



Cover: Master carver and puppet master M. Ahim with his wayang puppets in Ciampa Indonesia, from *Voices of the Puppet Masters: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia*, by Mimi Herbert. The Lontar Foundation in Indonesia and University of Hawai'i Press in North America, © Mimi Herbert, 2002. Photograph by Tara Sosrowardoyo. p. 160

Warrior Kings and Divine Jesters: Indonesian Rod Puppets

A Workshop for Educators
July 10, 2003

PRESENTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DISPLAY

Warrior Kings and Divine Jesters:
Indonesian Puppets from the Herbert Collection

Asian | Education

Acknowledgments

Workshop materials (including *Introduction, Slide Descriptions, and Lesson Plan and Activities*) prepared by Stephanie Kao, School Programs Coordinator, Asian Art Museum, with contributions by:

Kathy Foley, Professor of Theater, University of California, Santa Cruz: *Types of Wayang; Indonesian Puppetry: The World of Wayang; Performance Outlines of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; Glossary of Terms; and Bibliography*

Tonja Morris, Asian Art Museum Conservator: *Conservation of the Wayang Golek Collection*

Manager of Publications: Tom Christensen

Editorial Associate: Robin Jacobson

Graphics Specialist: Jason Jose

Photo Services Coordinator: Debra Baida

Museum Photographer: Kaz Tsuruta

Special thanks go to Bindu Tushara Gude, Assistant Curator of South Asian Art; Donna Strahan, Head of Conservation; Forrest McGill, Chief Curator and Wattis Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art; and Natasha Reichle, Assistant Curator of Southeast Asian Art for reviewing the contents of the packet; as well as to Deborah Clearwaters, Manager of Public Programs; Alina Collier, Education Resource Coordinator; Brian Hogarth, Director of Education; Ana Hortillosa, Public Programs Assistant, Performing Arts; Mimi Tsang, Family Programs Coordinator; Sarah Weems, Education Assistant, School Programs; and Allison Wyckoff, Public Programs Assistant, Art Education.

We are grateful to Mimi Herbert for permission to use photos from her book *Voices of the Puppet Masters: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia*; and photographers Tara Sosrowardoyo, John Marston, and Maria Farr, whose photos from this book are featured in this educator's packet.

The Asian Art Museum would like to thank the following foundations and corporations for their generous grants. Educational programs and activities (primary support): The Freeman Foundation and the Wells Fargo Foundation. Educational programs and activities (ongoing support): The William Randolph Hearst Foundation Educational Endowment, the California Arts Council, AEGON Transamerica Foundation, the Cisco Foundation, Stanley S. Langendorf Foundation, and the Joseph R. McMicking Foundation.



Table of Contents

Notes to the Reader	3
Introduction to Indonesia	6
Indonesian Puppetry: The World of Wayang	9
Conservation of the Wayang Golek Collection	28
Slides and Slide Descriptions	35
Lesson Plans and Activities	68
Performance Outlines of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata	78
Glossary of Terms	82
Bibliography	85
Map of Indonesia	87



Notes to the Reader

This packet is designed to give educators an introduction to the world of Indonesian three-dimensional rod puppet theater (*wayang golek*) and to the stories told in performances using these puppets. Wayang golek features a diverse repertoire including Islamic and Javanese historical tales as well as Indonesian versions of the Ramayana (Life of Rama) and the Mahabharata (Great Chronicle of the Bharata [Barata] Dynasty), the great Hindu epics; the most popular cycle of stories told by puppet masters (*dalang*) derives from the Mahabharata. It is important to note that, while Indonesian versions of Hindu epics follow a broad outline of the Indian stories, many variations appear. (In this packet, the first time the name of a character from a Hindu epic appears, the Sanskrit version is followed by the Indonesian form of the name in parentheses; thereafter, the Sanskrit names are used.)

Guide to Pronunciation of Bahasa Indonesia

Vowels

a	as in <i>father</i>
e	like the <i>a</i> in <i>late</i> (when stressed); like the <i>e</i> in <i>get</i> (when unstressed)
i	like the <i>ee</i> in <i>meet</i>
o	as in <i>go</i>
u	like the <i>oo</i> in <i>shoot</i>
ai	as in <i>Thai</i>
au	like the <i>ow</i> in <i>how</i>
ua	like the <i>wa</i> in <i>Washington</i> (when at the start of a word)

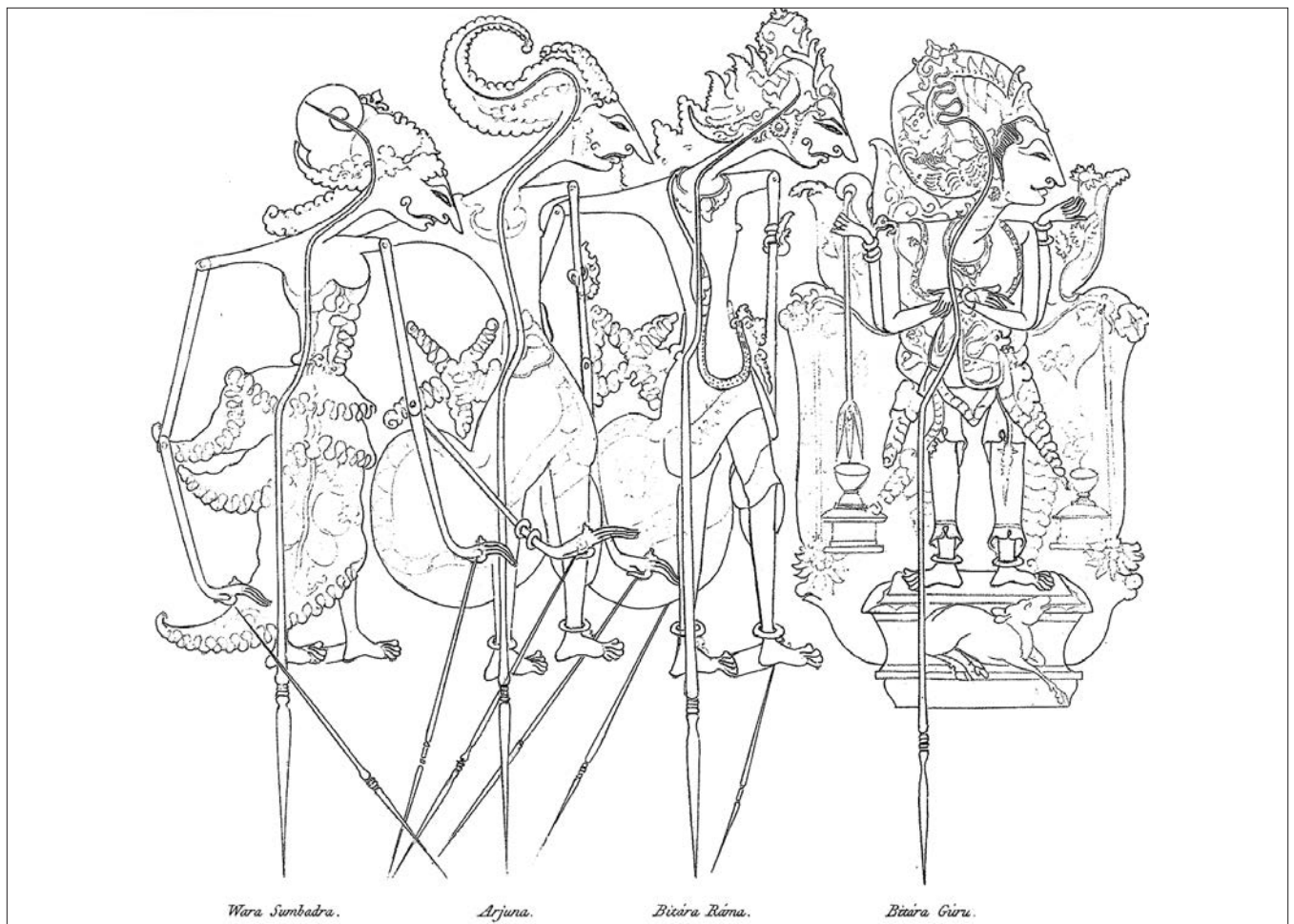
Consonants

c	like the <i>ch</i> in <i>chop</i>
g	as in <i>grass</i>
ng	as in <i>singer</i>
ngg	like the <i>ng</i> in <i>anger</i>
j	as in <i>join</i>
r	rolled, as in the Spanish <i>pero</i>
h	like English <i>h</i> but a bit stronger
k	like English <i>k</i> , except at the end of the word, when it is more a closing of the throat with no sound
ny	as in <i>canyon</i>

Types of Wayang

The term *wayang* is used to refer to a wide variety of Indonesian theatrical forms. Wayang figures come in all shapes, sizes, and mediums, including picture scrolls, shadow puppets, rod puppets, masked figures, and puppets twice human height. For most genres, *wayang* is the first term, indicating a form of traditional theater with or based on puppets. The second term identifies the medium or puppet type: scroll paintings (*beber*), three-dimensional rod puppets (*golek*), animal skins (*kulit*), or human beings (*wong*). There may be a third term in the phrase, usually designating the presentation of a story cycle such as the Hindu epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (*purwa*), Islamic (*menak*, meaning “aristocratic”), or historical chronicles of the East Javanese prince Panji, the grasscutter-turned-prince Damar Wulan, and the *wali* (saints).

- *Wayang beber* is the art form considered to be the predecessor of Indonesian puppetry. In this narrative tradition, long, painted scrolls are explicated by a human performer. Today, wayang beber is rarely performed.
- *Wayang kulit* is performed with shadow puppets made of water buffalo hide and is said to have developed from scroll puppetry. This form is most popular in Bali, where it is called *wayang kulit parwa*, and in Central Java, where it is called *wayang kulit purwa*. The leather puppets are carved with intricate designs and painted. Buffalo horn is used for the rods that manipulate the figures.



Topeng (Masks) and Wayang (Scenic Shadows) (detail), from Raffles's History of Java by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, FRS (1817).

- *Wayang wong* is human dance drama based on wayang puppet theater. This genre was popular in both courts and villages until the 1960s.
- *Wayang golek* is performed with three-dimensional wooden rod puppets. It is most popular along the north coast of Java and in Sunda, the highland area of West Java. Wayang golek has two major variants:
 - *Wayang (golek) cepak* is a form employed by dalang on the north coast. They use puppets that sport Javanese dress to perform a repertoire consisting of tales from the Javanese and Islamic traditions: stories of Prince Panji's endless search for his beloved princess, of grasscutter Damar Wulan's rise from doing menial work to marrying a queen and defeating her bitter foe, and of Amir Hamzah, the uncle of Muhammad, and his defeat of those who attack his Islamic kingdom. An alternate name for the tales of Amir Hamzah is *wayang menak*.
 - *Wayang golek purwa* has been the favored form in the highlands of West Java for the past 150 years. Here the dancing puppets present stories from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana repertoire. Wayang golek purwa puppets will be the primary focus of this packet.



Introduction to Indonesia
by Stephanie Kao

The Southeast Asian country of Indonesia consists of more than 17,000 tropical and volcanic islands that straddle the equator between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Among Indonesia's principal regions are the islands of Java, Bali, and Sumatra, as well as large parts of Borneo and New Guinea (a contested region). Today, Indonesia is home to more than three hundred ethnic groups with approximately five hundred spoken languages and dialects. Eighty-seven percent of the population, or some 200 million people, is Islamic, making Indonesia the largest Muslim nation in the world.

For thousands of years Indonesians developed complex agricultural societies with rich artistic and cultural traditions rooted in a belief in ancestral spirits and animism. The history of Indonesia also chronicles the influx of maritime trade, the transmission of religions, the rise and fall of Buddhist and Hindu kingdoms, 350 years of colonization by the Dutch, invasion by the Japanese, and the establishment of an independent nation in 1949. The Indonesian people have nurtured a world view that incorporates diverse religions and traditions with indigenous beliefs that lie at the heart of Indonesia's cultures.

For two thousand years, merchant ships have traversed the Straits of Melaka, the sea route connecting South Asia (the Indian subcontinent) and East Asia, carrying maritime traders in search of gold and fine spices. Midway in their journeys along this thoroughfare, in the archipelago of Indonesia, traders from India and China in search of exotic trade items discovered goods ranging from gold, nutmeg, and cloves to rhinoceros horn and kingfisher feathers. During this time Indonesian rulers drew upon new religions and cultural ideas brought by these foreign traders, who were sometimes accompanied by Hindu and Buddhist priests. After these Indian religions were established on the island of Java, Indonesian rulers in turn patronized the development of religious sites in India.

The story of how these diverse religions coexist with and support the indigenous beliefs of Indonesia is told in the arts and architecture of the islands. The Southeast Asian tradition of rulers claiming close association with divine beings extended to Indonesian kings who patronized Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. To honor the ancestors and to legitimize their rule, these kings built monumental structures to adorn the island of Java. The most famous are the Buddhist monument of Borobudur and the Hindu temple complex at Prambanan. In the late 1200s the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit emerged, during which time both Buddhism and Hinduism were practiced in the royal courts. However, the spread of Islam centuries later had an even more lasting influence on the people of Indonesia. Originally brought to the islands by Arab, Chinese, and Indian traders, Sufism (a mystical branch of Islam) was practiced in royal courts. In the 1500s the Sultan of Demak, originally a Hindu king, converted to Islam and conquered Majapahit, furthering the spread of that religion throughout the island.

Although aspects of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim faiths may appear to be in conflict with one another, the way these religions coexist with indigenous Indonesian beliefs may be viewed as a natural expression of its people's spirituality. Some Indonesians believe that these religions hold common teachings of morality and virtue. This is reflected in the theater tradition of shadow puppet theater (*wayang kulit*) and three-dimensional rod puppet theater (*wayang golek*), in which a Muslim puppet master (*dalang*) entertains and educates the people using puppets to reenact indigenous versions not only of Islamic legends but also of the Hindu epics and Javanese traditional tales. In a wayang performance the spirit world and the earthly world converge and the inner struggles of human existence—love, passion, hate, fear, and pain—are played out, revealing the history, spirit, and values of the people.



Indonesian Puppetry:
The World of Wayang
by Kathy Foley

Introduction

For more than a thousand years Indonesians have used *wayang* theater as a method of addressing the conundrums of life. The lively puppet traditions of South and Southeast Asia have portrayed epic stories that shrank the cosmos down to a miniature world. The vast expanse of the earth could symbolically be reduced to the few feet of a puppet stage. The puppeteer's lamp became the sun, throwing light on myriad creatures who, in their nobility or baseness, make up the world. The greatest stories ever told could be sung with one voice, and battles that "shook the world" could be fought by the two hands of the puppet master. By using the small world to represent the large, the puppet master (*dalang*) challenged himself and those who watched to understand the forces, seen and unseen, that make up the universe.

In the contemporary opening song of the rod puppet theater (*wayang golek*) of Sunda (West Java), the puppet master chants:

The dalang dances the puppets. The puppets are danced
not knowing in whose hand.
The screen hides the Lord, the power unseen.

The chant expresses an analogy familiar to Indonesians: the parallel between the puppeteer and the mysterious, divine force behind the universe. Ideologically, the puppet stage is a space via which the audience can come to understand the world from the viewpoint of a god; epic stories frame the region's religious and philosophical thought. Simultaneously, through jester characters (*punakawan*, also known as clowns or clown servants), the puppet master infuses the epic world with his comic political commentary on contemporary life. Puppet theater is a combination of some of the most archaic and the most up-to-date aspects of Indonesian culture.

Puppetry is the preeminent performance art of Indonesia; in this country, even theater with live actors often follows the patterns, movements, and stories borrowed from the puppet arts. *Wayang* is a key to Indonesian thinking, reflecting the lives and world view of the Indonesian people. Contemporary political scientists have studied puppetry in order to analyze the changing dynamics of Indonesian society (Anderson 1965). Anthropologists have plumbed the secrets of puppetry in order to analyze the country's social structure and cultural values (Keeler 1987). The Indonesian government terms puppeteers "information officers" and encourages them to promote government programs. *Wayang* is especially popular among the lowland Javanese, the Sundanese who inhabit the highlands of West Java, and the people of the adjacent island of Bali. For them, puppetry has long served both ritual and entertainment purposes.

History

The term for puppetry, *wayang*, comes from the Indonesian word for shadow *bayang*. *Wayang kulit*, shadow puppetry using figures made from water buffalo hide, is considered to be the oldest freestanding puppet form; the earliest references to it date from the 800s. A court poet during the reign of King Airlangga (1035–1049) wrote: "There are people who weep, are sad and aroused watching the puppets, though they know they are merely carved pieces of leather manipulated and made to speak. These people are like men who, thirsting for sensuous pleasures, live in a world of illusion; they do not realize the magic hallucinations they see are not real" (Brandon 1993, 3).

