them.

#### *The Collection*

As already noted, the programs were originally recorded and transcribed as part of a collaborative project run by the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies, working in conjunction with the Indonesian Academy of Arts in Denpasar. Programs were selected for recording on a systematic basis to document Balinese representations of theatrical and more broadly cultural and religious issues and events (Hobart 2001). The collection as a whole contains some 1500 hours of broadcasts, recorded over an eight-year period, from 1990 to 1998. Among these materials, there are 298 programs—broadcast over some four and half years—that explicitly represented themselves as ‘Hindu’ in orientation (e.g., in their titles, on which more in a moment). 277 of these recordings were transcribed and made available for analysis.

In addition to reviewing the full set of transcripts, I was given access to VHS copies of roughly two-thirds of the collection for the purposes of the study.

The majority of programs (approximately 69%) were broadcast on the Indonesian state television channel, TVRI (*Telivisi Republik Indonesia*). However, as the recording project began in 1990, the collection also includes some of the first programs to be broadcast on the commercial channels, RCTI (*Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia*), SCTV (*Surya Citra Televisi*) and TPI (*Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia*).<sup>1</sup> For each of these four channels, the Hindu-related broadcasts have—in addition to their more specific titles (see below)—a general series title under which they were listed in newspaper television timetables. These series titles corresponded to the four television channels as follows:

Series Title (and Abbreviation)	Series Title Translation	Channel
Bimbingan Rohani Hindu (Bim)	'Hindu Spiritual Guidance'	TPI
Gema Rohani Agama Hindu (Gem)	'Hindu Spiritual Reverberations' <sup>2</sup>	SCTV/RCTI <sup>3</sup>
Mimbar Agama Hindu (Mim)	'Hindu Forum'	TVRI
Penyegaran Rohani Hindu (Pen)	'Hindu Spiritual Refreshment'	RCTI/SCTV

The programs differed in important ways with respect to their use of language. All of the Hindu-related broadcasts recorded from the TPI, SCTV and RCTI channels were, with one notable exception, conducted in the national Indonesian language (*bahasa Indonesia*).<sup>4</sup> Balinese lan-

<sup>1</sup> Approximate percentages for the number of programs recorded from these three channels, against the total number of Hindu-related programs in the collection (277), are as follows: TPI (11%), RCTI (14%), SCTV (6%). According to Philip Kitley, RCTI and SCTV were first freely available in metropolitan Indonesia on the 24th of August, 1990; and TPI began broadcasting on the 23rd of January, 1991 (2000: 350). Here it is important to note that, despite their partial reliance on commercial funding, it would be a mistake to represent RCTI, SCTV and TPI as working in isolation from the state. Having noted the New Order associations of RCTI, Kitley has explained elsewhere that, despite ostensible independence, 'The licensees of the other commercial channels also have close New Order connections. TPI is owned by the holding company Cipta Lamtoro Gung Persada whose principal is Siti Hardijanti Indra Rukmana, the eldest daughter of President Soeharto.... The Surabaya based SCTV is supported by a consortium whose principals include Sudwikatmono, head of the Subentra group and cousin of President Soeharto, Mohammad Noer, former Governor of East Java, and Henry Pribadi, brother of Djuhar Sutanto, a key business partner of Liem Sioe Liong' (1994: 12).

<sup>2</sup> Shifting metaphors somewhat, one might alternatively render the title *Gema Rohani Hindu* as 'Hindu Spiritual Reflections'.

<sup>3</sup> According to Kitley, 'RCTI and SCTV have jointly purchased programs since their early days as a way of reducing costs' (1994: 14).

<sup>4</sup> The exception is [Hin0180](#), in which there is both the use of Balinese terms of address (e.g., *beli*, or 'older brother') and *mabasan*-style reading in which Balinese is the language used for the second reader's rendering (see below).