It has been debated whether or not puppetry is indigenous to Indonesia or was introduced from India or China. Indigenous origins are argued by scholars who point toward connections between the jesters and ancestral spirits; the jester characters that appear in every play have no clear Indian precedent. Indeed, Semar, the principal jester, is sometimes said to be the ancestral spirit of the island of Java itself, and this character is sometimes used in healing or protective rites. Even today in some areas of Indonesia, carvings, puppets, and gongs are considered by some to be objects that ancestral spirits can temporarily inhabit. Performances of puppetry are still held once a year at cemeteries where the founders of each village are buried. Ancestors are believed to have particular favorite stories. There is evidence that local animism has been a source of the puppet arts. In times past, if the harvest was threatened by vari-



Wayang kulit theater, 1900, from *Reiseerinnerungen Aus Indonesien* by Kronprinz Rupprecht Von Bayern. Edited by Michaela Appel (2000). Photograph by Nachlas Prinz Eugen von Bayern.

ous pests, the story of the Indonesian rice goddess, Sri, might be performed to ward off the attack. Today, such ritual stories are performed infrequently, but they remain a part of the history of the art.

Regardless of whether the impulse behind wayang is indigenous, widespread development of the art took place during the Hindu-Buddhist period, especially between 800 and 1500. According to myth, a prince named Aji Saka brought aspects of Indian culture to Java. A long ritual opening to the wayang performance celebrates his arrival on the island; he came bearing the *hanacaraka*, the Sanskritized Javanese alphabet, which he then split into four, casting a quarter to each of the four directions and thus transmitting literacy and prosperity throughout the land. The poetic language used by puppeteers in songs and narratives is laced with Sanskrit-based words. The repertoire is largely based on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the great Hindu epics. Some scholars feel that the Balinese puppet traditions resemble—in the realistic form of their puppets and the looser structure of their performance sequences—the art as it was performed on Java before the arrival of Islam to Indonesia in the 1500s. The Balinese (who remained Hindu) believe wayang was introduced by refugees from Majapahit, the last Hindu-Buddhist kingdom on Java, when it fell around 1520.

On Java, however, dalang say the art was invented by the *wali*, the nine saints who converted Java to Islam. One story told by Sundanese puppeteers is that Sunan Gunung Jati, a wali of Cirebon, was having a conversation with another saint, Sunan Kalijaga, about how to attract people to Islam. Sunan Gunung Jati drew the outline of a wayang figure on the ground with a stick. Kalijaga understood and created the first leather puppet. He presented his first performance in the local mosque and, in order to enter, viewers had to recite the Islamic confession of faith (“There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet”). Although wayang encompasses traditional Javanese stories and Hindu elements, most dalang are Muslims. Contemporary dalang consider themselves the literal or spiritual descendants of the wali. The elongation of arms, noses, and other features that gives an air of abstraction to the

Javanese figures is attributed to this tradition. The elaborate tuned percussion (*gamelan*) orchestra used in Java and Sunda (West Java) was introduced at this time. Two other Muslim saints are said to have originated the art form of three-dimensional rod puppets.

Unlike shadow puppet theater, which requires darkness to enact, rod puppet theater can be enacted at any hour. Rod puppets have a long history in China, and it is possible that these figures reflect Chinese influence (thought by some scholars to have been brought by the Chinese Muslims who took part in converting the Javanese to Islam), as the region where along the north coast of Java these wooden puppets flourished was heavily populated by the Chinese.

Most scholars believe that wayang existed before Islam came to the island; nonetheless, there may be some truth in tales of Muslim promotion of the art form. Significant innovations were made during the era of the wali. Some changes in the Indian stories were also made to accommodate Islam. For example, in Indian versions of the Mahabharata, Princess Draupadi (Drupadi) marries the five Pandava (Pandawa) brothers, but since polyandry was distasteful to Muslims, in the Javanese version she marries only the eldest brother, Yudhishtira (Yudistira). Another example of such changes is in the depiction of Durna (Dorna), the teacher of the Pandavas, who is a Hindu religious figure and a great hero in India. On Java, however, he is depicted (probably in an effort by Muslims to discredit Hindu clerics) as a meddlesome poseur. Moreover, during the period of the wali, stories that were Islamic in origin were introduced into the repertoire. Though not as widespread as the tales from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the stories of Amir Hamzah, the uncle of Muhammad, which came from Gujarat or Persia around this time, as well as tales of the exploits of the Islamic saints on Java, were also dramatized.

By the 1700s most of the features that characterize contemporary wayang were in place, but this dramatic form had not yet spread beyond the region where Javanese was spoken, and wooden doll puppets were used solely to tell Islamic tales while leather puppets were used for Hindu-based stories. Slowly, Javanese performers from the Cirebon-Tegal area of the north coast migrated into the highlands of West Java, where Sundanese was spoken. The Dutch colonial government opened new roads, facilitating this movement of people and arts. Local aristocrats known as regents, working under the colonial government, invited dalang to settle in those cities. By the late 1800s shadow puppetry was rare in West Java, and wooden rod puppetry had become the favored form. The repertoire performed with the wooden rod puppets, however, consisted primarily of stories from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the epic Hindu tales (*purwa*, meaning “first” or “original”), and Islamic tales were enacted only rarely. New sets of rod puppets that followed the iconography of the wayang kulit figures were made to present the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

Today major wayang performers are known all over Java. They appear on television and radio, and cassettes of their performances are available in stores. While it is still true that most major dalang are descendants of the families of traditional performers, in the twentieth century there began to be performers who were not trained by their own elders. The national high school of the performing arts, Sekolah Menengah Karawitan Indonesia (S.M.K.I.), and the college academy of Javanese performing arts, Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia (S.T.S.I.), have recently opened programs where puppetry can be studied by all.

Spiritual and Cultural Meanings

While contemporary wayang is a popular entertainment that pulsates with caricature and political commentary, it is rooted in animistic religious practices. Performances are usually given for rites of passage—most often weddings and circumcisions. Offerings are made to the spirit world, and incense is burned before the show to attract spirits.

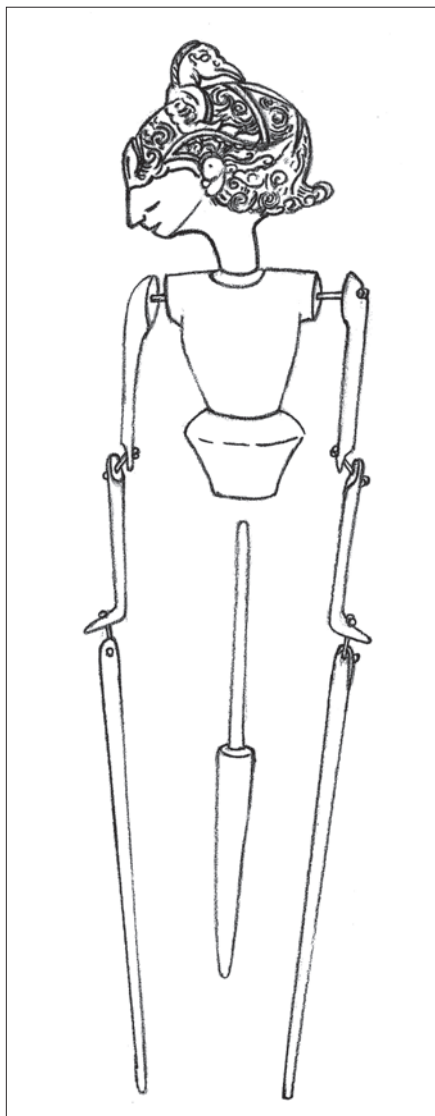
Some performances, however, are protective rituals (*ruwatan*) in which the dalang becomes a representative of the Hindu god Vishnu (Wisnu) (Foley 2001). According to tradition, these ceremonies must be performed based on number, gender, and order of birth of siblings within a family, or for those beginning a new endeavor. A ruwatan is required, for instance, for families with an only child; or with two children, one female and one male; or with five children all of the same sex. The performance protects the people or enterprise from the threat of demon Kala (“time”). In some areas *bersih desa* (“cleaning the village”), annual performances for the village ancestors, are thought

to sweep away bad luck. It is said that as evil is dispelled the spirits of beneficent ancestors gather to see the stories they loved in life.

Such ceremonies cement the bonds between the living and the dead and create harmony in the village. Wayang's traditional stature as a performing art derives from its role in these rituals that safeguard the community. Visitors may come to the house of a noted puppeteer from dawn until dark in a steady stream to seek guidance in such matters as curing an ill family member or to get water he has made holy to guard against disease and bad luck. By tradition the power of puppeteers is thought to extend beyond the realm of performances (Foley 1980, 2001).

Ritual performances are growing less common in Indonesia, but audiences continue to regard wayang as an important art. A measure of the pulse of the people, wayang reveals much about Indonesian culture and its changes. Government officials and political candidates woo performers in hopes they will echo public policy or promote a candidate in their performances.

Puppet Construction



Construction of a wayang golek puppet, illustrated by Stephanie Kao.

Wayang golek puppets are made from light softwood, which is first roughly modeled with a knife. The head is the most important part. The carver uses his hand to make the measurements—for example, the curve of the carver's thumb must fit smoothly into the slope of the chin and neck. The finer features of the headdress, which help identify the puppet as a particular character, is carved once the general shape of the head has been achieved. On the back of many headdresses is carved a bird face (*garuda mungkur*); the association of the mighty king of the birds, Garuda, with the Hindu preserver god, Vishnu, may be the source of this pattern. The trunk of the body is carved from waist to shoulders or neck. A hole is drilled through the center of the body and the neck; then a central rod is put through the hole and the head mounted on this rod. The arm pieces are carved in two sections—hand to elbow and elbow to shoulder. After the carving is complete the figure is coated with primer; then the head is painted in bright colors according to traditional patterns. The features of the face require the steadiest hand, for the life of the puppet is in the eyes and mouth. The body and the jointed arms are usually painted gold. Sequined bodices or cloth pieces wrapped around the neck sometimes cover the chest, and a batik cloth skirt hides the puppeteer's hand. The arm pieces are strung together and attached to the body with string. Finally, control rods are attached to the hands, and the figure is ready to dance. In the past, dalang made their own puppets, but now many order puppets from dalang who specialize in carving.

Major Puppet Types

The figures of wayang golek can be divided into five main character types: refined, semirefined, strong, emotionally uncontrolled, and special. A character type is indicated through the facial features and shape of the body. Puppet movement and voice are also determined by this typology. A puppet's specific character is identified by its puppet's headdress. In *wayang cepak*, which is popular along the north coast of Java, the headdresses are apt to be turbans, fezzes, or even Western-style military hats.



Arjuna, third of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers, approx. 1950
Indonesia; West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media

Promised gift from the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, R2000.86.115

Refined characters have white faces, bowed heads, and small and downcast eyes. They move in slow, gliding motions and speak in low, melodious voices. Their language is polite, and the thoughts they express are complex. Heroes and heroines are usually of this type. Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, and his wife Sita (Sinta); Arjuna, the hero of the Mahabharata, and his wife, Subhadra (Subadra); Amir Hamzah in the *menak* cycle and his wife, Munigar—all these characters fall into the refined category.



Shikhandi (Srikandi), a wife of Arjuna, perhaps 1800–1900
Indonesia; Central Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
Gift from the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.85.27

Semirefined characters have white or pink faces, slightly more upright heads, and small eyes that gaze straight forward. They move in quick but measured steps and speak in high-pitched voices. While generally refined, these characters are a bit more direct than the purely refined characters and more inclined toward precipitous actions. Shikhandi (Srikandi), a female warrior and a wife of Arjuna in the Mahabharata, fits this character type as does Krishna (Kresna), an incarnation of the god Vishnu in the same epic. Rash moves by members of this character type often motivate a story. For example, Shikhandi rushes off, disguised as a man, to find her lost husband and encounters fearsome ogres, necessitating a rescue mission.



The monkey warrior Hanuman (Hanoman), aide to Rama, approx. 1960 Indonesia; West Java Wood, cloth, and mixed media

Promised gift from the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, R2000.86.160

Strong characters usually have faces of deep pink, blue, or other dark colors, and large, bulging eyes. Their heads are bowed if they are modest or held high if they are boastful. The bodies of these puppets are larger than those of the previous groups. Their voices are deep and gravelly. The puppeteer creates the sound by tightening his vocal chords and resonating the voice in his chest cavity. These characters are the worker bees of the wayang world. If there is a battle to be fought, a forest to be cut, or a bridge to be built, the strong characters are ready. Ghatotkacha (Gatotkaca), the nephew of Arjuna and the protector of Pringgandani kingdom in the Mahabharata, is an example of this type of character. Hanuman (Hanoman), the monkey warrior of the Ramayana, is another strong character, though his light body color contrasts with the dark ones of others of this type.



The demon king Ravana (Rawana), enemy of Rama, approx. 1960
Indonesia; West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media

Promised gift from the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, R2000.86.152

Emotionally uncontrolled characters have red or dark-colored faces, protruding eyes, and open mouths with visible fangs. They hold their heads high and have large bodies. They speak in piercing voices with a musical lilt. These characters are the antagonists. Dushshasana (Durasasana), who attempts to rape Draupadi in the Mahabharata, is an example of this type, as is the demonic Ravana (Rawana), who opposes Rama in the Ramayana.



The jester Semar, approx. 1960
Indonesia; West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
*Promised gift from the Mimi and John
Herbert Collection, R2000.86.154*

Finally, there are special characters—those that do not fall into the other categories. Their voices and characteristics must be learned individually. There are perhaps fifteen characters in this category; many of them jesters.

The most important jester is Semar, who has a white face and a black body. He is actually a high god who has descended to earth to help humankind. He is both male and female, and is both father and mother to his sons. He is always groaning about how his sons do not pay attention to the important things that are happening around them. He loves them dearly but reprimands them regularly. His voice is slow and sometimes whiny.

Pug-nosed Gareng is the first son of Semar. While his two siblings fight with each other, he listens and thinks. If the brothers see two prongs sticking out of a bush, Cepot says "A bull!" and pulls out a cape, preparing for a bullfight. Petruk tells him the protuberances are TV antennas and then starts to argue about which program to watch. Gareng, on the other hand, shakes his head and mutters "Ogre"; immediately a demon attacks him. A strong fighter, Gareng often levels the enemy with a single blow.

The second son, the long-nosed Petruk, is the consummate nerd. Whatever the latest fad or most complicated news, he knows about it. He can program computers and recite verse with ease. He uses brains where Cepot uses brawn. Petruk's voice is high and nasal, and his diction more complex than that of his brother.

His third son is Cepot, who is a devotee of martial arts. In contemporary *wayang* performances Cepot sees all the latest movies and thinks of himself as a Rambo-like action hero when it comes to fighting. When his father tells him to work hard or study, he responds like the delinquent Bart Simpson. A proud underachiever who dreams of his prowess in battle, Cepot spends most of his time bickering with his brother Petruk, but bravely faces any demon. His voice is deep and guttural.



The demon Sisul, approx.
1970
Indonesia; Cirebon, West
Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed
media
*Promised gift from the
Mimi and John Herbert
Collection, R2000.86.142*

Rank-and-file ogres, or demons (*buta*), bear some resemblance to jesters. They tend to be portrayed as comic oafs, and they can be created with new special features and voices according to the innovativeness of the individual *dalang*. They are the perennial opponents of the jesters and are sure to be defeated by them.

Wayang Golek Performance

Wayang performances are a kind of blessing bestowed on special events such as circumcisions, weddings, celebrations of the ancestors, and other rites of passage and public events. The performers may be hired by an individual or a family holding a life cycle ceremony, or by an entire village. A performance is meant to engage all members of the community. For instance, philosophical discourses in the early part of the performance appeal to the elders of the village, while scenes of love accompanied by romantic songs speak to the young men and women.

Today's top *dalang* perform almost every day with the exception of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, when the *dalang* rest, repaint their puppets, and prepare for the start of the new season.

A family holding a feast hires a puppet master, who is accompanied by his troupe: eight to twelve musicians and one or two female singers in addition to one or two apprentices. A day before the performance, the sponsor builds a covered, raised platform about 25 feet by 25 feet in front of his or her home to serve as the puppet stage. A fresh banana tree trunk is mounted horizontally on two support legs. The puppeteer sits behind it with his head partially visible as he manipulates the *wayang golek* in intricate dances and delivers all the dialogue. The singers and musicians sit behind him. Hawkers and food sellers set up stalls around the perimeter of the performing area. Family members and invited guests are provided with prime seats from which to watch the show, while uninvited audience members watch for free from any available vantage point. After setting up, the troupe may do a short afternoon performance. But the real show by the featured *dalang* only starts after 9:00 PM, and it continues until 4:30 AM. Thousands of audience members attend the performances of famous *dalang*, and the family that hires him gains status from hosting the event.



Puppet master Asep and his troupe before a performance at Ancol, a recreation center in North Jakarta, from *Voices of the Puppet Masters: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia*, by Mimi Herbert. The Lontar Foundation in Indonesia and University of Hawai'i Press in North America, © Mimi Herbert, 2002. Photograph by Maria Farr. p. 195

The atmosphere of a traditional wayang golek performance is a bit like that of a fair at night. Stalls are set up to sell peanuts, coffee, and a variety of other goods. Everyone is cooking, socializing with neighbors, and listening to music, thereby adding to the excitement as they eagerly await the beginning of the puppet performance. Eventually, when the dalang comes on stage, the audience turns away from the myriad other activities in order to be lured into the puppet episodes of adventure, joy, romance, and laughter.

Wayang performances have traditionally been used as an effective way of teaching. Children learn the history of their region and the meaning of great epics by watching the midnight performances of puppet masters. Literature, history, culture, philosophy, political commentary, and religion—all these and more are part of the show. Though wayang is a tradition-based art form, it is ever subject to changes based on influences from contemporary life. Superstar puppeteers are adulated in Java the way pop stars are in America. Dalang carry on a venerable legacy, making their stories of the past relevant to the present.

Personnel and Music

It is necessary to understand the role of each wayang performer and the importance of music to the art form. The personnel includes the puppeteer and his assistant(s), the female singer, and the musicians.

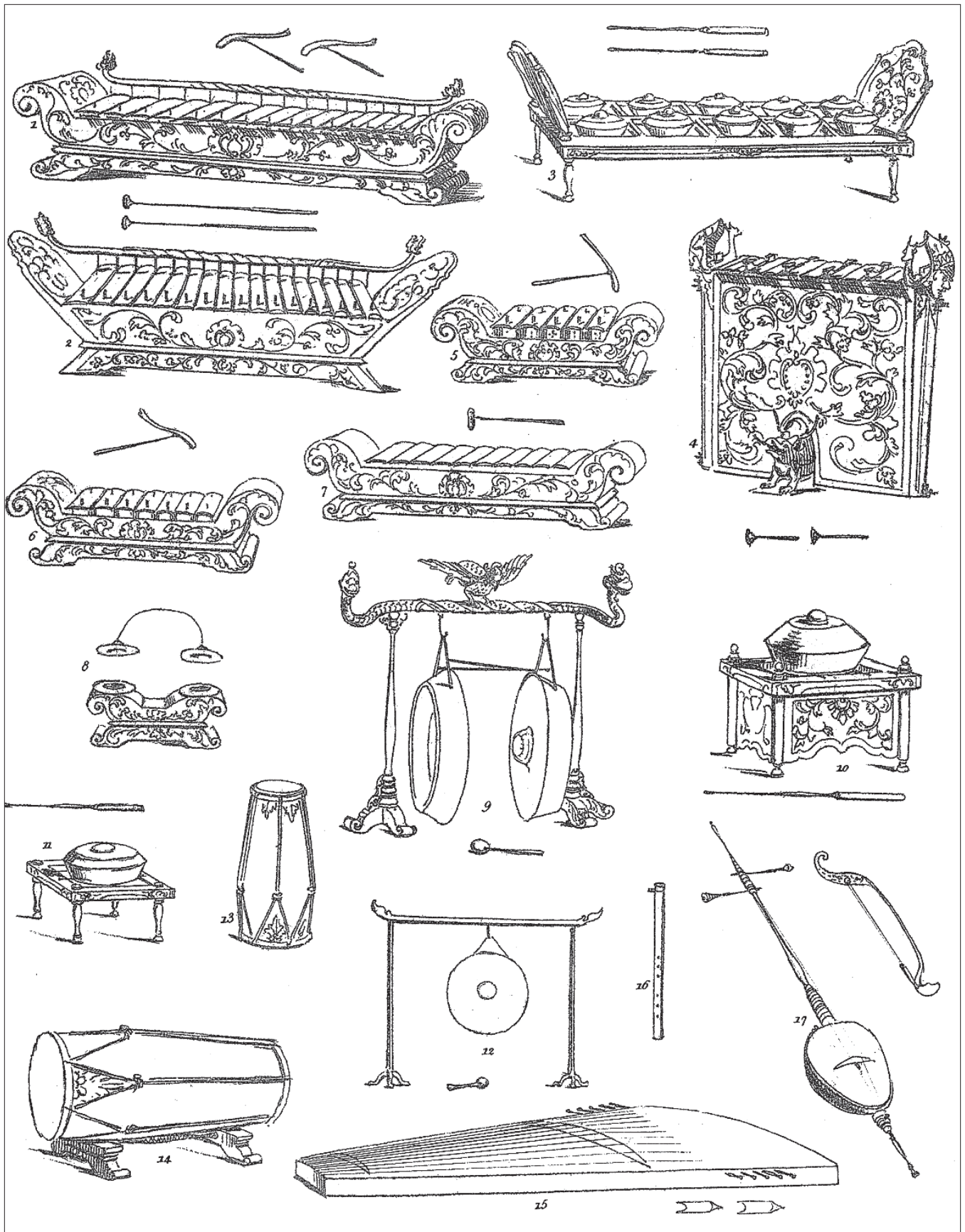
The dalang leads all aspects of the performance. He delivers all the dialogue, manipulates all the puppets, and sings mood songs specific to various elements of the drama. Throughout the course of the performance, he varies the rhythms to accompany the movement of the puppets by striking metal plates with his foot or hand. These metal plates, suspended by twine on the side of the puppet's chest, hang level with the dalang's foot as he sits cross legged behind the banana log. With his left hand, the dalang raps the puppet's chest with a wooden knocker to cue the tuned percussion (*gamelan*) ensemble.

Kneeling behind the dalang and to his right is the singer, who chooses lyrics that enhance the atmosphere and emotional impact of the scenes and performs songs upon request from the audience during the jester scene (which takes place in the middle of the performance) as well as at other interludes during the night.

Music is a vital component of all traditional wayang performances. A tune, a tempo, or a particular percussive pattern will alert even a blind audience member that a particular character, such as Rama, is onstage and is doing a specific gesture. In former times particular scales and story materials were linked: the five-tone *slendro* scale accompanied *purwa* tales, and the seven-tone *pelog* scale was used for the *cepak* repertoire. Specific tunes are associated with set scenes, character types, or dramatic action (such as battles and love scenes). Voices of character types are tied to specific notes of the gamelan.

The orchestra consists of some ten types of instruments played by nine musicians. The musicians not only play the instruments but also joke and banter, commenting on the action and conversing with the jesters.

In a gamelan orchestra, instruments are tuned to each other rather than to any absolute pitch. Therefore, an instrument from one gamelan cannot be played with instruments from another. Hanging and horizontal bronze gongs on racks are generally sounded on specific beats of the cyclical musical patterns. Smaller metallophones and xylophones play the more melodic patterns. Drums provide the rhythmic lead, and accent the moves of the puppets' dance as well as signaling starts, stops, and changes of tune. The drums also make sound effects. Singers, flute, or bowed lute provide an elaborate melody that rises out of the structure the other instruments supply.



Musical instruments (*gamelan salindro*), from *Raffles's History of Java* by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, FRS (1817).

Role of the Dalang

The dalang is a master musician, an epic storyteller, a dancer of dolls, a comic wonder, a deep philosopher, and a political pundit all rolled into one; some dalangs have the power to do exorcisms and other traditional ceremonies. In essence a conduit of the knowledge embedded in the traditional epics of wayang, the dalang connects the community with its cultural history and with the spirit world. Wayang performances are conducted as much to honor the ancestors and appease the spirits as they are to acknowledge living relatives during a family celebration. Therefore, the early part of a performance in particular is seen as a way to summon one's ancestral forces. Similarly, at the end of a performance, the dalang says, "The flower has been picked, may its fragrance spread," meaning that the audience has received knowledge from him and, it is hoped, they will use this knowledge to the benefit of the community.

A puppeteer usually begins training in wayang performance as a boy of ten or twelve, traveling with his teacher, who is often a relative. The apprentice dalang (*catrik*, meaning "disciple") acts as an assistant, anticipating his teacher's needs by pulling and preparing the correct puppet during performances for the dalang to pick up while also closely observing his teacher's technique. The dalang teaches his student the structure of a performance, which begins with a court scene, moves on to clowning, and climaxes in battle. He encourages the student to be conversant with the musical repertoire. As the student progresses in his training, the dalang will ask his student to do short afternoon performances or allow him to do a single scene during night performances. When the student has gained some experience, the dalang will encourage someone who seeks a performance to allow the student to do it in his place. If the performance is successful, other invitations to perform will follow.



Puppet master Entar performing *Bambang Somantri*, from *Voices of the Puppet Masters: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia*, by Mimi Herbert. The Lontar Foundation in Indonesia and University of Hawai'i Press in North America, © Mimi Herbert, 2002. Photograph by John Marston. p. 153

When the *dalang*-in-training finally performs, his innate abilities are also brought into play. The student must determine for himself how to maximize the comic potential of the jesters and must develop a story such that the political or social message is relevant. For example, as Megawati, the current president of Indonesia, was coming into prominence, Asep Sunandar, one of the top *dalang* in Sunda, began to perform the story of Brajamusti. Paralleling Megawati's struggle with her male opponents, the episode tells of Queen Hidhimba (Arimbi), whose brothers seize her kingdom from her because she is a woman; thus, Asep Sunandar's version of this old story feels as current as today's headlines. To become a popular performer, the skillful *dalang* augments what he learns from his teacher with his natural talent and shrewd intelligence.

Synopsis of the Hindu Epics

While the Sundanese versions of the Hindu epics follow the broad outline of the Indian versions, they include many variations. Performers may make up new stories about favorite characters from the epics. For example, a frequent plot innovation has Ravana (Rawana), the demon king from the Ramayana, reincarnated in the era of the Mahabharata and fighting against Arjuna, who in this later tale is the equivalent of Rama in the former.

Performers may make up new stories as long as they do not violate the givens of the heroes' lives. To understand this concept, consider *Hamlet* and *Faustus*, known works of the European tradition. Instead of playing the stories as we know them from Shakespeare or Goethe, a modern playwright or improvisatory theater company might write or perform a variation in which Faust taught at Wittenberg and Hamlet was a student there, one in which Gretchen is sought by both teacher and student as a lover. In keeping with the original work, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet's school friends, would provide comic relief, and Hamlet would ultimately be summoned home on the death of his father. In the hands of a skillful *dalang*, the epic tales are consistently being spun into new material.

Traditional stories that cannot be changed are called *pakem* (set, or "trunk," stories). *Karangan* (*carangan*) are invented ("branch") episodes such as the Western example given above. The following précis are of episodes of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as they might be performed in Sunda today. The whole epic would never be presented in a single performance. It would take many nights to dramatize the entire story. Most performances focus on a single event within the larger sweep of the story.

The Ramayana (Life of Rama)

The Ramayana tells the story of Prince Rama—the son of Dasharatha (Dasarata), the king of Ayodhya (Ayodya)—an incarnation of the god Vishnu, the preserver god. Vishnu comes into the world periodically in different forms to save it from destruction. In this story; when Rama's wife, Sita (Sinta) is abducted by Ravana (Rawana), the demon king of Lanka (Alengka), Rama enlists the aid of monkey troops to fight and reclaim his wife.

Dasharatha promises one of his wives that he will grant her anything she asks. To his chagrin she asks that his eldest son, Rama, be banished to the forest for fourteen years and her own child, Bharata (Barata), be placed on the throne instead. Bharata, who knows his mother is misguided, decrees that he will merely rule in his brother's place for the fourteen years, and he anxiously awaits Rama's return.

Meanwhile Rama, Sita, and Rama's faithful brother Lakshmana (Lakshmana) retreat to the forest where demons roam. The demoness Shurpanakha (Sarpakanaka) encounters the handsome Lakshmana and Rama in the forest and wants them to marry her. When they spurn her and cut off her nose, she plots their destruction. She tells her brother Ravana about Rama's wife. Sita, Shurpanakha says, is the most beautiful woman in the world. Ravana, desiring Sita for himself, sends the demon Maricha (Marica) disguised as a golden deer into the forest.

At Sita's request, Rama goes hunting for the deer. Sita hears a cry and thinks Rama is in danger. She forces Lakshmana to search for Rama, saying that should Lakshmana refuse to go, she will know he wants Rama to die so as to marry her himself. Lakshmana leaves her after drawing a protective circle around her feet.



Battle scene from a manuscript of the Ramayana (Life of Rama), approx. 1790
 India; Himachal Pradesh state, former kingdom of Guler
 Colors on paper
 Gift of Margaret Polak, 1992.95

Alone in the forest, Sita is no match for Ravana. He comes to the hut disguised as a hermit and tricks her into leaving the circle. With pity for the hermit, Sita steps out of this protected space to get food for him. Ravana kidnaps her, carrying her back to Lanka. En route he kills the heroic vulture Jatayus, who has valiantly attacked Ravana's flying chariot. In Lanka, Sita languishes in the garden of the *ashoka* (*asoka*) tree. Ravana comes each day to ask her to be his wife, and each day she responds that she can love none but Rama.

Rama, distraught, seeks his wife everywhere. He goes to Kishkindha (Guha Kiskenda), the kingdom of the monkeys, where he befriends King Sugriva (Sugriwa) and helps him defeat his unrighteous brother, Valin (Subali), who has stolen Sugriva's wife. The monkeys help search for Sita. Eventually Hanuman (Hanoman), the white monkey warrior and Rama's most loyal follower, finds Sita. As the son of a god, Hanuman can fly, so he crosses the ocean to the island of Lanka, where Sita is imprisoned, and gives her Rama's ring to prove to her that her husband still lives. Hanuman is captured by the demons, who set his tail on fire, but the punishment backfires as Hanuman frees himself and sets the city aflame with the sparks from his tail.

Hanuman returns to Rama, and with all the animals he helps build a causeway from mainland India to the island of Lanka. The great war rages for many days. Ravana's demons fall before the monkey army. Finally, Ravana faces Rama and is defeated. Rama and Sita are reunited and return to Ayodhya in triumph.

The Mahabharata

The Mahabharata is a much more complex tale, dealing with the exploits of the five Pandava (Pandawa) brothers as they struggle to regain their kingdom from their cousins, the hundred Kaurava (Kurawa) brothers. This rivalry cul-

minates in a great war that brings destruction and sorrow to both clans. The story takes place within the frame of a larger narrative that originates in heaven eons earlier and moves through many generations of the Pandavas' ancestors and descendants.

Much of the epic revolves around the families of two brothers, Pandhu (Pandu Dewanata) and Dhritarashtra (Destarata). Pandhu had five sons, who were noble and well-behaved. Yudhishtira (Yudistira), the oldest, was so honest and noble that his blood ran white and he floated above the earth when he walked. Bhima (Bima), the second, was huge and strong. He was straightforward and direct in his speech. Arjuna, the third son, was the handsomest man and the best warrior ever born, and to see him was to love him. The twins Nakula and Sahadeva (Sadewa) were upright and refined.

Though Pandhu raised them, each was actually the son of a god. They were born via a favor that Kunti, one of Pandhu's two wives, had obtained from a hermit. She had tried this once before her marriage, and was shocked to find that it had summoned the sun god, Surya, who left her pregnant with a son. Karna was miraculously born through Kunti's ear, a circumstance that preserved her virginity. Fearful that people would learn she was an unwed mother, she put the child in a basket with jewels from his father and set him afloat in the river. A humble charioteer discovered the child and raised him as a son. Later, Karna would be the only warrior who could rival the prowess of Pandhu's five sons.

Dhritarashtra, Pandhu's brother, was blind and had given the kingdom to his brother to rule. However, Pandhu died before Dhritarashtra did, and the blind brother became regent while his offspring, the hundred Kauravas, and their cousins the Pandavas were growing up. This passing of the kingdom back and forth caused confusion about who was the rightful ruler. Dhritarashtra's sons greedily maintained that their father was the elder brother so the kingdom should be ruled by them under Duryodhana (Duryodana), the eldest of Dhritarashtra's hundred children. The Pandavas, the sons of Pandhu, were clearly more honorable and high principled. They were favored by the people and, since their father had ruled, many felt they should succeed him.

The Kauravas had been born under odd circumstances. Dhritarashtra's wife had given birth to an odd lump of bloody flesh rather than a child; she took the strange entity, divided it into sections, and put them in pots. The vessels moaned and groaned, and, eventually, out came the hundred Kauravas. Theirs was not an auspicious birth.

The Kauravas had always been jealous of the Pandavas, and plotting against them became a favored pastime. The rivalry between the cousins grew as quickly as they did. After a marriage contest in which the Pandavas won the hand of the Lady Draupadi (Drupadi) from the Kauravas, she became the wife of Yudhishtira, the eldest Pandava. Now, the Kauravas discussed how they could ruin the Pandavas once and for all. Luckily, during the marriage contest for Draupadi, the Kauravas met Karna. The Pandavas insulted Karna by refusing to fight him because he was not, they felt, of noble birth. Unbeknownst to them, he was their elder half-brother. Ill treated by the Pandavas, Karna became the best friend of Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas. Karna would turn out to be the Kauravas' best protection against the strength of the Pandavas.

The Kauravas continually tried to set traps for their cousins, but their plots always backfired. One time they prepared a magnificent palace of lacquer for the Pandavas. When the Pandavas moved into the palace, the Kauravas set it afire, but the Pandavas managed to escape. In an attempt at reconciliation Dhritarashtra gave the Pandavas half the kingdom, and they built a great capital city at Indraprastha (Amarta). Their jealousy still unrestrained, the Kauravas fixed upon a plan to strip the Pandavas forever of their power. Duryodhana and his brother Duhshasana got their uncle, Shangkuni, to play a game of dice with Yudhishtira, who loved to gamble. The eldest Pandava, in the intoxication of gambling, bet his kingdom, his brothers, his wife, and even himself. He lost all to the loaded dice that Shangkuni rolled.

Draupadi was called to the gambling hall, and a gloating Duhshasana tried to remove her clothes. The chaste wife of Yudhishtira, distraught that her husband could have thought to gamble with her honor, called on the god Vishnu, who miraculously made a garment appear for each one Duhshasana pulled off Draupadi. Finally an accord was



Krishna driving Arjuna's chariot, approx. 1775–1825
India; Kashmir
Colors on paper
Gift of Margaret Polak, 1996.6

reached about how to resolve the situation: The Pandavas left their homeland for thirteen years, and the Kauravas became its rulers.

The Pandavas had various adventures during their period of exile. When the Pandavas returned, there was a reckoning: The Pandavas asked for only five villages of the vast kingdom that was once theirs, but the Kauravas only laughed.

The enmity led to a great war in which brother clashed with brother, and father confronted son. Arjuna killed his elder brother Karna, and Kunti mourned the death of her eldest son, while Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, served as a charioteer. After a long period of fighting, the Pandavas won, but so many were dead that they could take no joy in the victory. War and death were one and the same. The Pandavas retreated to the Himalayas, leaving a grandson of Arjuna to rule. Walking toward the heavens, one by one they died. Finally only Yudhishtira, the purest of the pure, remained. He was allowed to enter heaven, but there he saw the Kauravas feasting and his brothers cast into hell. He wept at this reversal, but then realized that this was the final test. All the things of the world, including passion and attachment, were bonds that must fall away. At last, Yudhishtira's spirit reached its destination: enlightenment. His brothers appeared and the heavens were full of rejoicing.

The Mahabharata is the longest epic known. If the Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Bible were combined, they would only begin to approach the length and complexity of the Mahabharata. Yet, with the dancing puppets of wayang golek, exciting episodes from these great tales are enacted night after night in Sundanese villages.



Conservation of the
Wayang Golek Collection
by Tonja Morris

The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco was recently given an extraordinary collection of approximately 250 Indonesian puppets, including examples dating from the 1800s to 1993. A generous gift from Mimi and John Herbert, who collected many puppets while living in Indonesia for several years, this grouping adds to the museum's already diverse collection of puppets from other cultures.

The Role of Conservation at a Museum

The primary goal of the Conservation department at the Asian Art Museum is to preserve the museum's collection for future generations. This goal is achieved through a number of activities including controlling the surrounding environment, performing conservation treatment, and researching fabrication methods and deterioration processes.

The Conservation department works with curators, museum engineers, and registrars to create safe environmental conditions while also working closely with exhibit designers and mountmakers to create exhibition spaces that allow the objects to be viewed in such a way as to prevent damage. Whether a single object or large groups of similar objects are on display in an exhibit or tucked away in storage, the goal is to care for the objects and to prevent or slow their deterioration, thereby preserving them for future generations to learn from and enjoy.

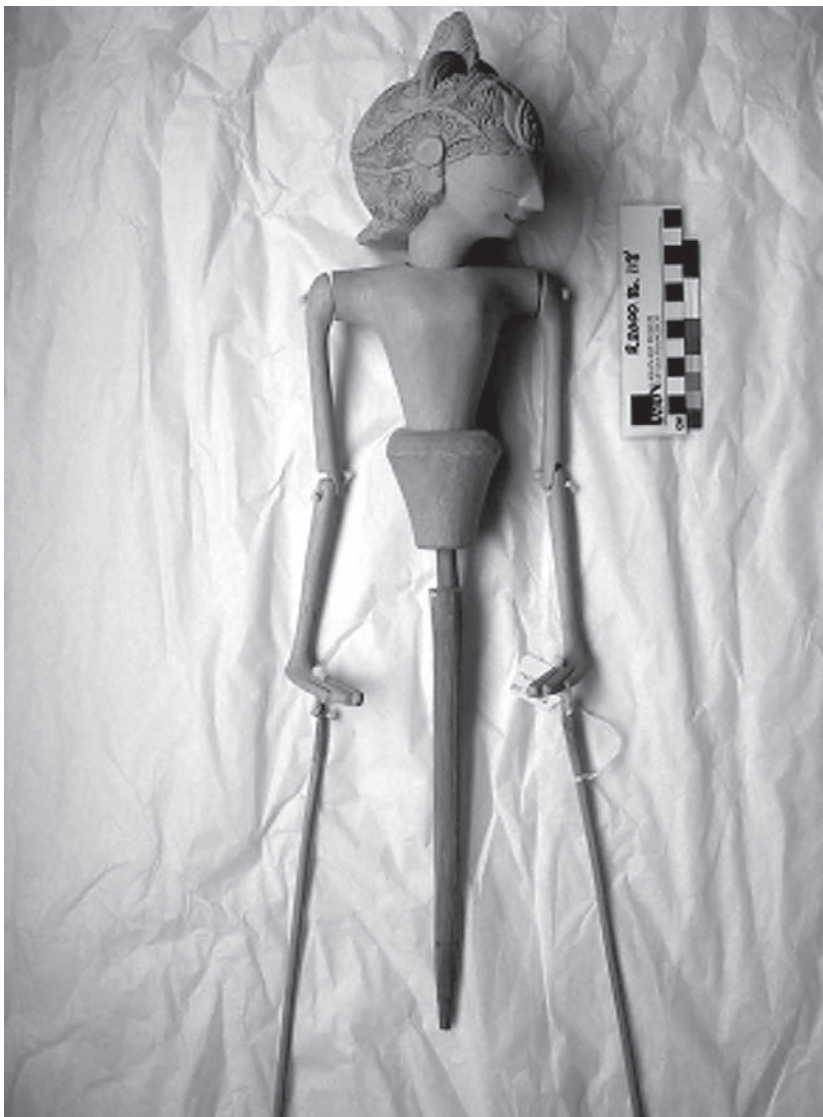


A servant woman (detail of flaking paint), perhaps 1800–1900
Indonesia; Tegal, Central Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
*Gift from the Mimi and John Herbert
Collection, F2000.85.37*

Conservation of the Wayang Golek Collection at the Asian Art Museum

The puppets arrived at the museum in varying conditions ranging from excellent to extremely fragile. Some of the arms and handling rods had become detached, and some of the textiles were dirty, worn, and had holes in them. Often, costume elements were in danger of becoming lost, and many puppets could not be placed upright because paint would have fallen off them in this position. Conservation's first job was to identify which puppets were in poor or fragile condition and then determine how they needed to be treated in order to preserve the various materials used in their construction.

The puppets in the Asian Art Museum's collection are constructed of diverse materials, including wood, textile, leather, and paint, as well as applied metal, glass, and plastic elements. Overall conditions varied from puppet to puppet due to the range of construction materials as well as age, use, and previous environmental conditions. Many puppets had been repaired by the puppeteers who used them. These repairs contain valuable historical information about how the *dalang* cared for their puppets, showing how the appearance of the puppet has changed. They help us understand what materials the *dalang* used to fix their puppets and in what manner they were repaired so they could again be used in performances. The puppets' condition also contains clues as to how they were manufactured and cared for; any changes made since their original making are a part of their history. It is important to document and preserve this information because it helps us determine how the collection needs to be maintained.



Subhadra (Subadra), a wife of Arjuna,
1995
By M. Ahim
Indonesia; Ciampea, West Java
Wood
*Promised gift from the Mimi and John
Herbert Collection, R2000.86.118*

Materials Used in the Construction and Manufacture of Wayang Golek

In order to determine an appropriate conservation treatment, a clear understanding of the materials used to construct *wayang golek* is needed. The typical puppet is constructed from light-colored softwood that has been carved, brightly painted, and dressed in various textiles as well as from applied decorative elements such as beads, hair, tassels, and leather items. A complete puppet includes the body, head, arms, and in some cases, legs (see photo of Subhadra, R2000.86.118, p. 29, 65), as well as the central rod (*cempurit*) held by the dalang. String is used to attach the jointed arms to the body. Wooden or horn rods, attached with string to the hands, are used to control movement. Costumes vary according to where and when the puppet was made, what type of character (refined, semirefined, strong, emotionally uncontrolled, or special), and what specific character it represents. Traditionally, regardless of character type, wayang golek wear a skirt, usually with a batik design. Some characters wear long-sleeved blouses, and some female characters wear strapless bodices. Noblemen and other male characters often wear bib-shaped velvet coverings and aprons adorned with sequins and beads.

Literature on the wayang golek tradition suggests that the carved wooden parts of the puppets are first covered with yellow paint and then overpainted with bright colors or gold paint. The demanding physical action of performances often causes damage to the puppets. Therefore, they are frequently repainted, often in a different color from the original.

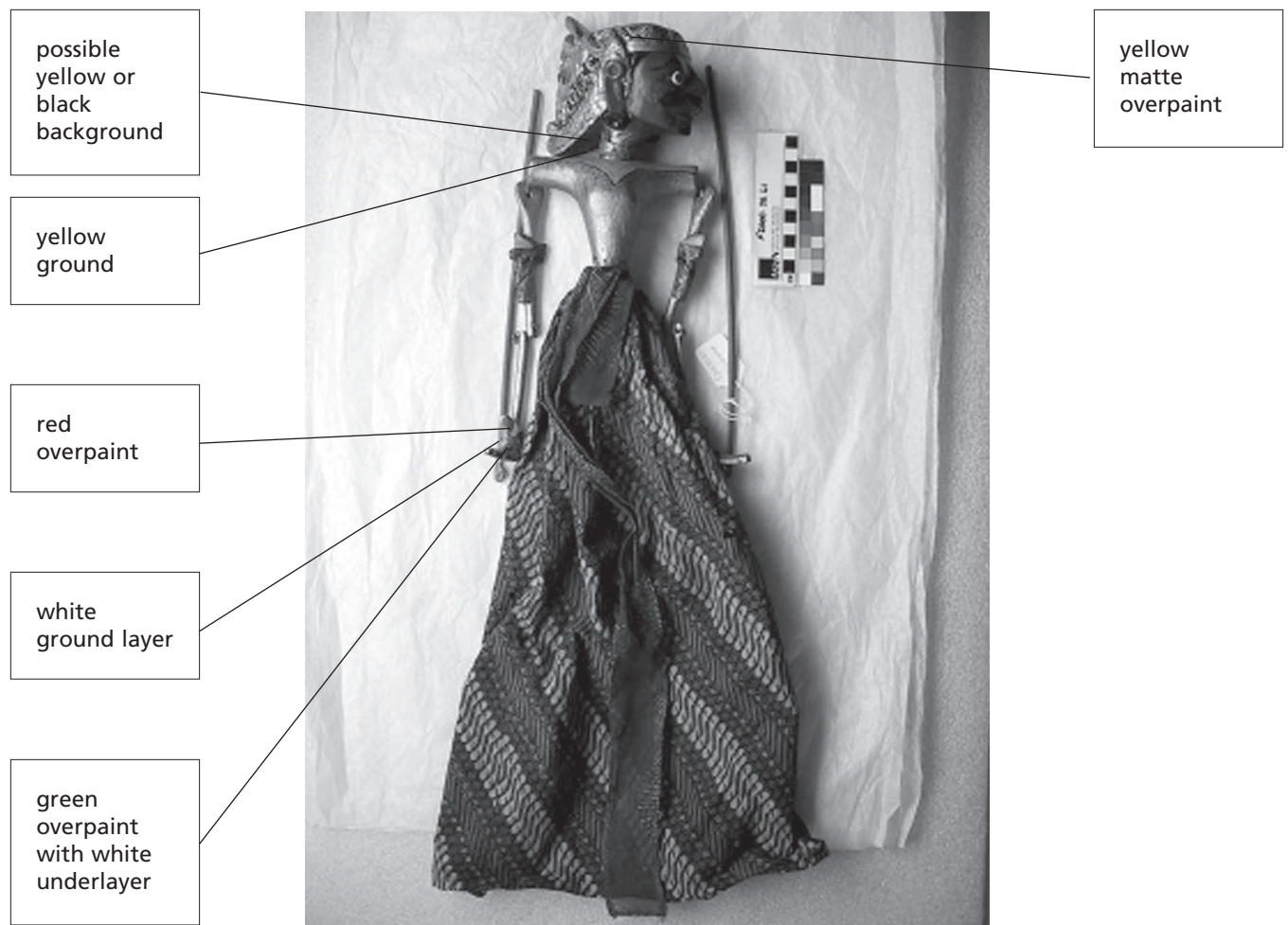


Ghatotkacha (Gatotkaca), son of Bhima (Bima), approx. 1950
Indonesia; West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
Gift from the Mimi and John Herbert
Collection, F2000.86.124

Scientific Analysis and Conservation

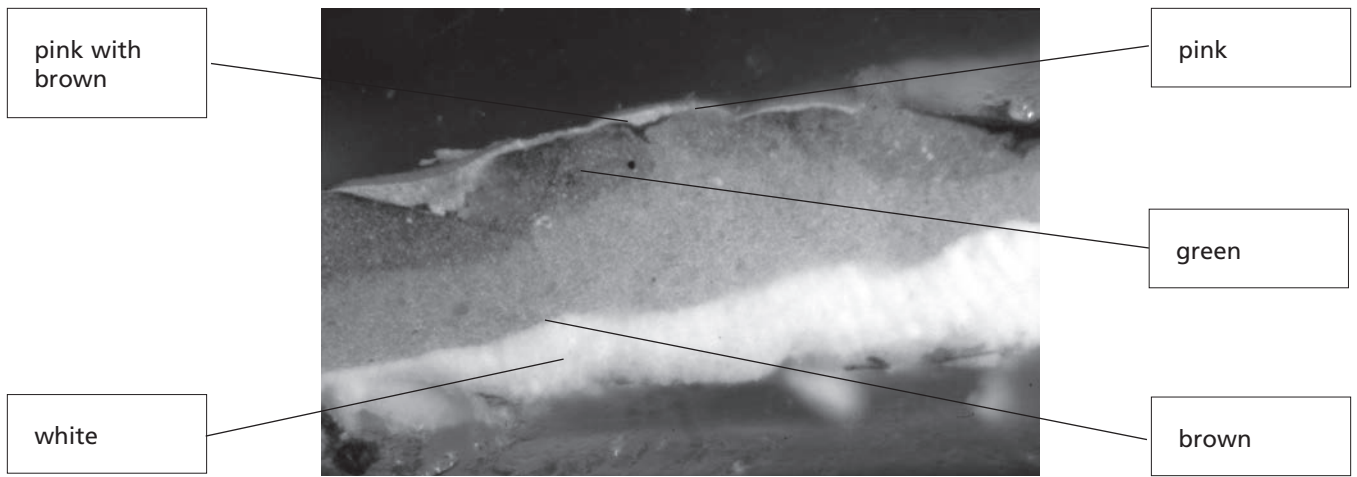


The warrior priest Bhisma (Bisma), uncle of the Kaurava and Pandava brothers, perhaps 1800–1900
Indonesia; Tegal, Central Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
Gift from the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.85.11

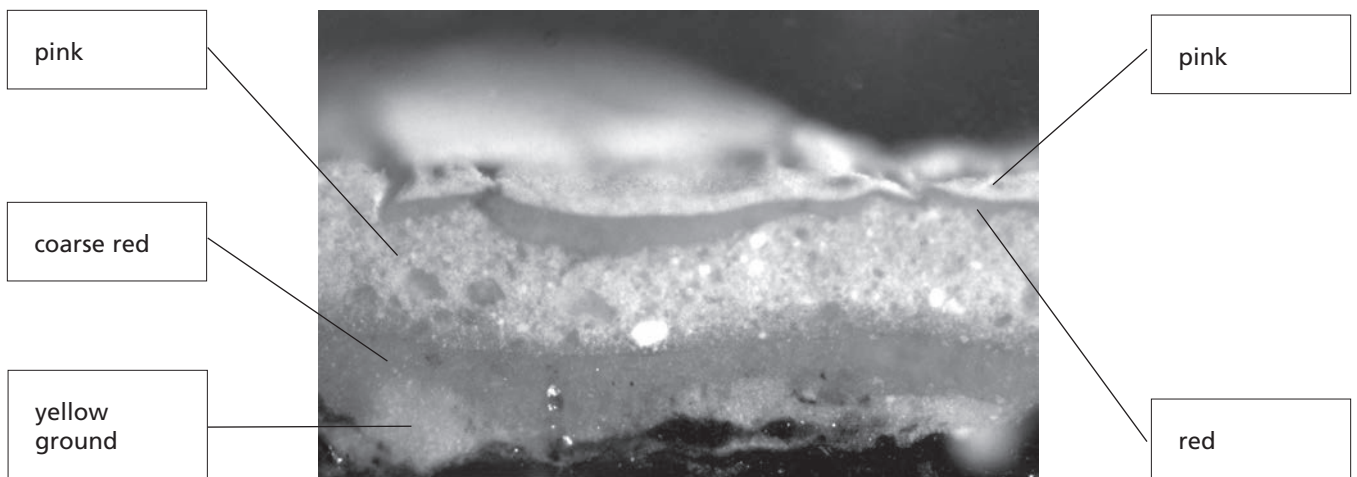


The nobleman Ashvatthama (Aswatama), 1800–1900
 Indonesia; Tegal, Central Java
 Wood, cloth, and mixed media
Gift from the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.85.61

In order to determine an appropriate conservation treatment method and to compile information about Indonesian puppet traditions, technical studies were carried out. These sorts of studies can identify how an object is made, including what type of pigments, paint binding mediums, and fibers are used to construct the textiles. Conservators and conservation scientists use a variety of tools to examine an art object in the attempt to identify these materials, so they can authenticate and date an object. In the case of the museum's wayang golek collection, paint samples about the size of a pinhead of all the layers of paint present were collected from two puppets, and cross sections of the samples were analyzed under a microscope to see how many times the puppets had been repainted. The cross sections revealed that some areas on one of the puppets had been overpainted at least four times. The surface visible to the viewer is red; however, the cross section shows that the puppet was originally painted with a white primer followed by a yellow-green color (photo F2000.85.61, p. 33, right side of lower armband). In another example, the visible surface is pink, but the cross section reveals that this area of the puppet was painted red on at least three different occasions (photo F2000.85.11, p. 33, right eye sample).



Ashvatthama (F2000.85.61), cross section showing right lower armband.



Bhisma (F2000.85.11), cross-section showing area of loss from face located above right eye.

1. In cross-section analysis, tiny paint samples are embedded in a transparent plastic, which hardens and is then ground away and polished until the edge of the sample is exposed. The sample is then studied under a microscope. The characteristics observed include the number and color of paint layers present, the order in which they were applied, the thickness of the layer, and the characteristics of pigment particles. This type of analysis helps to distinguish between original paint layers and any retouching or overpainting.

Because the puppets had been overpainted, it was necessary to determine what type of paint had been used for the numerous overpainting campaigns. This is important because any conservation treatment carried out on an object must not disrupt, damage, or cause irreversible change to any of the original and historical materials present. Therefore, the paint samples from the two puppets were further analyzed with two other instrumental analytical techniques, Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FT-IR)² and gas-chromatography mass spectroscopy (GC-MS)³. The combined use of the FT-IR and GC-MS techniques helped to identify coatings, binding mediums, and pigments used in the construction of the puppets.

The results of the analysis carried out on two puppets from the Asian Art Museum's collection revealed that among the numerous layers, one was a protein binder, another was an oil binder, and a third was a modern acrylic binder. Some areas were coated with a natural resin. The different materials and layers tell us that at some point in the puppets' lifetime they were overpainted and that the materials used for the overpainting are different from those used during the original manufacture. This information was helpful in understanding condition characteristics and was used to develop an appropriate treatment protocol for the collection.

Based on the information obtained through instrumental analysis, the conservation treatments chosen included cleaning dirty surfaces, reattaching lifting flakes of paint with an adhesive that did not disrupt or disturb existing paint layers, securing arms, filling areas of loss in wood and painted surfaces, and toning these areas with pigments. The results of the analysis not only helped conservation learn more about the fabrication and previous care of the museum's wayang golek collection, but also provided information that has aided the conservation department in the care and preservation of the collection for future generations to enjoy.

2. Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FT-IR) is a spectroscopic analytical technique used to characterize organic and inorganic compounds. With the use of a special microscope, it can be used to identify gums, oils, natural resins, waxes, and proteins, all of which are used as binding mediums in paints. Once classified, samples may then be subjected to additional analysis (for instance, by GC-MS).

3. Gas-chromatography mass spectroscopy (GC-MS) is a chromatographic technique used to separate and identify components of complex chemical mixtures in order to further fingerprint the types of natural resins and oils used in binding mediums.



Slides and Slide Descriptions
by Stephanie Kao



Lesson Plans and Activities

Making Wayang Golek: Indonesian Rod Puppets

Middle and High School

Subject Area:

Visual/Performing Arts and Language Arts

Objectives:

Students will

- analyze the role of the puppet master (*dalang*) in Indonesian rod puppet theater (*wayang golek*).
- read a summary of the Ramayana or a scene from this Hindu epic.
- identify the different puppet character types.
- construct a rod puppet of a character from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata.

Materials:

Pencils, one empty fluted plastic spring water bottle, black masking tape, cardboard, tag board, one dowel, large beads, one 18" flower wire, two 1' stiff wires, one dry cleaning hanger with cardboard tubing, one Styrofoam egg, newspaper, tempura paints, square batik fabric and sequins and ribbons (optional). Scissors, knife, pencil, and wire cutters.

Suggested Resources:

Clayton, Martin, Simon Cook, and Open University. *Wayang Golek: Performing Arts of Sunda (West Java)*. New York: Insight Media, 1999 (VHS).

Prime, Ranchor. *Ramayana: A Journey*. London: Collins & Brown, 1997.

Weintraub, Andrew, trans. *The Birth of Ghatotkacha: A Sundanese Wayang Golek Performance from West Java*. Ed. by Joan Suyenaga. Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation, 1998 (CD).

Slides and Slide Descriptions

Discussion:

Using the slides and accompanying descriptions provided in this packet, discuss with your students the following questions:

1. Who is the dalang and what is his role in wayang golek?
2. What type of iconography is used to distinguish the different character types—that is, refined, semirefined, strong, uncontrolled, and special?
3. How does this art form reflect the religious, cultural, and oral traditions of Indonesia?
4. How is the puppet constructed? How does the puppet master manipulate a puppet's movement?

5. What other elements, in addition to puppet manipulation, are important components of a wayang golek performance?

Procedure:

To introduce the Indonesian tradition of rod puppet theater, use the slides and accompanying descriptions provided in this packet. Review the discussion questions with your students, discussing the role of the dalang, a master storyteller who delivers the dialogue, manipulates all of the puppets, sings mood songs, and cues the tuned percussion (*gamelan*) orchestra. Read a synopsis of the Ramayana or the Mahabharata, or focus on a scene from one of these Hindu epics. Identify the main characters of the Ramayana or the Mahabharata and discuss how their character types are portrayed in wayang golek. If possible, have students watch a video or listen to a compact disc performance of wayang golek to give students a sense of how music, voice, and puppet manipulation come together during a performance.

Activity (see next page for illustrations):

The Body

1. Using a knife, slice the bottom off an empty fluted plastic spring water bottle.
2. Using the end of the bottle as a stencil, draw and cut out a circle from cardboard. Poke a large hole in the middle of the cardboard circle.
3. Tape the cardboard circle onto the end of the bottle that has been cut off. Cover the entire bottle and cardboard (except for the hole) with vertical strips of black masking tape.
4. Place the bottle so the end with the cardboard is facing up and the mouth of the bottle is pointed down. It should look like a narrow V. Poke two holes on opposite sides of the bottle 1" from the top.

The Arms

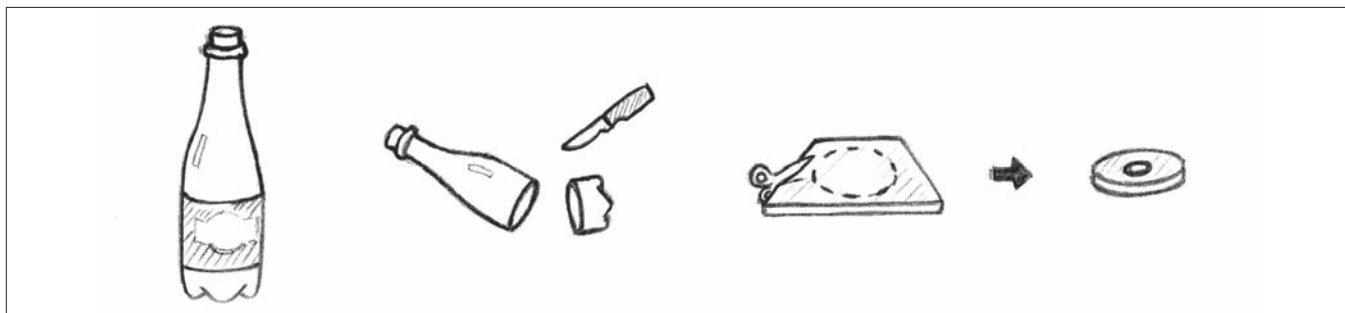
5. Remove the cardboard tubing from a dry cleaning hanger. Cut it into four 2 1/2" sections. Cover each section, including the ends, with black masking tape. Next, poke holes through the tape on either end of each tube section.
6. To make an armature for the arms, thread a flower wire through the holes on the sides of the bottle.
7. On either side of the bottle, thread onto the wire: a large bead (the shoulder), a tube section, another large bead (the elbow), another tube section, and five large beads (the hand). Bend and wrap the hand section into a tight circle.
8. Cut a stiff wire about 1' in length. To make a handle, bend and attach one end of the wire to the puppet's hand. Cut another wire and do the same for the other hand.

The Head

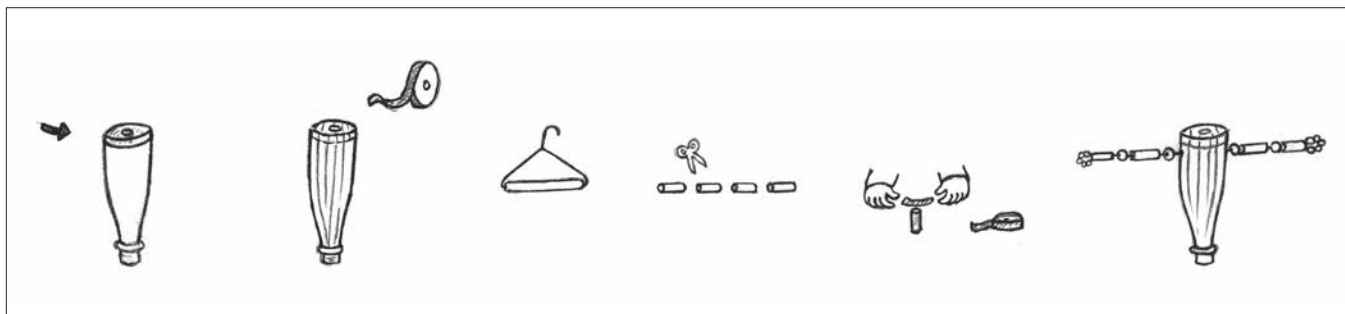
9. Using the end of the dowel, poke a hole about 1" deep in a large Styrofoam egg. You may need to use a sharp tool to carve out the extra Styrofoam.
10. To make the neck, cut a strip of tag board about 2" in width. Roll and tape it into a cylinder that will fit into the hole carved in the Styrofoam egg.

11. Crumple newspaper into the shape of a headdress. Refined characters have shrimp-tailed headdresses. Sculpt and tape the headdress together with black masking tape, and tape it onto the Styrofoam egg.
12. Cover the entire Styrofoam egg and the outside of the tag board neck with black masking tape.
13. Run a dowel from the mouth of the bottle up through the cardboard hole at the top of the bottle. Place the head and neck on top of the dowel.
14. To create a stopper on the dowel, use a pencil to mark the dowel where the mouth of the bottle rests. Then take the dowel out of the bottle. Cut a circle with a 2" diameter from cardboard, and poke a hole in the middle of the circle. Place the dowel through the hole. Tape the cardboard onto the dowel where it is marked in pencil.
15. Again, run the dowel up from the mouth of the bottle through the cardboard hole at the top of the bottle. Place the head and neck on top of the dowel. The stopper will prevent the bottle from sliding down the dowel.
16. Now, try manipulating your puppet!
17. Lastly, use tempura to paint in the facial features and headdress. A square piece of fabric with batik design may be wrapped and taped around the bottle to form the sarong. The torso and sarong may be decorated with sequins and ribbons.

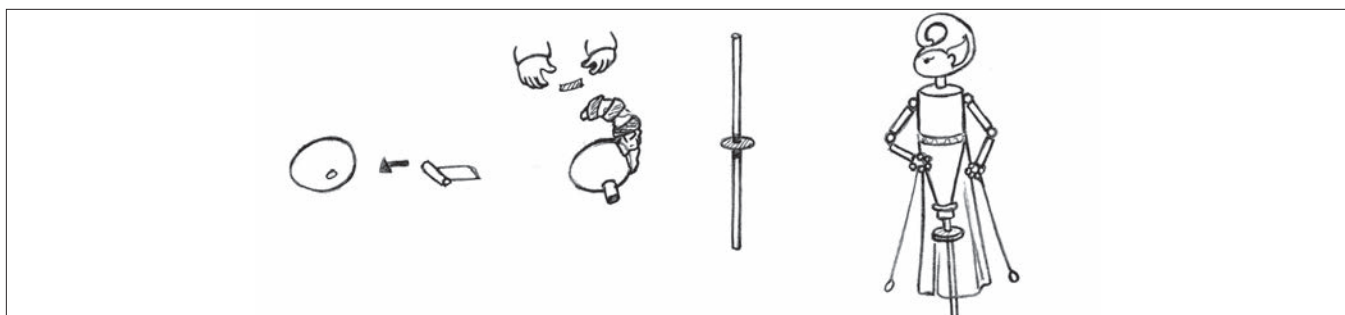
Body



Arms



Head



Extension:

Reenact a scene from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata using the puppets that the students created. Refined character types may be used interchangeably; for example, a puppet used for the character of Rama from the Ramayana may be used to play the refined character of Arjuna from the Mahabharata. Jester characters are of Indonesian origin and may be found in the Indonesian versions of stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. See the activity *Rod Puppet Performance: The Ramayana and the Mahabharata*, with dalang performance outlines provided by Kathy Foley.

The Art of Storytelling: Ramayana Character Studies

Upper Elementary and Middle School (This lesson may be adapted for high school.)

Subject Area:

Performing Arts, History/Social Science, and Language Arts

Objectives:

Students will

- discuss storytelling, a tradition that is passed down and preserved orally.
- examine how storytellers use voice, movement, drama, and music to tell a story.
- examine the Indonesian storytelling tradition using rod puppets (*wayang golek*).
- read a summary of the Ramayana or a scene from this Hindu epic.
- analyze a character from the Ramayana.

Suggested Resources:

Clayton, Martin, Simon Cook, and Open University. *Wayang Golek: Performing Arts of Sunda (West Java)*. New York: Insight Media, 1999 (VHS).

Prime, Ranchor. *Ramayana: A Journey*. London: Collins & Brown, 1997.

Weintraub, Andrew, trans. *The Birth of Ghatotkacha: A Sundanese Wayang Golek Performance from West Java*. Ed. by Joan Suyenaga. Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation, 1998 (CD).

Discussion:

Using the slides and accompanying descriptions provided in this packet, discuss with your students the following questions:

1. How is the Indonesian storytelling tradition similar to or different from the storytelling traditions that you are familiar with?
2. How does the puppet master (dalang) signal to his audience that a particular type of character is on stage (voice inflection, movement, the level of respect one character shows toward another, and artistic features)?
3. Describe some of the puppets shown in the slides. Ask students to guess which character type each puppet belongs to.

Procedure:

Locate Indonesia on a map. Introduce the Indonesian tradition of rod puppet theater (*wayang golek*). Using the slides and accompanying descriptions provided in this packet, review the discussion questions with your students. Have students read a summary of the Ramayana or focus on a scene from this Hindu epic. Ask students to choose a character from the story. If possible, have students watch a video or listen to a CD performance of *wayang golek* to give them a sense of how music, voice, and puppet manipulation come together during a performance. Have stu-

dents do an analysis of their chosen characters using the *Character Study Worksheet*. Next, have students write a scene from the Ramayana from the perspective of their chosen characters. Finally, have students act out their scenes to their classmates. Students may wish to collaborate with one another on their performances.

Activity:

See *Character Study Worksheet*.

Student's Name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

Character Study Worksheet

Name of Character	Student Answers
Character Description 1. What is the character's role in the story?	
Movement 2. How does the character walk? <i>(for example, little steps, clumsy stomps, or smooth gliding motion)</i> 3. How does the character use his/her arms and hands? <i>(for example, expressive hand gestures, swinging arms with pointing fingers, or placed quietly next to the body)</i>	
Speech 4. What kind of speech does the character have? <i>(for example, soft and calm, loud/shouting, grumbling)</i>	
Facial Expression 5. Describe the character's temperament. How does the character show his/her temperament through facial expression? <i>(for example, bulging eyes to express anger, goofy mouth and eye movements to express humor, looking downward indicating the character is refined)</i>	
Interaction with Others 6. Who are the main characters that he/she interacts with? 7. In what ways does he/she interact with them? <i>(for example, respectful, friendly, bossy)</i>	

Rod Puppet Performance: The Ramayana and the Mahabharata

Middle and High School

Subject Area:

Performing Arts, History/Social Science, and Language Arts

Objectives:

Students will

- Examine the history and stories told in Indonesian rod puppet theater (*wayang golek*).
- Discuss how storytelling reflects the religious, cultural, and moral values of a people.
- Discuss how the jester characters express the political and social concerns of the common people.
- Read a summary of the Ramayana or the Mahabharata, or scenes from these Hindu epics.
- Reenact a scene from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata using the puppet master (*dalang*) performance outlines written by Kathy Foley.

Suggested Resources:

Clayton, Martin, Simon Cook, and Open University. *Wayang Golek: Performing Arts of Sunda (West Java)*. New York: Insight Media, 1999 (VHS).

Prime, Ranchor. *Ramayana: A Journey*. London: Collins & Brown, 1997.

Weintraub, Andrew, trans. *The Birth of Ghatotkacha: A Sundanese Wayang Golek Performance from West Java*. Ed. by Joan Suyenaga. Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation, 1998 (CD).

Discussion:

Using the slides and accompanying descriptions provided in this packet, discuss with your students the following questions:

1. On what occasions are wayang golek performances held? How do they bring members of the community together?
2. What type of stories do dalang tell? How are Indonesian versions of the Hindu epics different from their original Indian versions?
3. What type of iconography is used to distinguish the different character types, i.e., refined, semirefined, strong, uncontrolled, and special?
4. What is the role of the jester? Why is this character important in wayang golek?
5. How does the puppet master signal to his audience that a particular type of character is on stage (voice inflection, movement, the level of respect one character uses toward another, and artistic features)?

Procedure:

Locate Indonesia on the map. Explain that Indonesia was the center of the maritime trade in Southeast Asia. Describe how Indian, Arab, and Chinese traders brought the religious traditions of Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism to the islands. Introduce the art of Indonesian rod puppet theater (wayang golek). Using the slides and accompanying descriptions provided in this packet, review the discussion questions with your students. Read a summary of the Ramayana or the Mahabharata, or focus on a scene from these Hindu epics. Identify the main characters of these epics, and discuss how the various character types are portrayed in wayang golek. If possible, have students watch a video or listen to a CD performance of wayang golek to give them a sense of how music, voice, and puppet manipulation come together during a performance.

Activity:

Have students reenact key scenes from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata either by using the rod puppets that the students created in the lesson *Making Wayang Golek: Indonesian Rod Puppets* or by acting out the story themselves. Use the performance outlines of the Indonesian versions of these Hindu epics written by Kathy Foley, which are provided on the following page.

1. Have students do an analysis of their characters to help them assume their performance roles. They may use the *Character Study Worksheet* provided in the lesson *The Art of Storytelling: Ramayana Character Studies*.
2. Give students the performance outline and have them study it together in groups. Next, have them perform the scenes using improvisation. Make sure to include the jester characters, who offer advice to the main characters as well as provide comic interludes between story scenes; they may also be used to comment on contemporary concerns of the audience.



Performance Outlines
of the Ramayana
and the Mahabharata
by Kathy Foley

These outlines are examples of those a *dalang* might write concerning major points to be covered in a rod puppet (*wayang golek*) performance. The text is usually a mixture of narrative and notes on dialogue; it is the basis upon which the dalang improvises a performance using the stock elements: opening, closing, and transitional mantras; mood songs; and the rules of character types, which dictate that some characters speak in formal, polite language and others in colloquial language. The Ramayana outline given here covers material that would in actual practice be broken into two or three stories. The outline closely resembles what would be seen today in dance drama versions: the narrative is presented in one performance, from the kidnapping of Sita (Sinta) to her release from Lanka (Alengka). In contrast, the outline given here for the Mahabharata episode is much like one that a puppeteer might use for a wayang golek performance.

The Ramayana

Opening mantra: Tell of a county wide and free, tell how it is rich and fertile with all that is needed to feed and house the people. This is the kingdom in the story of Dandaka Forest. It is here that the great Prince Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu, has retreated to live out his fourteen-year exile from his kingdom of Ayodhya (Ayodya). By the work of his hand, with the assistance of his brother Lakshmana (Lakshmana) and his beloved wife Sita (Sinta), he has made the dark forest into a place of beauty and safety where gardens bloom and birds call. Tell how at the present he meets with his brother and his wife at the retreat they have made in the dense forest.

Scene 1. Dandaka Forest

Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana talk in the forest about the golden deer Sita has seen. She begs Rama to catch it for her. Rama tells Lakshmana to guard his wife while he hunts and exits. A cry of "Help!" comes echoing through the forest. It is the voice of a demon pretending to be Rama.

Sita: This is Rama's voice. Go help him, Lakshmana, or he will surely die!

Lakshmana: You are mistaken, Lady Sita. That could not be Rama's voice. He is a great hero and needs no one to help.

Sita: Lakshmana, Rama is in trouble and you stay here? Go quickly or I will know for sure that you are not a true brother to Rama. Perhaps you long for his death so that you yourself can marry me, for what other reason would you let him die so piteously!

Lakshmana: How can you think this of me? In your heart you know I love my brother more than all the world. Why else would I have left all riches and luxury to follow him into exile? Still, if you force me, then I must go. For your safety, I will draw a magic circle around your feet. Do not leave its circumference until I return with Rama.

Narrator: Tell how, after Lakshmana leaves, a voice is heard begging for alms. This is the demon king Ravana (Rawana), who has taken up the guise of a wandering beggar in order to trick Lady Sita.

Ravana: Alms for the poor. Food for the hungry. Drinks for the thirsty, and everything good for me! Hey, Lady, what can you give me to eat?

Sita: Poor man, take what you want from the house.

Ravana tries to touch her but is prevented by the magic circle. He tricks her into going out of it by getting her to enter the house for food. As soon as she moves, he grabs her.

Ravana: In case you don't know, I am Ravana, Lord of Lanka. Now you will have the joy of becoming my bride!

Sita: Alas!

Scene 2. Another Part of the Forest

The jesters are waiting as their boss Rama hunts the golden deer. They complain that they hate camping, that the mosquitoes are biting them, and that they long to go back to Rama's palace in Ayodhya. The jester Semar tells his three sons about the golden deer. Petruk threatens to put horns on his head so he can be a decoy. Cepot says he doesn't need horns—all he has to do is lie down and any deer will mistake his nose for a huge horn. Petruk blows his nose, and Cepot says it sounds like a foghorn. The jesters joke on until finally Gareng says, "Shut up! Isn't that Rama coming?"

Rama is returning from hunting the deer. When he shot the deer, it turned into a ferocious demon. Rama encounters Lakshmana and reprimands him for leaving Sita. They find the heroic vulture Jatayus, who was killed by Ravana when he attempted to rescue Sita. Rama vows to find his beloved wife. A monkey enters, and Rama asks who he is. He identifies himself as Hanuman (Hanoman) of the monkey kingdom, Kishkindha (Guha Kiskenda). Rama tells Hanuman that he has lost Sita. Hanuman volunteers to help Rama find her, saying, "I'm a son of the god of the wind. If your wife is anywhere the wind blows, that's a place I can fly with my daddy-o. Don't worry, I will find her. Leave it to me."

The narrator tells how Hanuman leaps into the air and travels on the wind that blows south to Lanka.

Scene 3. The Ashoka (Asoka) Garden

Sita weeps in the *ashoka* (*asoka*) garden. Ravana enters and tells her that Rama is dead and she must prepare to marry him this very evening. Sita says, "Never! I would rather die than become your wife!" Ravana leaves, and Hanuman lands.

Hanuman: Excuse me—Mrs.? Miss? Ms.?—but I couldn't help noticing that you were crying. I'm feeling sort of sad too because I've been looking everywhere and I can't find Lady Sita.

Sita: But I am Sita.

Hanuman tells her he comes from Rama and shows her Rama's ring. She sends him off, telling him to return quickly with Rama.

Scene 4. Lanka

Ravana intercepts Hanuman. The demon beats the monkey and tries to set his tail on fire. Instead, Hanuman escapes and sets the whole city ablaze.

Hanuman: And that's only a preview of what we've got in store for you if you don't return the Lady Sita right away!

Narrator: Tell how Hanuman returns to Kishkindha, bringing Rama and his allies to Lanka. After many months Hanuman's army arrives. Weeks of fighting have already taken place. All the retainers of Ravana have died, sacrifices to the ogre king's folly. Finally, only Ravana remains. He comes forth to fight Rama.

Rama: Return to me, my beloved wife.

Ravana: She will marry me!

Lakshmana: Release my dear sister-in-law.

Hanuman: Come on, you badly-brought-up person, release the lady.

Ravana: Never.

Rama: Prepare, then, to meet your end.

Narrator: Rama and Ravana fight. Divinity and demon are locked in their eternal struggle. Tell how Rama takes forth his discus (*chakra*) which shatters all illusions. As it strikes Ravana, for the first time the demon sees clearly the folly of his furious pursuit of the things of this world. Understanding at last the aim of all existence and shattered by truth, Ravana falls.

Rama: Hanuman, bring forth the Lady Sita,

Rama and Sita are reunited. With Lakshmana and Hanuman they prepare to return to their kingdom of Ayodhya, since the years of their exile have now expired.

Closing mantra: Tell how with this our story ends. The flower is picked; its fragrance spreads. Close the gate to Vishnu's world."

The Mahabharata

Sample episode:

With the puppets, improvise dialogue and play the episode of the gambling.

Scene 1.

With their mother, Kunti, the five Pandava (Pandawa) brothers discuss the bad behavior of their cousins the Kaurava (Kaurawa) brothers. Karna (Kunti's son by the sun god, Surya) arrives. Kunti wonders why Karna looks so familiar. Arjuna is rude to him, and Kunti separates them before they fight. Karna says the Kauravas want to make up with the Pandavas, and Duryodhana (Duryodana), the eldest Kaurava, invites Yudhishtira (Yudistira), the eldest Pandava, to play a game of dice. Yudhishtira agrees. Bhima (Bima), another Pandava, advises Yudhishtira not to play, but he does not listen.

Scene 2.

The Kauravas' uncle, Shangkuni, will play in Duryodhana's stead. Grinning with glee, Duhshasana (Dursasana), another Kaurava, gives Shangkuni a pair of loaded dice. Yudhishtira gambles his kingdom, then his brothers, then himself, and finally his wife. Duhshasana brags that he will tear off Draupadi's (Drupadi's) dress. The narrator tells how Vishnu intervenes to foil this plan.

Scene 3.

The Pandavas take leave of Kunti to go into thirteen years of exile in the forest. Bhima says that though they have lost their riches they still have what is most important: They are brothers. Whatever they face, it will be as a family united.



Glossary of Terms
by Kathy Foley

Aji Saka: mythical prince who carried Indian culture to Java around the first century CE

bersih desa: ritual cleansing of a village, which is executed once a year in selected villages and may involve a puppet show

buta: demon, or ogre

catrik: apprentice puppet master

dalang: puppet master and narrator of traditional puppet and puppet-based genres

gamelan: orchestra accompanying wayang performances

hanacaraka: the old Javanese (Kawi) alphabet

karangan (carangan): newly invented (“branch”) episode using characters from the Hindu epics

the Mahabharata (Great Chronicle of the Bharata [Barata] Dynasty): the epic story of the struggle of the five Pandava (Pandawa) brothers to regain their kingdom from their cruel Kaurava (Kurawa) cousins

pakem: set (“trunk”) stories from the Ramayana or Mahabharata, in which no innovation is allowed

Panji tales: romance about a prince of East Java

punakawan: jesters

pelog: seven-toned gamelan musical scale used in wayang cepak

purwa (“first” or “original”): a cycle of tales derived from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana

the Ramayana (Life of Rama): the epic story of Prince Rama’s struggle to regain his wife, Sita (Sinta), from the demon king Ravana (Rawana)

ruwatan: healing or protective performance that releases people from the threat of the demon Kala

Semar: jester god of Javanese and Sundanese wayang

slendro: five-tone musical scale with nearly equidistant intervals

Sunda: mountainous region of West Java inhabited by people of Sundanese ethnicity and language

wali: the nine saints who converted Java to Islam

wayang beber: performance in which scroll paintings are narrated

wayang cepak (literally, “flat” wayang): rod puppet performances telling the stories of Prince Panji, of the grasscutter Damar Wulan, and of Amir Hamzah (wayang menak); as well as chronicles

wayang golek: rod puppet theater of the north coast and highlands of West Java (Sunda)

wayang kulit: shadow puppets made from water buffalo hide

wayang menak: rod puppet theater telling stories of Amir Hamzah

wayang wong: human dance drama modeled on wayang puppet theater



Bibliography
by Kathy Foley

- Anderson, Benedict. 1965. *Mythology and Tolerance of the Javanese*. Ithaca: Cornell University, Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program.
- Brandon, James. [1970] 1993. *On Thrones of Gold: Three Javanese Shadow Plays*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; reprint Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press.
- Buurman, Peter. 1991. *Wayang Golek: The Entrancing World of Classical Javanese Puppet Theatre*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Foley, Kathy. 1979. "The Sundanese Wayang Golek: Rod Puppet Theater of West Java." PhD diss., University of Hawaii. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.
- _____. 1982. "Of Dalang and Dukun—Spirits and Men: Curing and Performance in the Wayang of West Java," *Asian Theatre Journal* 1, 1:52–75.
- _____, trans. 2001. "The Origin of Kala: A Sundanese Wayang Golek Purwa Play by Abah Sunarya and Gamelan Giri Harja I," *Asian Theatre Journal* 18, 1: 1–58.
- Herbert, Mimi, with Nur S. Rahardjo. 2002. *Voices of the Puppet Master: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia*. Jakarta, Indonesia: The Lontar Foundation; and Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Holt, Claire. 1967. "The Wayang World," in *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Keeler, Ward. 1987. *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Keeler, Ward, and Kathy Foley. 1991. *Aspects of Indonesian Culture: Puppetry*. New York: Festival of Indonesia Foundation.
- Mrazek, Jan. 2002. *Puppet Theatre in Contemporary Indonesia: New Approaches to Performance Events*. Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia 50. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies.
- Petersen, Robert. 1998. *Introduction to the Traitor Jobin: A Wayang Golek Performance from Central Java*. Ed. by Joan Suyenaga. Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation.
- Philip, Robert. 1998. *Wayang Golek: Performing Arts of Sunda* (VHS). Distributed in the U.S. by Open University Worldwide (Milton Keynes, UK).
- Weintraub, Andrew, trans. 1998. *The Birth of Ghatotkacha: A Sundanese Wayang Golek Performance from West Java*. Ed. by Joan Suyenaga. Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation.



Map of Indonesia

SLIDE 1

Musicians play the instruments of the tuned percussion (*gamelan*) orchestra, which consists of metallophones, xylophones, and drums.

Female singers perform lyrics during and between scenes to enhance the emotional impact of the performance.

Banana logs are placed one on each side of the central space where the puppet master performs to hold rows of puppets. Puppet characters are separated into opposing forces of "good" and "bad" and placed accordingly. While so-called protagonists are placed to the dalang's right and antagonists to his left, the characters have complex personalities and struggle with their moral choices. As many as forty-five out of ninety puppets may be used during a single performance.



The puppet master (*dalang*) is the consummate storyteller. He delivers dialogue using voices specific to each character, manipulates all of the puppets, sings mood songs, and cues the gamelan orchestra. Dalang are revered in Indonesia for their puppetry skills and their knowledge of Hindu epics, Muslim legends, and Javanese historical tales.

The puppet chest is a large wooden box in which the puppets are stored.

Asep and his troupe before a performance at Ancol, a recreation center in North Jakarta, from *Voices of the Puppet Masters: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia* by Mimi Herbert (2002). Photograph by Maria Farr. Reproduced by permission.

SLIDE 1 DESCRIPTION

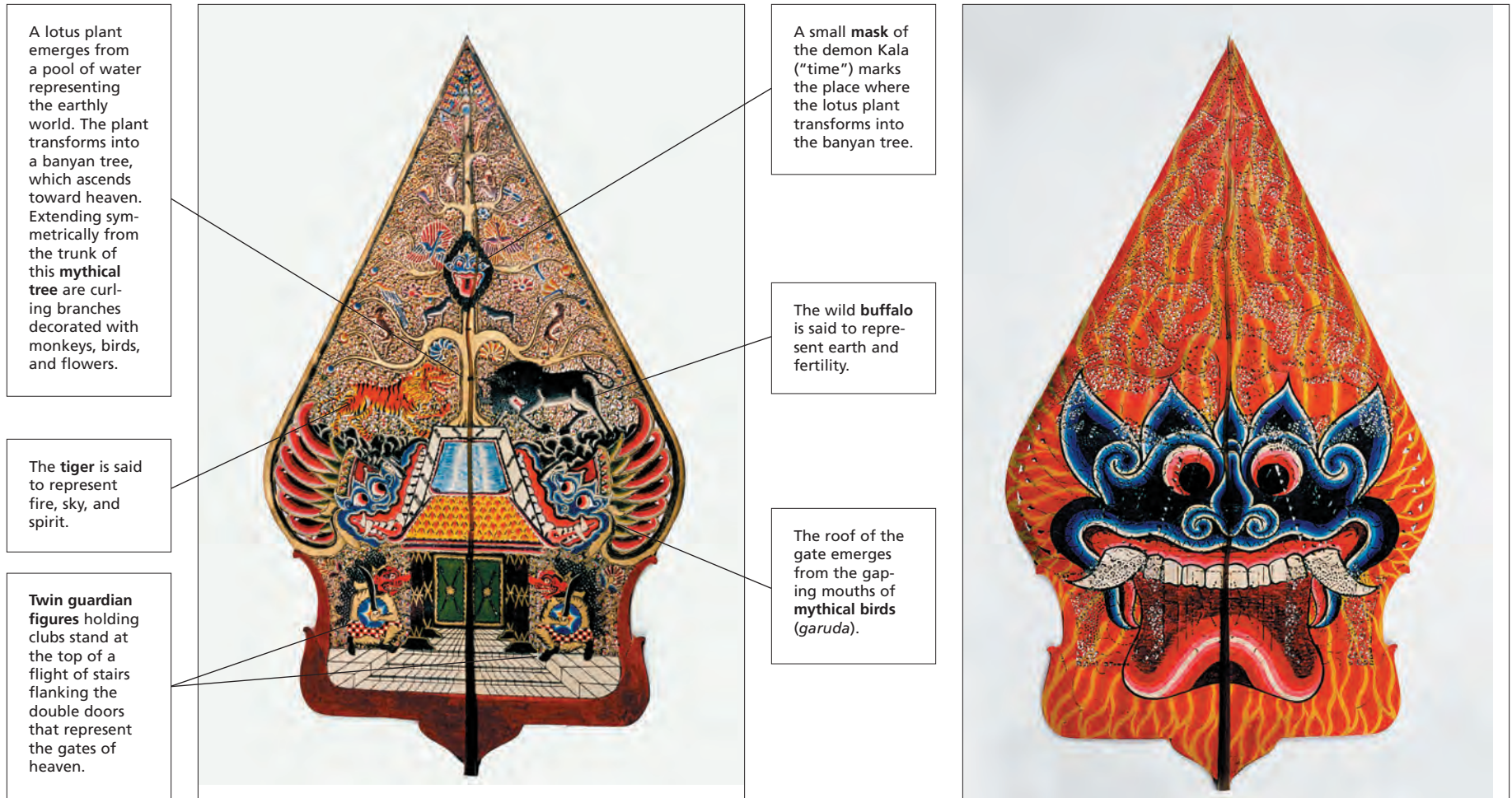
This photograph shows Asep Sunandar Sunarya, a famous Indonesian puppet master (*dalang*), known for his humor and innovative puppet creations, sitting with his troupe in preparation for a performance at a recreation center in North Jakarta. Rod puppet (*wayang golek*) performances are sponsored in conjunction with blessings held to celebrate weddings, circumcisions, rituals honoring one's ancestors, and occasionally exorcisms (*ruwatan*).

A *dalang* is invited, along with his troupe of musicians and singers, to perform episodes from one of the great Hindu epics—the Ramayana or the Mahabharata. In the case of *wayang golek menak* performances, the *dalang* uses three-dimensional rod puppets to tell Muslim stories; other repertoire includes stories derived from historical Javanese tales. Performances take place from 9:00 PM to 4:30 AM and are traditionally conducted outdoors on a raised platform covered by a canvas canopy. During the performance, the *dalang* sits cross-legged in the center of the stage, behind a banana log that rests horizontally on wooden stands. He remains in this position, facing the audience, during the entire performance.

Invited guests sit on the ground facing the stage while uninvited persons are allowed to sit behind the performers. *Wayang golek* performances hold appeal for all members of the village, teaching universal messages of morality, voicing political opinions of the common people through the jester characters, and entertaining with dramatic puppet fight scenes, music, and singing.



SLIDE 2



Tree-of-life puppet (*kayon*, or *gunungan*), approx. 1970
Indonesia; West Java
Painted and cut leather, horn, and thread
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.127

SLIDE 2 DESCRIPTION

This leaf-shaped shadow puppet, intricately carved from leather and supported by a central rod carved from horn, is known as a *kayon* (“tree”) or *gunungan* (“mountain”). In the symbolism of Indonesian rod puppet theater (*wayang golek*) the kayon represents the “tree of life,” the axis of the universe that connects the earthly world with that of the spirits. At the beginning of each performance, the puppet master (*dalang*) invokes a prayer. The first puppet he raises is the kayon, which he dances, spins, and flutters in the air, magically breathing life into the surrounding rod puppets. The kayon continues to be used throughout the performance for a variety of purposes. Its presence may indicate a change of scene, the entrance of a major character, elements of nature, or pieces of scenery such as a palace. The kayon may also be used to symbolize abstract themes such as war and destructive forces of nature such as fire and storms. Appropriately, the kayon is also the final puppet to be used in a performance—bringing to a close this depiction of the events of the spirit world

This kayon is decorated with a tree of life on one side and the face of the demon Kala (“time”) on the other. The tree of life (shown at left) represents the universe and all of the creatures that inhabit it, from the demon giants located at the base of the tree to the birds that perch on its peak, the latter symbolizing the human soul. The demon Kala (right) is surrounded by a halo of flames. His presence represents the annihilating forces that exist in the universe.

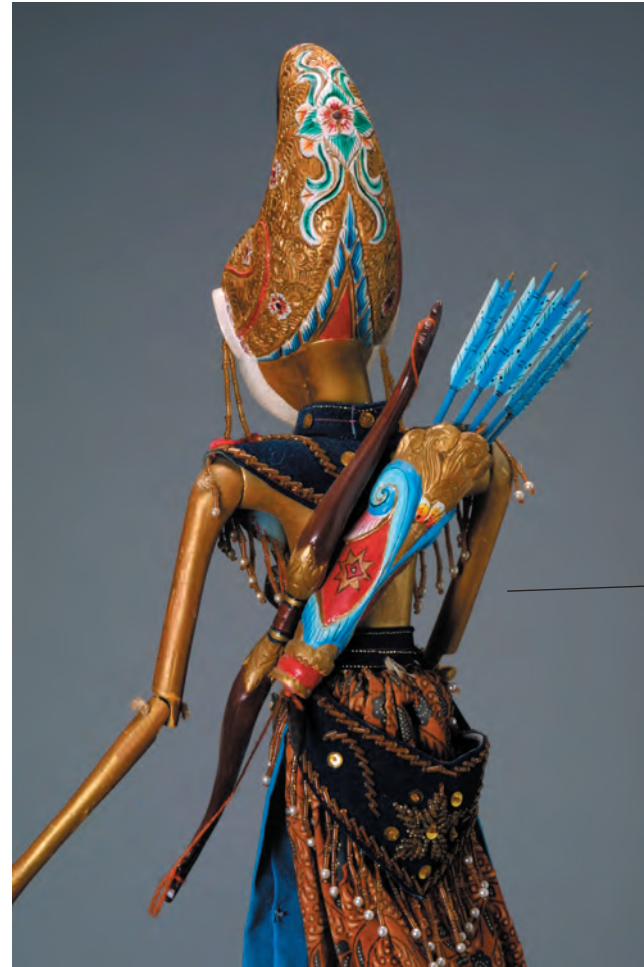


SLIDE 3

Arjuna's hair is drawn up in a bun that curves upward in a swirl. This type of **headdress** is worn by noble characters.

Arjuna's refined character can be seen in his **facial features**: white face, bowed head, narrow downcast eyes, and straight nose.

Arjuna wears a ceremonial **dagger** known as a kris. Draped around his torso hanging from his back are a delicately carved bow, quiver, and set of arrows.



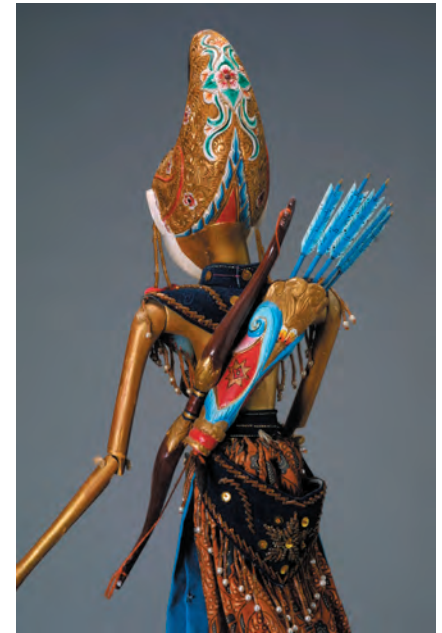
Refined characters such as Arjuna and Yudhishthira **do not wear arm or wrist ornaments.**

Arjuna, third of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers, approx. 1993
By Pak Aji
Indonesia; Bogor, West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.76

SLIDE 3 DESCRIPTION

Arjuna is the third of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers and warrior-caste hero of the Hindu epic the Mahabharata. He is the divine son of the god Indra and disciple of the god Krishna (Kresna). Arjuna is known for his chivalry, loyalty, and handsome looks, which draw the attention of princesses and other maidens. He is depicted as a graceful warrior whose agility on the battlefield is complemented by self-discipline, nobility, and the utmost loyalty to family.

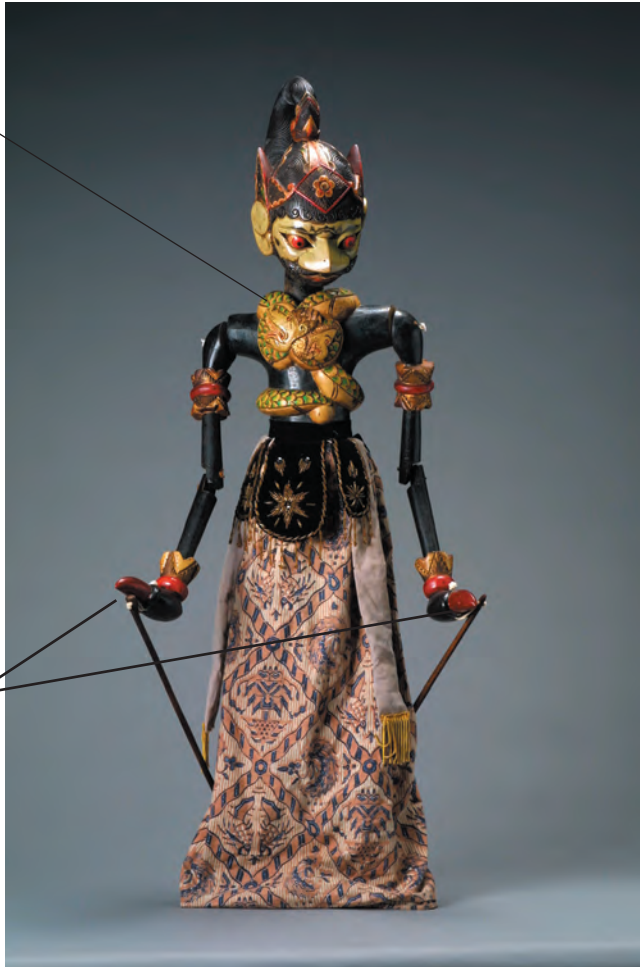
The Bhagavad Gita (“The Lord’s Song”), a pivotal episode in the Mahabharata, is a dramatic dialogue that takes place between Arjuna and the god Krishna (in disguise to the prince as his charioteer). On the eve of the great battle, as the Pandava brothers prepare to go to war with their cousins the Kauravas (Kaurawas), Arjuna anguishes over whether he can fight his own relatives, friends, and teachers. Krishna counsils Arjuna that sacred duty (dharma) must precede all personal desires. Therefore, one’s actions should be made in order to fulfill dharma, without concern for the consequences.



SLIDE 4

Bhima is characterized by a stout black or gold body that is bare from the waist up. A snake curls around his neck.

Bhima's long red fingernails are fierce weapons symbolizing his power of concentration.



Bhima's strong character can be seen in his facial features: green (sometimes blue or ochre) face, bulging eyes with red irises, pronounced nose, and full beard and mustache.

Bhima wears a double arm bracelet. The only other character to wear such a bracelet is Hanuman, the monkey general.



Bhima (Bima), second of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers, approx. 1960
Indonesia; West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.157

SLIDE 4 DESCRIPTION

Bhima (Bima) is the second of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers in the Mahabharata, a great Hindu epic. He is the divine son of the wind god Vayu (Bayu), and is known for his military skill, physical power, bravery, and voracious appetite. Although Bhima has a tendency to demonstrate a lack of self-control, his intentions are always honest and noble. While in exile because his brother Yudhishthira (Yudistira) has lost their kingdom in a gambling bet, Bhima marries the princess giant Hidhimba (Arimbi), with whom he has a son, who is named Ghatotkacha (Gatotkaca). Having descended from the wind god, Bhima has the ability to fly, as does his half-brother Hanuman (Hanoman) and his son Ghatotkacha.

In one story from the Mahabharata, the fierce warrior Bhima defeats a dragon, which then transforms itself into a poisonous serpent. Bhima wraps the serpent around his neck, declaring that it may bite him should he ever tell a lie.



SLIDE 5

Ghatotkacha is characterized by a slender body and wears **arm bracelets** sculpted in the shape of birds.



Ghatotkacha (Gatotkaca), son of Bhima (Bima), approx. 1970
By M. Ahim
Indonesia; Ciampea, West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.78



Ghatotkacha's hair is drawn up in a bun that curves upward in a spiral. His **headdress** is decorated with the head of a mythical bird (*garuda*) looking backward.

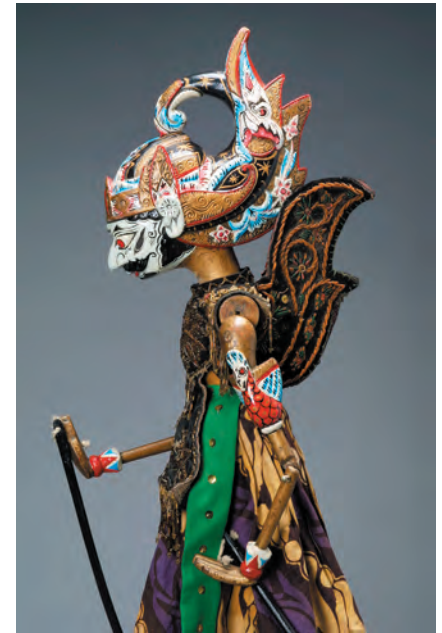
Ghatotkacha's strong character can be seen in his **facial features**: blue (or sometimes green or ochre) face, bulging eyes with red irises, pronounced nose, and full beard and mustache.

On his back, Ghatotkacha wears a **wing-shaped ornament** that functions like a halo.

SLIDE 5 DESCRIPTION

Ghatotkacha (Gatotkaca) is the son of Bhima (Bima), the strongest of the Pandava (Pandawa) brothers, and the princess giant Hidhimba (Arimbi) in the Mahabharata, a great Hindu epic. He is the consummate warrior, symbolizing bravery, loyalty, honesty, and military strength. In a story from the Mahabharata, Bhima calls for his son to help him during the Pandavas' exile. During the great war between the Pandava brothers and their cousins the Kauravas (Kaurawas), Krishna calls upon Ghatotkacha to fight Karna, Ghatotkacha's father's half-brother. Krishna knows that Karna owns a magical lance given to him by the god Indra. This lance has the ability to kill any living creature, but it may be used only once. Although Karna wishes to reserve the lance for killing Arjuna, he is forced to use it to kill Ghatotkacha.

While the graceful and refined Arjuna, who represents the ideal man, was once the favorite among *wayang* characters, Ghatotkacha, recognized for his coarse features and fierce military skills, has since become one of its most important heroes and is often associated with the young men who fought for Indonesia's independence.



SLIDE 6

Semar carries a black medicine bag over his shoulders.



Semar's tuft of hair represents the axis of the universe.

Semar's character can be seen in his facial features: white face, pug nose, and puffy cheeks.

Semar's black body consists of a bare torso, rotund belly, and large behind.

Semar walks with his right arm straight out in front of him.

The jester Semar, approx. 1960
Indonesia; Bandung, West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.14

SLIDE 6 DESCRIPTION

Semar is the father of the jesters. According to Javanese lore, he is a brother of the god Shiva as well as a god in his own right. He acts as an advisor, attendant, and companion to the heroes of the Javanese renditions of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, great Hindu epics. His name is derived from the Javanese word *samar*, which means “vague” or “obscure.” This quality is expressed in his androgynous appearance: He is both man and woman in the mythological realm.

The jesters of *wayang* are of Javanese origin and do not exist in the Indian epics. They usually appear around midnight, at the climax of the performance, to provide emotional support for the heroes, and in comic interludes that often include crude humor. Semar, for example, is known for breaking wind and constantly crying “Ambung! Ambung! Ambung!” (“Oh my!”). Not surprisingly, the jesters have a special place in the hearts of the Javanese. In Indonesian rod puppet theater (*wayang golek*), they represent the voices of the gods, of the puppet master (*dalang*), and of the people—conveying both episodic commentary and the contemporary concerns of the audience.



SLIDE 7

Cepot is dressed in village attire and wears a **black headcloth**.

Gareng's character can be seen in his **facial features**: pink face, big round eyes and nose, and protruding tooth.



The jester Cepot, perhaps 1800–1900
Indonesia; Tegal, Central Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection,
F2000.85.30



The jester Gareng, perhaps 1800–1900
Indonesia; Tegal, Central Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection,
F2000.85.32



Petruk's character can be seen in his **facial features**: long nose and large mouth. He always wears a closed jacket.

Gareng has the deformed body of a dwarf and disjointed arms.

The jester Petruk, approx. 1950
Indonesia; Bandung, West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection,
F2000.86.13

SLIDE 7 DESCRIPTION

These three jesters (shown here from left to right) are Semar's sons Cepot, Gareng, and Petruk. They act as companions and servants to the heroes in the Javanese renditions of Hindu epics. As the sons of Semar, they inherit his divine origin.

Cepot (also known as Astrajingga) is the Semar's third son. He is known for his thievish and eccentric qualities, and is traditionally the puppet through which the *dalang* makes political commentary, expressing the views of the people in the guise of comic relief. Gareng, whose full name is Nala-Gareng (meaning "dry heart"), is Semar's first son. He is frequently on the receiving end of his brother Petruk's teasing and is known to be dimwitted and pessimistic. Petruk (also known as Dawala), Semar's second son, is known to be a prankster and merrymaker. With their characteristic movements, speech, and quirky attributes, together these jesters engage in hilariously comic scenes. Jester characters are admired by audiences for their humor and their ability to maneuver effortlessly among gods, aristocrats, and the common people.



SLIDE 8



A demon (*buta*), 1993
By Duyeh
Indonesia; Cibiru, West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.121

SLIDE 8 DESCRIPTION

Buta (literally meaning “to be blind”) are the ogres, or demons, who wreak havoc on the universe. In *wayang*, however, they often take the role of humorous oafs. While the characters from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the great Hindu epics, must adhere to a set standard of iconography, the buta—who are characterized by large bodies, round eyes, blunt noses, and exposed teeth—may be designed, carved, and painted according to the artist’s imagination. Modern buta incorporate a variety of features that appeal to younger audiences. These include body parts that appear to be lopped off in the course of a fight and inner tubes that spray fake blood. The mouth of the buta shown here pops open so that the upper portion of the head can tip back completely to reveal the small, wide-eyed and green-faced ogre inside.

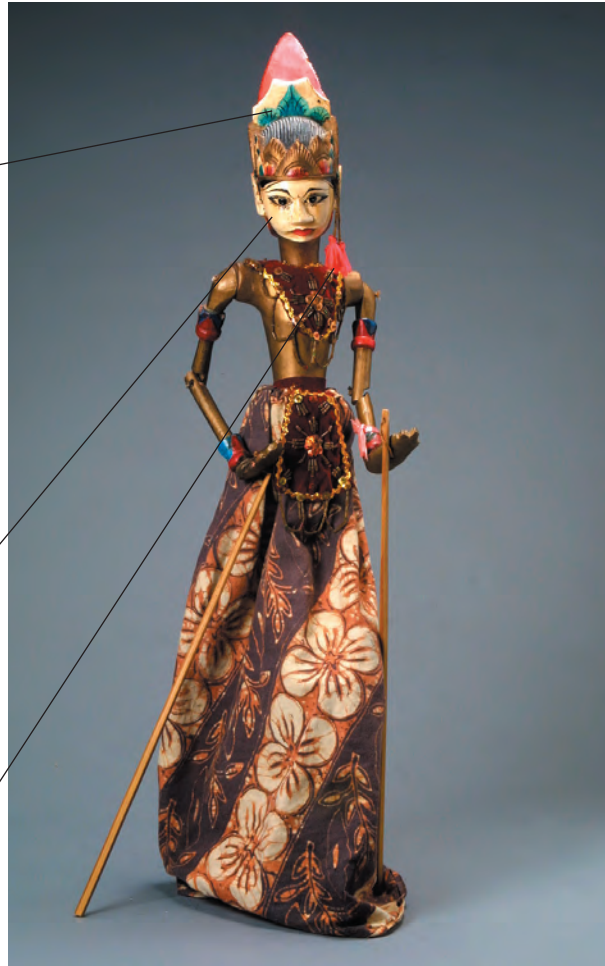


SLIDE 9

Sita's hair is drawn up in a close bun, which curls up in the back and is held in place with a comb. Her sculpted **head-dress** depicts the head of a garuda (mythical bird) looking backward.

Sita's refined character can be seen in her **facial features**: white face, inclined face, and narrow, downcast eyes. This puppet, however, is a modern innovation: The princess's eyes are slightly larger and they gaze forward.

Red tassels hanging from Sita's headdress frame and ornament the side of her face.



Sita (Sinta), wife of Rama, approx. 1980
Indonesia; West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.148

Rama wears a **high crown** associated with kings and deities.

Rama's refined character can be seen in his **facial features**: white face, inclined face, and narrow, downcast eyes.



The hero Rama, approx. 1930
By Abah Wikarta
Indonesia; Kuningan or Tegal, Central Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.89

SLIDE 9 DESCRIPTION

The virtuous prince Rama and beautiful princess Sita (Sinta) are the hero and heroine of the Ramayana, a great Hindu epic. Their bond of love, faithfulness, and dedication to sacred duty (dharma) are demonstrated in the events that unfold throughout the story.

Born by divine means to Dasharatha (Dasarata) and Kausalya, the king and queen of Ayodhya (Ayodya), Rama is the seventh incarnation of the god Vishnu in human form. He is born at the urging of the gods in hopes that as this form of Vishnu he will be able to kill the ten-headed demon king Ravana (Rawana). Ravana, on account of a boon granted by the god Brahma, cannot be killed by a god or any other divine being. Thus protected, Ravana has begun destroying the heavens.

Born of the earth, Sita appears to King Janaka of Mithila as he is ploughing his field. The king raises Sita as his daughter. The princess is thought to be a reincarnation of the goddess Lakshmi born to accompany Rama in his pursuit of Ravana.

The famous meeting of Sita and Rama takes place at the kingdom of Mithila when King Janaka holds an archery contest to decide who will have his daughter's hand in marriage. Her suitors are challenged to bend a magical bow once belonging to the god Shiva. It was claimed that no god or man could bend it. When it is Rama's turn, he bends it with such force that it snaps; thereby, he wins Sita as his wife.

The couple's adventures begin when Rama is banished for fourteen years by command of the second queen of Ayodhya. The lovely Sita faithfully goes into exile with her noble husband. In the forest Sita is captured by the ten-headed demon Ravana, who takes her to his kingdom, Lanka (Alengka). Rama enlists an army of monkeys to find her, but once she has been rescued, Rama begins to doubt that she remained faithful to him during her capture. Willing to die rather than be thought of as unfaithful to her husband, Sita ascends a funeral pyre. The fire god protects Sita from the flames, however, thus proving her innocence.

There are various versions to the ending of the Ramayana. In a later version, after Rama's coronation there is gossip in the kingdom saying that Sita broke her wedding vows while in Ravana's capture. Although Rama believes Sita is pure, he feels forced to banish her from the kingdom. While in exile, Sita gives birth to twin sons, Kusa and Lava. Twelve years later the boys visit their father in Ayodhya and sing to him the story of the Ramayana. Rama recognizes them as his sons and asks Sita to return. In front of the people, Sita calls to Mother Earth to swallow her up if indeed she is pure and has been loyal to Rama. At this time, the ground opens up, taking in Rama's beloved wife. After ruling for many years in grief, Rama is reunited with his beautiful Sita in the heavens.



SLIDE 10

Jatayus is depicted with a pink face. This puppet is carved with its **beak wide open**, revealing rows of upper and lower teeth including sharp upper and lower canines.

Like this one, puppets of Jatayus may have their arms carved in the shape of **wings**, or they may be constructed to accommodate detachable wings.



The heroic vulture Jatayus, approx. 1970
Indonesia; Cirebon, West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.49

Hanuman has a **white face**, bulging eyes, and protruding jaws that reveal sharp upper and lower canines.

Hanuman's **tail**, carved in wood, emerges from his sarong, looping over his shoulders and across his chest. Earlier puppets representing the monkey general had tails constructed of cloth tubes filled with cotton wool and attached to the headdress and to a wooden stump located at the rear of the figure.



The monkey warrior Hanuman (Hanoman), aide to Rama, approx. 1950
Indonesia; Bandung, West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.85

SLIDE 10 DESCRIPTION

The heroic vulture Jatayus and the monkey general, Hanuman (Hanoman) are allies of prince Rama and help to save the princess Sita (Sinta) from the ten-headed demon king Ravana (Rawana) in the Ramayana, a great Hindu epic. Throughout the course of the story, Rama is aided by a variety of animals including monkeys, bears, and birds.

Jatayus is the son of Vishnu's mount, Garuda, the mighty king of the birds. Jatayus is asleep in his tree when he hears Sita's cries for help as she is kidnapped and transported to the island of Lanka (Alengka) in Ravana's flying chariot. Jatayus attempts to rescue her but is pierced with hundreds of arrows from Ravana's bow. A vicious aerial battle ensues in which Jatayus tears off Ravana's heads and arms with his sharp talons. Each time Ravana is beheaded or dismembered, however, a replacement part appears. To Sita's horror, Ravana slashes Jatayus's wings, causing the heroic vulture to fall mortally wounded to the ground, where he is found by Rama and Lakshmana (Lakshmana). With his last breath Jatayus tells the princes where Ravana has taken Sita. In honor of the heroic vulture's valiant fighting, the princes perform funeral rites for him.

The celebrated white monkey general Hanuman, son of the wind god Vayu (Bayu), possesses supernatural powers. He flies to the kingdom of Lanka in a single bound to rescue the lovely Sita, who is captive in Ravana's palace. Hanuman hides behind a tree in the *asoka* garden and waits until it is safe to approach the princess. After presenting Sita with Rama's ring as proof that he is her friend and ally, the monkey general spies on her captors. In order to meet his enemy, Hanuman allows himself to be captured. Ravana pours oil on Hanuman's tail and sets it ablaze. The monkey feels no pain, however, and escapes, lighting the city on fire in the process. The monkey general then returns with news of Sita to Rama and Rama's brother, Lakshmana. Leading an army of monkeys, Hanuman builds a bridge to the island of Lanka in order to invade the demon palace and rescue Sita. Rama rewards the monkey general for his bravery with the gift of longevity.



SLIDE 11

Demons with red faces have blue irises.



The demon king Ravana is an emotionally uncontrollable character. Such characters can be identified by their facial features: red or dark-colored face, bulging eyes, blunt, protruding nose, and fangs that point downward.



The demon king Ravana (Rawana) in his ten-headed form (Dasamuka), approx. 1950–1980
Indonesia; Bandung, West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.31

SLIDE 11 DESCRIPTION

The ten-headed and twenty-armed demon Ravana (Rawana) is the villain of the Ramayana, a great Hindu epic. Ravana's power is a result of a boon given to him by the god Brahma. Ravana obtains the boon by meditating in devotion for ten thousand years while standing in the middle of five fires. After this, he proceeds to cut off each of his heads as an offering to Brahma. Just as Ravana is about to dismember his tenth and last head, Brahma appears to the demon and grants him any wish he desires. Ravana chooses to be made invulnerable to the powers of the gods and of other demons.

In the Ramayana, Ravana is so taken with the beauty of Sita (Sinta) that he devises a plan to kidnap the princess. He transforms himself into the form of a hermit to gain Sita's trust, after which he reveals his true horrific nature. He takes her captive in his kingdom on the island of Lanka (Alengka). Rama rescues Sita with the help of the monkey general Hanuman (Hanoman). In the course of the rescue, Rama kills Ravana with a magical arrow that flies through the demon's heart, exits through his back, enters the ocean to clean itself, and then returns to Rama's quiver.



SLIDE 12



Amir Hamzah, uncle of the prophet Muhammad, 1991
By Otong Rasta
Indonesia; Bandung, West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.62



Muslim characters such as Umar Maya wear a **turban** or a special court headdress.

Umar Maya, companion to Amir Hamzah, approx. 1980
By Pak Rohman
Indonesia; Gebang, West Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.51

SLIDE 12 DESCRIPTION

These puppets representing Amir Hamzah, the uncle of the prophet Muhammad (left), and his faithful companion Umar Maya (right), belong to a rod puppet theater tradition called *wayang golek menak*. They tell a cycle of Muslim stories that originated in Persia and came to Indonesia in the 1400s and 1500s with the spread of the Islam. The menak stories are loosely based on the historical legends of Amir Hamzah, the sixth-century warrior hero who was the uncle of the prophet Muhammad. As king of Arabia, Amir Hamzah defends himself against the attacks of neighboring countries and spreads the teachings of Islam.

In Java, Amir Hamzah's character takes on refined qualities similar to those of the heroes found in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the great Hindu epics. Umar Maya's character, however, does not fall into a specific category, as he exhibits both refined and coarse qualities. He is characterized by his dark face and impulsive nature.



SLIDE 13



Panji (whose name means "pennant" or "triangular flag") wears a crown in the shape of an inverted V.

Panji, a prince (and sometimes other refined characters), perhaps 1800–1900
Indonesia; Tegal, Central Java
Wood, cloth, and mixed media
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.18

SLIDE 13 DESCRIPTION

This puppet belongs to the theater tradition called *wayang golek cepak* (*cepak* means “flat”), a name that refers to the style in which the puppets are carved. These puppets perform Javanese tales including the romantic adventures of Panji, an East Javanese prince, as well as stories of Amir Hamzah, the uncle of the prophet Muhammad. This puppet represents the handsome and brave prince Panji, who goes in search of his beloved bride Candra Kirana (“Radiant Ray of the Moon”), the princess of Kediri.

On the eve of their wedding day, the princess mysteriously disappears. A demoness who wants prince Panji for herself takes the form of a beautiful princess and tells the prince that she is his wife but has been transformed by the goddess Durga. Meanwhile, Candra Kirana finds herself deep in the forest, where she attracts the attention of the gods. Disguised by the gods as a man, she travels to the palace to be reunited with her husband. When the demoness’s true identity is revealed, Candra Kirana magically vanishes. Panji goes in search of his bride, who has since become the king of Bali. In the climax, the prince fights with the disguised Chandra Kirana. According to the gods’ command, she must draw Panji’s blood in order to reveal her true identity. For a long time, neither of them brings harm to the other, but eventually princess Candra Kirana draws her hairpin and pricks prince Panji; thus she is finally reunited with her beloved.



SLIDE 14



M. Ahim on his carving platform, from *Voices of the Puppet Masters: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia* by Mimi Herbert (2002). Photograph by Tara Sosrowardoyo. Reproduced by permission.

SLIDE 14 DESCRIPTION

This photograph of the puppet master (*dalang*) and expert carver M. Ahim was taken in his home on the outskirts of Bogor, Indonesia. Traditionally, *dalang* are carvers. They must be versed in the iconography of each of the 60 to 120 puppets that perform in a story cycle. A *dalang* carves each rod puppet (*wayang golek*) character from memory, never referring to drawings as a guide. He begins by carefully choosing a block of light softwood. He hacks a rough model of the puppet's face and headdress then uses his hand to gauge the proportions of the face. For example, the back of the *dalang*'s thumb should fit snugly in the slope between the puppet's chin and neck. After this, the finer features are carved with smaller tools, a hole is drilled in the headdress (if the hair is worn in a raised, curling bun), and the entire surface of the puppet is smoothed with sandpaper. With a pencil, the *dalang* then draws on the wood an outline of the intricate details of the face and headdress. These are then carved and sanded. Lastly, the head is treated and painted according to the nature of the character the puppet will represent.

Carvers and their families frequently construct, paint, and sew cloths for the *wayang golek* puppets during the fasting month of Ramadan, when no ritual feasts are held.



SLIDE 15

Since the **upper torso** of the puppet is exposed, it is finely carved and sanded. The lower torso is hidden from view by the puppet's sarong and is left roughly carved.

A **central rod** extends through a hole in the body and into the neck, which supports the head.



The noble Subhadra wears her hair in a compact bun held in place with a **comb** in the shape of the head of a mythical bird (*garuda*).



Subhadra (Subadra), a wife of Arjuna and an incarnation of Lakshmi, 1995
By M. Ahim
Indonesia; Ciampea, West Java
Wood
From the Mimi and John Herbert Collection, F2000.86.118

SLIDE 15 DESCRIPTION

This finished carving of a rod puppet (*wayang golek*) representing Subhadra (Subadra), sister of Krishna and a wife of Arjuna, was carved by the puppet master (*dalang*) and expert carver M. Ahim, who is featured in the previous slide. Intricate swirling decorative motifs are carved into the headdress along with the construction of the puppet body.

The structure of a wayang golek puppet consists of nine parts—the head, torso, four parts that make up the arms, sticks attached to the hands, and a central rod (*cempurit*) that runs through the torso and into the puppet's neck. The process of carving and constructing a wayang golek begins with the head, considered the most important part of the puppet. Once this is complete, the torso is carved and a hole is drilled vertically through it. Next, a second smaller hole is drilled horizontally from shoulder to shoulder, and a thread is strung through it. The upper arms are then tied to either side of the torso, forming the shoulder joints. The elbow joints are similarly tied together, and wooden sticks are tied to holes in the hands. Wayang golek puppets range from fifteen to thirty inches in height.



SLIDE 16



M. Ahim with his wayang puppets, from *Voices of the Puppet Masters: The Wayang Golek Theater of Indonesia* by Mimi Herbert (2002). Photograph by Tara Sosrowardoyo. Reproduced by permission.

SLIDE 16 DESCRIPTION

This photograph shows the puppet master (*dalang*) and expert carver M. Ahim in his home sitting next to rows of his rod puppets (*wayang golek*) showing various stages in their making. Ahim manipulates one of the completed puppets (Ghatotkacha, featured in slide 5), which has been carved, painted, and dressed. The iconography of the headdress, the facial features, and the dress of each puppet is based on its character type. For example, noblemen wear velvet bib-shaped chest coverings and aprons, and noblewomen wear velvet strapless bodices; these garments for nobles are adorned with sequins. All of the puppets wear a skirt or sarong made of batik cloth or silk, depending on the character represented. Puppets may be further distinguished by trinkets, jewelry such as hanging tassels, and miniature carved weapons.

In this photograph, Ahim demonstrates the proper way to hold a wayang golek puppet. All puppet masters are ambidextrous: being able to carry and manipulate puppets in either hand or in both hands at the same time. Ahim holds the base of the body between his thumb and index finger underneath Ghatotkacha's sarong while gently grasping the central rod in his palm. In this manner, he is able to rotate the head left to right by moving his thumb and index finger back and forth. In his left hand, he holds two long sticks connected by strings to the puppet's hands. One stick rests in the groove between the thumb and index finger while the other is held balanced between the index finger and the middle, ring, and pinky fingers, which are wrapped gently around the stick. Through years of practice, the dalang brings life to each of the puppets using a seemingly infinite number of movements accentuated by music, song, and speech.

